

CHAPTER - III

Education of the Depressed Classes from 1813 to 1882

Early Attempts for the Education of the Poorer Classes.

In the initial stages, the policy of the East India Company was designed mainly for keeping an unrestricted market for British goods, for the collection of taxes and for the maintenance of Law and order. The Directors of the Company did not evince any special interest in the education of the native people. The systems of Hindu and Muslim education functioned in their medieval set up. The Hindu indigenous schools continued to practise their caste bias for the Depressed classes. The British patronage to Calcutta Madrasa and Sanskrit College were more guided by politico-economic and administrative interests rather than by any philanthropic attitudes. It was for the first time in 1813 that an 'educational clause' was inserted in the Charter of the Company. The Directive of the Board of Directors read as:¹

"Be it further enacted, that it shall be lawful for the Governor General in Council to direct that out of any surplus which may remain of the rents, revenues and profits arising from the said territorial acquisitions after defraying the expenses of the military, civil and commercial establishments, and paying the interest of the debt, in manner hereinafter provided, a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the

¹Basu, B.D., History of Education in India under the Rule of the East India Company, Calcutta, The Modern Review Office, p.66(quoted from the Charter Act).

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revival and improvements of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India".

Accordingly, the participation of the East India Company was envisaged for

- (i) the revival and improvement of literature,
- (ii) the encouragement of the learned natives of India,
- (iii) the promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.

Since the funds allocated for education were to be distributed in several areas, there arose a few controversies in the country. The root of these controversies was the question of priorities in the patronage of education. Some people favoured that the Company should encourage the oriental institutions, while the others desired for the introduction of the European system of education in India with English as the medium of instruction. There were, of course, a few people who felt that the need of the hour was to spend on the education of the peasantry and other poorer classes of the society. For example, Fraser had written to the Chief Secretary of the East India Company in 1823 as,²

²H. Sharp., Selections of Educational Records, Part I, New Delhi, Archives of India, 1965, p.13 (letter dated 25th Sept., 1823, from W. Fraser to the Chief Secy. Fort William.

"I shall here observe that the greatest difficulty this government suffers, in its endeavours to govern well, springs from the immorality and ignorance of the mass of the people, their disregard of knowledge connected with agriculture and cattle and particularly their ignorance of the spirit, principles and system of the British Govt.....It was long ago evident to me that to commence a plan which might in time extended to a general arrangement for the instruction of a portion of the children of the peasantry or as would be commonly called the Zaminders, to imbue them with the elements # of knowledge which would excite a spirit for learning and information, was the only way of laying the foundation for the advancement of the people in moral conduct.....The establishment of schools in cities and towns is comparatively speaking of secondary consideration - the majority of children of classes that inhabit cities and towns are educated by their parents. It is the children of zamindars, of the peasantry, of men enjoying hereditary and parental lands in their own right, the mass of the people, thousands to one of the people that require this instruction and will benefit by it."

Mr.Fraser had desired for an extension of education in the rural areas and requested the Company to contribute to it. He had also opened four schools for the children of the peasants and had requested the government to take over these schools. But it was, perhaps, too early a stage for realizing the ultimate advantages of Mass education. The officials of the Company believed in interpreting the Educational Clause in the literal sense. Mr.Fraser's appeal was rejected upon the principle,³

'the appropriation of any limited fund assigned for the purpose of public education should be chiefly directed to the best means of improving the education of the more respectable members of the Indian society especially those who make letters from profession'.

³Ibid., p.15,(letter dated 29th Nov., 1823 of the General Committee of Public Instruction to the Government).

The enunciation of such a principle was in line with the aristocratic outlook that education was the privilege of the higher classes and as a result the Company continued to ignore the education of the traditionally deprived.

In 1828, Sir Thomas Munroe mooted another proposal for opening schools for the general masses. He had proposed for establishing District and Tehsildari schools. The Court of Directors in their Despatch of 16th April, 1828 had approved of the plan of Thomas Munroe and authorised the gradual appropriation of Rs.50,000/- for these schools but later on, they revised their decision. In the Despatch of 29th September, 1830, the Court of Directors had again asserted their previous policy as,⁴

"The improvements in education, however, which most effectively contribute to elevate the moral and intellectual condition of the people are those which concern the education of the higher classes, of the persons possessing leisure and natural influence over the minds of their countrymen. By raising the standard of education among the classes you would eventually produce a much greater and more beneficial change in the ideas and feelings of the community than you can hope to produce by acting directly on the more numerous class".

Such a policy of the East India Company came to be popularly called as the 'Downward Filtration Theory'. One of the assumptions of such a policy was that education filters down from the higher classes to the lower classes in a community. Such an assumption could have been valid,

⁴Ibid., p.51.

in any other society but India. In India, the caste domination had structured the society in a way that culture could filter down in a caste group in isolation and there could hardly be any chances for trans-culturation. The Depressed Classes were unaffected by the Downward Filtration theory in the sense that they did not have a higher strata to pick up the benefits of European education. The only way to promote education among them was to make a beginning with elementary education. There could be three approaches for the same, viz. the opening of elementary schools by the Depressed classes themselves, the admission of the Depressed class children in the common schools for other castes, and the opening of special schools for the Depressed classes by other sections of the society or by the government.

The economic condition of the Depressed classes was so poor that they could not afford to open schools. Nor could they afford to arrange private tutors for their children because of the stigma of untouchability. The East India Company was not yet prepared for investing in the education of the poorer classes. So the only openings for their education could be through the generosity of the philanthropic persons who would either open secular schools admitting the children irrespective of their caste, creed or race or open special schools for the Depressed classes. For these, they had to wait of necessity for it was outside their own control.

The announcement of the British policy in 1833 that no native of India would be disabled from holding any place, office or employment, because of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour had no meaning to these classes under the existing conditions. The jobs they applied for were menial and no other caste people could apply for them. Such a policy could hardly motivate them for improving their vocations. The proclamation, no doubt, laid the theoretical basis for egalitarianism and the rule of law, but it would be incorrect to infer that any kind of equality or equality of opportunity came to be established between the privileged classes and the Depressed classes.

Regarding the establishment of secular schools which would admit the children without caste or creed, their number was negligibly small. They were opened here and there by some philanthropic persons or trusts and their functioning was limited to some local areas. They could not, therefore, act as agencies for the promotion of education among the masses. But the enthusiasm with which they were opened by the individuals and attended by the children of poorer classes showed that a consciousness was growing in the public about the advantages of the European system of education over the indigenous ones. Prof. B. D. Basu has quoted two cases wherein schools on European system of education were opened for the children of the poorer classes by the Indians. The first case is that of a Bengali gentleman by name

of Joy Narian Ghoshal, an inhabitant of Baneras, who had presented a petition to the Marquess of Hastings in 1814 and offered a sum of Rs.20,000/- and some lands as a gift for opening a school for the poorer classes.⁵ The school was established in 1818. A number of poor children belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities were admitted. Many of them were subsisted and clothed and some of them received small allowances for subsistence. The founding of Patcheappah's schools in Madras has been quoted as another example by Prof. Basu. The Patcheappah's schools admitted children of poorer classes belonging to various castes.⁶ But whether any children belonging to the Depressed classes were admitted to these schools or not is not known. Contribution of such schools for the education of the Depressed classes could be in the way that their secular character was in contrast to the traditional caste based character of the indigenous schools and their popularity was bound to weaken the caste basis of education in India.

As late as 1836, Lieutenant Robert Shortrede opened some secular schools in the rural areas of the Presidency of Bombay. Shortrede's schools are, perhaps, the first example of Government participation in extending Primary education to the masses in India. Shortrede's plan was to establish

⁵Basu B.D., op.cit.1., p.13.

⁶Ibid., p.52.

village schools wherein education in 3R's could be made available to all castes and communities at a minimum cost to Government.⁷ These village schools were established in Pimpri District of the Poona Collectorate. They resembled in several respects to the indigenous village schools of that time, with the difference that in the indigenous schools, the proportion of the children of the backward classes was almost insignificant, but in the new village schools started by Shortrede, the proportion of such children was comparatively higher and in some cases even the children of low castes had their place.⁸

One of the major objectives justifying the need for establishing such institutions was put forth by Lt. Shortrede as:⁹

"It is quite evident that there are no means of benefitting the condition of the people in a great and permanent degree unless they themselves be enabled actively to cooperate in the measures of government for their improvement and this can be effected in no other way than by the general establishment of schools in every village.....In most of the towns and larger villages there are schools which are attended by the children of the Brahmins and some of the wealthier classes but these schools are very little frequented by the children of common cultivators or the other labouring classes of the people. Generally the expense of having their children taught to read and write is more than the people can afford to pay. The

⁷Parulekar, R.V., Selections from Records of the Govt. of Bombay, Part I, Bombay, Asia Publishing House: 1953, p.183

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

teachers are almost Brahmins and among Brahmins there is a disinclination to communicate knowledge to any but those of his own caste and they are careful to foster the prejudices of the people by persuading them that they have no concern with reading and writing and reminding them that their children are required to tend their cattle in the field instead of being sent to school. Thus the knowledge of reading and writing is almost entirely in the hands of Brahmins and hence arises the necessity of employing this class almost exclusively in the Revenue and Judicial departments. They themselves are quite aware of it and hence have a jealousy against all endeavours for diffusing education and knowledge among the great body of the population. All that hitherto been done by Europeans, these subjects are generally felt and therefore, the Brahminic class is subject to dislike. The knowledge of reading and writing would enable the people to understand their own affair and vigilantly to observe and scrutinize the conduct of the native functionaries".

According to the proposals of Lt. Shortrede, there was to be a school in a village and about 40 to 50 children were to be kept under the instruction of one teacher. If the number of children coming to the school was to be less, children would be sent to a neighbourhood village and if the number exceeded, another teacher was to be engaged. Parents were supposed to pay a nominal fee of one anna (equivalent to 6 paises) per child per month. Teachers were to be paid salary by the Government. The children would also be helped for the expenses of the paper. These schools were to be visited by the district authorities and to be managed by Europeans to avoid the distrust and suspicion with which the body of the people regard everything in which Brahmins have any governing concern or arrangement'.¹⁰ Lt. Shortrede's

¹⁰Ibid.

plan was approved and he was vested with full authority by Government to start and supervise these schools. The first school was opened in August, 1836 and in course of the remaining part of the year, he opened as many as 21 schools in the Taluka.

In February, 1837, Government of Bombay appointed Thomas Candy to supervise and report on the working of the village schools in the Porbunder Taluka. The caste-wise enrolments of the scholars, as available in Captain Candy's inspection reports, shows the following pattern of distribution.

A. Extracts from the Inspection Reports for the Year 1840¹¹

- (i) No. of schools - 63
- (ii) No. of children - 850

Children by Caste:

Brahmins - 230

Koonbees - 380

Sonars - 34

Wanees - 37

Backward classes:-(Telee, Tambole, Tambut, Lohar, Kansar, Sooter, Simpee, Salee etc.) - 179

Depressed classes:-(Mahars & Chambhars) - 17.

B. Extracts from Inspection Reports for the Year 1842¹²

- (i) No. of schools - 69
- (ii) No. of children - 1171

¹¹Ibid., p.218.

¹²Ibid., p.220.

Children by Caste:

Brahmins	-	438
Koonbees	-	408
Sonars	-	56
Wanees	-	87

Backward Classes:- (Tailors - 36; Weavers - 36, Carpenters - 18; Kansars - 14, Oilmen - 21; Muslaman castes - 32; Barbers - 17; Potters - 7; Shepherd - 1; Gorrow - 26; Turnees - 4) - 212.

Depressed classes: Brags - 3; Smiths - 2; Mahars - 3; Chamars - 11; Pundeshees - 11; Ramoosees - 4; Blacksmiths - 5; Sunyans - 1; Washermen - 2; Goravees - 2) - 44.

The caste-wise statistics of the pupils for the two years show that the government schools were having a mixed population of students including the Depressed classes, even though the number of low castes was less in proportion to the high caste students. There could be several reasons for the thin number of Depressed class pupils. These classes had no traditions for education. They were economically poor. They were socially degraded and therefore, discouraged from sending their children to the schools. Another major obstacle in the way of the Depressed classes was that the schools were usually held in Dharamshalas, temples, Chowrees, or some other common place as available in the villages.¹³ Since the Depressed classes were not allowed

¹³Ibid.

entry into temples and other places of religious importance, many a Depressed class parents could hardly dare send their children to the schools. But in any case the efforts of Lt. Shortrede to promote education among the poorer and cultivating classes would have helped in breaking the caste character of the educational institutions. At a later date, these schools were transferred under the control of the Director of Public instruction in 1855.

As a result of the Company's rule in the country, some changes in the occupational structure were being evinced. There was a fluidity in the caste-based occupational theory and the jobs under the East India Company could be obtained by all irrespective of caste or creed. Though a large number of posts were in the hands of the Brahminic class and other higher castes, these castes could not claim their birthrights for the jobs on the basis of any religious theory. In view of this, the rigid practices of caste associations, which required individuals to stick to hereditary occupations had started weakening. The readiness of the Missionaries to convert whosoever desired to embrace Christianity also discouraged the Hindus to impose hardships on the weaker sections of the society. On the other hand, many persons belonging to the Depressed classes had converted themselves into Christianity and they were leading a changed life than their counterparts to some degree. At least, they were

not treated as untouchables. The attitudes of the British officials was also sympathetic towards the Depressed classes. Some of the Depressed class members had been given jobs under the East India Company. Having abhorred the parental occupations once, these individuals were now desirous of educating their children and putting them in government jobs rather than reverting back to the old ancestral occupations. Looking to the comparatively easier life being led by their brethren under the employment of East India Company, other members of the Depressed classes might have also liked to follow suit.

The economic poverty of the Depressed classes was the main reason for their general backwardness. The only way to improve their conditions was to increase the productivity of their occupations. The Depressed classes could not change to the occupations of the Caste Hindus. Their own occupations were unskilled and unproductive. The nature of these occupations was such that they could hardly yield for the survival of the family's expenditure. The next alternative before these classes was to apply for salaried jobs under the East India Company or under some officials and missionaries. Here again, the jobs could be of two types viz. ancestral or the new jobs under the company. For jobs other than the menial, some knowledge of English, Arithmetic etc. was required. Thus, there was a feeling that the economic conditions of the Depressed classes could be improved through means of education.

Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley's Crusade for
the Education of the Depressed Classes

Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley, the great saint of Maharashtra crusaded the movement for the amelioration of the Depressed classes in 1850's. Whereas he took keen interest in the overall welfare of these classes, he considered education as an important tool for their general improvement. The following extract taken from the introductory part of his unpublished book 'Cultivator's Whip Cord' written as late as 1883 is illustrative of his philosophy,¹⁴

'For want of Education Intellect deteriorated
For want of Intellect morality decayed
For want of morality progress stopped
For want of progress wealth vanished
For want of wealth the Shudras perished
All these sorrows sprang from illiteracy'.

After completing his own educationⁱⁿ 1847, Jotirao resolved to raise the banner of revolt against the traditional practice of denial of education to the Depressed classes. He wanted to throw open the gates of knowledge to the lower classes by disseminating education among them. He observed,¹⁵

'Female schools first of all attracted my notice, as upon mature considerations, they were found to be even more necessary than male ones, the root of education lying in the proper turn, mothers give to the disposition of children between their second and third

¹⁴Keer, D., Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley, the Father of Our Social Revolution, Bombay, Popular Parkashan, 1964, p.178.

¹⁵Ibid., p.23.

years. In this state of mind I visited while at Ahmednagar, in company with a particular friend, the female schools belonging to the American mission conducted by Miss Ferar and was highly pleased with the manner in which the girls in those schools were educated.

On his return to Poona after visiting the female schools at Ahmednagar, Jotirao opened a low caste female school allowing, however, such boys as wished to do so to attend also. It was, perhaps, the first occasion in the history of India that a special school for the Depressed classes was opened. Inaugurating the school, Jotirao Phoolley had said,

'The low castes - Mahars, Mangs, Chambaras etc. Composing a great part of my countrymen, being sunk deep in ignorance and misery, the Lord was pleased to excite in me a desire to better their conditions through means of education'.¹⁶

Opening of an elementary school is just an ordinary event but in the case of this school for the Depressed class girls, it was some thing unheard, unseen and unattempted hitherto before Jotirao had tried to negate a few social traditions simultaneously. It was against the Hindu religious code to educate the Depressed classes. Furthermore, education of the girls was also looked down upon in those days. Thirdly, Jotirao's intermixing with the Depressed classes was defying the caste rules of his own caste. Thus his

¹⁶Ibid.

opening of such a school was regarded as a disgrace by his own castemen. There were protests to him. In the face of stiff opposition Jotirao could not get a teacher. Later on, he put his wife to the job. It was further more resented and the influential section of his community pressurised his father to discourage him. Jotirao would not yield to the pressures and consequently his father turned him out of the home. In Jotirao's own words, the scene has been described as:¹⁷

'Having, however, by my teaching the low castes, become odious to my castemen, my father at last drove me out of his house and left me to shift for myself in the best way I could. So the school was, as a matter of course, closed, I was compelled to engage in business to gain a livelihood'.

The first school for the Depressed classes had run for five or six months only. This School was run at the house of Mr. Bhide in Bhudwar Peth and Sadashiv Govind Hate and Sadashiv Ballal Govande had helped in the running of the school.¹⁸ The closure of the first school could only be called as a temporary phase. Jotirao, fused with determination, reopened the school soon thereafter, but the venue of the school was shifted to the residence of Sadashiv Ballal Govande in Peit Joona Ganj. Govande also provided the school with slates and a subscription of Rs.2/- per month.

¹⁷Ibid., p.27(quoted from the Bombay Guardian, dated 16th Dec., 1853)

¹⁸Ibid., p.24.

As the number of children increased, Jotirao opened another school. For this school the place was hired out from a Mohammadan. Major Candy who was looking after the Shortrede's Village schools in Porbunder Taluka supplied books to this school. Still another school was established on July 3, 1851 for girls of the Depressed classes at Annasahel Chiplunkar's house in Budhwar Peit. Two more schools, the fourth and fifth in the series were established soon afterwards.¹⁹ With the increase in the number of pupils, some young girls also joined the classes and Jotirao felt the need to open separate schools for boys and girls. Consequently a separate school for boys was opened.

These special schools for the Depressed classes attracted a good number of visitors. Their success was even publicised by the press. The Poona Observer in its issue of August 21, 1852 published an account of the first two schools as the following.²⁰

'Jotirao Phooley has established two schools in Vittual Peit, one for the female children of Mahars, Dheds, Mangs and Chamars and the other for the Children of the same classes. Both the schools are taught and superintended by Jotirao himself, and assisted by brahmin teachers. These schools are supported by Jotirao out of his private means, aided by subscription collected from Europeans and enlightened natives. To these schools, the Dakshina Prize Committee has liberally granted an allowance of Rs.25/- per mensem beginning from this month'.

¹⁹Ibid., 31.

²⁰Ibid., p.40(quoted).

The Principal subjects taught in these special schools were reading and writing, writing to dictation, Grammar, Geography of the world in general and India in particular and history of the Marathas.²¹ The contents were by and large similar to those of other vernacular schools being established by the Government.

To give strength to the movement of ameliorating the conditions of the Depressed Classes through means of education, Jotirao Phooley constituted a society. This society was named as the 'Society for the Education of Mahars and Mangs'. It was headed by Sadashiv Govande who also acted as the chairman. Moro Vithal Walvekar became its Secretary; Sakharam Yashwant Paranjye, its treasurer; and Babaji Manaji Dengale and Jotirao Phooley as its ordinary members.²² Major Candy had recommended the society for a grants-in-aid and the Government had also, through its Dakshina Prize Committee, sanctioned a grant of Rs.25/- per month for its schools.²³

The Society had also applied to the Governor of Bombay for financial assistance and a plot of land for the building of a school in 1353. It was envisaged that the building would accommodate about 150 boys and 100 girls.²⁴

²¹Ibid., p.66

²²Ibid., p.39

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p.69.

The Governor, Honourable Viscount Falkland, was of the opinion that every encouragement should be given to the society formed for the improvement of Mahars and Mangs which he was happy to observe had a native for a secretary while another native had established the school. A plot of land, known as 'Trimbak Ji Dengle's Top Khana', for the erection of the school building was sanctioned. In May 1854, the Collector of Poona was directed to advance a sum of Rs.5000/- to the Society for the construction of the proposed site. But the sanctioned money and the plot were not released to the society as late as 1857 when a plot measuring about six acres of land at Bhokar Wadi was handed over to the Society.²⁵

The war of 1857 had its effect on the European donors of these special schools for the Depressed classes. The report of the inspection of the school in 1858 recorded "Several European and native gentlemen have of late withdrawn their monthly subscriptions and these have fallen so low that it will be the painful duty of the Society to shut up at least one of the three schools under their direction." As the interest of the public declined further, the financial hardships increased and ultimately the schools were transferred to the local fund under resolution No.5421 of 24th September, 1874.²⁶ With the transference of these

²⁵Ibid., .

²⁶Ibid., p.79.

schools as public institutions, two types of vernacular elementary schools under Government control came to function i.e. the common schools which were supposed to have a secular bias and the special schools for the Depressed classes.

The Hardships Caused to the Depressed Class Pupils in Common Schools.

There were hardly any schools especially established for the Depressed classes in any other part of the country except Poona. The attendance of the Depressed Class pupils in common schools was very thin. Generally, the higher castes discouraged these classes from sending their children to the schools. In places where the Depressed classes sent their children, they were subjected to humiliation in several ways. One of the impediments in their way was that most of the teachers themselves hailed from the Brahminic caste or other upper castes, they also did not like the idea of allowing equality of treatment for the children of these castes and usually dissuaded them. To quote an instance, the 'Friend of India' issue of June, 10, 1852 published the following incident from the Presidency of Madras.²⁷

'At Madras, some pariah(a low caste)students were admitted to an educational institution and immediately forty students belonging to higher castes left the school rather than suffer contamination of the Pariah's presence and thus be polluted. But when the Government officials took a firm attitude and declared that the Pariah students would never be withdrawn, of the forty more than twenty of them sought, with the most ample apologies, readmissions. They were readmitted. The upper caste students yielded though with grace to the firmness of the Government and the Commotion subsided'.

²⁷Ibid., p.55(Quoted from 'Friend of India', Madras, 10th June, 1852).

Reverend Murray Mitchell, in his book 'Recollections of my Early Missionary Life', has also cited another incident of a similar type.²⁸

"A Depressed class boy who was sufficiently acquainted with the vernaculars was admitted to the lowest English class. In a few minutes there came a deputation of Brahmin boys, their dark eyes sparkling, and every gesture betokening emotion. "We are going to leave the school, there are mehars in it." "One Mahar, I think." "Yes, but one is as bad as ten." "Am I to drive the poor boy away?" "We do not know. Only we go if he remains". "You need not touch him unless you like; you clever boys are near the top of the class and the poor mahar is at the foot. He is sitting on a different bench from you". "Yes, but there is matting on the floor and it transmits pollution. We brahmins are now all polluted and must wash away the defilement before we eat". "You wish me then to remove the matting?" "We must not have been in the class." "Well, at any rate, I cannot and will not put the boy out of the class".

Reverend Mitchell writes that he had felt puzzled. He did not wish to drive away the Brahmins and his conscience did not allow to dismiss the mahar. So finally he said to the Brahmin boys, "Wait till tomorrow. We are re-arranging the classes." So rather sulkily, the Brahmins retired. The result was that Mahar boy never came back to the school. Reverend Mitchell comments, "I suppose he found himself like a fish out of water; the high and the middle castes, no doubt, stood firm; and I believe the teacher of that class did the same thing".

²⁸Ibid., p.54(Quoted from Reverend Murray Mitchell, 'Recollection of My Early Missionary Life,Pp.314-15).

The fear of pollution by the touch or company or even the presence of the Depressed classes was quite strong and it worked commotion alike in the old and the young, in the illiterate and the educated, in the pupils and the teachers. Perhaps, it had the strongest commotion in the Brahminic castes from which most of the teachers were drawn. Reverend Mitchell has cited another such instance that shows the discriminatory behaviour practised by the teachers towards the pupils belonging to the Depressed classes in common schools.²⁹

"The Reverend Adam White went to visit a Government school near Poona. The Brahmin Pantoji was provided with a cane and he made good and frequent use of it. The Rev. Adam White asked the Pantoji why some clods were there. He replied: "I use my cane in the case of caste boys. If I struck the Mehar, pollution from the outcaste boy would come along with the stick and my whole body would be polluted. So when the Mahar boy is stupid, I just take a clod and let fly at him, and when I miss, I take another."

Under such conditions as narrated by Reverend Mitchell, it is but natural that the Depressed classes would have found it difficult to continue their children in common schools. Thus the discriminatory behaviour of the high caste pupils and the teachers could also be a pertinent reason for the thin attendance of the Depressed class pupils in common schools.

²⁹Ibid.

Official Policies for the Admission of
Depressed class Pupils in Common Schools.

The Woods Despatch of 1854 is a land mark in the educational history of the country. It directed for a diversion from the filtration theory by suggesting that the attention of the Government should in future be directed to the neglected but more important problem of conveying useful but practical knowledge to the great masses of the people. The Woods despatch had further suggested for the creation of separate departments of education in the different provinces. It was obvious that the attention of these Departments was to be attracted towards the vast masses of Depressed classes and hilly tribes (scheduled Tribes) which formed a significant percentage of the total population but were almost secluded from the existing functionaries of education. Moreover, these education departments were headed by European officers who were averse to caste restrictions and were sympathetic to these backward classes.

Encouraged by the changing political, social, and educational scene, the Depressed Classes were growing conscious of the importance of education as a means of finding better occupations and, therefore, wanted to educate their children. The news of the success of Jotirao's schools for the Depressed Classes was given a publicity every now and then by the Press and, therefore, the Depressed classes in other towns desired to open such schools. In August 1855, certain inhabitants of Ahmednagar prayed for the

establishment of a school for the education of the low castes. Accordingly, in November 1855, Government opened there a special school for the Depressed classes. "It is the first occasion", said the report of the Board of Education, "on which we have established a school for these Castes".³⁰

A significant event in the educational history of the Depressed classes is the Dharwar case. In June 1856, a Depressed class pupil applied for admission to a government school at Dharwar. This application raised a very delicate and difficult problem. On the one hand the Government felt that the petitioner had "abstract justice on his side". But it also felt that the admission of the petitioner might result in the withdrawal of all the caste Hindu children from the school so that the institution would be practically useless to the children as a whole. Admission was, therefore, refused on the ground that, 'to interfere with the prejudices of ages in a summary manner for the sake of one or a few individuals would probably do great damage to the cause of education'.³¹ The matter, however, did not rest there. These orders were noticed by the Govt. of India who was not pleased with the decision taken and observed that if such a case had occurred in the state of Bengal, the petitioner would not have been refused admission to the government school.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 70. (quoted)

³¹ Report, A Review of Education in Bombay State, (1855-1955), Poona, Govt. of Bombay, 1958, p. 410.

The matter even went up to the Court of Directors who passed the following orders.³²

"We are of the opinion that justice being, as admitted by the Bombay Government and its officers in favour of the admission of boys of all castes into the government schools, no exclusion solely on the ground of caste should be allowed. The educational institutions of the government are intended by us to be open to all classes, and we cannot depart from a principle which is essentially sound and the maintenance of which is of the first importance. It is not impossible that in some cases the inforcement of the principle may be followed by the withdrawal of a portion of the scholars, but with regard to the assumed unwillingness of the wealthier classes to contribute to the establishment of such schools, it is sufficient to remark that those persons who object its practical enforcement will be at liberty to withhold their contributions and to apply their funds, if they think fit to the formation of schools on a different basis".

In view of the above directions received from the Court of Directors, the Government of Bombay declared their educational policy:³³

"All schools maintained at the sole cost of the Government shall be open to all classes of its subjects without distinction".

For the first time in the history of India, educational institutions had been opened to the Depressed classes as a matter of rule. Furthermore, the officials of the Departments of Education considered the problems facing the

³²Selections from the Records of Govt. of India, Home Department, No. LXXVI, Calcutta, Suptd. Govt. of India Printing, 1870, p.92.

³³Keer, op.cit., 14, p.72.

Depressed Classes and also the type of education that could be of help to them for their amelioration. For example, the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay held the views that a different kind of teaching was required for the low castes. Whereas he wished to establish one individual (separate) school in every district for the benefit of these classes, he found book learning above them and useless. He concluded his report by saying 'My views on the subject have been confirmed by witnessing the failure of Mahar and Mang schools in Poona, from which the government aid was withdrawn a year ago'.³⁴ The Director had recommended for the opening of vocational schools for these classes.

To sum up, events by 1865 had started taking a positive turn. The concept of the education of the masses as well included education of the Depressed classes. They could legally seek admission in all government institutions, some of them had become bold enough to petition the government for their rights, the idea of opening separate schools for the Depressed classes was gaining currency and even the idea of opening vocational schools for them had been mooted. When these societal innovations were being introduced there was simultaneously a wave, a movement and an upsurge for social reform in India. The social Reformers had also included programmes and ideas for the amelioration of the Depressed classes in their plans of reformation.

³⁴ Report of the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay for the Year 1861-62, p.44.

The Contribution of Social Reform Movements
to the Educational Development of the Depressed
Classes.

Towards the closing decades of the Eighteenth Century, the conditions of the Indian masses had deteriorated beyond description. Economically people had almost been reduced to utter poverty because of the heavy taxation, instability of the rule, tyrannous activities of the officials of the East India Company. On the social front too, the society had fallen to the lowest ebb. Practices such as 'Sati Pratha' (burning of alive wife with the dead body of her husband), female infanticide, untouchability, blind adherence to the outdated caste associations etc. had shut the society in a static state of affairs. But with the consolidation of power by the East India Company, the economic situation had started improving by the second half of Nineteenth Century. Simultaneously the people grew conscious of the social vices and wanted to reform the society. The movement of social reform was initiated around 1830's and by the middle of the Nineteenth century it had sufficiently gathered momentum. Some of the organisations and individuals in this social task were also devoted to the uplift of the Depressed Classes. Almost all of the reformers had considered education as a necessary preliminary step for the amelioration of these classes. The activities of the social organisations that engaged themselves in the welfare programmes of the Depressed classes have been

discussed below:

a) The Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthna Samaj

Of all the religious movements of the Nineteenth Century, the Brahmo Samaj was the pioneering one. Throughout its history it has been sternly theistic and opposed to idolatory, and has always had a policy of reform. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Samaj, was the pioneer of all living advance, religious, social and educational in the Hindu community during the Nineteenth Century.³⁵ With the founding of the Brahmo Samaj, concided an unprecedented awakening in the socio-religious life of the country bringing in its wake new thoughts, new institutions and new visions.

As such, the Samaj, founded on January 23, 1830, as a purely theistic organisation, assumed a distinct social character very soon.³⁶ Raja Ram Mohan Roy had a passion for social service. Though he was already pre-occupied with other reformatory tasks as abolition of Sati Pratha etc., he could hardly attend to the problems of the Depressed classes but his very favourite saying and a principle of his life that 'the highest service of God is the service of man'³⁷ is remarkable. Unfortunately, the Brahmo Samaj had hardly

³⁵ Farquhar J.N., Modern Religious Movements in India, Delhi, Mushi Ram Manohar Lal, 1967, p.29.

³⁶ Dikshit S.S., Nationalism and Indian Education, Delhi, Sterling Private Ltd., 1966, p.27.

³⁷ Ibid.

crossed its infancy that its prophet, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, died and therefore, there crept in a sort of passivity in the organisation. A state of inactiveness continued in the organisation till 1850 when Keshav Chander Sen and Mahadev Gobind Ranade took over the leadership of its offshoots - Brahmo Samaj located in Bengal and Prarthna Samaj located in Poona.

The two movements, Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj, gave a considerable attention to the cause of education. They covered a wide variety of areas including adoption of the British system of education, women's education, education of the peasantry, relating education to the vocational pursuits of the society, making education inexpensive etc.³⁸ They also worked in the social domain appealing to eradicate the ills of the society by enlightening the masses through proper education. One of the programmes of the Prarthna Samaj also arranged for inter-caste dinners evidently to break the caste barriers of the Hindu society. In 1970, the leaders of the Prarthna Samaj established night schools and two of these schools were for the Depressed Classes.³⁹

The establishment of the schools for the Depressed classes had its own significance. The opening of 'night schools' for the poor was an innovative idea. Since the

³⁸Ibid., p.27.

³⁹Dikshit, op.cit., 36, p.27.

children of the Depressed classes had to work with their parents or outside home for earning the very livelihood of the family, night schools provided a scope when literacy could be imparted without much domestic hinderances. It would be remembered here that Jotirao Phoolley's special schools of the Depressed classes had proved beyond doubt that the Depressed classes were quite interested in the education of their children but the closure of these schools after 1857's disturbances showed that these institutions could not function without help or subsidiary grants from other sources and that the Depressed classes could hardly maintain these institutions without philanthropic or governmental support. Since the offices of the Prarthna Samaj were also located in Poona, the Centre of Jotirao's educational activity for these classes, the step of opening of night schools might also be regarded as an extension of the ideas and activities on the education of the Depressed classes already initiated by Jotirao Phoolley.

bThe Arya Samaj

Another socio-religious movement that had a great influence on the social life of Northern India was the Arya Samaj.⁴⁰ It was established by Swami Dayanand on April 10, 1875. From the nationalistic point of view the Arya Samaj had done the utmost for the betterment of the lot of the

⁴⁰Ibid., p.60.

downtrodden. The social ideas of the Arya Samaj were the equality of the sexes, absolute justice and fairplay between man and man, equal opportunities to all according to their nature, karma and merit and love and charity towards all. In pursuance of these ideals it took a great interest in the social uplift of the Depressed classes.⁴¹ The Arya Samaj was, perhaps, the first organisation in the country to launch the Shuddhi movement (reclamation) i.e raising the untouchables to the ranks of touchables by entitling them to wear the sacred thread. To encourage education amongst the Depressed classes the Arya Samaj did quite a useful work. Some of the religious scriptures of the Hindus had held that the Depressed classes should not be allowed to read the holy books of the Hindu religion. Swami Dayanand, argued over such mythical beliefs and viewed that they were unsound. In his famous treatise, the 'Satyaratha Parkash' he answers the question 'Are even women and shudras allowed to study the Vedas?', in a very logistic way.⁴²

'All men and women have a right to study. Does not God desire the welfare of the Shudras? Is God Prejudiced that he should allow the study of the Vedas to Dwijas and disallow it to Shudras? Had God meant that the Shudras should not study the Veda or hear it read, why should he have created the organs of speech and hearing in their bodies? As he has created the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, the Water, the Fire, the Air, the various foods and drinks for all, so he has revealed the Vedas for all'.....
 'Wherever it is declared that the Shudras are debarred from the study of the Veda,

⁴¹Singh, S.R., National and Social Reform in India; Delhi, Ranjit Printers and Publishers, 1968, p.242.

⁴²Dayanand Saraswati, Satyaratha Parkash, (translation in English by Dr.C. Bhardwaja), Madras, The Arya Samaj, 1932, pp.73-74.

the prohibition simply amounts to this that he^{who} does not learn anything even after a good deal of teaching, being ignorant and destitute of understanding is called a Shudra. It is useless for him to learn and for others to teach him any longer'.

Swami Dayanand was^a Hindu monk and challenged the Brahminic authorities for argumentation. His great rhetoric and righteous speech drew large followings. Swami Dayanand considered caste as a political institution made by the rulers for the common good of the society and not a natural or religious distinction. 'It is not a natural distinction for the four castes were not created by God as distinct species of men; but all men are of equal nature, of the same species and brothers. It is not a religious institution, for the salvation of men and their fate in the other world does not depend upon its observance. The castes are simply different professions or guilds, established by the state to guard against confusion and mutual interference and for the better accomplishment of different works. Each class was made up into a guild and furnished with its right and privileges and made hereditary. But as a whole any classification is a matter of the state. Any Shudra who is deserving of the promotion can be made by the state a Vaishya, a Kshatriya, a Brahmin if he qualifies himself for the respective class. Likewise any Brahmin who deserves the degradation can be made by the state a Shudra.'⁴³

⁴³Lajpat Rai, The Arya Samaj, Lahore, Uttar Chand Kapoor & Sons, 1932, p.50.

Arya Samaj repudiated the theory of caste as of divine origin; it condemned the numerous sub-divisions into which Hindu society had been split by reason of castes and subcastes; it considered the artificial barriers which caste in India had created to divide men from their fellow men as pernicious and harmful. But the Arya Samaj did not shut its eyes to the facts of life and recognised that by birth men are not equal; that they differ from one another in physical powers; in intellectual and mental faculties; in moral dispositions and also in spiritual development; that they are born in different environments; that their position and status in life must from the very nature of things be affected by their environment; that heredity also played its part in making them what they are at birth or in life. The Arya Samaj, therefore, purported to give equal opportunities to all persons, men and women, to acquire knowledge and to qualify themselves for whatever position in life they would like to fill. It admitted the right of every person to choose his or her environment, fight it out, and rise as high in the scale of humanity as he or she would.⁴⁴

One of the important programmes of the Arya Samaj was the Shuddhi Movement. In its religious terminology 'Shuddhi' meant,

- (i) conversion to Hinduism of persons belonging to foreign religions.

⁴⁴Ibid., p.150.

- (ii) reconversion of those who had recently or at any remote period adopted another religion.
- (iii) reclamation i.e., raising the status of the Depressed Classes.

The Arya Samaj reclaimed such of the Depressed classes, that came under its influence, in the Hindu fold, gave them the rights to wear the sacred thread and read the sacred books. The Arya Samaj also planned to educate the Depressed classes to higher social ideals with a view to eventually rising them to social equality with other caste Hindus.

Since the Arya Samaj attracted a large number of people especially in the United Provinces and Punjab, it weakened the caste prejudices. The softening of attitudes of the caste Hindus had as a matter of natural course, facilitated the economic and educational progress of the Depressed classes in such areas where it had made its impact.

c) The Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society, established in South India, was another socio-religious organisation that contributed to the educational progress of the Depressed classes. The society was founded in 1875 in United States of America by Sir Henry Steel Olcott, an Englishman and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a Russian Lady. Col. Olcott became its first President and Madame Blavatsky its first Secretary.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Dishit, op.cit., 36, Pp.81-82.

In 1879, they came to India and in 1882 settled down at Adyar (Madras) which became the Headquarters of the Theosophical society. Col. Olcott was deeply moved by the sad plight of the Depressed classes. He wrote a pamphlet 'The Poor Pariah' depicting the miserable plight of the untouchables and appealed for sympathy and help from all those who were interested in the cause of the downtrodden people.⁴⁶ For their amelioration, he laid great stress on their education for he knew that education alone could make them conscious of their worth and dignity by dispelling their ignorances.⁴⁷ Col. Olcott distributed the pamphlet throughout the world, to editors particularly, and found encouraging response from them. He, then, established a number of Pariah or Panchma schools in the South. The Panchma Schools became very popular institutions in the South and at a later date they were even accepted by the government of Madras as special schools for the Depressed classes. Regarding the management of these schools, they were allowed to be managed by the Depressed Classes themselves, so that these classes do not misunderstand the motives behind opening these schools. The efforts of Col. Olcott in this direction had proved a great success. He could even make the Governor of Madras interested

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p.83.

in them.⁴⁸

d) The Rama Krishna Mission

Swami Vivekanand, the Hindu Monk of Rama Krishna Mission, was even more emphatic and pronounced in his sympathies for the Depressed classes. He strongly advocated for the education of these classes. He would say that if the Brahmin had more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, no more money was to be spent over the Brahmin's education and all money was to be spent on Pariah's education. All the gift must be given to the weak if there it was needed the most. Born clever, the Brahmin could educate himself without help. But others who were not born clever, must have all the teaching and all the teachers. 'Our poor people, these downtrodden masses of India, therefore, require to hear and to know what they really are'.⁴⁹

Vivekananda had an insight into the real problems of these classes. He was fully aware of the difficulty that would hinder the educational progress of the poorer classes. According to him, this difficulty was not to be solved even if a free school was to be started in every village, because the poor boy would rather go to help his father in the

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Singh S.R., op.cit., 41, p.243(quoted).

field or otherwise try to make a living. So the Swami preached that if the poor could not come to receive education, education itself must go to the poor. 'There were 'Sanyasins' going from village to village to preach religion. 'Some of these wandering monks,' he would say, 'might be organised as teachers of secular things also. They will go from place to place, from door to door, not only preaching but teaching also'.⁵⁰

Swami Vivekanand always exhorted the countrymen to remember the lower classes. The ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper were all their flesh and blood - their brothers. In his opinion the chief cause of India's ruin had been the monopolising of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If India was to rise again, she could do so by spreading education among the masses.⁵¹

The movement of Rama Krishna Mission was spreading in the Eastern parts of the country and consequent with its expansion, the prejudices against the Depressed classes would have softened in those areas.

e) The Satya Shodhak Samaj

As already mentioned, Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley was the

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p.246.

precursor of the movement for the uplift of the Depressed classes. His initial efforts of opening of special schools for the Depressed classes and also founding the 'Society for the Education of the Mahars and Mangs' have already been discussed. On September 24, 1873, a meeting of the local leaders interested in the welfare of the Depressed classes was convened and a social organisation by the name of Satya Shodhak Samaj was established.⁵² Jotirao Phooley was elected as the President of the organisation. The Samaj outlined its principle,⁵³

All men are the children of one God who is thus their parent. There is no necessity of an intermediary such as a priest or a preceptor to enable the devotee to offer prayers to God. Any one accepting the principle is qualified to be a member of the Satya Shodhak Samaj.

Membership of the Samaj was extended to all castes including Brahmins and Mahars and Mangs and even Jews and Muslims became its members.⁵⁴

Immediately on the foundation of the Satya Shodhak Samaj, Jotirao started translating his resolutions into action. He called for applications of students from the Depressed classes and granted scholarships to ten students.⁵⁵ Earlier in the same year, Jotirao Phooley had released a book entitled 'Indian Empire under the Cloak of Brahminism.'

⁵²Keer, op.cit., 14, p.126.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

The salient points raised and discussed in the book were the following:⁵⁶

1. The theory of filtration was wrong and its philosophy, utopian. The best way to advance the moral and intellectual welfare of the people was to spread instruction among the masses. Therefore the government should care more for the education of the masses including the lower classes.
2. There was monopolisation by the Brahmins in administration. He advocated the recruitment of candidates from other classes. He suggested that candidates from the lower classes should be selected, trained, and appointed to the posts of Kulkarnis, Patils, and teachers. He raised no objection to Brahmin's getting post in proportion to their population.
3. One of the ways to promote education in the Depressed classes was the establishment of village schools without brahmin teachers because they either discouraged the lower classes' pupils or frightened them to quit the schools.
4. It was necessary to appoint men from the lower classes on Municipal bodies to look after the interests and amenities of the lower classes such as adequate supply of water and light.

⁵⁶Ibid.,p.116.

The issues raised by Jotirao Phoolley had in the course of time, taken the shape of programmes for the welfare of the Depressed classes. Rather, they occupied the political scene for more than fifty years and it was almost on such lines that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar crusaded the movement for the rights of the Depressed class in the second quarter of the twentieth century.

As would be seen from a brief description of the above socio-religious movements, the organisations were primarily established for religious reform, but they did not limit their work in the spiritual domains. They emphasized on improving the society by denouncing such religious practices as hampered social growth and therefore also included social reform in their programmes. Some of them went a step further. They covered the political domains as well for the political reform should emanate from the social context. Since in those days there was not any national platform wherein the different organisations could combine their efforts, such organisations attempted to bring social reform within the boundaries of their influences on one hand and also created the feelings for the need to have a national or all India platform on the other. These movements had their influence on thousands of people in the various parts of the country, viz., Brahmo Samaj and Rama Krishna

Mission in the Eastern parts, Theosophical society in the Southern areas, the Prarthana Samaj and Satya Shodhak Samaj in the Western regions and the Arya Samaj in the Central and Northern parts of the country. All of these organisations had considered the amelioration of the Depressed classes as a vital need of the day, but the difficulties of communication, transport, absence of mass media etc., must have been acted as the physical barriers to their expansion and it may be due to this that caste prejudices were reported to be diminishing in the cities and towns but continuing unabated in the rural and remote areas of the country towards the end of the Nineteenth Century.

The Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1872

A contemporary event of the period was the legislation of the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1872. The British Government, by introducing a uniform system of law in the country dealt a severe blow to the social and legal inequalities exercised in the country. According to the sanctions of the 'Hindu Smritis' (code of Hindu conduct), the caste status of an individual determined the punishment for an offence committed by him. The Hindu state, the village committee and the Caste Sabha dealt out varying punishments for the same offence to the delinquents of different castes. But the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1872 granted equality of treatment for all irrespective of their castes. This forfeited

the legal status of caste institutions. The expropriation of the Caste Committees of all penal powers by the British Government deprived caste of a powerful physical weapon to stampede its recalcitrant members into submission. Caste ~~sathas~~ became voluntary organisations which commanded no sanction of law when they inflicted on their members fines or such other punishment for infringement of Caste rules.⁵⁷

Educational Progress Attained by
the Depressed Classes upto 1882

The Educational Clause of the Charter Act of 1813 had laid down for the participation of the East India Company in the promotion of education in India. But in the initial stages, the participation of the Company and its officials was more by way of patronage to some of the missionary and vernacular schools than a systematic appropriation of the funds diverted for education. The educational policy of the Company was directed to the encouragement of higher education and education among the higher classes. But the Downward Filtration Theory could not hold the scene for long. The attention of the Board of Directors of the Company was time and again drawn to the poor condition of the masses and the need for opening elementary schools for the peasantry and other poorer

⁵⁷Desai, A.R., Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1959, p.230.

classes. Some of the officials of the Company took keen interest in the establishment of vernacular schools on European lines. These schools very soon gained popularity over the indigenous elementary schools. One of the characteristics of the new vernacular schools was that they admitted children irrespective of their caste and creed.

In 1854, the educational policy of the Company was streamlined by the Court of Directors. In their memorable Despatch, known as the Woods Despatch, the Company accepted the systematic promotion of general education as one of the duties of the State and desired for an extension of European knowledge in India. The Despatch had also advised the officials regarding the measures which could promote education in India. Some of these measures were,⁵⁸

- i. constitution of a Department of Public Instruction,
- ii. increased attention to all forms of vernacular schools,
- iii. the introduction of a system of grants-in-aid which should foster a spirit of reliance upon local exertions, and should in course of time render it possible to close or transfer to the management of local bodies many of the existing institutions.

⁵⁸ Govt. of India, Resolution of the Govt. of India in the Home Department, Nos. 199-211, dated Calcutta 11/3/1904, Para 457.

The policy laid down in 1854 was reaffirmed in 1859 when the administration had been transferred to the Crown.⁵⁹

The measures recommended by the Woods Despatch proved a great success and the number of colleges and schools had increased rapidly. The growth in their number had been augmented by the development of the Municipal system, and by the act which were passed from 1865 onwards providing for the imposition of local cesses which might be applied to the establishment of schools.⁶⁰ By the year 1882, there were more than two million and a quarter of pupils under instruction in public institutions.⁶¹

In so far as the promotion of education among the Depressed classes was concerned, it may suffice to say that it had made a beginning. The movement had achieved success to some degree in the Presidency of Bombay. The annual report of the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay, for the year 1881-82, contained the following figures of enrolment of the Depressed classes.⁶²

⁵⁹Ibid., para 458.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Report, op.cit., 31, p.411.

TABLE - I

Position of Enrolment of Depressed Class Pupils
in Bombay in the Year 1881-82.

Institutions	Enrolment of Scheduled Caste Pupils in			
	Govt. schools	Aided Schools	Inspected Schools	Total
Colleges	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
High Schools	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
First Grade Middle Schools.	4	7	16	27
Second Grade Middle Schools.	6	-	2	8
Primary Schools	2826	214	423	3463
Girls Schools	29	49	23	101
Indigenous Schools	-	7	-	7
Schools of Art	2	-	-	2
Night Schools	36	-	6	42
Special Schools	1	42	-	43
Total	2904	319	470	3693

Source:- extracted from the Report of the Director of
Public Instruction, Bombay for the Year 1881-82.

As would be seen from the above table, no Depressed class pupils were studying in colleges and high schools. This could, perhaps be for the reason that only a few boys were educated by this time and they might have liked to seek some jobs instead of seeking admission to a college or high school.

At the primary stage of education the situation was slightly better. It may be recalled here that by this time the primary schools opened by Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley and the Society for the education of the Mahars and Mangs had been taken over by the government and were termed as the Government schools. A large number of the primary schools were situated in villages where the traditional prejudice against untouchability was very deep-rooted. In these cases, the Depressed class pupils were very often refused admission in practice, although it was not theoretically permissible to do so. The department, therefore, tried to work out a practical compromise "without exciting much irritation or inflicting any permanent injury on education."⁶³ In practice, the upper castes exerted pressure on the Depressed classes themselves and they were induced not to send their children to the common schools. Even when admission was granted, the Depressed class pupils were made to sit apart from the other pupils and were not allowed to take part in the common activities of the school. Another discouraging factor was that very often the primary schools were located in temples and in such cases the Depressed class pupils were not even allowed to enter the building and had to receive such instruction as was available by sitting outside the temple.

⁶³Ibid.

Since Female education was not very popular in the country, Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley was not the first to opening schools for the Depressed classes only but his first school i.e. the Female School for the Depressed classes was, perhaps, the first Indian effort to open educational institutions for girls as well. Under such circumstances, the poor enrolment of the girls of the Depressed classes should not be a matter of surprise.

The absence of enrolment of the Depressed classes in the indigenous schools shows the traditional Hindu practices. It may be pointed out that the various institutions such as girls schools, night schools, special schools, etc., # imparted elementary education only. As would be seen from the table, only 35 out of a total of 3693 pupils were studying in middle classes. In other words, the incidence of a Depressed class pupil studying higher than the primary classes was less than one percent and it was nil in so far as high school education was concerned.

No reference to education of the Depressed classes in other presidencies and provinces under British dominion is available. It is just possible that a few Depressed class pupils could be studying in other parts of the country as a result of the impact of the social reform movements. The Departments of Public Instruction had not laid down any specific policy for the promotion of education among the Depressed classes by 1881-82.
