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The problem of the Depressed Classes has in recent times reappeared as an embarrassing issue of Indian politics. Years ago I set out to work on the subject on a limited scale in course of preparation of a dissertation for my M.Phil. degree. My initial interest in the subject was further stimulated when the work was subsequently published. Then I got a Fellowship in the Department of History, University of North Bengal, which I must gratefully acknowledge here had enabled me to follow up investigation on the subject on a wider perspective covering the three eventful decades ending with the transfer of power to Indian hands. The period had witnessed our frequent experiments with the system of responsible government which was altogether unknown to the people of the colonies. It was a journey of such strange vicissitudes that one often finds it really difficult to have a total view of the picture. I had undertaken my work under the supervision of Dr. Mihir Mohan Mukherjee, Reader in History, University of North Bengal. He helped me a lot while I was trying to piece together the materials of history. His valuable advice has enabled me to understand the curious mechanism of British politics that led to the legitimisation of caste identity and the consequent politicisation of caste conflict.

The purpose of this work is to bring out an analysis of the British government's attitude to the Backward/Depressed Classes during the period 1919-47. It also seeks to examine the changing policy of 'reservation' and to relate in the process factors
responsible for electoral innovation through many Constitutional Reforms introduced by the Raj. The problem of the erstwhile Depressed Classes now mostly categorised as Scheduled Castes is a living issue of Indian politics. A large number of scholarly literature have already made an intensive study of the problem primarily as a subject of Political Science and Sociology. In the present work, however, I have tried to trace the root of the problem from a historical point of view. My mission is to analyse the trend of social-political forces that contributed to the growing awareness of a separate identity of the Depressed Classes on the basis of which they built up their claims for separate electorate. Attempts have been made to explain the role of the colonial rulers who are usually believed to have deliberately fomented such agitation with a view to retain their imperium under conditions of stress arising out of the nation's struggle for freedom against imperialism. The discussion has been designed to cover a period which started with the official recognition that the Depressed Classes deserved some special measures of representation in the Legislature (1919) and ended with the transfer of power (1947) when the demands of Scheduled Castes were to a large extent met not by granting them separate electorate but by making them partners in the government and co-sharers of power in a democracy. But although 1919 has been chosen as the convenient dateline to start with the discussion necessary gleanings into the course of events of the past period has also been made to complete the whole range of perception. The chapters of the book has been arranged in a
manner that one may delineate each of the transitional phase of the movement and they have been further linked up with one another for bringing out a convincing and comprehensive account of the process of electoral experiments. A sort of flyleaf has been added with each of the core chapters of the work. They contain a synopsis of the basic trends of the period and thus provide necessary cue to the subject in the forthcoming chapter.

The problem of the Depressed Classes was an all-India phenomenon. There were also variations in the intensity of the problem according to the variety of custom, usage and local situations of a province. Naturally, therefore, one has to plan the model of his analysis covering the whole subcontinent within the range of his investigation limited to certain focal areas. I have, therefore, laid stress on collection of materials which although specifically relevant for certain areas are equally essential for working out a hypothesis no less relevant for the entire subcontinent. This is the reason why in the present work there are frequent references to Bengal, Maharashtra and Madras while they are so few about other provinces in India. The vast area comprising the native states for example, has not been taken into consideration. Surely they had the similar problem no less distressing than others. But they were parts outside British India and hence not to be included in the spectrum of the present project.

As for source materials I have depended mostly on official
publications. The large number of excerpts taken from various caste literature, pamphlets, tracts and arranged in the text of Sekhar Bandyopadhyay ( *Caste, Politics and the Raj: Bengal 1872-1937*, Calcutta, 1990) helped me a lot in understanding the various dimensions of the caste problem in Bengal. Incidentally I may mention here that while giving an account of the various caste associations I had to often refer to a large number of castes a few of which being a little unfamiliar have been only printed in italics while the more common among them have been printed in the conventional characters. As for spelling the caste names I have followed the pattern given in the recognised texts.

The highlight zones of discussion in the present project have been clearly specified at the beginning of each chapter. But this apart I have also tried to describe in brief the important stages of constitutional progress in this country. A meaningful study of the various compulsions that led to frequent changes in the British attitude towards the Depressed Classes cannot possibly avoid the prodigious task of viewing the successive stages of historical development. I have, therefore, given a detailed narration of events with a proper documentation wherever they are found necessary. The chapter on Conclusion examines the implications of the colonial policy as well as an assessment of the role played by the Congress, Gandhi and the separatist Scheduled Caste leaders in bringing about respectable solution of a problem that plagued the country for about the past thirty years before India has achieved her independence.
Much kindness has come my way while preparing this thesis. My special thanks are due to Dr. Barun Dey with whom I had some useful discussions on caste and communal politics of India. My father Dr. Ladli Mohon Raychaudhury, Director, State Archives, West Bengal also helped me in many ways. To him I owe my first interest and training in history. I had collected materials from various libraries and repositories of official documents viz. National Archives, Nehru Memorial and Museum Library both at New Delhi, State Archives of West Bengal, West Bengal Secretariat Library, National Library and the Central Library of Calcutta University including the library of North Bengal University. I am grateful to the members of staff of these organisations. Ajoy, my husband has motivated a lethargic researcher like me into action. Abhipsito, my son had kept me cheerful during the period of sustained labour. His pranks and frolics are a constant source of inspiration for me.
ABBREVIATIONS

BPSA. Background Papers of the Seminar on Ambedkar and His Mission, Published by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Birth Centenary Celebration and All-India Buddhist Conference, Calcutta, 1990.

CWM. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

G.B. Government of Bengal.

G.I. Government of India.

HN. Harijan (Garland publication), New York.

IAR. The Indian Annual Register.

IFC. The Indian Franchise Committee.

IRTC. The Indian Round Table Conference.

R.Sgh.C. Indian Constitutional Reforms: Reports on the Southborough Committee and Government of India's Despatches on them.


CHAPTER I

Introduction: Genesis of the Policy of Reservation.

A social scientist eager to know the mechanism resulting in the emergence of political societies in India has to often start with an investigation into the roots of social organization of Hinduism. Caste may be described as the foundation of the Indian social fabric, at any rate as far as Hindu society is concerned. The term 'caste' has been used to describe ranked groups within rigid systems of social stratification and when defined in terms of its Hindu attributes and rationale is unique to India. A.L. Kroeber defined caste as "an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank of social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions". The caste system, then can be said to have been based on the idea of a society composed of birth-ascribed hierarchically ordered, and culturally distinct social groups. The hierarchy entails differential evaluation, differential rewards and differential association. Since caste system ranks people by birth-ascribed group membership rather than by individual attributes, individual mobility is by definition impossible in the system. Since again the caste hierarchy implies a system of differential evaluation it means in effect a system of institutionalized inequality. Underlying hierarchical interaction between castes is the existence of what has been termed 'status summation'. The multiple roles played by individual members of a caste are equivalent in the status they confer. Thus a person of high ritual status tends also to be of high
economic, political and social status. These statuses tend to coalesce and people are thus enabled as well as enjoined to interact with members of other castes in a consistent and hierarchical manner. Part of the dynamics of caste organization including the occasional tensions arising out of the inflexible caste model did often occur when there had been attempts for rectification of status incongruities. The caste system indicating a scale of social and organizational status of human beings and earmarking a man's position in the said scale at the moment of his birth had therefore, rendered the entire model of Hindu social organization as totally irrational if not unwholesome too. All Hindu Dharma Shastras take caste for granted. All Puranas assume the existence of caste and look upon it as a permanent order of society.

However it is common knowledge that the Hindu concept of Jati and Varna although possibly relevant in the context of ancient times does not fit at all with the changing condition of a dynamic society. Recent sociological work on caste has made it clear that the institution has never resulted in as closed and as immobile units as the jatis were usually thought to be, and there had been always inter-caste mobility (though small in number) arising out of such factors like land-surplus and western education including improved means of communications during the pre-colonial and colonial periods respectively. (3) But instances of such mobility being mostly rare, ranking of the Hindu society into four varnas usually furnished Brahminical orthodoxy with the bedrock on which it erected the elaborate caste structure. One essential feature of this institution
is the concept of "purity and pollution". In Hindustan proper, castes can be divided into five groups; first, the twice-born caste; second, those castes at whose hands the twice-born can take *pakka* food; third, those castes at whose hands the twice-born cannot accept any kind of food but may take water; fourth, castes that are not untouchable yet are such that water from them cannot be used by the twice-born; last come all those castes whose touch defiles not only the twice-born but any orthodox Hindu. (4)

The idea of defilement through touch of the human body, its proximity or even by touch of its shadow is associated with the concept of untouchability which has no parallel in the history of the civilised world. The so-called untouchables belong to the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy. Popularly known under various nomenclatures - *Achhuts, Panchammas, Atishudras, Avarnas and Antyajas* these outcaste people do not constitute a homogeneous or well-knit social group; they are truly speaking a conglomeration of heterogeneous castes, belonging to various regional, linguistic social, cultural and occupational affinities. Nevertheless, throughout history they remained subject to certain common social disabilities and degradations which for various reasons, assumed political significance of considerable magnitude most specifically in the Gandhian era of Indian politics.

Most of the Hindu shastras replete with high-sounding rhetorics provided a moral justification for such caste-based discriminations. The *Bhagavadgita* seeks to uphold such discriminations through one of
Lord Krishna's own exhortation—*chaturvarnam maya sristam guna karma bibhajasas* (The four-fold Order was created by Me on the basis of quality and action). The dictum may mean that the caste of an individual is linked to his *karma* (quality and action) instead of the accident of his birth. Here *Bhagavadgita* no doubt marks an important change in attitude at the philosophical level. But in actual practice the philosophy of caste takes the sting off the institution (of caste) and skilfully stereotypes it. As a matter of fact the *karma* judged in its peculiar Hindu esoteric context also means the deeds of an individual in his *purva* and *para janma* (life both before and after the present one) taken together. Such a hypothesis that seeks to justify and rationalise man-made social imbalance in the light of an individual's *karmaphal* marks the height of hypocrisy which abounds the holy texts of Hinduism.

One important outcome of this ritual ranking of castes has been to create deep-rooted vested interests in this system and to enable people belonging to the so-called higher castes to exploit men of the lower castes through the institutional framework of social organization. However, there is nothing unusual about this phenomenon. Ruling classes everywhere have tried to build a closed society of privilege through all sorts of devices and aristocracy has generally joined hands with the clergy in the process. What is, however, very peculiar about India is that as caste conditioned and controlled every aspect of an individual's life, it led to the creation of a society in which there was no 'rank disequilibrium' in the sense that for long it had hardly generated a sense of inequality particularly among those
who were its victims. "The real triumph of the caste system lies not in upholding the supremacy of the Brahmin, but in conditioning the consciousness of the lower castes in accepting their inferior status in the ritual hierarchy as a part of the natural order of things". This explains why Ekalavya, a tribal boy of *Mahabharata* had calmly surrendered to a demand for his forefinger made by his vainglorious Brahmin Guru - Dronacharya to whom he had little reasons to feel indebted. This also explains why in ancient times perhaps no one among the so-called low caste people came to challenge Kautilya when he prescribed differential rates of interests for debts according as they may be accepted by people belonging to different castes. In the same manner nobody came to challenge the great Hindu law giver's *bidhan* (commandment) which enjoined "...A king shall never sentence a Brahmin though convicted of all possible crimes but may banish him with all his property secure and his body unhurt. No greater crime is known on the earth than the slaying of a Brahmin and the king, therefore, must not even form in his mind an idea of killing a priest". Further there had been another *bidhan* to the effect that if a *shudra* mentions the name and class of the twice-born with contumely, an iron nail, ten figures long shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth and here again such a savage code remained unchallenged for a long time.

Coming to the more recent times when India was ruled by the colonial masters there was no indication of any improvement of the situation and status of this luckless lot belonging to the so-called low caste of the Hindu society. Socially they remained segregated from the
caste Hindus. They lived in the outskirts of the villages; and in certain parts of South India, such as in Madras and Malabar they were not allowed to come near a Hindu temple. In most cases the Brahmins would not function as priests in their ceremonies, in some cases their ceremonies were performed by their own caste-men and in others by the so-called inferior Brahmins. They were not allowed to reside or even travel along the streets of certain parts of the towns and villages of Southern India. In Cochin, the roads in close proximity to the temples and palace were a no-entry zone for them and they had no right to seek redress of such discrimination. Under the rule of the Peshwas, in the Maratha territories, the Mahars, the most numerous untouchable caste of Maharashtra to which belonged Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, had to carry an earthen pot, hung from their neck, in which they were to spit lest the excretion on the streets may pollute a high caste Hindu. In Mysore State, the women of certain lower castes were not permitted to cover their bosoms and even after being granted the permission for the same under a Royal Proclamation they could not be allowed to imitate the dress and hair styles of higher castes. The untouchables were also subjected to numerous restrictions in such matters as food, dress, ornaments and dwelling condition. Good food, good dresses including gold ornaments and dwelling in good houses were all forbidden to them. The Shanars of South India, although a very wealthy class among the untouchables, have had no right to build two-storeyed houses, wear gold ornaments and use umbrellas even during the months of hot or rainy season of the year.

In the field of education, the benefits of receiving liberal
education although made available to all, were denied to people belonging to the so-called lower castes. This state of affairs continued even during the period following Wood's historic Despatch of 1854. The low caste students could not be admitted in the common schools because the caste Hindus felt that the presence of such boys in the schools would pollute the children of their own caste. I.A. Baines noted that the boycotting of the Depressed Class boys in the schools was almost universal. In 1915, in Bombay Presidency, the Mahar and other Depressed Class boys were not allowed to enter the school rooms and were accommodated outside the class room on the verandah. The doors of the common schools were in the same manner kept closed to the Chamars because the caste Hindu teachers and pupils would not allow the low caste boys to sit in the class rooms together with the high caste children. In Bengal which was relatively free from caste prejudices, the condition of these boys although a little better was by no means very enviable. Here they were not allowed to stay together with the caste Hindu boys in the same hostel and had to live elsewhere separately (as in Banibhaban mess at 10 Simla Street, Calcutta) under the superintendence of one high caste man who was seldom sympathetic to the residents of the boarding house. The caste bias of the Hindu gentoo was most shamefully demonstrated also at the time when the Hindu College, the forerunner of Presidency College, the most advanced centre of learning in Bengal came to be founded in 1817. That college, as reported by F.J. Mouat, Secretary to the Council of Education, Government of Bengal, was "designed as a school for conveying English learning to Hindoos of the higher classes exclusively". Later when for reasons of financial constraints there was a proposal for some organic changes in the Hindu College the
native managers of the institution declined to accept the proposal lest in that case the principle of exclusive admission is dropped for ever. It was then argued that the caste Hindu guardians may not allow their children to sit "on the same benches with children of very low caste or social position". For a long time therefore, the standard of educational attainments of such low caste people continued to remain at a very low level. According to the Census of 1931, there were only 19 literates in every one thousand of their population as against 84 literates in every one thousand of the Hindu population and 95 literates among the same number of total population of the country.

Of course it is true that since the twenties of the present century the provincial governments everywhere went on a special drive for promotion of education among the children of the Depressed Classes. Efforts were made to make all publicly managed schools open for admission of students of every description irrespective of their caste. Special schools and hostels were also opened for the education of the children of the Depressed Classes and provision made for remission of fees and grant of scholarships to such pupils. As a result of such special measures, there was some noticeable growth of education among the Depressed Classes and particularly in areas like Bengal, Punjab and U.P. there was a spectacular increase in the admission of the Depressed Class pupils to the common schools.

But all said the state of education among the Depressed Classes remained as much dismal as had been quoted in the census Report of 1931.

The economic condition of the low caste people was also very
deplorable. According to the norms of the traditional society they were supposed to do all kinds of work which involve great physical labour including most other jobs which the high caste people would hate to perform. Besides cultivation, they performed some so-called unclean jobs like scavenging, sweeping, carrying night-soils and burning the dead-bodies (as in the case of dhanger, methar and dom). Some of them also engaged themselves in skinning the dead cattle and some minor handicrafts (in case of the chamor), weaving (in case of the Kori caste of U.P. and Bihar) and toddy-tapping (in case of the Pasi caste of Northern and parts of Southern India). Social custom deprived them of the right to seek a higher social status by taking to occupations other than the hereditary ones. Naturally therefore, the Depressed Classes, as a result of all such restrictions imposed on them existed only like a vast labour force without any right to enforce their bargaining power as labourers. They cultivated the soil but could not own the land. They performed the menials' job including those of house servants in the families of the high caste people, but could not earn proper wage for their services. It is no wonder then that they always remained "badly nourished, clad in the vilest rags, eaten up with leprosy or other horrible diseases, huddled like pigs, untaught, uncared for and unpitied". (20)

During the post-Reform Act of 1919 few among the Depressed Classes found opportunities to be placed in government services. But their number was very negligible. However the Depressed Class people had to fight hard for obtaining even such minor concessions from the government. It was often argued that the educational backwardness
of such people would mainly account for the very small number of their appointments in the government services. This may be a good enough point for debate. But educated spokesmen of the Depressed Classes attributed this to the caste prejudices of the recruiting authorities who came mostly from the caste Hindus. In 1921 an unstarred Council question was put to Sir Henry Wheeler, the Hon'ble Member in charge of Appointment Department of the government of Bengal in which Babu Bhismadev Das, Hon'ble Member gave vent to the sense of frustration of the young graduate and under-graduate namasudra candidates of Bengal who have failed to secure suitable employment under the government. The reply of the Minister appeared to be very significant. He confessed that some thirty-five qualified namasudra candidates had sought employment in the various cadres of government service including Civil Service, Police Sub-inspectorship and Sub-registrarship. But only one of them secured an appointment of a Sub-registrarship in 1918. The Hon'ble Minister's answer is a revelation in the sense that it shows that at least for the Depressed Class people merit was not always a criterion for recruitment. As a matter of fact the caste prejudices of people close to the official circle had forestalled the appointment of the so-called low caste people also in other departments of the government - Central and Provincial. This is the reason why no definite policy for recruitment of the members of important Hindu castes other than those usually employed in government offices could be formulated even when a Resolution to that effect was taken in February 1907 by the government of the newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Six years later, the government made a frank declaration of its intention
when in the Imperial Legislative Council it was openly avowed that "any reservation of such work for them to the exclusion of others is scarcely practicable". It may be noted here that although the reservation policy could not yet be formulated the members of the Depressed Classes were allowed to enjoy some special facilities so that they may be easily accommodated in the government services at least in the province of Bengal. But this being an ex-gratia measure could very little improve the employment situation so far as the Depressed Classes of Bengal were concerned. Curiously enough, ever since 1920, the government of Bengal had accepted the principle of communal representation in the services and had, therefore, set apart one-third of total vacancies in the provincial services for the Muslims. But application of the same principle for the benefit of the Depressed Classes "was not considered to be 'safe' owing to the dearth of qualified candidates". Again in 1922, the government issued a general order which would reserve a certain quota in the total number of government services that had to be filled up either by the Anglo-Indians or the members of the Depressed Classes. But here too the concession as regards reservation appeared to be rather elusive than real. Grouped "as they were with the Anglo-Indians, the 'depressed classes' could not compete with them on equal terms".

Judged in all respects, therefore, the condition of the so-called low caste people including most notably the untouchables appear to have remained very deplorable during the past three thousand years when the caste system provided the basic scheme of social organization of India. Of course it is true that during the colonial period when India came to be gradually acquainted with the ideals of a
western model of liberal and democratic forms of government, the caste-based model of social institution containing so large an element of inequality and discrimination was challenged by the more advanced and enlightened section of the Indian society. But they have failed to bring about a substantial change in the social psychology of the people who being still caught in the hallowed tradition of caste found it difficult to overcome the prejudices centuries old. As a matter of fact since Indian social life is mainly articulated through caste; any organization or association which is formed to further social interests tends to be coloured by caste. Even now it serves as a cementing factor for group formation, for within a caste-oriented frame of society, individual behaviour is largely regulated in terms of the conventional norms of the caste in which an individual is born. "His primary loyalties are to his kin and caste members at the local level. Even if he migrates to urban centres, it is essentially along caste lines; if he turns factory worker, he returns to his village for traditional, ceremonial occasions and finally after retirement". This is the reason why the so-called higher castes are practically allowed to dominate over low castes especially in the rural community till today. In a recent study of Jannsar Bawar by R.N. Saksena; it was found that in spite of the very earnest desire of the government to remove the social and economic handicaps of the koltas, who form the Depressed Class and provide free labour to their landlords by tradition, it has not been possible to remove their disabilities since the koltas themselves chose to remain tied to their landlords out of their own blind regard for the tradition. Old prejudices seldom die away very easily and in a traditional society they have a
lingering life. This role of caste is inevitable since, in the absence of well-developed interest-groups and voluntary associations, caste has filled an important gap in the life of the people.

II

One of the fundamental reasons why progress in Indian society had remained stunted for long is the nation's inability to improve the general standard of the so-called low caste people of the land and to allow them adequate opportunities for getting absorbed in the mainstream of Indian society. The point was even clearly understood by the colonial masters who believed that the problem of Indian situation should be judged in the context of "the outstanding fact that the average Indian of the lower class is remarkably poor and helpless - poor and helpless to a degree to which Europe can afford little parallel. There is thus an infinitely large field for work, both voluntary and official, in raising the condition of the lower class population; in educating them up to improved ideas of sanitation; and in freeing them from degrading social customs". It may be noted here that the Depressed Classes constitute a sizeable portion of the Indian population. According to the Census of 1931, their population was 50,195,770, constituting 21% of the Hindu population and 14% of the total population of India. Yet so vast a segment of population had been kept segregated. In the circumstances it is quite natural that the "rhetoric of nationalism and the idiom of democracy were meaningless in a society which rested on the institution of caste, and they were invoked merely to provide a facade for the domination of the 'superior' over the 'inferior'
The imperialist historians had for a long time harped on the essentially divisive element of the political society in India. Sir Herbert Risley who had already gathered vast experience as the principal man of the Census Survey of 1901 in India, launched a powerful attack upon the notion of territorial representation advocated by John Morley, the Secretary of State for India. Because of the structure of society in India, he argued, representative councils would result in the domination of the superior over the inferior castes. However, such a distortion would not come about if each of the social units, be it a community or a religious group, was given separate representation in the legislative councils set up under the new constitution. "Risley in effect argued that since India was a political society different in structure from the political societies of the West, only a constitution which recognised this difference could bring into existence a creative political community in the country".

The nationalist historians viewed the interpretation of the civilian scholars like Risley with suspicion. They thought that the model was conveniently designed to undercut the demands voiced by the nationalists. But then it cannot be denied that the low caste people themselves also felt an urge for being treated as equals to others in the society. This change in attitude was the result of a variety of reasons, viz contact with the West, social regenerative movement within the subcontinent itself and quest for power. These factors operating sometimes singly and sometimes jointly have brought about a great change in the society.
The establishment of British rule in India had opened prospects for a distinct improvement in the status of the low caste people of the country. Various forces and agencies, all emanating from the Western culture, worked for their elevation during the British rule. The British government introduced equality before law which at least theoretically ensured social justice to the low caste people. The Christian missionaries coming from the West, worked for their welfare. The British rule had thus initiated the process of westernization which cut down the social prejudices and taboos. Finally, the socio-religious reform movements of the nineteenth century, an outcome of the Western impact, awakened the enlightened Indians to the moral responsibility of improving the lot of the low caste people.

The impact of the West on the cultural and social areas of the colonies was first felt when the Christian missionaries took up the programme of social reform among the natives of India. The missionaries took the earliest initiative for the spread of education among the low caste people and in the process they had brought opportunities to these people to become aware of the fundamental equality of human beings, a lesson hitherto almost unknown in India. It is true that notwithstanding their immense services for the uplift of the low caste people the missionaries could not bring about any substantial change in the traditional society. This is because the Company's government was unwilling to jeopardise its revenue-earning business prospects by trying to hurt the deep-rooted religious sentiments of the people however much they might appear to be inhuman or undemocratic to them. But then the propaganda of the Christian
missionaries and the rationalistic and liberal ideas coming through contact with them had undoubtedly stimulated humanitarian concern for the welfare of the Depressed Classes. Moreover such people themselves began to realise that the sanction of untouchability "which for so long had justified their miserable condition was false, and that it was not held by the missionaries or the British Government". Consequently there was an awakening among them which led them to agitate for their reclamation such as were seen among the Mahars of Bombay, Thiyyas of Malabar, and Bhokkaligas of Mysore. It was mainly because of the work of the missionaries that the Depressed Classes of Madras Presidency became aware of their social and political rights and realised the inequality of their economic as well as ritual status.

Next to the Christian missionaries mention may be made of the contributions of the great social-religious reformers of the country who felt the urgent need of reorienting the traditional society according to the needs and aspirations of an enlightened generation. During the colonial period the socio-religious movement began with Raja Rammohun Roy who aimed at reforming the Hindu society by clearing many of its institutional abuses including also the abuse of caste and untouchability. The Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Theosophical Society, the Arya Samaj and other reform associations condemned untouchability and worked for the uplift of Depressed Classes. Some of these social reformers like Jotirao Phule (1827-1890), Vithal Ramji Shinde (1873 - 1944), Chhatrapati Shahu (1874 - 1922), Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil (1887-1959), and most notable
of all Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) including men like Sasipada Bandyopadhyay of Bengal had made significant contributions towards mobilizing the non-Brahmin mass for their educational and political developments. They had tried to bring a total transformation of their status through varied means viz, education, legal enforcement, acquiring political power and of course also enlightening the downtrodden masses for making them aware of their rights by using the means of agitation.

Simultaneously with the evangelic zeal of the missionaries and the social-reform movement within the Hindu society itself the British government also helped to quicken the pace of transformation by introducing in India the democratic culture of the West. The British administration and the personnel in charge of it could not remain cut off from the democratic and humanitarian movements of contemporary Europe. As early as 1833, the Charter Act passed by the British Parliament proclaimed the principle of equality of treatment to the natives of India in the matter of appointments to the public services. The same principle was reiterated in a wider sense in the Royal Proclamation of 1858 which promised the "equal and impartial protection of law" and equality of opportunities for all in the matter of recruitment to public services. These principles readily counteracted the injustice and discrimination inherent in the hierarchical nature of Hindu society.

A process of change had therefore, already set in with the coming of the British. Inevitably, the colonial rule had released certain
forces that came to question the rationale of the hierarchical organization of a traditional society. The penetration of the British administration into the interior, the introduction of British law and the establishment of law courts based on the British sense of justice and equality - all taken together had corroded the power base that provided sustenance to the caste-oriented stratification of the traditional native society. "The system of production and exchange that arose in the Hindu society on the basis of family occupations" and which "lasted because of the bonds of cooperation it provided" was seemingly swept away before the onslaught of the market economy that gradually came into existence under the colonial rule.

Customary production relationship was replaced by contract and as a result caste was detached from the economic system. "Land became a marketable commodity and career was thrown open to talent. Frequent transfer of landed rights as well as new opportunities in trade led to greater diffusion of wealth across caste lines. The element of competition was thus introduced in a society that was previously non-competitive". The net result of all these was a mighty transformation of the indigenous society so much so that at least in the nineteenth century Bengal many individuals and associations had started believing that caste system would wither away automatically.

The logic that the British rule had played a progressive role in India was also clearly understood by Karl Marx. England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society. But then by laying the material foundations of Western society in India (through use of electric telegraph, railroads, creation of private property in land
and of course also by educating the people) it had also stimulated the desire and efforts indispensable to social advance. Marx was very categorical about the role played by modern industry in India which he thought "will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress". Therefore, the raj did indeed undermine the "self-sufficient inertia" of village and caste and release "the desires and efforts indispensable to social advance".

However, the desire to achieve social advance also means the desire to accumulate power, power to manipulate the levers of administration through capture of position in the Council House. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the constitutional reforms of the government had opened the prospects of wider Indian participation in the seats of government. The system of franchise and quota in the Council Houses had brought opportunities for obtaining seats in the Legislature and this can be achieved through organisational manoeuvres and skilful handling of the electoral machinery. The situation coupled with such factors like greater occupational mobility and spread of education during the colonial period had increased the status aspiration of the so-called low caste people who now felt the need of building some horizontal solidarity among them so that they may more effectively wage their battle for more power and patronage in this new competitive world. However, a section of the Cambridge historians have failed to see a desire for social advance operating as a basic impulse for building up political or semi-political organizations founded on horizontal solidarity. In
the pursuit of power, as some of them would like to believe, power was wanted for its own sake and at any rate there was seldom any motivation for use of power to change society. "Consequently political power existed as a composite variety of elements, many of which might possess no inherent social or economic relationship to one another."(42)

Looked at from these basic realities of Indian situations most of such organizational solidarities have been described to be more like a 'ramshackle coalition' formed in a bid to capture power, office and place rather than use of power for a thorough social change.(43)

Not all contemporary thinking on the caste/national movement was, however, marked by the crudeness and simplistic analysis which characterized the interpretation put forward by a school of historians in Cambridge. It is true that the lower caste movements being mostly led by the caste elites often got lost in the whirlpool of institutional politics operating within the competition-collaboration syndrome and the masses boiling with a desire for 'ethnic freedom' might feel little affinity with a movement which largely relied on the tactics of electoral bargains for obtaining larger concessions and patronage through a loyalist political strategy. It is also true that a caste movement could not become powerful so long as there was not a convergence of the two levels of consciousness: the aspirations of the elites and the grievances of the masses. It is often argued that the so-called horizontal expansion did not take place simply because in most cases the supposed convergence did not occur and the membership of these associations remained limited only to the educated members of the caste. Thus a caste association may not also always
represent the ideas and aspirations of an entire community. But all said it is also true that within an occupational jati "its members could and did work out, at least in certain cases, a broader group-solidarity or forged a greater community-consciousness while confronting the outer world". Thus caste associations often linking the more advanced sections of similar jatis undertook to upgrade the position of the caste in the social hierarchy. They pressed for the extension of the privileges and rights by adopting the attributes and emulating the behaviour of higher castes and by turning to the state for recognition of their claims.

In the realm of politics, caste in order to acquire newer potentials for bargain had responded through three different types of political mobilization, each suggestive of different phases of political development: vertical, horizontal and differential. The Rudolphs have perhaps chosen to put maximum emphasis on horizontal mobilization which according to them illustrates most clearly as to how the cultural and structural transformation of a traditional institution contributes to political modernization and democracy. Such mobilization which manifests usually in numerous caste associations are in the nature of "paracommunities that enable members of castes to pursue social mobility, political power and economic advantage". The caste associations enabled middle and lower castes to establish and win social esteem, first from the state, then from the macrosociety and last and most slowly from the microsociety of village and locality. When the caste associations turned to the state their initial claims were aimed at raising caste status in terms of
the values and structure of the caste order. But as liberal and democratic ideas penetrated to a wider section of the population the aims of the caste associations began to shift from sacred to secular goals. Instead of demanding entry into temples, prestigious caste names, and the so-called honourable occupations and histories in the Census, the associations began to demand access into the corridors of power through political representation. For, institutional changes in the structure of politics have already demarcated newer areas of influence which did not always correspond to rank or position in a caste hierarchy. Political power obtained through exercise of franchisal right may permit entry into these new areas of influence. The huge number of low caste men now armed with the right to vote in the election process had a natural advantage in competitive democratic politics and once such an exercise is successful they may gain influence, access and power in state and society. With such new acquisition at their command, they can also change in their favour the allocation of resources, privileges and honour. Caste associations, therefore, attempted to have their members nominated for elective office, working through existing parties or forming their own; to maximize caste representation and influence in governing bodies and to use ministerial, legislative and administrative channels to press for action on caste welfare programme. \(^{(49)}\)

It may appear strange that the horizontal solidarity was built along lines not of class but caste. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has given answer to the riddle. "But that they thought of being organized in terms of caste rather than class was purely because, in their
mental world, caste was still the most valid and perhaps the only real broad social category which they could easily refer to for social mobilization.... The colonial policies", Bandyopadhyay further argues "also reinforced this structural pluralism in Indian society by distributing patronage on the basis of the caste status of individuals, who were thus compelled, by the logic of the politics of numbers, to stay within that group for social and political identity in institutional life". Here comes, therefore, yet another field of scholarly investigation - the nature of colonial inducement, which may be helpful for a clear understanding of the policy of reservation.

The rationale of the principle of reservation has to be understood in the context of colonial inducement at two levels. First, by a skilful application of the method of statistical investigation the colonial government had generated a sense of separate identity among wide groups of Indian population who were gradually persuaded to believe that they must not be hamstrung and tied with the vast sector of Indian people whose interest were altogether different from theirs. Such a hypothesis, then led to the germination of the ideology of separate electorate of which the practical application was made even unasked, by the British government when large-scale constitutional reforms were granted at the opening of the present century. The demand for reservation was, therefore, a natural sequel to official concessions being already made for separate electorate and special constituencies.
That the raj itself was responsible for generating a sense of separate identity among the various segments of Indian population can be well understood if one tries to trace the history of census-based colonial sociology of India. The British policy of treating the Indian society as a pluralistic one was clearly revealed when the first census operation of the present century was taken by the then Census Commissioner Herbert Risley in 1901. In this project Risley's endeavours were not merely confined to the collection of descriptive and quantitative information alone. On this occasion he actually tried to classify each caste according to its place in Hindu society, both in terms of local hierarchy and more significantly, their varna affiliation. This he did for "presenting an intelligible picture of the social grouping of that large proportion of the people of India which is organised admittedly or tacitly, on the basis of caste. In the Census of 1911, the population that had been so far classified as Hindu was divided into three distinct categories namely, Hindus, Animists, Tribals and the Depressed Classes or "Untouchables." It may be noted here that on the eve of this census the colonial government had made the first attempt to develop a separate political identity among the lower castes, later known as the Depressed Classes in official parlance. The census model of classification of Indian population was continued subsequently, even though it was resented by some Hindus who feared that it would react unfavourably on their political importance.

Thus the separate enumeration of the Depressed Classes which could not be undertaken in 1911 owing to public protest, was secretly accomplished in 1917, when the Bengal government prepared such a list that included twenty-one "untouchable Hindu and Animist castes or
Tribes", six "Aboriginal and Hill Tribes" and four "Criminal Tribes" - thirty-one social groups in all. The practice was continued also in 1921 and 1931. It should be noted here that though the term Depressed Classes was originally intended to include the Hindu untouchable castes, sometimes the census authorities included in it the names of some castes who were never considered as such. It is not unlikely that such inclusions were made deliberately as a political move to swell the population of the Depressed Classes and reduce the Hindu population. At any rate in the province of Bengal at least 'some respectable castes' like the Sonarbenia and Saha were officially declared as constituents of Depressed Classes by the census officers and also by the Southborough Franchise Committee. Thus as noted by H.N. Brailsford, a British observer, "by classifying Indians according to creed in every conceivable relationship of public life", the British government had very effectively "helped to make them abnormally conscious of their differences".

If the census reports appear to be a thin end of the wedge, the Indian Councils Act, 1909 had caused further estrangement in the society. The Morley-Minto Reform proposals had submitted a novel scheme of election under which the constituencies were divided into a large number of units comprising Muslims, Landlords, Muslim landlords, Chambers of Commerce, Universities etc. The framers of the Reforms were definite that the system of 'general electorates' and 'territorial representation' was not suitable for India and that 'Communal representation' and a system of election based on classes and interests was the only practical and just method for filling seats in the Central
as well as the Provincial Councils. However, it may be also noted here that the representatives came from so many divergent interest groups including classes and communities, that it was difficult for them to work as a team and to forge a common front against the government in the Councils. But this was precisely what the colonial government wanted to achieve. Representation was given to classes and interests with a motive which impelled the colonial ethnographer-administrators to initiate census investigation almost on similar lines and which may result in splitting the country into many divisions and segments.

The British policy of communal representation which was based on the assumption that Indian society was essentially a congeries of widely separated classes, races and communities with divergences of interest and hereditary sentiment was further reflected in the reform proposal of Montagu and Chelmsford. In their report on constitutional reforms, they emphasised the British responsibility for providing representation and if necessary, protection to the Depressed Classes:

"We intend to make the best arrangements that we can for their representation, in order that they too may ultimately learn the lesson of self-protection. But if it is found that their interests suffer and that they do not share in the general progress, we must retain the means in our own hands of helping them". (56)

But all said, the joint authors of the reform proposal did not provide for any particular method of representation for the Depressed Classes, even though they recommended communal representation in case of Muhammadans, Sikhs and the Non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency.
The Franchise Committee which was appointed in 1918 under the chairmanship of Lord Southborough to devise franchise and frame constituencies recommended the expedient of nomination for the representation of the Depressed Classes, as they did not find it possible to provide an electorate on any satisfactory system of franchise. This committee recommended only seven seats for the Depressed Classes to be filled up by nomination out of a total number of 791 seats in all the provincial Legislative Councils. Such a recommendation, could however, little satisfy the members of the Depressed Classes. Before the Southborough Committee, B.R. Ambedkar, therefore, made an elaborate and forceful plea for the adequate communal representation of the Depressed Classes. He argued that the concepts of freedom and self-determination should be applied not only in the case of international relations but also in the case of class relations within a nation, 'because discord does not exist between nations alone, but also... between classes from within a nation', and that the moral evils, such as dwarfing or stunting of the Indian race, which was attributed to the British rule by the nationalists could be more fittingly voiced by the untouchables to the disgrace of the Brahmin oligarchy. He subscribed to the colonial outlook that territorial constituencies of the Western democratic type were not applicable to the pluralistic society of India, specially because the social divisions of India constituted an 'obstacle in the path of realising an harmonious political life'. He, therefore, recommended plural constituencies with provision for reservation of seats and communal representation. For the purpose of communal representation he divided the Hindu society into three classes - Brahmins, Non-Brahmins and Untouchables. However Ambedkar's plea for electoral
reservation was never considered to be just enough for obtaining social equality and there had been, therefore, always a persistent demand for reservation of seats in the educational institutions including the services of the state.

Although the Government of India Act passed in December 1919 made no provision for the representation of the Depressed Classes in joint or separate electorates there were indications that the government remained always very sympathetic to them so far as their other demands were concerned. This is because the colonial government had already established the ideology of differentiation which motivated it to underpin a central dichotomy between the privileged higher castes at the one end and the depressed lower castes at the other. Then in order to neutralise the social tension likely to arise out of this central dichotomy of the traditional society the colonial government had evolved a policy of 'protective discrimination' by which the government sought to grant special favour in matters of education, employment and constitutional rights, first to the Muslims and then to the Depressed Classes later called the 'Scheduled castes'. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has explained the situations that led to the application of the device of protective discrimination "particularly when the high caste Hindu bhadralok began to question the legitimacy of the raj at the turn of the century. In order to contain the intensifying anti-imperialist agitation, the British first tried to rally the Muslims and then with equal consistency sought to mobilize the Hindu 'depressed classes' in support of their rule". Once again Sekhar Bandyopadhyay feels that the demand for reservation is at one end a manifestation of "the weak
response of certain lower castes to the nationalist movement" and at another end is also the political idiom of a "new social category called the 'depressed classes' constructed by the sociological discourse and subsequently politicised by the policy of protective discrimination". If his views sound a little harsh Gail Omvedt's assessment appears to be not too mellowed either. She believes that "the general reservation policy during the 1920s and 1930s led to a situation in which the 'non-Brahmins' became a loose and contentious (sic) alliance of different caste groups and communities, engaged in political opposition to the dominant Brahmins but quarreling about each other's share of the general allotment". She further quotes V.K. Nataraj who saw in the scramble nothing more than sheer "maneuvering for a share of the pie". Dr. Barun De finds in the movement of the lower castes a 'little nationalist' (kleinzjati if one may borrow a usage from the German term klein deutschen) sentiment which was also a part of a particular view of history. "In this", Barun De argues", 'caste' appeared to be the most legitimate reference category. In the 1920s and 1930s it was raised to the level of an ideology. Its structure was similar to the ideology of Muslim qaum or millat or Hindu fanatical communalism, which at the same time broke up British Indian political integration, again under original colonialist sponsorship".

During the post Non-co-operation years, the self-consciousness and separatist feeling among the Depressed Classes gained greater momentum. The brightening prospect of representation through special electorates and the dissatisfaction with the slow
progress of anti-untouchability movement and in some cases, disillusionment with the actual performance of the caste Hindu politicians and reformers led to the growth of such tendencies. An insight into the political history of this period should, however, take into account the situations leading to the emergence of the problems of the backward castes during the preceding decade of 1909 - 1917.
NOTES


4. Ghurye G.S., Caste and Class in India, Bombay, 1957, p. 139


6. Code of Manu quoted in Kamble J.R., Rise and Awakening of Depressed Classes in India, New Delhi, 1979, p. 72


10. Hutton J.H., Caste in India, Bombay, 1951, pp. 204-205


19. G.I. Home (Pol), File no. 23/23/1933. The file contains an account submitted by the Director of Public Information, Government of India, indicating the measures adopted by the various provincial governments for the welfare of people belonging to the Depressed Classes.


22. Ibid, p.697. Unstarred question no. 250(b) & (c) dated 18th July 1921.

23. G.I. Home (Public), Police, File no. 11/30/1927. Also see the Presidential speech of B.R. Ambedkar in All-India Depressed Classes Congress, first session held at Nagpur dated 8 & 9 August 1930.


34. For example one may also refer to the views of Valentine Chirol. Chirol claimed that India was a 'mere geographical expression' which could never develop into a nation in the western sense of the term; and that whatever political movements, with a pseudo-national character, existed in India, had their roots deep in traditional, instinctively anti-western sources. The so-called national movement headed by small elite groups had therefore the particular interests of their own castes rather than the general interests of the people. See Chirol V., *Indian Unrest*, London, 1910, pp. 322-323.


41. Marx Karl, 'The British Rule in India', *Selected Works II*, pp. 652, 661-662. Karl Marx however also agreed that England's mission of destruction, "the annihilation of old Asiatic society" was not yet complete in 1853. "We know", he writes, "that the municipal organization (village and caste panchayats, or councils) and the economical basis of the village communities have been broken up, but their worst feature, the dissolution of society into stereotype and disconnected atoms (that is, the Indian villages and castes), has survived..." the revolutionary impact of British imperialism. *Ibid.* p. 660.


48. Rudolphs in their case study based on the history of the Shanans (the Nadars) and the Vanniyars of the erstwhile state of Madras have illustrated the process of social change and modernization from within and below the caste(s) itself. Over the past century these castes have transformed themselves through sustained effort to build a more enduring organization against the subjection of caste hierarchy. *Ibid.* pp. 36-61.


53. G.B. General (Education), File no. 1E-8, January 1917, Progs. nos. 14-17.


57. Evidence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar before the Southborough Franchise Committee. Quoted in *BPSA.*, p. 110.


61. Bandyopadhyay S and Das S. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 3.
"Most schemes of political improvement are very laughable things".
- Boswell's Life of Johnson.

In August 1917 an announcement with a promise of 'responsible government' was made by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy. The declaration stimulated the ambition of every section of Indian population. While the Indian National Congress felt it necessary to get ready for obtaining large shares of powers from the British hands, the response of the depressed people was not quite prompt. This was because the Depressed Classes being economically and educationally very backward could not develop a high level of political consciousness. But this does not mean that there was a total lack of preparedness among them. On the contrary, without any programme for participation in the scramble for power the depressed people had long since started to mobilize horizontally through many of their caste associations for attaining higher caste status and most importantly for redress of their plight by expanding the opportunities for education among their fellow caste men. The caste associations, it is true, often vied with each other, but they had also taught them how to organise and with this experience they could also jostle for power with the high caste elites. The Home Rule League which had practically captured the Congress platform tried to pacify them by adopting a resolution in condemnation of untouchability. But the Depressed Classes remained unquieted and without slightest intention of making any settlement with the Congress they opposed the Reform Scheme which they feared would lead to the ascendancy of the high caste dominated Congress. The
non-Brahmans though not perhaps depressed people themselves also
followed suit. However, no section of Indian population could find
their demands met in the Reform Act of 1919. Home Rule or
self-government was clearly out of the question. Communal electorates
could not be expanded beyond the sphere already delimited in 1909.
Reservation in a plural constituency was said to be against the
principle of democracy. Only non-official representation through
nomination was conceded to, and there again the number was restricted
to only seven at the first instance. The Depressed Classes,
therefore, stood disillusioned.
CHAPTER II

Montagu-Chelmsford Reform and Development of the Political Ideology of Caste.

An important feature of the early decades of the twentieth century was the emergence of 'caste' as an important factor of Indian politics. This is not to say that the so-called low caste men remained quite indifferent about this situations in the preceding century. In the foregoing chapter it has already been stated that the introduction of western education coupled with far-reaching changes in various spheres of life had brought about a corresponding change also in the level of social consciousness of such people among whom an urge for upward social mobility was clearly noticeable even in the last century. But such changes albeit very significant failed to provide the necessary impulse for bargaining in the game of politics. This was forthcoming in the twentieth century first with the Morley-Minto Reforms 1909, and then when the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Bill was enacted in 1919. Communal electorates were granted to the Muslims in the Indian Councils Act 1909. But the Depressed Classes although comprising a large part of the total population of the country were not represented at all in the Morley-Minto Councils. This was believed to be a deliberate omission. Because the Depressed Classes were unorganised and hence not quite able to bargain for power the British government could easily ignore their interests. Dissatisfaction was expressed against this injustice in the joint memorandum of the Depressed India Association, Bombay and the Servants of Somavamshi Society, Bombay, to the Indian Statutory
"The principle of separate electorates was recognised by the late Lord Morley as a vital safeguard for the security and advancement of backward classes and communities and experience has shown during the last two decades that it has served as a powerful lever to raise our Muslim brethren who, in consequence, are making headway and coming into line with more advanced sections. We plead that the identical principle be applied to our community and that the time has arrived to extend its beneficent utility to our case as well". (1)

The views of the Depressed India Association was also shared by Nayak, a leading Calcutta newspaper of the time. Writing about the reformed Councils, this paper made a significant comment (15 October 1912) that the real representative of Hindu society found no place in the Councils; it was only a section of the English-educated babus that got themselves elected. Since caste distinctions were most likely to perpetuate, much discontent could be removed by holding elections on the basis of caste. 'Thus', the Nayak observed:

"the importance and influence of the upstart Babus will be gone. The English-educated Babus are at heart opposed to any increase of influence of the Hindu masses; for they know that that means the loss of their own influence. If the Government wants to destroy the sham agitation in this country, if it wants to root out discontent, let it elect members to the Council on the basis of caste, religion and numerical strength". (2)
However, speaking from the colonial standpoint the grievances of the Depressed Classes were partially met for the first time in the Government of India Act 1919. It may be noted here that although the Depressed Classes were not satisfied with the quantum of concessions made available for them the Act for the first time made an official recognition of the fact that the said people had a reasonable and justified claim for share in the political power of the country. So long these people were persuaded to keep content with little shares in public services including share of seats in schools, colleges and educational hostels. This was undoubtedly very important. But it could not earn them a position in the seat of power which alone can take a decision at the policy making level of the government. Now that opportunity was available. With the introduction of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms the British imperial strategy set the terms for decolonisation from 1920s. "Devolution of power", wrote David Page, "to Indian hands, which took place within the electoral framework, by encouraging competition for power, also encouraged an extension of political activity, with the result that new classes, castes and communities and interests were drawn into political process". (3)

The August 1917 Reform Proposal of the Secretary of State for India had brought the first ever opportunity for the Depressed Classes to operate as a pressure group in politics. But the group or community consciousness of the low caste people was never so strong that they could very easily organise on political lines for obtaining political concessions from the rulers. This is not to say, that caste
was not politically relevant during the earlier period of British colonial rule. Historians have on the contrary referred to *daladali* in the early nineteenth century Calcutta where caste played a vital role. But towards the end of the last and the opening of the present century there was a noticeable change in the said profile. The multi-caste dals of the yester years "began to dissolve into exclusive caste associations" and most of the endeavours to improve the social position of the various castes began also to be pursued at an organised level.\(^4\) This means that the Depressed Classes had started an exercise which was due for a start only around the time when the Reform Proposals were announced in 1917. Once again this does not suggest that castes had been thoroughly politicised in the same manner and attained the same level of perfection which distinguished them, as political communities in the 20s and thereafter. What is important to note in this context is that starting to combine on a social/cultural plain the castes became soon organised enough to effectively participate in the wrangle of power-sharing politics of India.

Explanation has been offered to indicate how the urge for mobilization among the various castes of Bengal was generated.

"By the early twentieth century,... the cultural contents of each caste had become more or less similar...The more blatant forms of untouchability and social disability had also disappeared. But emotional attachment to caste persisted; for caste now became the focus of mobilization for the pursuit of group or
individual interests... As a result, the caste associations which first began to appear after the census of 1901 rapidly proliferated after 1905, when 'protective discrimination' in favour of the Muslims became an established trend in British policy in Bengal". (5)

The main purpose to form caste associations was to achieve horizontal solidarity within the castes so that they may move up vertically as well. Such associations became platforms for organised movement for demanding shares in public services including various other facilities in the sphere of education. The Namasudras of eastern Bengal for example, organised village committees and spoke of self-help for the material improvement of their community. Beginning with an attitude of defiance to the social authority of the higher castes, the Namasudra protest movement of 1872 gradually culminated into a well-organised movement for their social uplift. (6) Towards the beginning of the present century their contact with the Christian missionaries had made them aware about their educational backwardness and they now demanded special facilities in the field of education. Between 1905-1917 the Namasudras also sent several deputations to the government with the request that the government may help them in their endeavour to overcome their backwardness. By the beginning of the twentieth century the Namasudras being also somewhat educationally advanced and politically conscious, were planning their own development. By 1908 members from their community had been returned to the Bengal Legislative Council. (7) Distrustful of the caste Hindu nationalists, the Namasudras abstained from the anti-partition
agitation in 1905 and at the height of the agitation in 1907 a
deputation of their representatives waited upon the Lieutenant
Governor of Bengal and prayed for the perpetuation of British rule.\(^8\)

In almost the same way various other caste associations began
to emerge in Bengal. The Mahishyas of Midnapore (who later on
refused to be categorised within the Depressed Classes) revealed a
spirit of group solidarity fostered on the basis of caste. The
Mahishya Samiti attempted to organise a broader mass-based movement.
It called upon its members to become self-sufficient and
self-reliant both economically and culturally. The samity also took
initiative for starting several organizations for resource
mobilization from among their community. The fund was proposed to be
utilised for work on self-reliant development.\(^9\) Similarly, the
'Kshatriya Samiti' of the Rajbanshis, founded in 1910 also sought to
mobilize the masses. The Samity with such organizational units like
Mandali and Patti made a special drive for extension of educational
facilities among the students of the Rajbanshi community. The Sahas
of eastern Bengal also founded their own separate organizations,
viz., the 'Swajati hitasadhani Samity', founded at Dacca in 1898 and
the 'Purbabanga Vaisya Samiti' founded sometime in 1909. Among the
various other caste associations of Bengal the names of quite a
large number have been quoted in a recent work on the caste movement
of Bengal. They include 'East Bengal and Sylhet Vaisya Saha
Sammilani' (1923), 'Sadgop Sabha' (1901), 'Jessore and Nadia
Sutradhar Samaj' (1926), 'Tilijati Sammilani', 'Tilijati hitaishi
Sabha', 'Gandhabanik Mahasammillani' (1923) and also some other
obscure organizations of such caste groups like the Pods or Paundra-Kshatriyas, the Baruis, the Jogis, the Vaisya Barujibi and the Karmakars. It should be noted here that the prosperous trading castes of Bengal appeared to have the most remarkable organizational ability. The names of some of their caste organizations are 'Saptagramiya Subarnabanik hitasadhani Sabha', 'Subarnabanik Yuvak Samiti', 'Calcutta Subarnabanik Samaj', 'Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani' and 'Subarnabanik Mahila Sammilani'.

According to a deceased research scholar the search for identity and mobilization among the low castes (including the intermediary castes otherwise known as Sat sudras) and the Muslims took an almost identical pattern of expression. In each case the initiative came from a group of neo-prosperous leaders who had heavily relied on group sentiments as a means to fulfil their own personal ambition in politics. Also both the communities shared almost the same kind of social aspiration. However, the Hindu society being itself a stratified order such aspiration provided the impulse, first for group formation within units of each caste community and thereafter cutting across the caste line the unity was sought to be forged among a wider range that encompassed the entire submerged section of the Hindu society. Efforts to build up such large-scale solidarity were, of course often impeded by inter-caste jealousy and group rivalry among the various castes. But the basic urge to move up along the scale of social hierarchy through horizontal mobilization remained constant for most part of the early decades of the present century.\(^{(10)}\) Once again it must be noted here
that some of the non-Brahmin Satsudra and intermediary castes, who were relatively more prosperous than the actual Depressed Classes, also shared the same perspectives and behaved almost in an identical manner.\(^{(11)}\) The Rajbansis for example were unwilling to come under the category of the Depressed Class. Nevertheless they were keen on getting all the benefits meant for the depressed people.\(^{(12)}\) In the same manner the wealthy Subarnabanik or the Saha samaj also came forward to justify their natural claim for institutional benefits.\(^{(13)}\)

Leaving aside Bengal, the caste spirit acquired much greater social and political importance in south India and Maharashtra. In the coastal Andhra Pradesh there were signs of an emerging caste consciousness since when due to the economic changes brought about by the beginning of the twentieth century the non-Brahmin peasant caste groups like the Kammas, Reddis and Telagas (Kapus) became socially prominent by attaining an enviable level of prosperity through their new occupation of trade and commerce. The growth of consciousness among these dominant non-Brahmin castes was reflected in their participation in the District Conferences which came to be regularly convened in Andhra from 1892 onwards. The district conferences were often used by them as platforms to voice their grievances and also to bargain with the government for getting benefits for their economic, social and educational growth. Again, after having acquired economic and social status, the non-Brahmin castes organised themselves exclusively into separate associations, each claiming to strive for solidarity among its caste fellows and for gaining economic and employment benefits from the government.\(^{(14)}\)
However, in Andhra, at least in the initial stages, these associations were not rabidly anti-Brahmin in their approach, even though in practice they were operating under a broad understanding of anti-Brahmin sentiment. Nevertheless, "by 1916, due to the impact of Dravidian-oriented self-respect movement in Tamil Nadu which turned into an anti-Brahmin movement later, in Andhra too, there emerged certain overtones of this kind, even though it never assumed the radical form anti-Brahminism". (15)

A list of some important caste associations of Andhra Pradesh has been provided in a recent article contributed by V. Ramakrishna of Hyderabad Central University. The list includes such names like 'Arya Vaisya Mahasabha', founded in 1907 and activated by Atmuri Lakshminarasimham, 'Viswakarma Kuladharana Sangham' (1903), 'Kamma Mahajana Sabha' (1910), the 'Reddy or Kapu Sangham' (1913) of Cuddalore, the 'Gouda Association' (1907) organised by Hanumantha Rao of Challapalli, the Yadava Association, the Telaga Association and also the Naidu Sangham originally set up in Madras in 1910. (16)

A curious feature of these caste associations was that starting with a social welfare programme for the well being of the members, the associations later assumed a political character and became more careful in looking after the interests of the more influential and prosperous members of their community. Another significant aspect of these associations was their attempts at forging wider caste-links cutting across the boundaries of the
well-marked linguistic regions. This explains why the 'Reddi Mahajan Sabha' overstepped its own caste-linguistic confines and sought to bind in a camaraderie its caste-brethren from Tamil speaking and Kannada speaking districts of the Presidency. The Kammas in a similar manner succeeded in widening their area of influence by inviting persons of their own caste in other parts of Southern India. Most of the non-Brahmin caste associations of Andhra Pradesh were therefore slowly tending towards a wider presidency level non-Brahmin movement. The trend became more pronounced after 1917 when the 'South Indian Liberal Federation' was established and a host of non-Brahmin associations were also formed in several districts of Andhra. (17)

In Kerala, caste consolidation and social reform movement was clearly noticeable among the two major non-Brahmin (untouchable) communities, the Ezhavas and the Nairs. The awakening of the Ezhavas - traditionally lowly tappers and tenders of the coconut palm (but soon becoming economically well-off due to the expansion of coconut market) was centred around the religious leader Sri Narayan Guru (C 1855 - 1928), Dr. Palpu, the first Ezhava graduate and the great Malyali poet N. Kumaran Asan. At the initial stage the Ezhava movement took the form of opposition to Brahmin domination, demand for entry into temples and also to sanskritize some of their own customs. The Ezhavas later drifted to the more radical line of politics. A quick transition from social reform initially sought often through caste associations, to thoroughgoing radicalism was to be in fact a recurrent feature of Kerala life. These caste associations were often 'the first form in which the peasant masses
rose in struggle against feudalism. But then, to quote a veteran politician 'the grip of these caste organizations on the peasantry has to be broken if they are to be organised as a class'.

Besides the Ezhavas, there were signs of awakening also among the Nairs who remained hard pressed by the non-Malayali Brahmins, the Syrian Christians and also because of their own embarrassing and retrograde social customs. However, towards the end of the last century the Nairs were carried by a zeal for social reform under the influence of some of the eminent novelists of Kerala, Chander Menon and Raman Pillai including such energetic Nair leaders like K. Ramakrishna Pillai and Mannath Padmanava Pillai. Raman Pillai was the principal organizer of the Malayali Memorial of 1891 which attacked Brahmin predominance in state jobs primarily as a spokesman of the Nair community. Ramakrishna and Mannath founded the Nair service society in 1914 which took up a programme of internal social reform combining caste aspirations as well. It should be noted here that although the Nair movement of Kerala sought to widen its organization by cultivating its link with the Justice Movement it could not, however, avoid occasional attritions with the Ezhavas the like of which broke out at the time of Nair-Ezhava riot in 1905.

In south, especially south Tamilnadu caste movement was most conspicuously felt among the untouchable Nadars, also otherwise known as Shanans. Originally toddy tappers, an occupation considered polluting by the canons of Hindu orthodoxy, this caste had over the past century transformed itself by creating new units of
consciousness, organization and action. By appealing to the common identity of caste brethren it mobilized horizontal solidarity against the subjection of caste hierarchy. "Today by successfully changing its caste culture and having this change recognized by the state and by Madras society, it, like other castes which have participated in similar processes, occupies a new and higher place in a changed social order.\(20\)

But the upward mobility could little bring a total transformation of the entire community. The condition remained unchanged with the more lowly toddy tappers of Tirunelveli who still went on being called by the old caste name Shanar at a time when their successful brethren in the district of Ramnad had appropriated the more prestigious title of Nadar.\(21\)

Politically caste aspirations assumed the more significant character at the time of the Justice Movement in Madras around 1915-16. The movement was launched by C.N. Mudaliar, T.M. Nair and P. Tyagaraja Chetti on behalf of intermediate castes (Tamil Vellalas, Mudaliars, Chettiarss, Telugu Reddis, Kammas, Balija Naidus and Malyali Nairs) which included numerous prosperous landlords and merchants and therefore felt jealous of Brahmin predominance in education, the services and politics. Statistical evidence reveal the social disparity arising out of the undisputed ascendancy of Brahmins in every walks of life. Only 3.2% of the population, Brahmins in the Madras Presidency held 55% of deputy collector and 72.6% of district munsiff posts in 1912. Brahmins at times were also big landowners, particularly in Thanjavur and despite the fact that
very few of them were actually engaged in agricultural work and most of them were settlers in the town areas. The Madras Justice Party intended to set right this social imbalance under which the Brahmins had a share of influence quite disproportionate to their number. Unlike the Nadar Mahajana Sangam or E.V. Ramasami Naicker’s Self Respect Movement the Justice Party had none of that anti-clerical and rationalist ideological orientation which found its most dramatic expression in Self-Respect marriages. Whereas the Nadars attacked Brahmin domination more on the front of religion and culture than politics, the Justice Party concentrated on a policy of opposition to the Brahmins for specific material gains. A curious feature of the Justice agitation is that while opposing the Brahmins it had also set itself against the nationalist movement that was led by the Congress, on the plea that the Brahmins were dominating it and consequently, chose to align themselves with the colonial government, thus perverting the cause of the caste associations. There is moreover reason to believe that the British officials, journalists and business interest in Madras successfully exploited this anti-Brahmin psyche of the Justice Party for playing the old game of divide and rule.

In Madras, besides the Justice Party other category of depressed people also showed signs of community consciousness. As early as 1892, R. Srinivasan the first Depressed Class man of the presidency to receive higher education formed an association of the Depressed Classes, called Pariah Mahajan Sabha which was later named as the Adi Dravida Mahajan Sabha. The association brought out a
journal named Pariah for ventilating their grievances and also sent a memorial to the British House of Commons protesting the arrangement of simultaneous holding of the I.C.S Examination in England and India as that would result in their opinion in the recruitment of more caste Hindu candidates against whose preponderance and oppression the Depressed Classes needed protection. (23)

By 1890, socio-religious awakening had also started among the Thiyyas of Malabar under the leadership of a spiritual leader named Sri Narayan Gurusvami. In 1903 they founded a religious association, called S.N.D.P. Yogam (Sri Narayan Dharma Paripalan Yogam, meaning union for the protection of Narayan Religion). The aim of this association was to impart Hindu religious ideas to its members and followers as well as give financial aid to the poor students. In 1906 the Vokkaligas, the peasant outcastes of Mysore met in a conference at Bangalore and formed an association called Vakkaligara Sangha mainly with a view to spreading education among their castemen. (24)

In the Bombay Presidency, the Mahars who had been excluded from service in the army since 1892 were early in the twentieth century agitating in a constitutional manner for their recruitment in the army as before. In November 1910, they met in a conference in Poona and drew up a memorial to the Earl of Crewe, the Secretary of State for India praying for their recruitment in the lowest grades of the public services, in the rank of the police sepoys and of
soldiers in the Indian army. They also asserted their essential equality with other Indian fellow subjects and expressed their anger for discrimination on the basis of caste. The memorial concluded: "We have long submitted to the Jagannath of caste; we have for ages been crushed under its ponderous wheels. But we can no longer submit to the tyranny. We must emancipate our manhood. We may be poor, feeble, ignorant, but we are still human beings; we are besides British subjects, and we seek our inalienable rights as British subjects from the British Government".

But the most significant of the caste movements was that of the Satyasodhak Samaj in Maharashtra which recent research has revealed to have two distinct strands. The first trend very similar to the Justice Movement in Madras largely depended on the patronage of the Kolhapur ruler, Shahu. But Shahu was not originally a follower of the Satyasodhak Samaj, although he was influenced by the tenets and the movement of the Arya Samaj which were against the birth basis of caste and the practice of untouchability. However he felt attracted to the samaj when on one day he was suddenly awakened to the rude reality that although a rajan himself he was considered a lowly shudra by the Brahmin priests of his land. The incident brought an all-out transformation in the mind of Shahu and he was all set for a struggle against Brahminism and their domination in the administrative offices of the state. His mission was to end the caste system by bringing a total emancipation of the untouchables. This he wanted to achieve through an action programme by which he first abolished the practice of untouchability in his own state, issued orders to legalize intercaste marriages and he himself kept
in frequent company with the untouchables - the Mahars and Mangs so that others may follow his example. Like Jotirao Phule, Shahu also adopted a programme of expansion of education as the only remedy of their sufferings in the hands of the Brahmins. He founded two hostels for the students of the Depressed Classes and in 1917 issued that momentous order by which primary education was declared free and compulsory in his state. On 30 September 1919, Shahu issued another order by which boys belonging to the untouchable community could be admitted like the caste Hindu students in any school of the state. As a result of such special drive for expansion of education, the number of untouchable students in schools which was only 234 in 1894 rose to 2162 in 1922. Again not being fully satisfied with all such legislations Shahu next took another significant decision. He issued orders (2 August 1902) which reserved 50% of the state vacancies for people belonging to the backward castes.

The populist and radical trend of Shahu's programme (attacking not only the Brahmins but also the merchants and the rich in general) had made the satyasodhak movement extremely popular with the masses. Under leaders like Mukundrao Patil who from 1910 brought out the Satyasodhak mouthpiece Din Mitra, the Samaj acquired a unique rural base in the Maharashtra Deccan and the Vidarbha-Nagpur region. Its populist character is well indicated by the fact that practically the entire bulk of Satyasodhak literature is in Marathi and not in English. The 1917 annual conference of the samaj received report from 49 branches spread over 14 districts, and no less than 30 of these local units were in villages of not less than 2000 inhabitants. "The
The predominant note at this level was a rejection of caste oppression and hierarchy, and not a Sanskritizing demand for a higher status within the existing structure. It is true that only the rich peasants provided the social base of this movement. But then it had also highlighted certain common interests of the entire peasantry against largely upper caste mahajans and landlords.

A question may be put at this stage. The Depressed Classes including people belonging to the intermediary castes who can be broadly categorised as non-Brahmins and who felt convinced that they could not prosper largely because of the preponderating influence of the Brahmins had now grown strong enough to participate in the institutional politics. True that the caste associations could not always mobilize as much successfully as to build up a broad-based organization encompassing the different caste units some of which even occasionally vied with each other for short-time gains or for sheer caste jealousy as between themselves. It is also true that the caste movements could not gather as much momentum as it ought to, always and everywhere. But they had already displayed such energy and ability as to be reckoned as a force or factor in the politics of the country. Naturally one may feel curious to examine the reactions of the Indian National Congress in face of the emerging consciousness of the depressed people, the underdogs of Indian society.

Admittedly, neither the moderates nor the extremists of the Indian National Congress seemed to be ever aware of this situation. This is because the Congress was never apprehensive of any organized
people who could effectively challenge its claim to leadership. The splinter groups within the Congress were its own men and there were already signs of their homecoming. The Muslim League alone was its rival. But ever since the Lucknow session of the Muslim League (1913) and more specifically since the Congress-League Pact of 1916, the two communities came closer to each other with the result that the Congress got almost a walk-over in Indian politics. But still, the nationalist leaders could not feel complacent. There were signs of cloud gathering in the sky and no one who was least aware of the growing tension in Indian society could deny the utmost need for making a further realignment of powers at level hitherto remaining unnoticed for long.

The war situation had evoked newer aspirations among the people of India. India's sacrifice in Britain's war, it was thought, would not go unrewarded and there was a wide expectation among the nationalist circle that there might be some devolution of power in their hands immediately after the war is over. But nobody knew how much power would be actually handed over to them or at any rate if concessions were at all forthcoming from the colonial masters should they be just enough to fulfil the expectations of the people? The nationalist leaders were in a state of tenterhooks for the historic announcement of the Secretary of State (August 1917) was yet to be made. The Congress had already declared that nothing short of Home Rule or Self-Government would be able to fully satisfy the people. But home Rule is not such a trifle as to be very easily granted by the unrelenting masters. If the Congress was to wrest power from the
Raj it must place its demand and move along with the support of the people at large. But who were these people? What did the Congress do for the amelioration of the most legitimate grievances of the Depressed Classes? It is true that occasionally in the past some of the Congress leaders took initiative for expansion of educational facilities among them. Others spoke eloquently in support of their claims on the floor of the Legislature. But such mindless expressions could neither salve the injuries of the Depressed Classes nor could they create any conviction in their mind as to the sincerity of purpose of the nationalist leaders. As a matter of fact the Congress exercise for obtaining support of the low caste people did never go beyond making some routine efforts or using rhetorics for obtaining for them social uplift of a minor nature. This is because the Congress remained primarily engrossed in the game of politics and questions of social reform occupied perhaps only a secondary position in the priority list of their party programme. However, the situation had changed a lot since long and it then dawned upon the leaders that the cause of the depressed people should at least find a place in one of their many resolutions so that these people may understand that the Congress was always by their side. Hence in 1917 (barely four months after Montagu's historic announcement), in its Calcutta session (December 26-29) presided over by Annie Besant, the Congress departed from its usual practice of ignoring social questions and boldly -
"Resolved that this Congress urges upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by customs upon the Depressed Classes, the disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting these classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience". (28)

The same resolution was also adopted in the thirty-third session of the Indian National Congress which was presided over by M.M. Malaviya and was held in Delhi in December 1918.

But such claptrap was utterly fruitless. The Depressed Classes could not be cajoled into lending all-out support to the Congress even after its open appeal for removal of all disabilities upon them. The Congress and the high caste and Brahmin dominated Home Rule League of Annie Besant and Tilak had already aroused apprehension among the depressed people and the under-privileged non-Brahmin castes that the scheme of transfer of responsibility would virtually lead to monopolization of power by the high caste elites who would do nothing to safeguard their interests. Such people therefore, readily opposed the Home Rule movement as well as the Congress demand for self-government.

In Bengal, the educated members of some of the lower castes, particularly the articulate sections among the Depressed Classes grew apprehensive of the situation. When the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform proposals were announced, in a conference in 1917 they resolved that
if any additional power were "vested in the hands of a few leaders without giving any share of power to us it... (would) make the future progress of the backward classes impossible". It was also resolved that Home Rule was premature and injurious to the existing condition of the Indian people and was not desirable so long as the caste system existed in India. A similar conference next year unequivocally demanded 'communal representation' to safeguard "the interests of so many different castes". The resolution was also endorsed by the leaders of certain other backward castes, such as the Pods, Rajbanshis and the Kapalis. The Tilis although they did not talk of communal representation, shared nevertheless the same apprehensions.

Bengal was not quite alone to oppose the Home Rule Leaguers and the Congress claim for self-government. In his note sent to the government the Lt. Governor of Punjab made a personal request to the government to give special consideration to the "pathetic appeals made in Bengal, Madras and Bombay by or on behalf of the unfortunate depressed classes, comprising some 50 millions of people, who fear that their upward progress - slow and difficult enough in present conditions, but at the same time assured under an imperial British administration and stimulated by philanthropic missionary effort from the West - will be seriously imperilled if the British character of the administration is materially altered".

In the Madras Presidency, the Adi Dravida Mahajan Sabha, the association which claimed to represent the whole Depressed Class
population of the Presidency, i.e. one-fifth of its total population, became politically active to voice their demands. Under the auspices of the Sabha a meeting was held on 4 November 1917 in Madras in which speeches were made denouncing the Home Rule movement, and resolutions were passed expressing loyalty to the British Crown.\(^{(34)}\) In pursuance of a resolution passed in the said meeting a deputation presented a memorial to Montagu on 9 November 1917. The memorialists propounded the theory that the Panchammas or the Adi Dravidas represented the earliest civilization of South India who were later on stigmatised as untouchables by the Aryan invaders from the north, and also expressed gratitude to the Christian missionaries and the British Government for their contribution to the socio-economic uplift of these suppressed people. They also categorically opposed the Home Rule movement. "We shall fight to the last drop of our blood any attempt to transfer the seat of authority in this country from British hands to the so-called high caste Hindus who have ill-treated us in the past and would do so again but for the protection of British laws.\(^{(35)}\) They also denounced the Congress party as one, dominated by the Brahmins who carry notions 'of their own superiority and inferiority of others into every detail of public and private life'. Almost the same views were expressed in different language by several other associations of Madras. The Madras Dravidian Association urged that 'no reform should be introduced to weaken the British authority or to change the British character of administration or to concentrate power in any one particular class'. The Southern Indian Liberal Federation expressed concern for a political situation that may 'tend to weaken British authority in
India and thereby jeopardise the interests of the large and hitherto inarticulate masses of the country'. It feared that "if Home Rule or self-government were granted to India at the present time, the Government would pass into the hands of a class of oligarchy unfit either by traditions or training for wielding political power, and thus the interests of the masses would suffer". Leaving aside the Depressed Classes, the views of the entire community of the non-Brahmins were admirably summarised in the following extracts from the speech of the Raja Zamindar of Telaprole presiding at the non-Brahmin Conference at Tinnevelly:

"We non-Brahmans are to remain and multiply in order that the chosen few may have subjects to rule; and the British are to remain to keep off external dangers by their military and naval forces and to suppress us if we should dare to oppose the orders of a Brahman oligarchy. Home Rule in other words is to be Brahman in policy, but British in the means used for enforcing that policy".

But such a policy, as the Zamindar of Telaprole very emphatically pointed out, is both impracticable and immoral: "Great Britain", he added

"has the right to demand from us obedience and if necessary to secure it by force, provided she rules well and is willing to give us a share in ruling as we become fitter and fitter to bear the responsibilities. But I say emphatically that ... we are not cattle to be sold by one master to another, with
the further humiliation of having the first master standing by with a bludgeon in case we object to be sold". (37)

Turning from Madras to Bombay and the adjoining Maratha districts of the Central Provinces and Central India the situation was clearly described by Shahu, the Maharaja of Kolhapur in one of his addresses to the Mahratta Educational Conference at Khamgaon. The Maharaja fully agreed with Lord Sydenham who held that Home Rule would do no good to India so long as the country remained endlessly divided by innumerable caste barriers. He had therefore expressed to take the programme of educational expansion on a priority basis as that would help the people to consolidate and unite. Of course the Maharaja made a guarded statement when he said that he was not altogether 'against Home Rule'. "Surely we want it", but at the present moment, he said, "Let us do everything in our power to bring together all the different people in the common interest of material and moral progress of this great country of ours", because in "the present circumstances, however, we must have the protection and guidance of the British Government until the evils of the caste system become ineffective". Further,

"To prevent Home Rule from culminating in an oligarchy we must have communal representation at least for ten years. It will teach us what are our rights. Once we know them, communal representation can be dispensed with. We have the sad experience of our municipalities before us. In these institutions the representation of the lower caste is nominal. The mistake should not be repeated". (38)
Similar distrust of the Brahmin ascendancy was expressed in more emphatic language in the Mahratta Conference at Poona. The President, Khasi Rao Power in demanding a separate electorate for the Marathas said

"They were all aware of the religious ascendancy of the Brahmans over the other communities, particularly in the Deccan. It was to remove this injustice that they wanted separate electorates. The Brahmans had so far done nothing for them. No questions relating to Mahratta interests were put in the Councils, because there were Mahrattas there". (39)

Speaking on the above resolution R.S. Bhaskar Rao Jadav not only resented the Home Rule Leaguers' move for self-government as utterly useless for the down-trodden masses but also disowned Tilak, a champion of the Home Rule cause as a leader of the Marathas. He said,

"Mr. Tilak was not a Mahratta and was not their leader. They knew the difference between the treatment they received at the hands of a European officer and that which they received at the hands of a Brahman officer. Brahmans were not of their flesh and blood; they did not accept water out of their hands or allow their dead bodies to be burnt side by side with theirs. Mahratta was a separate caste with a history of its own". (40)

The resolution was seconded by R.S. Kale, who said that the Sirkar was the cultivators' ma-bap and that Mahrattas wanted separate electorates because the Brahmans were people who would deprive the backward people of their rights. Baburao Haibatrao Jadav remarked
that once the Mahrattas handed over their Raj into the hands of the Brahmins, 'they would be made sweepers, and they should not make the mistake again of entrusting Mahratta interests to the Brahmins'.

However, even in the face of such united opposition to the Congress programme of action the party remained unusually unperturbed. The Congress attitude to this orchestrated demand for a division was to consider it simply as a part of colonial conspiracy. This is clearly revealed in the Presidential address of Annie Besant in the thirty-second session of Indian National Congress. "We have", she said

"a Nation, composed of many communities and opinions, trying to obtain liberty. We have above it, a Government, holding all power and all patronage, and able to crush by Executive Orders those whom it considers to be advocates of excessive changes. It tends to ally itself with any party or community which will help it to stave off legislation that diminishes its power. Its natural tendency is to watch for any sign of fission, and to ally itself with the weaker party to crush the stronger, as did the East India Company in its so-called conquest of India". (41)

The insinuation that there was a conspiratorial alliance between the bureaucrats and the opponents of the Congress was further clarified when the Congress President directly accused the officials of 'bribing' and holding out temptation of 'special concession' to an 'irresponsible crowd' for creating disunity and division among the people who were by and large united under the banner of the Congress.
The Congress President held that the anti-Brahmin movement, in the Madras Presidency, with its Association 'of a few hundred members and its three organs in the Press' could make little impression upon the majority of people and it "is now happily obscured by a real non-Brahman Association, the Madras Presidency Association, led by the veteran leader, Dewan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillai and already many thousands strong". Once again the Congress President held rather complacently

"We make too much of these transitory difficulties and quarrels, and give them an importance far beyond their real mischief-making power. They will assume their proper proportions when we have won Home Rule".(42)

In conclusion, she said that she was sure enough that the national parties will soon become grouped into healthy constituents of the body politic distinguished by differences of principle but not by a spirit of enmity and discord. "The use of power will create a sense of responsibility, and responsibility will bring about reasonable discipline".

But in spite of all the assertions made by Annie Besant on behalf of the Home Rule League and the Indian National Congress the British officials in India had their own information that the so-called 'irresponsible crowd' referred to in her speech would try to offer maximum resistance to the Congress programme. "There are already signs", commented the Lt. Governor of Punjab in paragraph 4 of his memorandum submitted to the government that,
"the masses though only dimly comprehending the aims of the advanced politicians are distinctly uneasy at the prospect of the transfer of power to them from the Sircar, and that a large majority of what may be called 'classes' (the landed aristocracy, big merchants, etc.) as well as a considerable and growing proportion of the educated men outside the high caste Hindu literati, from which class the advanced politicians are mainly drawn, repudiate the aims of the latter and their claims to speak for the peoples of India". (43)

These indications, as one can gather from the said memorandum were most marked in the provinces where the Home Rule propaganda, which was at that time practically also the creed of the Congress and the Muslim League, had been most vigorous. The official reports very often confirmed that where the Home Rule propagandists were most active, as in Madras, Bombay, Bihar and Orissa and parts of the United Provinces and Bengal, there was a 'growing comprehension of their ultimate aims and a steadily increasing hostility towards them'. (44)

The Declaration of August 20, 1917, promised 'responsible government' in familiar British way. It was a clear 'repudiation of the Morley-Minto policy, which had made no concession to the Congress demand for self-government within the British Empire'. (45) It was a declaration of belief in the philosophy of liberalism. The Mont-Ford proposals were accordingly prepared and a report on Indian reforms were eventually submitted. (46) The Report indicates that Montagu and
Chelmsford were doubtful about the advisability of communal electorates for India. Starting from the conventional arguments in favour of communal electorates the joint authors pointed out the errors of those arguments giving in detail as to why the principle is thoroughly incompatible with the condition of an ideal political life. Moreover, they were said to be opposed to the teaching of history as they do seldom ease the tension of a society where the application of the device of communal electorates only stereotype the existing relations between different communities each of which should ideally merge in the mainstream of the body-politic. The report also discarded the argument that communal electorates once granted to a section of the Indian people should be applied for similar benefits to other people of the country. The crucial test to which the joint authors conceived, all proposals should be brought 'is whether they will or will not help to carry India towards responsible government.'

"Some persons hold that for a people, such as they deem those of India to be, so divided by race, religion and caste as to be unable to consider the interests of any but their own section, a system of communal and class representation is not merely inevitable, but is actually best." (47)

The protagonists of the communal representation theory, according to the joint authors, believe that the system could lead to 'a healthy stage in the development of a non-political people'. But history is replete with examples which indicate that communal representation held good only when the territorial principle being quite unknown to a tribal society 'blood and religion' served as the only single bond of unity in a political society. However the principle of democracy
cannot be allowed to thrive on such basic instincts of tribal life. Nor the idea of 'responsible government' according to the concept of the West can fit well with a system where the allegiance of individual citizens in the state is determined by factors of group loyalty. "We conclude", the joint authors of the Report therefore observed,

"Unhesitatingly that the history of self-government among the nations who developed it, and spread it through the world, is decisively against the admission by the state of any divided allegiance; against the State's arranging its members in any way which encourages them to think of themselves primarily as citizens of any smaller unit than itself". (48)

The joint authors of the Report had further clarified their position as to why they did not like to extend the principle of communal electorates among those whose sectional interests they would like to safeguard by adequate provisions in the constitution. It is true that Morley-Minto Reforms Act of 1909 had granted electorates to the Muslims. But once this was done nobody can question the wisdom of the measure taken by the government long ago. Separate electorates for the Muslims, therefore, must be accepted as a factum valet and the government must try to honour it. But while remaining true to its pledge no government can at the same time ignore the fact that any extension of the same principle to further larger areas would lead only to fostering of a divisive spirit. Because

"Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organised against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens; and it is difficult to see how the change from this system to national representation is ever to occur." (49)
Grant of separate electorate to the Muslims induced many others to demand the same. Thus the Sikhs in the Punjab, the non-Brahmins in Madras (although in that Presidency they actually constitute a majority), the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians, the Europeans and the Lingayat community in Bombay had all asked for communal representation. In Bengal and elsewhere even members of the Depressed Classes in some cases (the Namasudras for example) were up with such demands. But while considering these demands the joint authors of the Report were never forgetful of the fact that communal electorates often worked as a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle.

"Any general extension of the communal system, however, would only encourage still further demands, and would in our deliberate opinion be fatal to that development of representation upon the national basis on which alone a system of responsible government can possibly be rooted." (50)

Montagu and Chelmsford were therefore, clear enough in making their final recommendation. Although special electorates were said to be necessary in some cases (such as the planting and mining interests, the chambers of commerce, and the universities) for "the representation of other minorities we should prefer nomination".

However, the joint authors of the Report were aware that the system of nomination would dilute the character of a house which is conceived to consist of members elected by the people. But the "anomaly involved in the presence of nominated members in a Council to which we are giving some responsible powers" has to be accepted as "necessary illogicalities attendant on a transitional period". This
means that the practice of nominating members in an elected body should be generally discarded. But then considering the fact that India had not grown sufficiently experienced in handling 'responsible powers' some concessions may be allowed for the time being. Because

"Nomination has in our eyes the great advantage over the alternative of extending the class or communal system that it can be more easily abolished when the necessity for it ceases" and until "the territorial principle of representation" could be fully established.\(^{(51)}\)

In the Report it was also assured that the communities represented by nominated members would be placed upon the same footing as those of other communities in the Council. As for the Depressed Classes the concern of the authorities was clearly expressed in paragraph 155 of the Report where it was stated that the government would always come to the help of these people if at any point of time it was felt that their progress was not satisfactory and their interest were not safeguarded.

Writing on the subject, Provincial Legislatures, the Report advised to form a committee. "The Committee's investigations into the subjects of the franchise, the constituencies, and the nominated element... will enable it to advise as to the composition of the councils, which... should then be determined by the Secretary of State in Council, on the recommendation of the Government of India, in the form of regulation to be laid before Parliament".\(^{(52)}\) The Franchise Committee was thus appointed in 1918 under the chairmanship of Lord Southborough to devise franchise and frame constituencies. The problem
of communal electorates was expressly mentioned in the terms of reference to the Franchise Committee which was required inter alia to advise:

- how far representation can be adequately and effectively secured by territorial electorates, or where circumstances seem to require it in order to secure adequate representation of minorities, of special interests or of backward classes by (1) special or communal electorates; or (2) reserving elective seats for special classes in plural constituencies; or (3) nomination in such measure as the exigencies of fair and adequate representation entail; or (4) other expedients, for instance proportional representation, etc. (53)

The Franchise Committee submitted its report (together with the report of the committee on Division of functions) on 26th February, 1919. It was wrought with an arduous job. The Committee toured all over India, their work lasting from November 1918 till almost the last week of February next year when the report was finalised. The Committee examined large number of witnesses who came from all parts of the country and represented various shades of opinion. (54) Moreover, it had to also take into consideration the original proposals of the various local governments (eg. Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, the Central Provinces and Assam) for the constitution of and election to the Provincial Legislative Councils. Some of these proposals while criticising the Mont-Ford Reform Report also pointed out the areas to be taken into special consideration by the Franchise Committee. The proposal of the government of Madras drafted by Sir A.G. Cardew, for
example, had held a strong case for special representation of the Panchammas of Madras. He argued that "the root notions of democracy run counter" to the traditions of Indian society where the concept of equality of opportunity is totally absent because of a rigid caste system. In such circumstances the Brahmins and other high caste men naturally became the most privileged section of society with the result that they had captured all the ten seats of the Madras Legislative Council filled up by election on the basis of territorial constituencies. Thus the Panchammas remained deprived although they comprised 10 millions that is about a 5th of the total population of the presidency. The reform proposal could not make sufficient provision for safeguarding the political interests of this vast number of people. With a sarcastic tone, Cardew then concluded. "Is there here a sound basis for democratic institutions, and is it likely that such a scheme will guarantee 'ordered progress for India as a whole'?"\(^{(57)}\)

The note prepared by the Government of Bombay and submitted to the Franchise Committee also contained some adverse criticism of the reform proposal. It criticised the reform scheme for not giving adequate consideration to the claims to communal representation for the Marathas. The views of the joint authors of the Report "that in no case is it expedient to allow communal representation to sub-sections of the Hindu community" and that "community should be regarded for election purpose as a whole" also seemed to be quite tendentious. The treatment to the Depressed Classes was also far less satisfactory. Not only they were left undefined
but they were not even considered fit for any special favour for their lack of intelligence and also because that there may be dearth of qualified candidates among them. (58)

Before the Franchise Committee there were a large number of cases which the Committee categorised as "other claims to communal representation." Thus claims for separate electorates were placed before it by such communities like the Mahishyas of Bengal and Assam, the Marwaris of Calcutta, the Bengali domiciled community of Bihar and Orissa, the Ahoms of Assam, the Mahars of the Central Provinces, the Uriyas of Madras and the Parsis of Bombay. In the Southern parts of the Bombay presidency and in Madras claims were put forward by non-Brahmin Hindus (some higher and some lower but all above the untouchables) for separate communal representation as a means of protection against the alleged ascendancy of the Brahmins. The Lingayets of Bombay also demanded that their interests should also be protected in a similar manner. (59)

But the Franchise Committee could not meet any of the demands placed by the communities noted above. The Committee made a pointed reference to the case of the non-Brahmins in particular. The solution of the problem of Brahmin ascendancy on the basis of reservation of seats for the non-Brahmin candidates in a plural constituency may not be acceptable to the non-Brahmin leaders who "mistrust candidates, though belonging to their own class in whose election Brahmins would take a part, however limited may be the number of their votes". The solution through forming a non-Brahmin communal
electorate seemed to be equally unrealistic to the Committee. As for
the non-Brahmins of Madras the Committee held that their case was
further spoilt by their leaders who refused to appear before the
Committee.\(^{61}\)

In paragraph 24 of the report the Franchise Committee laid its
suggestions on representation by nomination. It agreed with
Mont-Ford reform scheme and held in most categorical terms that "we
have been driven to the expedient of nomination for the
representation of the depressed classes, because in no case did we
find it possible to provide an electorate on any satisfactory system
of Franchise". At the same time the Committee also admitted the
'necessary illogicality' of the system of nomination. "Our
proposals", therefore, the Committee reported, "comtemplate a very
sparing use of nomination, and we have provided only a narrow margin
to enable the Governor to correct any glaring inequalities in
election..."

The recommendations of the Franchise Committee in so far as
matter relating to representation by non-official nomination came in
for sharp criticism also at another level. The Fifth Despatch of
Indian Constitutional Reforms (Franchise) while referring to the
many omissions of the Franchise Committee's recommendation also
severely criticised its attitude to looking at the problems of the
Depressed Classes who were categorised as "Hindus-others" in
the Committee's report.\(^{62}\) Within this category all people belonging
to the Hindu outcastes and enjoying a similar status as those of the
Panchammas of Madras had been grouped together. All taken
together, they comprised about one fifth of the total population. But the Franchise Committee provided only seven seats by nomination for so vast a number while keeping the same number of seats for Anglo-Indians whose strength of population stood no comparison with the Depressed Classes. The population-wise distribution of seats for each province was worked out in the Despatch as under:\textsuperscript{63}\textsuperscript{64}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total Population (millions)</th>
<th>Population of Depressed Class</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Seats for Depressed Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>221.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>791</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The signatories of the Fifth Desatch felt that such small representation of so vast a number of people would set at naught the lofty ideals of the reform scheme which intended to "make the best arrangements that we can for their representation" while at the same time trying to develop the representative institutions so as to end the permanent degradation and ostracism of the lowest
castes. (65) To make good the principles of the Report the outcastes were, therefore, proposed to be treated with greater generosity. Finally the Despatch recommended

"We think there should be in each council enough representatives of the Depressed Classes to save them from being entirely submerged, and at the same time to stimulate some capacity for collective action. In the case of Madras we suggest that they should be given six seats; in Bengal the United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa, we would give them four; in the Central Provinces and Bombay two and elsewhere one. In these respects we think that the committee's report clearly requires modification". (66)

The Joint Select Committee presided over by Lord Selbourne once again took stock of all the recommendations made in connection with the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform. Although it generally approved of the recommendations of the Southborough Committee it thought that some reconsideration should be made of the provisions relating to the representation of "the Depressed Classes, non-Brahmins and Marathas, and of Europeans in Bengal". (67) Finally when the Government of India Act was passed in December 1919 no provision was made for the representation of the Depressed Classes in joint or separate electorates. What is even worse is that the recommendation of twenty-three non-official nominations for the Depressed Classes in all the six regions (excluding one for region marked 'elsewhere') made in the Fifth Despatch was also totally ignored. Nevertheless under this Act provision was made for the representation of the Depressed Classes by nomination in the provincial Legislative Councils and Central Legislative Assembly. The number
of such nominations was finally fixed according to the letter of the Secretary of State to the Government of India dated 15 July, 1926. The number was fixed at 20, i.e. three short of allotment made by the Fifth Despatch. The poor number of nomination was quite inadequate as compared to the population of the Depressed Classes. The reform Scheme had held high the expectations of the depressed people including people who considered them backward and unprivileged in comparison with the Brahmins. All such men stood completely disillusioned.
NOTES

2. Report on Newspapers and periodicals in Bengal for the week ending 26 October 1912.
3. Page D, Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, Delhi, 1982, p. 3.
5. Ibid. p. 144.
9. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has presented an admirable account of various caste associations in Bengal in his work op. cit., pp. 143-151.
15. Ramakrishna V., 'A Background Study to the Emergence of Caste Consciousness in Coastal Andhra Pradesh' in Bandyopadhyay S and Das S (ed.), op.cit., pp. 110.

16. Ibid., pp. 111, 112.


18. Today, however, to complete the excerpt, "it is easy enough to see... that these caste organizations are not the class organizations of the peasantry; they do on the contrary, consolidate the caste separatism of the people in general..." See Namboodiripad E.M.S., The National Question in Kerala, Bombay, 1952, pp. 102, 106.


27. Sarkar S., op.cit., p. 162.

29. Bengalee, 10 November 1917.
30. The Statesman, 1 December 1917.
31. The Statesman, 5 November 1918.
32. Tilir Gaurav, Chaitra 1325 B.S. Quoted in Bandyopadhyay op.cit., p. 150.
34. The Statesman, 6 November 1917.
36. Indian Constitutional Reforms, Government of India's Despatch of March 5, 1919 and Connected Papers, p.4.
37. Pioneer, 22 December 1917.
38. Indian Constitutional Reforms, Government of India's Despatch of March 5, 1919 and Connected Papers, p.5.
40. Ibid.
42. Ibid. p. 244.
43. Indian Constitutional Reforms, Government of India's Despatch of March 5, 1919 and Connected Papers, p.2.
44. Ibid.
46. The Report was drafted by Montagu's Secretary William Marris (later Governor of the U.P.) and published in July 1918. The Government of India Bill based on it was introduced in the House of Commons on June 2, 1919. The Joint Parliamentary Committee, presided over by Lord Selbourne, altered some provisions of the Bill and submitted its report in November 1919. The Bill became an Act on December 23, 1919, and came into full operation in 1921.


48. Ibid.

49. Ibid. para 229.

50. Ibid. para 232.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid. para 225.


54. The members of the Committee were Sir Frank G. Sly, Sahibzada Aftab Ahmed Khan, W.M. Hailey, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Malcolm N. Hogg, Srinivasa Sastri with P.C. Tallents to act as the Secretary of the Committee. There were also added members taken from the Government of India and the provinces of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, U.P., Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, C.P. and Berar, and Assam.

55. However, on 26 February 1919 only the reports of the Franchise and Functions Committees (both being presided over by Lord Southborough) were submitted. The report of the third committee which was presided over by Lord Crewe and which held its sittings in London was submitted at a later date and was made available for examination by the Joint Select Committee (presided over by Lord Selbourne). The report of the Joint Select Committee was accepted by the Parliament and the Act of 1919 came into force. Rushbrook Williams L.F., India in 1919, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 40, 83, 188-191.
56. R.Sgh.C. pp. 95 seq.
57. Ibid., Appendix XIV, pp. 103 seq and 124-127.
59. Ibid. p. 8.
60. Ibid. p. 9.
62. Fifth Despatch on India Constitutional Reforms (Franchise) dated April 23, 1919. Among the signatories of the Despatch were Chelmsford, C.C. Munro, C.S. Nair, G.R. Lowndes, W.H. Vincent and T.H. Holland.
63. Ibid. p. 5. Non-official nominations for the Depressed Classes amounted to in Madras - 2, Bombay - 1, Bengal - 1, United Provinces - 1, Bihar and Orissa - 1, and Central Provinces - 1. There were no allotment for Punjab and Assam.
64. Ibid. p. 6.
66. Fifth Despatch on Indian Constitutional Reforms (Franchise), 23 April 1919, p. 6.
68. G.I. Home (Public), File no. 290/1925.
"The miserable hath no other medicine
But only hope".
- William Shakespeare
Measure for Measure. III. i. 2.

The constitution of Statutory Commission under the chairmanship of John Simon produced a mixed reaction on the Indian mind. The Indian National Congress felt humiliated because no Indian was accommodated on the Commission. The Congress interpreted it as a sign of bureaucratic indifference to the political interests of the country. But a large majority belonging to the backward classes including people of the Depressed Classes thought that the government seriously intended to redress their grievances and opportunities are forthcoming under which they would soon become co-sharers of political power in the country. The need of the time, was therefore, to effectively represent their case to the Commission. This was not quite an easy job. The term 'Depressed Class' was nowhere clearly defined and no one was very certain about which other castes, tribes or groups might be included as components of the category loosely called backward class. In the circumstances the Commission received barrage of representations from various groups each claiming special representation in the legislatures. However, when the report of the Statutory Commission came out in 1930 the intention of the colonial masters became soon clear to all. The government wanted to bide its time and had no intention to solve the problem. Once again the expectations of the backward classes were belied.
The Reform Act 1919 could not come up to the expectation of the Depressed Classes. Already the general criticism was levelled against government, not merely in the Nationalist but also in the Moderate press that the reform scheme as originally conceived had been whittled down and diminished by the recommendations of the Southborough Committee. It is true that the meagre concessions recommended for them did not seem to be acceptable even to the Government of India which made a little large allocation of seats for the depressed people. But they were not just enough and consequently there was much discontent among those people. It may be noted here that the Reforms Enquiry Committee constituted in June 1924 was also aware that the representation of the depressed people had been far from satisfactory. Speaking on behalf of the United Provinces Liberal Association, H.N. Kunzru and Gokarnnath Mishra who were examined as witnesses by the Committee (August 13, 1924) openly criticised the Act because "the custodians of the political power" under the Act, "hitherto cannot claim a record of useful activity to their credit on behalf of the untouchables". The Committee also admitted in its Report (paragraph 64) that the representation granted to the Depressed Classes under the scheme was inadequate. The minority report of the Committee also made a clear suggestion on representation of the Depressed Classes:
"As regards the representation of the depressed and working classes, we are of the opinion that the correct principle to follow would be to lower the franchise so as to give them a chance, through the open door of election in general electorates; but where practical considerations point to a different conclusion, we would suggest that for the next few years only special constituencies might be framed for them". (3)

However, before long a decision on the basis of the report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee was taken the government announced the constitution of another commission called the Indian Statutory Commission for the purpose of enquiring into the working of the system of government (November 8, 1927). (4) It may be noted here that at the time of the Reforms Act 1919 the parliament also enacted that at the end of ten years at the latest, a Statutory Commission should be appointed to examine and report upon the progress made towards realisation of the goal of responsible government. The proposed commission however, was constituted two years before its due time.

The newly constituted Statutory Commission because of its all white character failed to generate hope in the mind of a large section of Indian population who greeted its members with black flag and boycott. But the reaction of the Depressed Classes was altogether different. They saw in the Commission an opportunity to resubmit and plead for their case which may result in the fulfilment of their political aspiration. They felt sure that the high caste dominated Congress would not like to see them gaining their legitimate share in the power politics which might lead to the erosion of their
preponderating influence in the politics of the country. The non-Brahmins who at one time seemed to be sympathetic to them did no longer appear to be their supporters especially since when the Justice Party came to power in Madras in 1921. Led by M.C. Rajah the Depressed Classes, therefore, broke away from the party and protested against its indifference to their cause.\(^{(5)}\) In the second session of South India Adi Dravida Congress, held at Koilpatti of the Tinevelly district in 1923, M.C. Rajah pointed out that the Justice Party had no real solicitude for the welfare of the Depressed Classes, that they only "shed crocodile tears and pose as friends of the Depressed Classes".\(^{(6)}\) In the same year, a deputation of the Adi Dravidas led by him complained to the Governor of Madras, Lord Willingdon, that the Justice Party had not done justice to them in the matter of nomination of their members to the legislature, local boards and appointment to government service.\(^{(7)}\) Disenchanted by all means the depressed people now looked forward to the colonial government which alone, they thought, could do them justice. The structure of power alignment during the post-Reform period in India, therefore, conformed to this basic rule of convenience. The depressed people needed to win their case and quite naturally therefore they abandoned the nationalist line of anti-imperialist agitation in order to lean more and more on the side of the government. At the same time they had also come to express their separate identity by means of an open disavowal of their friendly relationship with other like-minded organisations (the Madras Justice Party for example) who grew, of late indifferent to them.

The community consciousness of the depressed people revealed
itself in most of their attempts to establish themselves as a social group with distinct political interests, entitled to special consideration by the government. Thus in Calcutta, in a meeting of the Depressed Classes held in the Albert Hall under the presidency of Mukunda Behari Mullick on 7 December 1924, it was declared that if they were to obtain government jobs in proportion to their number, occupy more seats in the Legislative Councils, district boards, local boards and municipalities and make allround progress, they should combine against the so-called higher castes, especially the Brahmins and if possible non-co-operate with them.

In Central Provinces the Depressed Classes exhibited their class consciousness by breaking away from the non-Brahmin reform association, the Satya Sodhak Samaj, as a mark of protest against the alliance of both the non-Brahmins and the Brahmins for denying socio-religious equality to the Depressed Classes. In 1921, in Bela in the district of Nagpur the Mahar community also expressed similar exasperation against the non-Brahmins. It is true that the non-Brahmin movement ostensibly included all communities except the Brahmins and there had been also efforts to include the Depressed Classes in it. But as a matter of fact instances were not rare to indicate that there had already developed a cleavage between the non-Brahmin caste Hindus and the untouchables.

In the Mainapuri, Itwah, Etah and Kanpur districts of the United Provinces a movement called the Adi Hindu Andolan was going on among the Depressed Classes by the mid twenties. The spokesmen of the movement were bitter against the caste Hindus whom they branded
as 'hated conquerors responsible for the present lot of the suppressed classes'. They propounded the theory that the Depressed Classes were the original inhabitants of India who were finally reduced to the position of serfs by the Aryan invaders. The protagonists of the movement expressed loyalty to the 'benevolent British Raj' but for whom they held, "the caste Hindus would have crushed the untouchables to an unimaginable degree". They made a strong demand for separate representation and a fair proportion of government jobs. (11)

The separatist Depressed Class not only broke away from their one-time allies. At almost the same time they also took to the policy of keeping aloof from the non-co-operation movement. This is because they did not want to be involved in the action programme of a political party which they thought had seldom espoused their cause. Thus when the Congress decided to boycott the programme of royal visit to India the Depressed Classes arranged for extending ovation to the Prince. In the Bombay Town Hall some of these people held a meeting for honouring the Prince. In Delhi and Oudh, the Chammars also welcomed the Prince because they thought that the visit of the Prince 'would in some way lead to the lifting of their burdens'. (12) In Bengal the Namasudras remained aloof from the non-co-operation movement and in a meeting held at Sannyasi in the district of Khulna on 18 March 1922, their leader Mukunda Behari Mullick declared that it would be suicidal for the Namasudras to join the Congress-led non-co-operation movement. In his public address Mullick had not merely advised his audience to ignore the threats or coaxings of the Congress but had also expressed his
gratitude to the British government which, he held, made no
distinction on grounds of caste and creed, and had largely helped
the Namasudras to make rapid advance.  

However, the whole texture of Indian politics changed with
the rise of Gandhi. Under his stewardship the Nagpur Congress
adopted a highly significant political resolution. In order "to
establish Swaraj within one year", it urged all bodies "to settle
disputes between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, and to make special
efforts to rid Hinduism of reproach of untouchability". As a
result, there was a widespread belief among some of the lower castes
of Bengal that the non-co-operation will work as a great leveller of
caste disparities. It was also believed that Gandhi's 'charismatic
appeal' would reach deep down to the bottom layer of the society,
the tribals, the low castes, the landless labourers - all of whom
began to show "a contempt of all authority". But the miracle did
never happen. Almost nothing was done in the direction of social
reform and no major economic programme was ever undertaken. Of
course the Working Committee of the Congress at its meeting in
Bardoli in February 1922 had drawn up a programme of social reform.
The programme held out a promise "to organise the Depressed Classes
for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral
condition, to induce them to send their children to national
schools, and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which the
other citizens enjoy". But the Bardoli decision proved to be a
fiasco largely because the responsibility for implementing the
programme was entrusted with G.B. Deshpande, an orthodox Brahmin
with whom it was not possible for Swami Sraddhananda to work together. So the depressed people everywhere in India stood completely frustrated. As a result, although the rich Mahishya farmers felt no hesitation about joining the Congress, the political response of the depressed castes like the Namasudras or the Rajbanshis was rather weak. That the Congress including other high caste Hindus had always ignored the interests of the depressed people was also categorically asserted by the Namasudras, the most vocal and politically conscious section among the community. Rasik Lal Biswas, Joint Secretary of the All-Bengal Namasudra Association complained that 'past experience has confirmed' that the interests of the depressed people were never looked after by the "heaven-born guardians of the masses". Biswas used a guarded language, but his insinuation is quite clear, although he did not name any party or people as the target of his invectives. In its report submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission the Government of Bengal also made a similar observation. The report stated that although "each party feels that it must express sympathy" with the needs of the depressed people nobody cared to uphold their case in the first Council constituted under the Reforms Act of 1919. The case of these luckless people was to be placed alone by a single nominated representative of their class in the Council. "There is", therefore, the report adds

"more than a little truth in the bitter words of a speaker on the Budget of 1922: 'So far as the sweet words are concerned, I admit that from the highest rulers of the province to the so-called leagues,
everyone shows sympathy with the condition of the backward classes. But when the time for practical action comes, all sympathy evaporates'.

The attitude of the depressed people, their stout refusal to participate in the non-co-operation movement and their policy to desert the Congress and make alliance with the colonial masters evoked wide-spread criticism in the nationalist circle. Gandhi criticised them for being overzealous to organise a meeting in the Bombay Town Hall for giving reception to the Prince of Wales. "The meeting is for honouring the Prince. This serves the Government's own interest. So far as I know, this is for the first time a meeting of Antyajas is to take place in the Town Hall of Bombay. This is nothing but flattery or bribing. Moreover the Government will readily welcome anyone who wants to join in honouring the Prince". At Meerut, on the occasion of the Prince's visit, the address of welcome presented by the Chamars was alleged to have been prepared by the Government officials. In Madras, fearing the 'prospect of a vigorous no tax-payment campaign' during the non-co-operation movement, the authorities declared their intention 'to take away the lands of those who would not pay land revenue and give them to members of the depressed classes'. This announcement was interpreted by the Modern Review, a nationalist periodical of Calcutta, as proceeding 'out of a political motive based on the policy of divide and rule', because "there are poor and landless men among the depressed classes as also among other classes".

The nationalist circle further pointed out that the loyalty
of the Depressed Classes was not always devoid of ulterior personal motives because it was soon discovered that most of their great spokesmen were either already included in the list of favours of the government or they pleaded for nomination to the legislatures as rewards for their loyalty and anti-Congress activities. Thus Ganesh Akaji Gavai, a Mahar and subsequently the General Secretary of All-India Depressed Classes Association who served as the member of Central Provinces and Berar Legislative Council for about twenty-five years also pleaded for his nomination to the Central Legislative Assembly. Similarly Khem Chand, President of Sri Jatav (Chamar) Sabha, Etah, U.P. and Nirode Behary Mullick of Bengal received the patronage of government and ultimately became distinguished members of their respective provincial Councils.

But then it will be an oversimplification if one would rather uncharitably conclude that the basic impulse for opposing the nationalist movement and collaborating with the British government was nothing more than a selfish desire for loaves and fishes. The age-old disparities between the depressed people and the higher caste Hindus, in terms of economic achievements and social status undoubtedly served to alienate the two categories (the caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes) for ever. The depressed people were bitter about the high caste men for they knew that the privileged upper caste Hindus, all entrenched in power and social influence were unable to like the advancement of the Depressed Classes. They also knew that in India "politics is nothing but theology in action" and it is this theology which the depressed people would like to destroy with the support of the enlightened British masters. So in
this context' when the British government took interest in the elevation of the depressed people through the most effective means of 'protective discrimination', they were easily brought sentimentally closer to the Raj. "But this attachment, was also embedded in an ideology that emanated from a different perception of history and a different attitude to colonial regime, vis-a-vis those of the nationalists". This attitudinal difference was largely an outcome of a process of social acceleration symbolised by the British rule:

"As the nationalists portrayed the establishment of colonial rule as a break with a glorious past, the lower caste people considered the new regime to be an improvement over the past. The new era seemed to be pregnant with new possibilities, particularly that of permanent elimination of the age-old disparities, discriminations and disabilities".

This image of a golden present dominated the minds of the down-trodden and the under-privileged people who were so long considered as no better than marginal men in a traditional, caste-ridden society. The high rhetorics of nationalism and patriotism could, therefore, make little impact upon this socially inferior categories to whom the colonial masters appeared to be more humane and responsive to their legitimate demands as human beings than the high caste men of their own country. Like the Buddhist period, observed 'Subarnabanik Samachar', "an age of equality among the Hindus has again been ushered in". Under the 'rule of the
generous English', noted 'Tilir Gaurab', "many non-Brahman have attained self-realisation". In this new "egalitarian rule", wrote another Saha penegyrist, anyone could aspire for self-improvement, as education and wealth had become equally accessible. "To all these social groups, therefore, any political movement against British rule appeared to be steps in historical retrogression, as attempts to put the clock back and hence against their legitimate community-centric interests".\(^{25}\) For the depressed people, loyalty to the Raj was also a means for overcoming their social humiliation.

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It has already been stated that the Indian Statutory Commission otherwise known as Simon Commission was appointed in 1927 i.e. two years earlier than when it was due as a concession to the Indian demand for early revision of the Constitution. The Commission was appointed "for the purpose of inquiring into the working of the system of Government, and the development of representative institutions in India, with a view to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing in India". The task of the Commission was not easy, it was neither allowed to work in peace. However, it was subsequently laid down that the members of the Commission were to co-operate with the elected members of the Indian Legislatures, who were to report simultaneously but not jointly with the members of the Commission. The Indian Legislative Assembly boycotted the Commission. But partial co-operation was received from the Provincial Legislative Councils. The Commission set out to work through a 'Joint Free Conference' presided over by Sir John himself and consisting of seven British Commissioners and a
corresponding body of representatives chosen by the Indian Legislatures. The Commission sitting as the Joint Free Conference commenced its task at Poona on the 15th October 1928. The Report of the Commission was issued in May 1930.

A large number of documents representing the case of the depressed people including the non-Brahmins and other backward classes were placed before the Commission. Among them were the memorandum submitted by -

1. All-India Depressed Classes Association.
3. C.P. and Berar non-Brahmin Political Association.
5. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on behalf of the Depressed Classes of the Bombay Presidency.
8. All-India Shri Jatava Mahasabha.
10. Yadava (Gopa) Mahasabha.
11. All-India Yadava Mahasabha.
12. All-Bengal Namasudra Association.
14. Depressed Classes of Madras Presidency, and
15. All-India Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha and Madras Arundhati Maha Jana Sabha.

Memorandum were also submitted by leading individuals in their personal capacity such as those by Mr. Rama Charana, Munshi Hari Tamta, Ram Prasad Ahir and Dr. R.V. Khedkar. A large number of
deputations also met the Commission. Among them were those sent by non-Brahmin Political Association from C.P. and Berar, the All-India Depressed Classes Association and C.P. and Berar Depressed Classes Association, Provincial Yadava Mahasabha and All-India Yadava Mahasabha. The Commission also examined a number of witnesses representing these classes. They included such all-India figures like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Dr. P.G. Solanki, M.C. Rajah, G.A. Gavai, Devidass Jatato, R.S. Nikalje including B.C. Mandal and D. Roy from Bengal. (27)

In working out a system of reformed franchise and representation the Simon Commission first faced the problem of how to delineate the paradigm of some analogous and overlapping categories like the non-Brahmins, the backward classes and most importantly the Depressed Classes. If electoral reforms were to be taken up as the primary responsibility of the Commission, then the precise area in which the work is to commence required to be clearly defined. Demands for communal representation were occasionally laid on behalf of these classes. But how to define a community whose claim to segregation was based on a variety of reasons - economic backwardness, social apartheid if one is permitted to use the term, cultural differentiation and non-conformist religious attitude as in the case of the Animists and the tribals? The demands often made by the Depressed Classes that they being Hindu outcastes were considered as Antyajas, i.e. not Hindus and therefore should be treated as a separate community may be taken as an expression of anguish for the ill-treatment meted out to them by the high caste
Hindus. However, it may not be out of place to mention here that caste being also a status symbol when many Hindus (for example, the Mahishyas of Midnapore) because of their uncertain standing in the Hindu society were grouped together with the Depressed Classes expressed their faith in the Hindu view of social fragmentation by demanding to be denotified soon. Old beliefs do not die out very soon. They are almost inviolable in a traditional society. Then again the claim of such people on the ground of their depressed state of living was whittled away by Subramania Ayyer who while being examined by the Statutory Commission remarked, "I am under the belief that India as a whole is a depressed nation, and that every person who is carrying on his old traditional calling, which is not in very much demand by the people and who therefore gets low wages and less honour, is depressed in the real sense of the term". Ayyer's meet-the-press like comment need not be taken very seriously. But it indicates that the term can be defined with as much elasticity as one would prefer to.

As for the non-Brahmins, the category was sought to be defined by the President of the non-Brahmin Political Association of Central Provinces and Berar. In his memorandum submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission it was stated:

"The Non-Brahmin Party, as the name implies, includes all except the Brahmins. Its membership is open to all Hindus, Muhammadans, Christians, Jains Parsees and everyone else except the Brahmins".
The term was further clarified in some other part of the same memorandum. The party, it was stated consisted mainly of the masses who were exploited by the Brahmins. The non-Brahmin masses, according to this interpretation were mainly agriculturists and labourers and were also said to be 'the producers of the wealth of the country, and are mostly residents of the rural areas'. The fact that G.A. Gavai, a member of the Depressed Class belonging to the Mahar community was closely connected with the said Association indicates that the organisations of the non-Brahmins also included the Depressed Classes. What appears to be, however most striking in this case is that the said memorandum urged upon the Commission to form four communal electorates keeping the Depressed Classes and the Non-Brahmins as two distinctly separate categories. The two groups may therefore be taken as components of a larger category - the backward Classes.

But in a sense the term Backward Class is also a misnomer. In the United Provinces Backward and Depressed Classes were often used as interchangeable terms so much so that the people there belonging to the Depressed Classes would like to be called backward Classes. This is not because the term Depressed Class appeared to be specially odious but clearly because the term backward Class had a wider connotation, meaning thereby the touchables as well as the Depressed Class untouchables. Thus in his supplementary memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission Rama Charana, an Advocate from U.P. remarked -
"This Government has never used untouchability as the test of depression, and rightly too. In other words, political as opposed to social depression has been the test with the U.P. Government...If the Government were to adopt untouchability as the test many castes who though not untouchable but who are as depressed as untouchables, would not be covered by the term. What the Government wants to do is to give special protection to the classes who are politically backward either due to untouchability or any other causes". (30)

Rama Charana had further named the castes who were included in the list of the Depressed Classes as shown in the Census Report, 1921. There were altogether fifty-two castes (the fifty-third being shown as 'others') mentioned in the list, but "None of these castes", Rama Charana held, "except that of Bhangies are strictly speaking untouchables". Again "Kahars have been touchables always but they are as backward politically and economically as are the Chamars. Then again the same caste which is touchable in one place is untouchable in another place". (31) Rama Charana had further referred to the Kumaon division of U.P. where all castes except Brahmins, Thakurs and Beniyas were untouchables while most of them were touchables in the plains. "It will be thus seen that both touchable and untouchable castes...have been considered as depressed classes in these provinces both by champions of these classes and also by Government itself and census authorities".

Again in Bengal the term Depressed Class as understood by Rasik Lal Biswas, Joint Secretary of the All-Bengal Namasudra
Association also meant the Backward Classes. In his memorandum submitted to the Commission he had pointed out in most assertive language that barring the educationally advanced and privileged Hindus "the rest because of their backwardness of education have lagged themselves behind and are now put under the term "Depressed Classes (backward classes)". The word in paranthesis indicates that in Bengal "Depressed" and "Backward Class" were used as interchangeable expressions.

However, the views of Biswas did not find corroboration in the official circle. Thus W.S. Hopkyns, Special Officer, Reform, when examined by the Statutory Commission failed to endorse the opinion of Biswas. Further in a memorandum submitted by the Govt. of Bengal the views of the All-Bengal Namasudra Association was clearly contradicted. The term Depressed Classes the government report confirmed, had been left undefined. But then

"It has not quite the same meaning as the 'backward classes' many of whom though 'backward' in education and standards of living could not by any means be described as 'depressed'. Examples of such are found amongst the Buddhists, Animists and certain of the lower caste of Hindus, and the poorer sections of Muhammadans".

Confusion became worst confounded when the government report freely referred to such groups like the Santals (tribals), 'the lower caste', the Namasudras and the 'untouchables' so as to get them all herded together under a common denomination - the Depressed Classes.
In Bengal the Depressed Classes were referred to by another nomenclature—the Supressed Classes. In its memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission the Bengal Depressed Classes Association remarked that the Depressed Classes comprises people who were stigmatised as untouchables and were also denied access into the public temples of the Hindus. The Association complained that though 'reckoned as Hindus' these people really belong to the 'supressed classes' of Hinduism. "These supressed classes" the Association observed

"prefer British rule to Home Rule for India. They remain aloof from the Swadeshi boycott, non-co-operation and recent independence movement started by the handful of agitating Indians." (34)

Depressed or Supressed whatever may be the nomenclature of this category, it was however commonly accepted that they were most often treated as untouchables although the rigidity of the idea of defilement by propinquity varied from place to place. In Madras it was perhaps worst of all. In Maharashtra and the Decan it was no less galling as could be gathered from the evidence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In Bengal it was not so rigid whereas in the Punjab and Assam it was almost absent.

It appears from the foregoing analysis that apart from untouchability backwardness is perhaps the most common criterion by which the Depressed Class could be recognised and identified. But such a flat method could little help the authorities which found it very difficult to define the category of the Depressed Classes.
As a matter of fact the Government of India "have consistently avoided themselves making any precise classification of the groups forming what are called the depressed classes". This is because of the fact that in the existing circumstances when not quite a few of the castes in the lower scale were trying for upward mobility and when the social reform movements already started to work for social regeneration, it was believed to be not very proper for the government to identify any particular caste or group as 'Depressed Class' specially when there was a chance for their elevation. Sir Henry Sharp while preparing his Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India made a very significant observation-

"Sometimes the whole community declares itself to be depressed with a view to reaping special concessions of education or appointment. Sometimes a caste or a sub-caste hitherto regarded by all as depressed totally repudiates the description and declares itself as good as its neighbours. On the whole the tendency is for the castes to edge themselves here and there into a higher scale by the assumption of new names and privileges."(36)

Sharp's comments serve to illustrate the difficulty of arriving at any correct definition of so vague a term as the Depressed Classes.

Even then attempts were made at different times to identify the Depressed Class components. In 1916 in consequence of a resolution moved in the Imperial Legislative Council, the
Government of India addressed local governments to ascertain their views on the subject of the amelioration of the condition of the Depressed Classes. In course of the correspondence that followed they stated that some definition was required of the term Depressed Classes. Apart from incidental references to the humbler sections of the community who were loosely called 'Depressed' largely due to poverty, the tenor of the discussion in the Imperial Council was to include in this expression (i) criminal and wandering tribes, (ii) aboriginal tribes and (iii) untouchables. The Government of India asked that the classification heads to be adopted by the local governments should be (a) Depressed Classes (i.e. untouchables), (b) aboriginal and hill tribes, and (c) criminal tribes and that the actual caste or tribes in each group should be enumerated. Accordingly reports were received from the various provincial governments prepared on the basis of their enumeration and assessment conducted in 1917-18. The data as regards the Depressed Classes furnished by the Provincial governments are as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Number of Depressed Class Castes/groups</th>
<th>Total Number of Depressed class population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras (25 districts)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>64,84,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16,35,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>67,42,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>83,74,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11,09,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30,60,232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further attempts towards enumeration and identification of the Depressed Classes were made by the Franchise Committee.
Southborough Committee, it may be recalled here did not recognise any such category but had grouped them together under a common head-'Hindus-others'. In the Appendices attached to the Report the Committee while making a region-wise enumeration of the castes/groups/sections who were included in the said category had also furnished the total number of their population. According to this report the Depressed Class ergo the 'Others' group mostly consisted of the untouchables. In Madras they were the Panchammas i.e. the Pariyaha, Pallans and Valluvans. In Bombay and Punjab they could not be permitted to enter the Hindu temples whereas elsewhere in India they were untouchables of the degree determined by the custom of the land. In paragraph 11 of the report the number of the Depressed Class population were shown as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>63,77,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>5,77,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>99,48,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>1,01,18,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>17,38,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>93,82,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.&amp; Berar</td>
<td>37,69,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>2,92,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,22,03,956</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next important occasion on which an attempt was made to estimate the number of the Depressed Classes in the country was in the Seventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India for the years 1912-17. In Appendix XIII at pages 92-94 of Volume II of that Review separate statistics for the Depressed Classes as noted overleaf were furnished.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Total number of Caste/tribe</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56,86,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16,35,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>67,42,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>Caste not given</td>
<td>83,74,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21,07,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12,36,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30,12,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>No less than 163 different tribes &amp; Castes</td>
<td>27,01,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,14,97,119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1921, the then Census Commissioner J.T. Marten experienced the same difficulties while trying to make a fresh estimate of the population of the Depressed Classes. Apart from paucity of data the Census Commissioner hesitated to offend any particular caste or group who may not like to be identified as member of the Depressed Class. But then Marten could not also avoid his responsibility. On the basis of information collected from his Provincial Census Superintendents he had finally completed his report which worked out a sum total 5,26,80,000 (52.68 millions) Depressed Class population for 15 regions including the provinces and the native states of Baroda, Gwalior, Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore. But Marten explained that the said figure represented "a rough estimate of the minimum numbers" whereas the actual figure should be "something between 55 and 60 millions in India Proper". The Franchise Committee accepted the census figure given by Marten. But thereafter in November 1927 "when speaking in Parliament on the
The conflicting estimate of the Depressed Class population indicated that the government itself was none too sure about its statistical findings. Such ambivalence on the part of the government could only result in a widespread controversy. Lala Lajpat Rai complained in the Legislative Assembly (16 February 1928) "that the estimate of approximately 30 millions in the Educational Progress Report for 1912-17" had been deliberately inflated to a figure of 60 millions. He was probably trying to establish that the government manipulated the figures with a motive to strengthen the Depressed Classes by unduly increasing their numbers and thereby to play off those people against the rest of the Hindu community. However G.S. Bajpai, Secretary to the Government in the Department of Education, Health and Lands corrected Lala Lajpat Rai and gave a different estimate of the Depressed Class population which he thought would be around 28.5 millions for only the Governor's provinces excluding Burma and Assam. Lord Winterton gave two other figures. According to him the total number of Depressed Classes in British India was 43 millions. But the number of untouchables worked out on the basis of data provided in provincial educational reports would not exceed 29 millions. Then again the statement of Bajpai and Lord Winterton was challenged by M.C. Rajah, President of the All-India Depressed Classes Association. Rajah had collected the figures of different
provinces gathered partially from the report of 1911 and the Census Report of 1921 and then concluded that the total population of the untouchables in India would be 52.44 millions. (41)

Most of the memoranda submitted to the Statutory Commission contained the demands for franchisal reforms including provisions for larger number of representation commensurate with the need and number of different interest-groups including the Marathas, the non-Brahmins, the Backward and most importantly the Depressed Classes all of whom, to quote a favourite coinage of the Cambridge historians, represented a 'ramshackle combination' against the Indian National Congress. A.N. Surve, Advocate and Fellow, University of Bombay for example wrote in his memorandum that "Communal electorate should continue if the communities concerned want them", but he did not support reservation for the Maratha caste as they had already shown to be able to return adequate number of their representatives. However he favoured an increased number of representation for the 'allied castes'. Of course Surve did not explain as to which castes would come under this category. But one could guess his viewpoint from the following extracts from his memorandum:

"The allied castes need protection, therefore steps should be taken for confining the benefit of the device i.e. reservation to them (i.e., the allied castes). In order to secure representation to all the allied castes, I would even recommend rotation or reservation of a particular constituency to a particular caste,
Surve was supported by S.K. Bole, Member of the Legislative Council of Bombay. Bole felt that under the existing circumstances when franchise could not be made universal "the principle of reservation of seats, nominations, separate electorate and constituencies is a dire necessity". He laid out a scheme of wide representation for such segment of society.

"...the need for reservation of seats to the backward communities in every province, separate constituencies for the depressed classes, special representation on the central and provincial legislature for labour and agricultural population should be embodied in the new Government of India Act".

The non-Brahmins of Central Provinces and Berar also demanded communal representation. In their scheme of electoral reform four distinctly separate communal electorate including those for the non-Brahmins and the Depressed Classes were clearly envisaged. However in their memorandum submitted in the Statutory Commission it was not clearly stated as to whether communal representation was demanded on the basis of backwardness of their community. In the circumstances one can only guess that the representation was
claimed as a safeguard against the predominating influence of the Brahmins who had kept them politically overshadowed for a long time. Curiously enough although demanding communal representation for the Depressed Classes (like those of their own non-Brahmin group) the non-Brahmin representative Rai Bahadur K.S. Naidu while presenting a deputation to the Commission admitted that their Association included members from the Muhammadans as also from the Depressed Classes. (44)

Then again the Marathas also demanded communal representation. In its memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission the All-India Maratha League proposed a fourfold division of the voters in the Deccan - (a) Brahmins, (b) Marathas, (c) Untouchables and the (d) rest. While making claims for communal representation the Secretary of the League remarked "Our group should be represented in the Provincial Legislature and the Central Legislature according to the strength of our population and the sacrifices we have undergone". The reasons for the claims of the Marathas were also most explicitly laid down by the Secretary of the League:

"Ours is a backward community and does not know how to protect itself from local politicians belonging to the other groups... In order to put a stop to this exploitation by others, we ask in the interests of our community for reserved seats... We comprise one-fifth of the population of this province and one-thirtieth of the total population of this country... we propose a change in the number of our reserved seats in the same proportion".(45)
As against the claims for communal representation/separate electorates made by these groups including the Depressed Classes, one may feel interested to know the reactions of the orthodox Brahmins. Srinivasa Acharya and Diwan Bahadur Kuppuswami Ayyer speaking on behalf of the orthodox Brahmins of Madras remarked that as a matter of general principle the claim of separate electorate should be discarded-

"...all communities should freely compete in the same electorate. Other people must assist these Depressed Classes to compete in the general electorate, and if they are not returned in larger numbers, they must be nominated". (46)

The Diwan Bahadur, particularly assured that the "Brahmins as a class have the least objection to their (i.e. the depressed people) being elevated".

But of all the representations and memoranda submitted to the Statutory Commission, perhaps the most forceful were those submitted on behalf of the different organisations of the Depressed Classes. They contained demands like reservation of seats in proportion to their population in the legislative bodies and local bodies, reservation of posts in the Executive Councils of the Governors and the Viceroy, widening of franchise in their favour either by abolishing property qualification or by introducing universal franchise, reservation of posts in the public services, special provisions for promoting their educational uplift, and
special measures for promoting their socio-economic uplift.

Speaking on behalf of the Bahiskrita Hitakarini Sabha, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the most eminent spokesmen of the depressed people commented "the Sabha does not wish to ask for Communal electorates. In its opinion, it would be sufficient if the depressed classes are provided with reserved seats in the general constituencies".\(^{47}\) The Servants of the Somavamshi Society, Bombay, wished that the Depressed Classes should be granted separate electorate in the same manner and on the same consideration it was granted to the Muhammadans under the Morley-Minto Reforms Act of 1909.\(^{48}\) The All-Bengal Namasudra Association did not clearly spell out their choice but was very certain that the interests of their community "can never be represented by another caste" and therefore demanded that "every community should be given a definite number or representatives in the legislative bodies...in proportion to the population of each".\(^{49}\) The All-India Depressed Classes Association claimed that their "communal interest should be safeguarded by means of communal representation based on communal electorates".\(^{50}\) As a matter of fact the Depressed Classes remained most steadfast to their claim for separate electorate. Dr. Ambedkar was asked by the members of the Central Committee of the Joint Conference as to what he thought about a possible communal tension that might grow in case separate electorates were granted to the depressed people. But he, however, made a nonchalant reply - "Even assuming it does lead to tension, I do not see how you can get rid of it"?\(^{51}\)
Most of the Depressed Class representatives demanded that adequate number of seats should be reserved for them. Dr. Ambedkar was very precise in the matter. He said that for the Bombay Legislative Council at least 22 seats should be reserved for the depressed people. Others were of opinion that the Depressed Class quota should be commensurate with their numerical strength.

By far the most significant demands were made in the area pertaining to the methods of representation. The All-Bengal Namasudra Association proposed reduction of the number of nominated members. "Representation on legislative bodies", the Association held "should be made directly by the people or electorates" in a manner that no "member of a non-Depressed community should be allowed to represent the Depressed Classes."(52) The Bahiskrita Hitakarini Sabha opposed the principle of nomination and insisted upon the extension of the principle of election to the Depressed Classes. The reason is that the Sabha believed that a "system of representation like that of nomination which deprives the depressed classes of "their" right must stand self condemned". (53) The Somavamshi Society besides supporting the system of election held that representation in order to be 'natural' must ensure that our representatives must be men selected from the rank and file or our community". (54) However Rama Charana placed an alternative suggestion-

"The present method of election will not be suitable to the depressed classes. Therefore in their case only those persons should be enrolled as electors who have
certain educational qualifications as well as those who may be nominated as electors by the organisations of the depressed classes. The number of electors will no doubt be limited but only such electors will choose the real representatives of the depressed classes". (55)

The demand of the All-India Depressed Classes Association was almost in tune with that of the Somavamshi Society. The Association proposed that,

"The representation of the Depressed Classes on the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly should be by nomination on the recommendation of the All-India Depressed Classes Association and the number of the Depressed Classes to be nominated should be one-sixth of the total strength of these bodies". (56)

The All-India Adi Dravida Maha Jana Sabha and the Madras Arundhati Maha Jana Sabha in a memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission expressed their confidence in the system of nomination which most other representatives of the Depressed Classes has straightway rejected. The two Sabhas dwelt on the hardship of the Hindu outcastes in Madras. Thereafter they suggested the means by which they could overcome their miseries.

"Nomination was and is the only method by which effective representation of a weak community can be secured. We plead that this system of nomination should continue in any reformed Council which you may advocate. If for any reason such a nomination becomes impracticable, we beg to suggest that, of the
one-fourth of the total number of seats we hope we shall be granted, one-half may be by election and the other half by nomination". (57)

The All-India Shri Jatav Mahasabha of the Chamars held a slightly different view than many of its fellow organisations. The Mahasabha insisted that seats "should be reserved for the depressed classes in proportion to their numerical strength". But then it had no objection to leave it to the discretion of the government to settle "the method of filling up those seats so long as they can be certain of those seats". The Mahasabha also gave a free hand to the government to finally decide whether separate electorate would be the most advantageous tool for the protection of the interests of the depressed people. (58)

Many of the Associations presenting their memoranda to the Statutory Commission also suggested methods of franchisal reform including plans for organisation of constituencies. Ownership of property of a certain value or payment of a minimum amount of tax to the government treasury as a determinant of voting right was described as very undesirable and repugnant to the principle of democracy. Ambedkar pleaded that the government demand "must be fixed so low as to bring it within the reach of the large majority of the poor and the oppressed sections of society... and the adult franchise is the only system of franchise which can be in keeping with the true meaning of" democracy. (59) The Somavamshi Society made a similar demand, "the franchise should be extended to all
adults in our community without any property or educational qualifications and should be on as wide a basis as possible"(60)
The Yadava (Gopa) Mahasabha representing the Gope and Ahir community of Bihar and Orissa also supported adult male suffrage while pointing at the same time that a sufficient number of seats should be reserved for their community "so long as their representation on the legislative bodies be not reasonably adequate due to their educational backwardness and also to influential parties exploiting the suffrage for their own political ends"(61)

While giving his justification for praying for 'election' to be substituted for 'nomination' Ambedkar also demanded another major concession for his community.

"Ministership is a very important privilege, and the depressed classes cannot afford to forego the same... under responsible government nominated members must continue to be ineligible from office. A system of representation like that of nomination which deprives the depressed classes of this right must stand self-condemned."(62)

The Kahar Sudharak Mahasabha of Kanpur also made a similar demand. In its memorandum submitted to the Commission the Sabha expressed that "at least one minister in the Provincial Government should be recruited from amongst the touchables and the untouchable depressed classes" of their community.(63) The Depressed classes Association of the Central Provinces also felt the need of having some minister(s) chosen from their community. "They must be given a
representative in the Cabinet to protect and advance their interests." (64) It may be incidentally noted here that the All-Bengal Namasudra Association did not make any demand for a position in the cabinet. However it demanded that at least one member of the Depressed Classes should find a place in the executive council, both in the Province and the Centre. (65)

Ambedkar's demand for increased representation of the Depressed Classes was based upon his argument that injustice was done upon these classes for their being erroneously included within the fold of the Hindu community. But as a matter of fact the Depressed Classes were not Hindu and as such they should better be treated as a minority community of India. But even as a minority their position and social standing was far worse than any other comparable minority (the Muhammadans for example) of the country. The Indian Depressed Classes, therefore deserved highest protection from the government. Such protection could be assured by meeting their claim for reserved seats accompanied by adult suffrage. However if adult franchise could not be granted then only the Depressed Classes would demand separate electorate for them. It may not be out of place to mention in this connection that notwithstanding his faith in the principle of adult suffrage Ambedkar maintained a rather dubious stand when question for extending the same privilege to the aboriginal tribes and to the criminal and hill tribes was placed for consideration of the Commission. At the first flash, Ambedkar said that he would support their claim. But a moment after he confessed that "with regard to the criminal tribes, it might not be a good thing to give them adult suffrage" and as for the
aboriginal he preferred a circumlocutory expression, "I do not think there is any harm in giving aborigines the right to vote". (66)

The recommendation of the Statutory Commission came out in May and were released for publication on the 24th June, 1930. The report is divided into twelve parts and covered 316 pages. (67) The recommendation contained therein were said to have been unanimously agreed upon.

At the outset the Commission recorded its observations on the problem of communal representation. The Commission felt convinced that there were quite substantial reasons for the claim "that communal feeling might be reduced by making both Hindu and Muhammadan members rely upon the support of a mixed electorate". But considering the Hindu-Muslim relation as it existed at the time the Commission considered it necessary to continue the system of separate electorate for the Muslims. However the Commission was aware that protection for 'special interests' as was the case for the Marathas in the Bombay Presidency and the non-Brahmins in Madras is also a form of communal representation. But strangely enough the Commission agreed to retain such reservation for the Marathas although the non-Brahmins of Madras could not be recommended for the same privilege to which they were used long since. Of course the Commission had its own justification for making such discriminatory recommendations. But they did not appear to be really convincing.
As for the Depressed Classes the existing system of getting representatives from their community solely by nomination cannot be accepted as a satisfactory solution of the problem for such a method provides "no opportunity for training them in politics". "It is clear", the Commission further noted with anxiety

"that even with a considerable lowering of the franchise - which would no doubt increase the proportion of depressed class voters - there would be no hope of the depressed classes getting their own representatives elected in general constituencies without special provision being made to secure it". (68)

Most of the Depressed Class representatives who claimed separate electorates with seats allocated on the basis of population scarcely knew that the total number of the depressed people enumerated on the all-India level could not be officially ascertained. Figures worked out at different levels being often speculative in nature the Commission had no opportunity to form any confident opinion in the matter. Judging from the standard of Bombay the Commission could at best say that not more than 2 per cent of the Depressed Class population in the general constituencies was in a position to exercise their rights of franchise and that in the absense of confirmed data the Commission cannot "recommend allocating seats to the depressed classes on the basis of their full population ratio".

There was also another side of the problem. The 'Depressed
Class' was nowhere clearly defined. The Commission had worked out a figure of the total Depressed Class population of Madras, Bombay and the Central Provinces which may not be at variance with the estimates received from the respective regions, "but in Bengal and United Provinces it may well be otherwise. "In the circumstances no decision can be taken until so long the Depressed Class category is well defined for each of the regions and an assessment of their regionwise total number is made by an expert committee.

In consideration of all the facts noted above the Commission finally proposed that in all the eight provinces there should be some reservations of seats for the Depressed Classes in non-Muhammadan constituencies. But the Commission while making this recommendation remained alive to another problem namely the possibility of a dummy candidate fielded by the high caste men who may operate as a stooge in the hands of his patrons. The Commission, therefore, thought "that rules might be made providing that the Governor, after consultation with such associations or otherwise, as he thinks best, should certify which candidates are authorised to stand for the depressed class seats". Such a safeguard, it was thought, would prevent the appearance of spurious candidates masquerading for political and electoral gains.

The Commission was further aware that anxieties were expressed in some quarters that, at first, sufficient candidates may not be found in the ranks of the Depressed Class themselves,
qualified by education and experience to represent them in the provincial legislature. The Commission considered this to be a problem of a temporary nature and therefore recommended a temporary expedient for overcoming the difficulty. The Commission proposed to "confer upon the Governor the further power, provided he is satisfied that this is really the case, of authorising persons, whether men or women, who are not themselves members of the depressed classes but who have shown special interest in their welfare, to be amongst the approved candidates, or, alternatively, of nominating them for certain of the reserved seats". But since this could by no means become a permanent problem the Commission would like to confer this special power for a maximum period of ten years by which time it could be reasonably believed that there would be no more dearth of qualified Depressed Class candidates.

While making out a case for reservation the Commission had rejected the proposal of separate electorate in defence of which the case for the Muhammadans were most often argued by the representatives of the depressed people. But to the Commission's way of looking at things such an argument did not hold good, "we are averse from stereotyping the differences between the depressed classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step, which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to the ultimate and political amalgamation with others". Moreover a separate electorate for an undefined category whereof the members through a
In Chapter III, Part II of its recommendations the Commission also dwelt on the problem of franchise. The property qualification, according to the considered opinion of the Commission had debarred the economically depressed section of the society from the use of a most important citizen's right to which it would be otherwise entitled. The Commission estimated that with a 6.7 per cent share of the population the Muhammadans in Madras Presidency comprised 4.7 per cent of the voters. But with a 15.5 per cent of the population the Depressed Classes in the same Presidency were only 4.1 per cent of the total number of voters. Such a disparity can only be reduced by lowering the property qualification. The Commission therefore, while proposing to set up a suitable body which may frame schemes 'to enfranchise about 10 per cent of the total population' also recommended for lowering the property qualification for voters. However, it may be noted in this connection that the Commission could not be sure as to what extent such a measure when implemented would really benefit the Depressed
Classes. "The effect on the depressed classes of lowering the franchise may not be as marked, but in their case too, as the qualification is lowered their voting ratio will rise".\(^{(71)}\)

The recommendations of the Simon Commission appeared to be satisfactory to none. The Indian National Congress was already disillusioned and without caring for what the Commission would recommend, the Congress had already submitted the Nenru Report so as to let the people of India feel that it could more competently frame a more acceptable constitution for India. But Congress apart, the recommendations of the Commission came in for sharp criticism at other quarter as well. A perusal of the Council debates of August 1930 would show that the Hindus and Muhammadans were united in considering the recommendations as 'disappointing and retrograde'. Speaking on the floor of the Council men like J.K. Sengupta, a retired Bengal Civilion characterised the report as 'a constitutional monstrosity'.\(^{(72)}\)

But most dismal was the frustration of the Depressed Classes. The separatist Depressed Class associations vehemently attacked the recommendations of the Statutory Commission. While the reservation of seats in joint electorates was condemned on the ground that it would result in the election of the nominees of the general electorate i.e., mainly the caste Hindus, the power of certification given to the Governor was disapproved as being intended to return only the allies of the Government. \textit{Patit Pavan}, a Depressed Class mouthpiece, observed:
"Just as the political unity between the untouchables and other caste Hindus is desirable, so is that between Hindus and Muslims in view of the country's welfare. The Simon Commission recommends separate electorate for the Muslims, is it not then wonderful that the same Commission talks of high principle in the case of the untouchables? The Commission's recommendations for the untouchables are quite detrimental to the uplift of that community." (73)

The reasons for the failure of the depressed people to win at the first round were pointed out by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. His comment touched a melancholy note when speaking at the Nagpur Congress of the Depressed Classes in August 1930 he clearly confessed that "there is no such thing as a public opinion of the Depressed Classes" and consequently though there was no fundamental difference of opinion among the various Depressed Class associations which shared almost common grievances there was no concerted action by the Depressed Classes as a whole". (74) Casteism with its canker of the feeling of superiority hampered the unity among the Depressed Classes as in the case of the caste Hindus. For example, in Bombay Presidency the Mahars and Chamars vied with each other on their exclusive claims for superiority over others. (75) Such disunity as Ambedkar would aver in a tone of self-criticism might balk the plans of the Depressed Classes. But nothing undaunted they would further look to the Round Table Conference where their spokesmen (Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan) would represent their case with renewed vigour. The colonial masters, as one may
describe in the words of Boswell's Life of Johnson, had always fed them "with a continual renovation of hope, to end in a constant succession of disappointment".
NOTES

1. The Committee also known as Muddiman Committee consisted of three officials namely Sir Alexander Muddiman, Sir Muhammad Shafi, Sir H. Moncreiff-Smith including six non-officials of whom one Sir Arthur Froom to represent the European Community and five Indians namely the Maharaja of Burdwan, Sir Sivaswami Iyer, Mr. Jinnah, Dr. Paranjpye and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Motilal Nehru was offered a seat but he declined to accept the offer on the ground that the Committee had no power to enquire into the defects of the Act itself, as distinguished from its working. See IAR. Vol. I (1924), p. 542.


6. Ibid., p. 192.

7. Saraswathi S., op.cit., p. 171.

8. Ibid.


10. SCR. Vol. XIII, p. 94. Interestingly Hugh Owen interpreted non-Brahmin solidarity in terms of movements of the rural bourgeoisie and its urban commercial bourgeois allies. He has
quoted Christopher Baker to show that even the Justice Party was born as a faction and its 'non-Brahman ideologies were an early casualty' and remained as little more than communal rhetoric. See Hugh Owen, *The Indian Nationalist Movement*, New Delhi, publication date not mentioned, pp. 22, 33.

11. See letter from a correspondent to M.K. Gandhi in *Young India*, 24 September 1925.


20. Letter from a correspondent to M.K. Gandhi in *Young India*, 24 September 1925.


23. See the Chapter on 'Caste and Protective Discrimination' in Bandyopadhyay S., *op.cit*.

27. The most important of these memoranda, deputations and evidence can be found in SCR. Vols XVI-XVII.
29. Ibid. p. 509.
31. Ibid. p. 349.
34. Ibid. Vol. XVII. p. 96.
37. However figures were not available from Punjab where because of Muhammadan and Sikh influence caste distinctions were less rigid than in other parts of India. Assam also did not submit any report as "the depressed classes or untouchables could scarcely be said to have any representative in the province". The list submitted by other provinces were kept unpublished as "no provincial government contemplated lending itself to lebelling any particular caste or tribe with the stigma of untouchability". Ibid. pp. 1347-1349.
38. See before p. 74.
39. Ibid. p. 1354-1355.
40. However the estimate of Marten did not include Burma although it took into account the figures received from Assam and some native states of India. Ibid. p. 1354.
41. Ibid. p. 1357.


43. Memorandum from S.K. Bole. Ibid. p. 31.

44. Deputation from the C.P. and Berar Non-Brahmin Political Association. SCR. Vol. XVII. p. 512, Qn. no. 102. Also see the memorandum submitted by the President of the said Association. Ibid. p. 509.

45. Memorandum submitted by the Secretary, All-India Maratha League. SCR. Vol. XVI.

46. Deputation of the orthodox Brahmins. SCR. Vol. XVII. p. 347, Qn. no. 37.


49. Memorandum submitted by the All-Bengal Namasudra Association. SCR. Vol. XVII. p. 90.

50. Memorandum submitted by the All-India Depressed Classes Association. Ibid. p. 505.


52. SCR. Vol. XVII, p. 90.


54. Ibid. p. 48, para 11.

55. Ibid. p. 348.

56. SCR. Vol. XVII, pp. 504, 505.
57. Ibid. p. 284.
58. Memorandum submitted by the All-India Shri Jatav Mahasabha. SCR. Vol. XVI, p. 352.
59. Ibid. p. 41.
60. Ibid. p. 48.
61. Memorandum submitted by Yadava Mahasabha. Ibid. p. 455.
62. Ibid. p. 40.
63. Ibid. p. 356.
64. Ibid. Vol. XVII, p. 507.
65. Ibid. p. 91.
67. SCR. Vol. II. The subject matter of the present paper is contained in Chapter II and Chapter III of Part II with two Appendices (Nos. VII & VIII) of Chapter II.
68. Ibid. p. 65.
69. Ibid. p. 66.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid. p. 93.
75. The Times of India (Bombay), 20 October 1931 (Editorial).
The task of framing a constitution for India had been a very trying exercise for the leaders. The demand of the various interest-groups had to be met. Also there must be adequate provisions in the new constitution which would protect the minorities with necessary safeguards. On behalf of the Indian National Congress, Pandit Motilal Nehru had drawn up a constitution, which as it was claimed would be able to satisfy all. But except the hard-core Congress people it was found to be acceptable to none. The British Government already aware of the division among the Indians proposed to settle the issues across the table. But the series of Round Table Conference became at once the stage for an intolerable wrestle where everybody fought against everyone else and no decision could be arrived at. Outside London further efforts to come to a settlement (the one through Rajah-Moonje Pact being never implemented) was precipitated by the Prime Minister's peremptory deal called the Communal Award which led to the epic fast and then signing of the Poona agreement. The Poona Pact brought some windfall electoral gains for the Depressed people. But ere long they proved to be more elusive than real.
CHAPTER IV

The Scheme for Electoral Concessions: Consensus through Disagreement (1930-32)

The Report of the Simon Commission was published towards the middle of 1930. Two years earlier an alternative scheme of reform called the Nehru Report (1928) was also submitted on behalf of the nationalists who boycotted the Simon Commission. But none of these Reports could satisfy the political aspirations of the Depressed Classes. The Simon Commission retained the non-Muslim joint electorate and left the question of franchisal qualification undecided. The Nehru Report was even more outrageous. It ruled out separate electorates as being most harmful for the nation. At the same time 'reservation' was provided for none other than Muslims. The expectations of the Depressed Classes were, therefore, totally belied.

Such outright rejection of their claims at all quarters had stiffened the attitude of the depressed people. They remained unyielding in their demand for adequate representation in the Legislature. They also demanded weightage in the matter of their representation although they agreed that the quantum of weightage may vary in order to suit the need of changing circumstances. As for the nature of the electorates it was further stated that although separate electorates would be more conducive to the interest of the depressed people they would nevertheless accept
joint electorates with reserved seats if adult suffrage is introduced as a matter of general principle. These demands were made in a meeting of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held at Nagpur immediately after the publication of the Report of Simon Commission. In his Presidential address at the same conference Dr. Ambedkar indicted the government as well as the nationalists for not giving proper attention to the interests of the Depressed Classes. He was particularly most critical of the nationalists who, he alleged tried always to defer the question of settlement of the social problems until 'the political freedom of the country is achieved'.(1) The Depressed Classes, Ambedkar further held were not prepared to wait for an indefinite time. They wanted immediate 'adjustment of the political machine' so as to be partners in the future government of the country. He also demanded adequate safeguards for the Depressed Classes of India.

The government paid no heed to the Nehru Report which was the result of a unilateral exercise on the part of the nationalists. But the Report of the Simon Commission was also rejected by most of the political parties in India. Nevertheless the government arranged to hold a Round Table Conference in London. Lord Irwin had already promised (31 August 1929) that a Round Table Conference would be held in London in order to draw up a new constitution for India. It was a measure to conciliate Indian public opinion which was very much estranged by the all-white composition of the Commission. This became furthermore necessary in view of the fact that the Indian National Congress boycotted the Conference from the
The Conference was inaugurated at a time when the Civil Desobedience movement was at its height. It was inaugurated on November 12, 1930, by the King and was presided over by the Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald. There were altogether 89 delegates from India, out of which 57 represented British India and 16 were the representatives of the Indian States. There were also 16 members of the British Parliament from all the three political parties of the country. The British Indian delegates were nominated by the Viceroy. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Diwan Bahadur R. Srinivasan, a leader of the Adi-Dravidas and a sitting member of the Madras Legislative Council were chosen as delegates to represent the interest of the Depressed Classes in the Conference.

In the fifth plenary meeting of the first session of the Round Table Conference Ambedkar presented his viewpoint regarding the safeguards necessary for protecting the interests of the Depressed Classes in the proposed constitution of a self-governing India. In a long speech exceeding 3500 words he criticised the caste Hindus, the British Government and the bureaucracy in India for maintaining most unsympathetic attitude to the Depressed Classes who comprised nearly one-fifth of the total population of British India. The Hindus had declared them outcastes and treated them as slaves whose sense of dignity as human beings was partially recognised only under the colonial rule. But the British masters although not as much unfeeling as the caste Hindus were unable to restore their human status "because it is afraid that its intervention to amend the existing code of social and
economic life, will give rise to resistance". The depressed people were therefore quite sure that neither the British Government nor even the much publicised scheme of Dominion Status/Swaraj would be able to do anything good for them and they would have to fight out their own case single-handed. In the concluding part of his speech Ambedkar summed up the claims put forward on behalf of the Depressed Classes. The depressed people being considered as outcastes must be treated at par with the Muhammadans and have necessary concessions of a minority community so far as electoral matters are concerned. The settlement of the demands of the depressed people need not be kept pending until the political freedom of the country is achieved, they are to be settled without further loss of time. Finally, the concept of a Swaraj/Dominion Status leaving the scheme of power adjustment undefined would be totally unacceptable to them. They would, therefore, strongly demand that "we shall be installed, in adequate proportion, as the political sovereigns of the country along with our fellow countrymen". Ambedkar was quite terse in his comments

"The depressed classes have had no friend. The Government has all along used them only as an excuse for its continued existence. The Hindus claim them only to deny them or, better still, to appropriate, their rights. The Muhammadans refuse to recognize their separate existence, because they fear that their privileges may be curtailed by the admission of a rival. Depressed by the Government, suppressed by the Hindu and disregarded by the Muslim, we are left in a most intolerable position of utter helplessness to which I am sure there is no parallel and to which I was bound to call attention".(3)
The case of the Depressed Classes was more forcefully presented in the meeting of the Minorities Sub-committee of the Round Table Conference. Here Rao Bahadur Srinivasan had almost repeated the allegations of Dr. Ambedkar against the caste Hindus who, he believed would never cease to look down upon the low caste people unless they were salvaged from their present position with a considerable amount of political power in their hand. "You are well aware", remarked Srinivasan in a bitter voice "of the treatment we undergo at the hands of the caste people. The only alternative is to have power in the Legislature, so that we may fight our own case". The extent and the scope of the political power claimed on behalf of the depressed people was also clearly indicated.

"Our object is to have adult suffrage, and to have separate electorates only as a temporary measure. We want reservation of seats on a population basis, with sufficient weightage to enable us to withstand the majority in the Council". (4)

Both Ambedkar and Srinivasan submitted a memorandum, entitled 'A Scheme of Political Safeguards for the Protection of the Depressed Classes in the Future Constitution of a Self-Governing India' to the Round Table Conference, setting therein 'the terms and conditions on which the Depressed Classes will consent to place themselves under majority rule in a self-governing India'. (5) The Scheme specified a set of eight conditions including one on 'Fundamental Right' which would safeguard the interests of the
depressed people. Condition no. IV dealt with the proposals for ensuring adequate representation of the depressed people. Separate electorate was claimed only for the first ten years, thereafter if the majority of the depressed people agree there may be a switch over to joint electorate with reservation. The principle of adult suffrage was insisted upon. The quantum of representation was not specified. But it was stated that the total number of representation granted to the depressed people should have some parity with the total number of representation granted to other communities. Weightage was demanded on behalf of the depressed people of Bombay and Madras. Condition no. VIII of the Scheme pointed out that the amelioration of the condition of the depressed people would not result only by means of obtaining adequate representation for them in the Legislatures. They must also be allowed to exercise the power to influence governmental action. For this, they need to be accommodated also in the Cabinet. "The Depressed Classes therefore claim that in common with other minorities, their moral rights to be represented in the Cabinet should be recognized".

It may be noted here that the Scheme of Political Safeguards presented to the Minorities Sub-committee was in essence a repetition of what Dr. Ambedkar had demanded on behalf of the Depressed Classes in his presidential address at the first session of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held at Nagpur on the 8th August 1930. There was however a slight difference in the scheme of 'Electorates' as proposed by Ambedkar in his presidential
address at Nagpur and in the Scheme jointly submitted by him and Srinivasan before the Minorities Sub-committee. Ambedkar insisted on adult suffrage which if granted "we ought to have no objection to the scheme of joint electorates with reserved seats being applied to the Depressed Classes". But Srinivasan was a little undecided on this point. Being cross-examined by Issac Foot at the first meeting of the first session of the Round Table Conference (December 23, 1930) Srinivasan confessed that weeks earlier he was in favour of putting primary stress upon separate electorate. But now "we only ask for a separate electorate as a temporary measure".

The Scheme of Political Safeguards embodied this compromise formula. It envisaged a temporary expedient of separate electorate for ten years to be replaced by joint electorate with reservation based on adult suffrage.

The views held by the spokesmen of the Depressed Classes received sympathetic attention of some influential members of the conference. One of them Mr. Issac Foot raised the issue at the parliamentary debate on the House of Commons on 26 January 1931. Mr. Foot referred to the disabilities of the depressed people and said: "If you do not establish safeguards for their protection their blood may cry against us". Drawing attention to the endless plight of this luckless people, he had also forewarned the government and the people of India:

"They may be defenceless now but one day will be strong. As there is justice upon this earth there is no bank that can keep back for ever the accumulated sufferings of these people".
But all said no decision could be arrived at in the meeting of the Minorities Sub-committee. The report of the Sub-committee signed on behalf of the Prime Minister referred to conflict of opinion among the members and no satisfactory solution of the problem of representation could be found out.

"...if the whole, or practically the whole, of the seats in a Legislature are to be assigned to communities, there will be no room for the growth of independent political opinion. and this problem received a serious complication by the demand of the representative of the Depressed Classes that they should be deducted from the Hindu population and be regarded, for electoral purposes, as a separate community". (9)

The sub-committee therefore recommended that the question of representation may be taken up for further discussion at the next meeting of the Round Table Conference.

After returning from the Round Table Conference in London, Ambedkar convened a Leaders' Conference in Bombay which met in the Gokhale Education Society's Hall at Parel on April 19, 1931. Prominent leaders of the Depressed Classes from all parts of the country - Bengal, C.P., Madras and Maharashtra attended the conference which was presided over by N. Shivraj. Ambedkar submitted a report of his work at the Round Table Conference and it was wholeheartedly endorsed by the conference amidst thunderous applause. The Conference then appealed to the Government to
nominate the Depressed Class representatives on the Federal Structure Committee so that the Class may have effective say in the next Round Table Conference. Petitions were also submitted for inclusion of the Depressed Class representatives in the provincial cabinets. (10)

The results of the Round Table Conference so far as the Depressed Classes were concerned were overassessed at the time. One of its solid outcome was the definite emergence of the Depressed Classes in the political picture of India and more important was the brilliant and moving exposition of their insufferable conditions by Ambedkar before the bar of world opinion. But then speaking from another context, Ambedkar himself had confessed in a personal letter written to his secretary Shivtarkar, that his achievements in the Round Table Conference was like laying a foundation that had more of sand than mortar' (11) It was more of an exercise in futility. Owing to disagreement on the question of seats, which the different communities sought to secure in the proposed legislatures, and on the system of election whether separate or joint electorate with reservation should be employed and also whether adult suffrage could be immediately introduced, the Conference was adjourned. The non-participation of the Congress representative contributed to the major weakness of the Conference. It was arrogant on the part of the government to plan to go ahead without caring for the participation of the Congress. But it was not quite easy and subsequent events proved that taking any vital decision on Indian matters without Congress 'was like reckoning without hosts'. (12)
The difficulties with the representatives of the Depressed Class was that although they would always stoutly adhere to the demand of community-wise representation they could not at the same time device any means which would arrest the tendency of endless fragmentation of the political society in India. Not that they remained obstinate on every point. In the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held at Gurgaon on 31 October 1931, Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah made it clear that although the depressed people "are for adult franchise as the ultimate goal" they knew that "it is not practicable in the present day". This is a quite good gesture. But then why upon earth did they steadfastly cling to the demand of separate electorate? Rajah referred to the deliberations of the Simon Commission where "out of 37 Depressed Class associations who submitted their representations 35 demanded Separate Electorates, one favoured Joint electorates with Adult Suffrage and Reservation and the other wanted Nominations".(13) This is a clear indication that the Depressed Classes grew bitter enough to win their bait at all costs. Ambedkar was once reminded that whether he was aware that the claim of separate electorates might lead to growing communal tension in the country and he replied - "Even assuming it does... I do not see how you can get rid of it".(14)

Ambedkar's and Srinivasan's stand was widely accepted by the depressed people all over the country. But the dissenting views were neither to be ignored. Ambedkar was opposed by a section of the Depressed Class spokesmen in the Bombay Presidency who styled themselves as nationalists and demanded reserved seats in joint electorates. It is often believed that such opposition was secretly
sponsored by the Congress and the followers of Gandhi who wanted to discredit Ambedkar with a view to uphold the primacy of the Congress in the politics of the country. Ever since the time of the first session of the Round Table Conference the Congress elite as well as the pro-Congress sections of the press sought to organize meetings of the untouchables with a view to project only such among the Depressed Class spokesmen who were engaged in opposing Ambedkar. Thus they were bent upon doing "whatever they could to show that 'untouchables are denouncing Ambedkar' and that there was a wave of support for joint electorates". P. Balu and B.J. Deorukhar were prominent among those who opposed Ambedkar. Both of them belonged to the Chamar caste which had traditional rivalry with the Mahar caste to which Ambedkar himself belonged. It was primarily among the non-Mahar depressed people that the Congress could make any impact at all. Deorukhar and his supporters tried to cause disturbances in the conference of Ambedkar held in Bombay immediately after his return from London. They were driven out by the followers of Ambedkar. However, the supporters of Ambedkar were in a majority mostly outside of Maharashtra.

The first session of the Round Table Conference failed to make any specific recommendations so far as the claims of the Depressed Classes are concerned. The Minorities and the Depressed Classes were definite in their assertion that they could not consent to any self-governing constitution for India unless their
demands were met in a reasonable manner. Nothing better could, of course, be expected from the type of motley crowd that was assembled in London and the way delegates were chosen. The Conference, therefore, had to be adjourned until further notice. In the meantime, situations both in India and England had substantially changed. In India, the ban on the Congress Working Committee was lifted and its members along with many other important leaders including Gandhi were released unconditionally, on January 26, 1931. Long and protracted negotiations began between Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi which resulted in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact signed on March 5, 1931. In England the Labour Government was replaced by the National Government and although Macdonald continued to be its head Irwin had to quit and Lord Wellingdon became the new Viceroy of India. In the context of such far-reaching changes the importance of Congress as a powerful factor in Indian politics was more assuredly felt in the official circle. The Prime Minister while adjourning the first session of the Round Table Conference, expressed the hope that the Congress would be willing to join future deliberations of the Conference and invited it to co-operate with the task of constitution-making for India. There was in fact no escape from such a course of action. The Indian delegates were not in a position to speak for the whole of India in the absence of the Congress leaders. Without the representatives of the Congress there was a fear that the conclusions reached at the Conference might not be acceptable to the masses of India.
The second session being held between 7th September and 1st December 1931 did not open with a meeting of the full Conference. The Federal Structure Committee (Sub-committee I) was reassembled on the 7th September and the Minorities Committee (Sub-committee III) on the 28th September, followed by a plenary Session beginning on the 28th November 1931. The other committees were not reassembled. The issue of the Depressed Classes were taken up for discussion in the meetings of both of the Federal and the Minorities Sub-committees in which apart from Ambedkar and Srinivasan the presence of Gandhi was an added attraction.

The deliberations of the second session so far as the Congress was concerned were largely conditioned and guided by the Nehru Report (1928) drawn on behalf of the Congress and also by the Congress Working Committee Resolution on the communal problem. The Nehru Report, it may be noted here admitted that "the Hindus are chiefly responsible for this suppression of a large class" to whom representation may be allowed either by Nomination or by Separate Electorates. But even after a formal recognition of the legitimacy of their claim the author of the Report rejected both of the expedients. This sudden volte-face had much aggrieved the depressed people whose leader M.C. Rajah gave a bit of his mind in his presidential address at the All-India Depressed Classes Conference of October 1931 - "If there are only two alternatives open statesmanship demands to choose the lesser evil but rejecting both is ignoring the problem and not solving it". (17) But the Depressed Classes though said to have been treated
unsympathetically by the Congress, the Working Committee had resolved that the Congress being unable to set forth 'any communal solution of the communal problem' would recommend adult suffrage (as per resolution of the Karachi session of the Congress) and Joint Electorates forming the basis of representation in the future constitution of India. Clearly, therefore, the Congress proposed to solve the problem of the Depressed Classes by means of a constitutional guarantee of equal fundamental rights for all and protection of minority rights and universal adult franchise which would put them all together in the roll of voters.

Personally, Gandhi was unconcerned with the question what place untouchables will have in any political constitution, because for him the problem of the Depressed Classes was a socio-religious one whose solution lay in the awakening of Hindu conscience, supplemented by some special efforts for their general uplift, and not in any kind of constitutional safeguards like special representation. When a Depressed Class deputation led by P. Balu, waited on him at Manibhaban, Bombay, on 26 June 1931, and urged him to support the proposal for reserved seats in joint electorates in the second session of the Round Table Conference, the latter did not make any commitment to this proposed electoral arrangement, and only promised that everything he would urge in the Round Table Conference would be in the interest of the Depressed Classes, and the country in general. To another deputation, led by Ambedkar, which waited upon Gandh i on 14 August 1931, and wanted to know the latter's opinion on the special representation of the Depressed
Classes, he expressed his firm opposition to any such electoral arrangement on the ground that it would result in the political separation of the untouchables from the Hindus and would be therefore 'absolutely suicidal'.

The very frank discussion that was held between the two leaders on 14 August 1931, indicated the shape of things for the future. In his speech in the 24th meeting of the Federal Structure Committee held on the 17th September 1931 Gandhi made a terse statement that although for sound historical reasons his party has reconciled itself to special treatment of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh tangle, "the Congress will not extend that doctrine in any shape or form". This is because the interests of the Untouchables "are as dear to the Congress as the interests of any other body or of any other individual throughout the length and breadth of India". That interest, he further added could be guaranteed by means of adult suffrage and "safeguards would be the wrong way to go about the business". In explaining his stand for rejection of a scheme for any further special representation Gandhi remarked that with adult suffrage in the political society envisaged by him even the landlords can act as trustees for their tenants, and further even a European or an Englishman (like Charlie Andrews for example) can be "elected a delegate in any constituency in India without the slightest difficulty". What is therefore wanted, according to Gandhi's perception of future India, is neither safeguards nor special representation but only the good will of the people added with a confidence in the universally trusted apparatus of adult suffrage.
"In any case", Gandhi remarked

"I do feel that, in any scheme that the Congress can be party to, there is no room for the protection of special interests. The special interests are automatically protected when you have got adult suffrage". (20)

Incidentally, although rejecting special representation Gandhi referred to the 'provision in the Congress regarding special cases' and explained 'we certainly want Untouchables to be elected' in our Legislatures. But if however the constituencies so misbehave themselves as not to elect them "I would have a clause in the constitution which would enable this elected Legislature to elect those who should have been elected, but have not been elected". (21) However Gandhiji could not foresee a situation when even with such constitutional provision an elected Untouchable is only a dummy of the upper caste Hindus. In his minute submitted to the Bengal Franchise Committee Mukunda Behari Mullick referred to the election of Babu Rasik Chandra Charmakar, Babu Mohini Mohan Das and Babu Hoseini Rout to name a few, all of whom were allowed a smooth entry into the Council 'as a sort of ridicule by the political party'. The said representation contained many other names who having operated as dummy candidates of the Congress secured their entry into the Councils through discomfiture of decidedly more worthy candidates. (22)

On 28 September 1931 Ambedkar presented his viewpoints before
the members of the Federal Structure and the Minorities Committee. He remained quite firm to repeat his demands which were already submitted on behalf of the Depressed Classes. He also found an ally, Sardar Ujjal Singh to support his claim. "Taking India as a whole", the Sardar remarked

"the Muhammadans are certainly a very strong minority, but there are three or four other minorities - the Sikhs, the Europeans, the Christians and the Depressed Classes - whose rights have got to be equally protected".\(^{(23)}\)

The gist of Ambedkar's statement was that the depressed people must have their legitimate share of seats in the Legislature which need also to be protected in the manner already specified by them. He had also indirectly attacked Gandhi for his alleged exercise to take a unilateral decision in matters touching the interests of the Depressed Classes -

"Those who are negotiating ought to understand that they are not plenipotentiaries at all; that whatever may be the representative character of Mr. Gandhi or the Congress people, they certainly are not in a position to bind us - certainly not".\(^{(24)}\)

The acrimonious tone of the debate was to some extent due to some insinuating comments of Gandhi in which he spoke about the non-representative character of persons who were nominated by the British Government to function as delegates of the Depressed...
Classes. In an interview outside the Round Table Conference Gandhiji pointed out that Ambedkar only represented the Depressed Classes of that part of India to which he belonged and that he had received telegrams of the Depressed Classes of various parts of the country, assuring their "fullest faith in the Congress and disowning Dr. Ambedkar". He further told Evelyn Wrench, the editor of the *Spectator*: "If the untouchables in all part of India would record their votes, I should be their representative".

Ambedkar's speech (October 8, 1931) before the members of the ninth meeting of the same Committee was a clear repudiation of Gandhi's statement:

"I say therefore that whether I am a nominee or not, I fully represent the claims of my community. Let no man be under any mistaken impression as regards that."

He had also bitterly criticised Gandhi for his and his party's much acclaimed sympathies for the depressed people - "I can only say that it is one of the many false claims which irresponsible people keep on making, although the persons concerned with regard to those claims have been invariably denying them". In the concluding portion of his speech Ambedkar then, expressed his apprehension that if the British masters leave India without solving the problem of the Depressed Classes they would have to suffer untold miseries in the hands of their native master. Ambedkar also made it clear that as a matter of fact his community is not at all 'clamouring
for transfer of political power', but if it becomes inevitable, he on behalf of his community would only demand

"that transfer will be accompanied by such provisions that the power shall not fall into the hands of a clique, into the hands of an oligarchy, or into the hands of a group of people, whether Muhammadans or Hindus; but that the solution shall be such that the power shall be shared by all". (29)

The broad outline of the programme as to how power should be shared had been already indicated in the joint memorandum submitted by Ambedkar and Srinivasan ('A Scheme of Political Safeguards') before the members assembled at the first session of the Round Table Conference. A supplementary memorandum giving the details of the special representation claimed and signed by the same persons was now submitted on the 4th November 1931. It was tagged as Appendix VII of the Second Report of the Minorities Committee. The memorandum specified the general principle of allocation of seats in proportion to the population of the depressed people in both of the Federal Legislature and in the provincial legislatures in Bengal, Central Provinces, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Punjab and the United Provinces. In Madras and in Bombay (in the event of Sind remaining a part of the Bombay Presidency) the Depressed Classes would remain satisfied with 22 and 16 per cent representation respectively. As for the method of representation separate electorates were preferred which if found necessary may be replaced after twenty years by a system of joint electorate. But such changes
could be introduced subject to some strict conditions like a
referendum of the voters. The memorandum also submitted that the
existing disreputable nomenclature for the depressed people should
be changed as most of them would like to be identified as 'Non-caste Hindus', 'Protestant Hindus' or 'Non-conformist Hindus'
or with some such designation instead of 'Depressed Classes' (31)

The pattern of arguments and counter-arguments both on behalf
of the Depressed Classes and the Congress soon made it clear that
the deliberations at the Round Table Conference would lead the
deleoges nowhere and there was little chance of a consensus. Dr.
Ambedkar always sceptic about the prospect of receiving a righteous
deal from the Hindus had moreover information that Gandhi had a
secret understanding with the Muslims who would in exchange of
Gandhi's support for the Muslim claim of fourteen points would
support him in rejecting the claim of the Depressed Classes for
separate electorates. (32) But then Gandhiji was also visibly
displeased with Ambedkar. Much to the chagrin of the nationalists
the accredited leader of the Depressed Classes had suddenly made an
agreement with the representatives of the Muhammadans, a section of
the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the British community
on the basis of a fixed quota of seats for each of the signatory
communities to be filled through separate electorates. The
agreement provided that in case of the Depressed Classes "no change
to joint electorates and reserved seats shall be made until after
twenty years' experience of separate electorates, and until direct
adult suffrage for the community has been established". Besides the agreement recommended for them 20 seats in the all-India Upper House of 200 seats and 45 seats in the all-India Lower House of 300 seats with 180 seats in the provincial legislatures having 1100 seats. The agreement also recommended special treatment of the Depressed Classes in the constitution for removal of their disabilities and facilitating their recruitment to the public services.\(^{33}\)

The agreement, known as the Minorities Pact, was introduced in the Minorities Sub-committee on 13 November 1931 (having already received the blessings of H.Carr) by the Aga Khan, the Muslim representative on the Round Table Conference. Gandhi was scheduled to address the members of the Minorities Committee on that very day. Naturally he felt tremendously frustrated at this sudden turn of events:

"I am astonished that Sir Hubert Carr should tell us that they have evolved a scheme which, being designed only for a temporary period, would not damage the cause of nationalism, but at the end of ten years we would all find ourselves hugging one another and throwing ourselves into one another's laps. My political experience teaches me a wholly different lesson. If this responsible government, whenever it comes, is to be inaugurated under happy auspices, it should not
undergo the process of vivi-section to which this scheme subjects; it is a strain which no Government can possibly bear".\(^{(34)}\)

Deprecating the whole scheme of the Minorities Pact Gandhiji explained that the Congress is well agreeable to inclusion of adequate clauses and reservations as to the fundamental rights and civil liberties of the citizens in the future constitution of India. It is also ready to accept any solution that may be acceptable to the Hindus, the Muhammadans and the Sikhs. But "Congress will be no party to special representation or special electorates for any other minorities", namely the Depressed Classes for example. The Minorities Pact, he further added is not a scheme "designed to achieve responsible government, but is absolutely a scheme designed to share power with bureaucracy".\(^{(35)}\) In conclusion Gandhiji made a moving appeal to the representatives of the Depressed Classes. He said that a large number of Hindus are now ready to atone their sin and would be glad enough to welcome the so-called Untouchables within the fold of Hinduism and assuredly as their equals. In the circumstances when the general trend indicates a spirit of unity and cohesion the depressed people should not seek to withdraw under a misconceived notion that their rights as human beings would be protected only when they are separated. The depressed people should know "that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar-sinister, which is the shame not of them but of orthodox Hinduism". However,
even after all these persuasions if the depressed people decide to separate they should better apostatize from Hinduism first.

"I do not mind Untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in the villages... therefore I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with my life". (36)

But parleys and debates came to no avail. Gandhiji although always nursing the unconquerable hope of keeping the polity united was unable to lead the house to a consensus. The Prime Minister when submitting his report of the Minorities Committee therefore admitted that the basic problems regarding representation of the Depressed Classes could not be solved by means of a joint deliberation. "The Committee has in these circumstances, to record with deep regret that it has been unable to reach any agreed conclusion of the difficult and controversial question which has been the subject of its deliberations". (37) The second session of the Round table Conference started with a bang but at long last ended in a whimper.

But there is an inside story which may explain as to why it failed at all. It has been alleged in some quarters that the way the Minorities Pact was arranged is a clear indication of the
secret influence of the wire-pullers in politics who tried to fish in the troubled waters. The *Modern Review* of Calcutta pointed out that 'some lotus-eating intriguers', in collusion with their 'British patrons', were trying 'to please the powers that be' with a motive to 'convert the Hindus into a powerless entity by vivisecting the community into caste Hindus and the depressed classes'. It agreed with Gandhi's view that separate electorates would retard the 'gradual absorption of the Depressed Classes in the so-called higher social ranks of Hindu society'.(38) In another section of the press the makers of the Pact were denounced as 'traitors, sycophants and enemies of Indian freedom'.(39)

It was believed in the nationalist circles that the British Conservatives had given their support and blessings to the Minorities Pact. "It is well known", writes Jawaharlal Nehru, "that a certain alliance was formed in London during the Second Round Table Conference between the delegates of some minority groups and British Conservatives". (40) An Indian journalist, who had an interview with Clement Attlee, the Labour leader, before the second session of the Round Table Conference, afterwards recorded in his autobiography that the later told him that during the second round of talks the Tories would try 'to set up obstacles to India's advance towards self-rule by 'playing up the grievances of Muslims and the Depressed Classes in their bid to thwart the Congress".(41)

On returning from the second session of the Round Table
Conference, in a public meeting held at Bombay on 28 December 1931, Gandhi declared that he was not prepared for any concession like reservation of seats to the Untouchables 'because...it would be perpetuating untouchability'.(42) Quite in another context he reiterated his standpoint - "What these people need more than election to the legislature is protection from social and religious persecution".(43)

On the other hand, Ambedkar, after returning from London, criticised Gandhi for the latter's allegedly hostile attitude towards the Depressed Classes. It was alleged that he resisted the Depressed Classes' legitimate claims for political concessions almost at the same time when he showed undue sympathy for the Muslims. He was not prepared to conciliate with Ambedkar while he surrendered totally to the Muslim community. "Had he used persuasiveness to argue Ambedkar into a spirit of compromise, Ambedkar's brains and guns would have been a positive help in demolishing the fortress of Muslim communalism".(44)

During the various discussions suggestions were made that the British Government should settle the dispute on its own authority. These suggestions were of course accompanied by some important reservations. Even then it was a clear indication that the political windbags representing the various parties from India would not be able to solve their problem which need to be settled by applying the superior wisdom of the colonial masters. When the
Prime Minister saw that there was no solution to the Minorities problem, he asked the members to sign a requisition authorising him to settle the communal problem and to pledge themselves to accept his decision. With the exception of Ambedkar, all other members including Gandhi signed this pledge and thereby allowed the British Government to take a peremptory decision like the one in August 1932.

Gandhi's pleadings in the second session of the Round Table Conference for joint electorates could not be accepted at the time. But his efforts were not entirely fruitless for a section of the Depressed Classes soon felt convinced by the arguments of Gandhi. Baloo and Deurukhar, two of the leaders of this class had expressed their disagreement with Ambedkar and quickly tilted to the side of Gandhi. Even M.C. Rajah, a prominent leader of a section of the Depressed Classes withdrew his support to the separate electorates. He arrived at an agreement with B.S. Moonje, the President of the Hindu Mahasabha, on the basis of the principle of reservation of seats in joint electorate in proportion to the population ratio. The agreement was cabled to the British Prime Minister on 28 February 1932 with the message that the depressed people were no more in a mood to stick to the demand of separate electorates as proposed by Ambedkar and his followers in the Round Table Conference. The alternative plan which was communicated in the message was as follows:
"the Working Committee of the All-India Depressed Classes Association has unanimously decided in favour of joint electorates with the Hindus, with reservation of seats on a population basis. Complete agreement now prevails between the Depressed Classes Association and the Hindu Mahasabha".(45)

Finally in a letter to the Prime Minister released to the press on 21 March 1932, Rajah asked the former to treat the agreement as concluded between the only central organization of the Depressed Classes i.e. the All-India Depressed Classes Association of which he was the President and the organised body of the Hindus taken as a whole i.e. the Hindu Mahasabha. He also wrote that he had entered into an agreement with the Hindu Mahasabha because he had a ray of hope "of our assimiliation into the main body of the Hindus".

The Rajah-Moonje Pact produced a mixed reaction. Depressed people supporting Ambedkar and opposing his viewpoints argued both in favour and against the Rajah-Moonje Pact and the controversy dragged them into a brawl leading to an angry demonstration of their muscle power at the opening of the second session of the All-India Depressed Classes Congress which commenced at Kamptee on the 7th May 1932 under the presidency of Rai Sahib Muniswami Pillai. The meeting passed a dozen of resolutions one of which supported the Minorities Pact, the most important being M.B. Mullick's from Bengal who upheld the Pact as having contained the 'irreducible minimum of the demands of the Depressed Classes'.

Those who opposed the Pact included such stalwarts like Gavai, Thaware, Khandekar, Gorghat not to speak of others whose number was not quite few. There was yet another group who opposed both the Ambedkarites and his adversaries.

However, in a statement issued by Rajah to the members of his community he scuttled most of the arguments of those who criticised his pact recently signed with the Hindu Mahasabha. He had further made a comparative estimate of the total number of seats allocated for the Depressed Classes and the Muslims as per terms of the Round Table Conference Minority Pact. Acting on the basis of this statistical analysis he had then accused both Ambedkar and Srinivasan in the following words:

"...it is evident that these two depressed classes delegates have done a positive harm to the depressed classes by claiming and accepting seats on behalf of the depressed classes much less than what they would be entitled to on the basis of population".

In contrast with the Minorities Pact the gains of the Rajah-Moonje Pact were said to be definitely higher. This was shown with the help of the following table:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislatures</th>
<th>Strength of Chamber</th>
<th>Seats according to R.T.C. Minority Pact</th>
<th>Seats according to Rajah - Moonje Pact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CENTRE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above chart shows that under the Minorities Pact the Depressed Classes were given a total of 180 seats in all the seven provincial legislatures whereas they got 194 i.e. 14 additional seats under the Rajah-Moonje Pact. The gains for the central Legislatures was similarly 18 higher in the Upper House and 12 higher in the Lower House. This apart according to the Rajah - Moonje Pact the Depressed Classes had the right to contest additional seats also, as they had contested and won the elections to the Local Boards in Alandur, Sembiam, Villivakam, and other Unions in the Chingleput District of the Madras Presidency. (48)

Rajah had also disarmed his critics by pointing out the many
inconsistencies in their arguments and by also openly accusing them of frequent changes in their stand. He said that he was indicted for toeing line with the high caste Hindus and deserting the separate electorateites which he himself was at the beginning of his political career. But then Ambedkar also made a quick change of his viewpoint. In his representation to the Simon Commission on behalf of the Bahiskrita Sabha of Bombay he said that "the Sabha does not wish to ask for communal electorates. In its opinion it would be sufficient if the Depressed Classes are provided with reserved seats in general constituencies." But soon after at the Round Table Conference he became a staunch advocate of separate electorate. Rao Bahadur Srinivasan, another Depressed Class representative in the Round Table Conference who endorsed Ambedkar's point of view at the said conference made just an opposite statement at the Simon Commission and declared "our people are not yet advanced to have Separate Electorates. Unless you give Adult Franchise the Depressed Classes should have no Separate Electorates". Moreover in demanding separate representation the Rao Bahadur had certainly overstepped his limits, for the Madras Depressed Classes' Federation of which he was the President had by a meeting held immediately before his sojourn to London in 1930, authorised him to demand reservation of seats in joint electorates. As for Munuswami Pillai who thundered against the Rajah-Moonje Pact at the Depressed Classes Congress at Kamptee (May, 1932) it would be just enough to recall that the gentleman who clamoured for separate electorates supported reservation of seats under joint
electorates for Union Boards, Municipal Councils, Taluka Boards, District Boards etc when the Madras Local Boards Act was passed in the Madras Legislative Council in 1930.\(^{(51)}\)

The Separate versus Joint Electorate controversy had little chance to end in a reasoned judgement. While there are unassailable arguments on both sides, it seems Rajah's agreement with the Hindu Mahasabha leader had greater value than Ambedkar's with non-Hindu Minorities.\(^{(52)}\) Whatever might be the degree of the representative character of M.C. Rajah as a Depressed Class leader as compared with Ambedkar, the former's was an agreement with the Hindu Mahasabha which claimed to represent the Hindu community of which the Depressed Classes formed a part and which was in some ways concerned with their welfare, while the latter had made an agreement with the non-Hindu minorities almost ignoring the inherent natural relation of the Depressed Classes with the Hindu community.

The controversy was again taken up at the forum of the Indian Franchise Committee which was presided over by Lord Lothian. This Committee, it may be recalled here was constituted under Prime Minister's instructions as a result of the recommendations of the Franchise Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference (Second Session). So far as the Depressed Classes were concerned the Lothian Committee had to deal with their problem with much greater details and thoroughness than the Southborough Franchise Committee, keeping in view the necessity of providing them a special system of representation. The Committee was entrusted with the task of
defining the term 'Depressed Class' and estimating their number. It was also asked to examine in view of the controversy on joint versus separate electorates, the extent to which the Depressed Classes would be likely to secure the right to vote in ordinary electorates through a general extension of the franchise and place on record 'facts which would facilitate the devising of a method of separate representation for the Depressed Classes.\(^{(53)}\) The terms of reference did not specify in categorical terms as to whether the Lothian Committee would make any recommendations on the suitability of any particular kind of electorate. However Lord Lothian made it clear that to recommend any particular system of electorate joint or separate, was beyond his Committee's terms of reference.\(^{(54)}\) But despite such announcement the advocates of joint and separate electorates submitted their views before it. The All-India Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha headed by J.S. Pillai,\(^{(55)}\) All India Arundhataya Central Sabha of Madras,\(^{(56)}\) Depressed India Association of Bombay headed by R.S. Nikaljay,\(^{(57)}\) Gujarat Depressed Classes Association headed by P.G. Solanki,\(^{(58)}\) All India Namasudra Association headed by Rasiklal Biswas,\(^{(59)}\) U.P. Hindu Backward Classes League,\(^{(60)}\) and U.P. Adi Hindu (Depressed Classes) Association of Lucknow\(^{(61)}\) asked for separate electorates in their memoranda to the Franchise Committee. Rasiklal Biswas pointed out to the Franchise Committee that his Namasudra community wanted separate electorates as well as weightage in representation, because even with adult franchise they had little chance of getting their candidate returned through the system of general electorate.\(^{(62)}\) R.S. Nikaljay pointed out in his memorandum that 'the cry for joint
electorates' were 'raised by high class Hindus', simply 'with a view to keeping all the reins of power in their own hands'.(63) He also pointed out that the All-India Deressed Classes Association of which M.C.Rajah was the President never functioned and was merely a paper organisation.(64) P.G.Solanki while upholding the demands submitted by Ambedkar pointed out that there was 'no leader among the Depressed Classes possessing the fame of Dr. Ambedkar', 'who has been acknowledged as the leader of the Depressed Classes'.(65)

On the other hand M.C.Rajah and G.A.Gavai,(66) P.Baloo,(67) Dalit Jat Sudharak Sabha of Gorakhpur,(68) and the All-Bengal Namasudra Youngmen's Association of Dacca,(69) supported reservation of seats in joint electorates. Baloo held in his memorandum to the Indian Franchise Committee that as the major portion of the Depressed Classes were agriculturists, servants engaged in the domestic work of the upper caste people many of them being also engaged in small-scale business they were "to a certain extent dependent upon the good-will and help of the upper classes", and could not therefore, isolate themselves from the caste Hindus by such electoral device as separate electorates. He held that his Chamar community had particularly decided in a conference, held at Bombay in October 1930, in favour of joint electorate with reservation of seats, as the community, because of its hereditary business in leather goods and shoe-making, wanted to keep connection with the upper classes.(70) Monohar Dhali, Jogendranath Adhikari and Gangacharan Poddar, the Joint Secretaries of the
All-Bengal Namasudra Youngman's Association, in their letter to the President of the Bengal Franchise Committee, opposed the political separation of the Depressed Classes from the Hindus by the mechanism of separate electorates. They wanted removal of social differences and proportionate reservations of seats in joint electorates for an 'experimental period' in view of the political backwardness of the Depressed Classes. At Delhi on 29th March 1932, Lord Lothian and the members of his secretariat watched a demonstration of the Depressed Classes' Association of Delhi in favour of the Rajah-Moonje Pact before the office of the Franchise Committee.

At Delhi, on 30th March 1932, a controversy took place between M.C. Rajah and B.P. Ambedkar on the question of electorate in the Franchise Committee meeting. Backed by Gavai, Rajah unhesitatingly asked for joint electorate with reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes on the basis of their total population in view of just "a remarkable change in the angle of vision towards the depressed classes even in my caste-ridden province of Madras". But Ambedkar tried to shake them from their position by severe cross-examination. He also questioned the bonafides of Rajah's Association and produced a telegram from the Mahar Youth League repudiating the Rajah-Moonje Pact.

In the midst of this heated controversy the Committee had to proceed with utmost caution. However, its Report including qualifying notes and minutes of dissent was published on June 3, 1932. The Report submitted its findings which were arranged under
some major heads viz Definition of Depressed Classes, Provincial estimates of Depressed Classes, Enfranchisement, Representation of Minor Majorities and Special Interests.\(^{(74)}\) In a chapter dealing with the Depressed Classes the Committee observed that the term when used in a political context should not include "primitive or aboriginal tribes, nor should it include those Hindus who are only economically poor and in other ways backward but are not regarded as untouchables".\(^{(75)}\) The Committee thus agreed to define the Depressed Classes as 'those who are untouchable, i.e. who cause pollution by touch or approach or denied access to temples'. The Committee also examined the figures of the population of the Depressed Classes given by various authorities in the past. Thereafter the Committee had prepared the following table indicating the total number of Depressed Class population.\(^{(76)}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>South- Borough Commr. 1917</th>
<th>Sir H. Sharp Commr. 1921</th>
<th>Simon Commr. 1931</th>
<th>Provisional Commr. inc-Assam 1931</th>
<th>Govt. Comt. 1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>37.45 18.62</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The question of introducing a system under which all adult members of the population may be reckoned as qualified voters next came in for serious consideration of the Committee. This is a condition which is normally accepted to be the sine qua non of the smooth functioning of a democracy. The Committee also agreed that the adoption of the principle of adult franchise would avoid the necessity for devising special franchises by ensuring representation of all elements of the population. But at the same time it had also pointed out that there are some real difficulties in adopting the principle of adult franchise. For a variety of reasons the introduction of the system would be rather difficult in the existing situation of India. The Committee therefore concluded "that in view of the prodigious difficulties... it would be the course of wisdom and statemanship not to launch the new constitution on the basis of adult franchise, but to seek a more managable basis, and that it will be for the legislatures themselves to determine at what pace the electorate should be further expanded". However the Committee could not give any indication of what that 'managable basis' should be when the question of the enfranchisement of the depressed people came in for its consideration. The Committee was also aware that in the absence of a new electoral roll it would be impossible to calculate the voting strength of the Depressed Classes and since most of them would not have the requisite property or educational qualification it was quite certain that they would not be enrolled
in proportion to their population. But since "it is essential that under responsible government these people should be able to express their opinions in the Councils, the Committee recommend a levelling up of the depressed class vote by some form of differential franchise". (78)

It may be interesting to note in this connection that the Bengal Franchise Committee set up by the Government of Bengal on the 15th January 1932 with the specific responsibility to advise the Indian Franchise Committee in association with the local government made almost the similar observation with the exception that it had at the same time also recommended "that the direct vote should be conferred on all persons paying 12 annas local tax or rate or over". (79) However the dissenting note submitted to the Committee by Mukunda Behari Mullick contained observations which were largely in conformity with the views of the separate electorateites. Of course Mullick did not formally record his opinion on the suitability of a particular kind of electorate so far as the depressed people were concerned - "I do not consider it worth while to pursue this point as it has been definitely ruled by the Chairman of the Indian Franchise Committee that this question is not within the scope of their enquiry". But while dealing with a question as to if Depressed Classes are likely to have representation of their own choice in general electorates he had by an admirable marshalling of facts based on the election records of past five years (1920, 1923, 1926, 1929 and 1930) proved
appenently beyond doubt that given the existing backward condition of the depressed people there was little chance of genuine Depressed Class representative to be returned by general electorate:

"Our experience and the review of the results of the previous elections... show clearly that the depressed classes will not be able to secure representatives of their own choice in the general electorates under a joint system of elections". (80)

IV

While the controversy on joint versus separate electorate was going on and the Indian Franchise Committee was carrying on its work, Gandhi who was in jail (because of resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement) felt seriously disturbed at the news of the British efforts to solve the problem regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes according to its own unilateral decision. The plea for such an initiative was that the delegates of the Second Round Table Conference with the exception of Dr. Ambedkar agreed to allow the Prime Minister to suggest a measure for the settlement of the communal question which remained unresolved at the conference. Gandhi had information that the British Government was up for a settlement which would concede separate electorate to the Depressed Classes. This would be contrary to what Gandhi stood for and so he reminded the Secretary of State for India that his statement in the Second Round Table Conference to resist with life
the grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes was not made in the heat of the moment or by way of rhetoric but meant to be a serious statement. It was also stated that the question of the Depressed Classes "is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue". In the circumstances Gandhi would try to resist the decision of the government if it sticks to a policy of making any unprincipled concession to the Depressed Classes:

But I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, I must fast unto death". (81)

Gandhi's letter met with an evasive reply from Sir Samuel, the Secretary of State, who while advising Gandhi to wait until the decision of the Indian Franchise Committee is published assured him that the decision of the government will depend 'solely and only upon the merits of the case'. (82) The government remained firm in its decision and on the 16th August 1932 the Prime Minister announced his scheme of Communal Award.

The Comunal Award granted separate electorates to the Muslims, Europeans and Sikhs. To the Depressed Classes it gave both separate electorate and the right to vote and contest in the general or unreserved constituencies. A member of the Depressed Class, could
therefore, in some cases give two votes all at the same time. Special Depressed Class constituencies were also to be framed in selected areas where such people were most numerous and except in Madras, the constituencies were so designed as not to cover the whole area of the province. In Bengal since the Depressed Class voters were likely to constitute a majority in some of the general constituencies no number was fixed for special Depressed Class constituency. It was expected that the "Depressed Class should contain not less than ten seats in the Bengal Legislature". The special constituencies were also said to be set up as a temporary expedient and it was expected that they would terminate after twenty years if not earlier as per a relevant provision of the Award. The Award gave 71 seats to the Depressed Classes in all the provincial legislatures having 1508 seats. The allocation of seats was according to the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Seats for Depressed Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay including Sind</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including Berar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Frontier Province</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1508</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his explanatory statement on the Communal Award the Prime
Minister claimed that his scheme would satisfy the rival claims of the Depressed Class people whose representatives were most vociferous in the Round Table Conference for separate representation of their community. The Award would also meet the demands of the nationalists who wanted to integrate the Depressed Classes within the fold of Hinduism. The Prime Minister said:

"Our main object in the case of the Depressed Classes has been while securing to them the spokesmen of their own choice in the legislatures of the province where they are found in large numbers, at the same time to avoid electoral arrangements which would perpetuate their segregation. Consequently Depressed Class voters will vote in general Hindu constituencies and an elected member in such a constituency will be influenced by his responsibility to this section of the electorate". (83)

Whatever might be the explanation given by the Prime Minister, the Award aroused serious apprehensions in the mind of Gandhi. He felt sure that grant of separate electorate to the Depressed Classes 'would end in nothing but civil war between the caste Hindus and Harijans' (84). The possible consequence of separate electorates for Harijans", he confided to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai on 21 August 1932, "fill me with horror... The separate electorates will create division among Hindus so much so that it will lead to bloodshed. Untouchable hooligans will make common cause with Muslim hooligans and kill caste Hindus. Has the British Government no idea of all this"? (85)

It is not true that the British Government could not foresee
this situation. On the contrary, the crux of the problem was that, as the government rightly saw the situation:

"Most of the Depressed Class leaders regard the Depressed Classes' problem as part of the communal problem. Most of Hindu opinion object to its being treated as part of the communal problem on the ground that Depressed Classes do not form a separate community as do Moslems, Europeans, Indian Christians etc". (86)

The government knew it further that with the granting of double vote to the Depressed Classes, one in a special constituency for their own representative and one in the general electorate, together with a modest number of reserved seats caste separatism would have the necessary sanction of the government and would be given official recognition. So this was all intended by the government. In final defence of their position for conceding separate electorate to the Depressed Classes the Prime Minister stated "The anamoly of giving certain members of the Depressed Classes two votes is abundantly justified by the urgent need of securing that their claims should be effectively expressed and the prospect of improving their actual condition promoted". (87)

The debates in the Round Table Conference had made it clear that there were major difference of opinions between most of the high caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes. Such breaches had made their appearance long ago and they became more manifest under definite colonial patronage since when with the introduction of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms the British imperial strategy set the
Ambedkar was in favour of a complete political partition between Depressed Classes and the Hindus and the government believed that "It is an exceedingly difficult demand to refuse, in spite of the overwhelming difficulties...This demand may have to be met". The British Government, therefore, announced the Communal Award as 'a bounty with a vengeance'. When Lord Willingdon succeeded Irwin, Samuel Hoare apprised the Viceroy of the importance of the demand of the Depressed Classes along with the Muslims. Hoare also assured in private letters that their case would receive special advocacy. Ambedkar's hard work in England had its desired effect.

But the Award could not satisfy all alike belonging to the Depressed Classes. The Depressed Classes' leaders of Bengal although satisfied with the provision of separate electorate were particularly unhappy with the number of seats allocated for them. Protest meetings were organised in the province in which it was alleged that the government did not do justice to the depressed people of Bengal. A representation was also sent by Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma which claimed for allocation of at least 27 out of 80 general seats in the provincial Legislature. Even Ambedkar who won a great victory in his bargains particularly protested against the complete denial of the right of representation to the Depressed Classes of the Punjab. On the other hand B.J.Deurukhar, the staunch supporter of Rajah-Moonje Pact, described the Communal Award as 'very disappointing'. According to him as a result of the separate electorates 'majority castes' among the Depressed Classes would capture the seats at the cost of the 'minority castes'
and the Depressed Classes as a whole would be isolated from the Hindus.\(^{(94)}\) M.C.Rajah, the architect of the Rajah-Moonje Pact also felt apprehensive of the Imperial designs and his fear proved to be not unfounded as the British Premier had failed to "advise the communities to unite with one another politically, whatever their social and religious differences may be and to join in a Joint Electorate.\(^{(95)}\) The Working Committee of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha in its meeting at Delhi on 20 and 21 August 1932 strongly condemned the Communal Award for having created separate constituencies for the Depressed Classes.\(^{(96)}\) In another meeting held on the 25th September 1932 the Mahasabha complained that the Communal Award had deliberately flouted the unanimous opinion of the Hindus and important sections of the Depressed Classes in favour of joint electorates. The nationalist public opinion, which in general condemned the Communal Award as designed to weaken the forces of nationalism, regarded separate electorate as specially intended to weaken the solidarity of the Hindu community. The Bombay Chronicle observed that the main object of the Award was to turn the national majority of the Hindus into a minority.\(^{(97)}\) It was also pointed out in the official reports that Hindus in general dislike the separate electorate for the Depressed Classes and extreme Hindu opinion regarded it "as a deliberate attempt to split Hinduism."\(^{(98)}\)

However, the most vehement opposition to the scheme of separate electorate for the depressed people came from Gandhi. On 18 August 1932 Gandhi wrote to the Prime Minister about his decision to
resist the scheme by 'perpetual fast unto death' which was to commence from the noon of 20 September 1932. But the Prime Minister's reply to Gandhi's letter contained no promise for reconsideration of the Award. It reiterated the decision of the government that there shall be no change in the scheme of separate electorate so long as the parties affected by the Award do not give their consent to a change. Naturally there was no indication of any solution of the crisis. The die was already cast.

The fast therefore created a problem, that of how to save Gandhi's life. In England men like Andrews, Polak and Lansbury began to invite the attention of the English people to the serious character of the situation. In India the 20th of September was observed as a day of fasting and prayer and Shantiniketan participated in the observance. Negotiations were opened for finding a way out of the impasse. Dr. Ambedkar was drawn into the negotiations and with the aid of men like Amritlal Thakkar, Rajagopalachari, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Birla, Sardar Patel, M.C. Rajah, Jayakar, Rajendra Prasad, Hridaynath Kunzru and others a scheme was formulated which met with the acceptance of all parties by the fifth day of the fast. Thus the Poona or Yervada Pact came into being (24 September 1932) which was signed by the caste Hindu politicians as well as Depressed Class leaders of two opposite groups and cabled to the British Prime Minister for immediate acceptance so as to avert the disaster upon Gandhi's life. Simultaneously Ambedkar and Srinivasan and M.C. Rajah made separate cables to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State and Viceroy indicating
their assent to the Pact. In the meantime the Pact was also unanimously ratified by the conference of Hindu leaders held in Bombay on 25 September 1932. (101)

One of the basic principles on which the Poona agreement was made was laid by the Liberal leader Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. He devised a compromise formula between the two hostile claims of separate and joint electorate. He proposed two different systems of election for two types of reserved seats. For some reserved seats in the joint electorate he suggested that the Depressed Class candidates would be nominated as a result of private consultation between Hindus and the Depressed Classes. For the rest of reserved seats the Sapru formula recommended two elections—primary and secondary. In the primary election the Depressed Class voters would choose a panel of three candidates for each seat out of whom their representatives would be finally elected by the general electorate, comprising caste Hindu as well as Depressed Class voters. Sapru held that this electoral system while maintaining the principle of joint electorate would enable the Depressed Classes to choose their own candidates, an opportunity not available to them previously. (102)

Ambedkar and Solanki, the two protagonists of the separate electorate system accepted the Sapru formula. But within its framework Ambedkar asked for 197 reserved seats as against 71 provided
by the Communal Award. Out of these 197 seats he wanted the double election system to be applicable for 76 leaving the rest to the single election system. He had further suggested that the Primary election was to continue for ten years, and the question of reservation was to be decided after a further period of 15 years by a referendum among the Depressed Classes. While Sapru had fixed the number of candidates to be elected in the primary election at three, Ambedkar fixed the number at two.\(^{(103)}\)

There were breathless moments of stress and strains at the time of negotiations leading to the agreement at Yervada. Ambedkar's panel system was at first not acceptable to Gandhi to whom the panel system should be applied to all or none of the reserved seats. Ambedkar was unwilling to agree, but soon emotionally won over gave his consent to Gandhi's terms. Then came another stalemate on the question of duration of primary election and referendum to decide the duration of reserved seats. Gandhi approved of the referendum, but said it should take place after five years. Here again Ambedkar refused to condescend and the Pact had to be signed at last without the condition of referendum attached to it. Finally, there had been also much of a haggling on the question of allocation of seats. It was then decided that 148 seats in the Provincial Assemblies should be granted to the Depressed Classes. At the same time they were to also have 10 per cent of the seats of the Hindus from British India in the Central Assembly.\(^{(104)}\)

The Poona Pact gave the Depressed Classes more than double
the number of seats they had got in the Communal Award. The following comparative study will explain the relative advantage of the two so far as the Depressed Classes were concerned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Seats under Communal Award</th>
<th>Seats under Poona Pact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay including Sind</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces &amp; Berar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Frontier Province</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Poona Pact was widely acclaimed by the nationalist public opinion as well as Press "as a personal triumph for Mr. Gandhi and a sure indication that Indian Political parties were able to settle their own differences". (105) Most of the depressed people also felt satisfied with the deal of the Poona Pact under which they gained the all-time highest privilege so far as electoral representation was concerned. But Ambedkar did not seem to be satisfied with the arrangement. He made a psephological analysis of the result of the election which according to the new constitution was held in February 1937. His contention was that the advantage allowed to the Depressed Classes was actually intercepted by the Congress which bagged 78 out of total 151 seats reserved for the Untouchables. "The power to do mischief", Ambedkar held
"in elections which a joint electorate gives to a majority is increased immensly if the electoral system is based on the principle of a single member constituency".\textsuperscript{(106)} The mischief was writ large in the election result of 1937. The Congressite candidate winning a reserved seat functioned as a party stooge operating largely at the instance of his Congress boss and therefore seldom dared to uphold the real interest of the untouchables unless instructed by the party to open his mouth on the floor of the Legislature.

According to Ambedkar, the benefits of the Communal Award although it had earmarked a lesser number of seats for the untouchables was definitely higher than that of the Poona Pact. The Communal Award gave the untouchables the benefit of Double Vote, one to be used through separate electorate and the other to be used in the general electorates. Now if the Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats it also deprived them of the right to the double vote. Ambedkar held that this increase in seats can never be deemed to be a compensation for the loss of the double vote which increased the bargaining power of the Depressed Classes.

"The Second vote given by the Communal Award was a priceless privilege. Its value as a political weapon was beyond reckoning. The voting strength of the Untouchables in each constituency is one to ten. With this voting free to be used in the election of caste Hindu candidates, the Untouchable would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate the issue of the general election".\textsuperscript{(107)}
enough so long as it does not ensure the return of a candidate, himself being Untouchable at the same time. The Poona Pact having failed to give this guarantee would not come to the real benefit of the Untouchables. Then again as stated earlier the provision of panel system was also not acceptable to Ambedkar. He denounced the system as a costly paraphernalia. He was also afraid "that under the panel system of election, the general constituency would in most cases return the member who, from the strictly Depressed Class point of view, was the weakest of the panel", i.e. a candidate who might have polled the lowest number of votes from the Depressed Classes in the primary election. Such fear was evidently accentuated by the orthodox Hindus’ display of political strength in their opposition to Gandhi’s anti-untouchability movement. (108) It may be noted in this connection that Ambedkar was not the only Depressed Class leader to criticise the panel system. Some other Depressed Class leaders also preferred separate electorate provided in the Communal Award to the scheme of joint electorate prescribed in the Poona Pact. T. Chinniah, the convenor of All-India Adi Dravida Mahajan Sabha, Nungambakkam, Madras, held that under the Poona Pact the real representatives of the Depressed Classes would not be elected, because those who polled the lowest number of votes in the primary election would in most cases obtain majority of votes in the final election. (109) Even in far off Bengal, the Poona offer did not seem to have satisfied all the sections of the Untouchables. The Depressed Classes Association of Bengal had already registered its protest against the insufficient number of seats reserved for their members. (110)
But even keeping in mind the point of criticism levelled by Ambedkar against the Poona Pact one wonders as to how the same man who was so critical of the Pact could so forcefully support the agreement at its initial stage. In one of his first public utterance after the Poona agreement Ambedkar made it clear "I must confess... there was so much in common between the Mahatma and myself...I am very grateful to the Mahatma for having extricated me from a very difficult situation", meaning thereby that it was gandhi's conciliatory attitude that saved him from being held responsible in case Gandhi died at the time of his fast. Thereafter Ambedkar also remarked:

"My only regret is, why did not the Mahatma take up this attitude at the Round Table Conference? If he had shown the same consideration to my point of view, it would not have been necessary to go through this ordeal". (111)

Gandhi once said, "It is always my lot to appear to be unfair. I cannot help it". (112) This is quite true. Even a large majority of the Hindus whom he tried to save by keeping them united became critical of his policy. It was pointed out that had Gandhi agreed to reserved seats in joint electorate in the Round Table Conference the Depressed Class representatives would have been satisfied with lesser number of seats in which case the caste Hindus need not sacrifice so many seats to the Untouchables as they had to in Bengal and elsewhere. (113) Again the acceptance of the principle of separate primary election was regarded as subversive of
the very purpose of Gandhi's fast, because it amounted to an acceptance of separate electorate. Reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes without any specific mention of the period at the end of which reservation would expire was therefore regarded as undemocratic if not anti-national too. "So long as there is reservation", observed the editor of an influential magazine

"mutual distrust and suspicion between the two sections of the Hindus will be in evidence. The earlier both such inner want of mutual confidence and its external signs disappear, the better for the Hindu community. The Hindus must attain solidarity within the minimum period."(114)

In the midst of a bitter recrimination everybody forgot that the principle Gandhi had maintained in the London Round Table Conference having been denied by the decision of His Majesty's Government, the problem had been oriented afresh. Gandhi had to therefore accept joint electorate with reserved seats only to avert the greater evil of separate electorate. Nobody again cared to recall that under the Rajah-Moonje Pact the Depressed Classes were to get 265 seats which was drastically reduced to only 148 under the Poona agreement.

But if the Poona Pact made a drastic retrenchment of the quota earmarked in the Rajah-Moonje Pact, it had also granted the Depressed Classes 18% of the general seats in the Federal Legislature. To many Hindus this appeared as undue bounty amounting to appeasement. Most of these people had fresh in their memory the events
of 1909 when Gopal Krishna Gokhale's overdose of liberalism had won for the Muslims some undue advantage under the Morley-Minto Reforms Act. They felt that more than two decades after, the same liberal extravagance and this time shown by Gandhi had won for the Depressed Classes unequal advantages for which the high caste Hindus alone had to suffer. (115)

The grievance of the caste Hindus were not wholly unreal. In Bengal the Hindus felt particularly sore about an arrangement which had made a large size dent upon their share. Quite a large section of Hindus in Bengal who were dissatisfied with the seats allocated to them under the Communal Award felt further aggrieved when the Poona Pact offered 30 seats to the Depressed Classes out of the 80 general seats. As pointed out by Subash Chandra Bose, "In province like Bengal where Hindus had already been unjustly treated in the Award, the Poona agreement was regarded as a further injustice by the rest of the Hindu community particularly in view of the fact that the depressed class hardly existed there." (116) To Subhas Chandra not all the people belonging to the Depressed Class deserve to be identified as backward and hence should not be covered by the blanket deal of the Poona Pact. Many people shared his views which were reflected in at least two of the leading dailies of Calcutta - Subhas Chandra's Liberty (17 August 1932) and J.M. Sengupta's Advance (18 August 1932). (117)

This orthodox opposition to the Poona Pact was mounting in Bengal since December 1932, when 25 Hindu M.L.C.s had sent
a telegram to the Prime Minister, followed by another telegram from Satyendranath Sen, a member of Central Legislature. In January 1933 another delegation from Bengal consisting of B.P.SinhaRay, Hirendranath Dutta, Tulsi Goswami, Pramathnath Tagore, B.C.Chatterjee and J.N.Bose met the Viceroy to convey to him their disapproval of the Poona agreement. Lord Willingdon felt perturbed at the expression of their strong feeling and he wrote:

The Hindu position here is certainly very hard. Under the pact they have had a further 20 seats taken away from them and handed over to the Depressed Classes, with the result that they will be in a small minority in the new Council and this notwithstanding the fact that they are in Bengal the chief men of influence both educationally and materially."(118)

In a short time this 'orthodox Hindu backlash' assumed a very serious character. Thus in March 1933, J.L.Banerjee, a veteran Gandhite and a tried non-co-operationist moved in the Legislative Council a resolution which stated that the Poona Pact "is unacceptable in the peculiar circumstances of Bengal, that it is injurious to the interests of the Hindu community of this province and subversive of their solidarity", and "therefore, the Prime Minister should be pleased to revise and withdraw his acceptance of the same so far as this province is concerned". The resolution was also heartily supported by such other Hindu elite like S.M.Bose, Anand Mohan Poddar and Naresh Chandra Sengupta.(119)

It should be noted in this context that the strong Hindu reaction to the Poona Pact had in its turn further stiffened the
attitude of the Depressed Classes in Bengal. Babu Rasiklal Biswas was already critical of the Hindus and now Babu Mukunda Behari Mullick came to openly challenge the validity of the position of the Hindus. Babu Amulyadhan Ray came in almost a direct confrontation with the Hindus when he openly criticised J.L. Banerjee's resolution as a very glaring example of 'Brahminical fraud'. Not content with such invective he even went further and described Banerjee's move as the triumph of a 'determined combination of the zamindars, moneylenders and the caste Hindus against the Depressed Classes'. Emotion ran high, so much so that the sober voice of Aukshay Kumar Sen, the only caste Hindu to refuse to vote in favour of Banerjee's resolution was lost in the wilderness. Mischief of clan spirit reigned supreme everywhere and endless bickerings leading to political chaos became the order of the day.

Gandhi, always 'nursing the unconquerable hope' of keeping the Untouchables bound together in fraternity with the Hindus gave them perhaps more seats that what were due to them. Considering the number of Depressed Class population this arrangement had nothing unfair in it. Rather it may appear to be very fair and just in the context of enormous injustice heaped upon the Untouchables for centuries in the past. But the colonial masters saw an opportunity in the situation. They convinced the depressed people that as a Hindu minority their interests were identical with those of the Muslims minority and their combined strength would increase their bargaining potential against the Hindus and would therefore bring more advantages for each of them. Henceforth
Bengal became the centre of a new political alignment between the Muslims and the Harijans while the European M.L.A.'s remained patrons, priests and witnesses of this strange alliance. (121)

It may be interesting to note in this connection that the Poona Pact accepted by the British Government was later on criticised by many members of the British Parliament, particularly its Conservative members. The Joint Parliamentary Committee held that the original Communal Award contained a more satisfactory solution of the problem of Depressed Class representation than the Poona Pact, because on the one hand, it sought to maintain the unity of Hindu community by making provision for the caste Hindus and Depressed Classes voting together in the general constituencies, and on the other hand, it gave the latter the right to choose their own representatives so as 'to ensure their case being heard and to influence voting'. The Joint Committee also pointed out that the lesser quantum of representation given in the Communal Award was absolutely justified as the Depressed Classes were not in a position to find larger number of candidates of 'adequate calibre' on account of their backwardness. But since the Pact had been formally accepted under authority of His Majesty's Government according to the Clause 4 of the Communal Award, the Parliamentary Committee did not deem it politic to reject the Pact. (122) During the discussion on the Government of India Bill, 1935 in the House of Commons, some of the diehard Conservatives opposed the Poona Pact. Sir Henry Croft held that this pact would bring the Depressed Classes under the 'permanent bondage of Congress
leadership'. He pointed out that the 71 seats allotted to the Depressed Classes under the Communal Award would have gone to their actual representatives, but under the Poona Pact all 148 seats would be captured by the 'so-called depressed class representatives', set up by the Congress. He alleged that the Poona Pact had been manoeuvred by Gandhi 'with very great ingenuity', because the latter wanted to maintain 'the domination of Hindu political power'. (123) However the Labour member, Clement Attlee quickly pointed out the misconception of Croft. He said that Gandhi's policy was to remove the disabilities of the Depressed Classes by integrating them into the Hindu community, and that any policy of separating them from the Hindu community was dangerous. (124)

The Poona Pact marked the end of an epoch. But there are people, now and then, who believed that Gandhi had won his victory by moral coercion. Critics of Gandhi also appeared to be trusted friends of the depressed people since more often than not they had made loud claims to vindicate the rights of the Untouchables. However, "It is a general popular error to imagine the louder complainers for the public to be the most anxious for its welfare". (125)
NOTES


2. The Round Table Conference worked through nine sub-committees each of which was untrusted with a specific charge. The Minorities Sub-Committee (no. III) being chaired by the Prime Minister for example, was to recommend measures which may secure the willing co-operation of the minorities and the special interests. Similarly the Franchise Sub-committee (no. VI) under the chairmanship of Sir W.F. Jowitt was to suggest on what main principles was the franchise to be based for men and women.


9. IRTC. 12th November 1930 - 19th January 1931, Sub-committee No. III (Minorities). (Sub-Committees' Reports, Conference Resolution and Prime Minister's Statement) Report presented at the meeting of the committee of the whole conference on 16 and 19 January 1931. p. 47.


16. However, the Labour Party which assumed the role of Opposition in the Parliament soon expelled Macdonald for forming the National Government. Macdonald, thus for all intents and purpose, became the head of the Conservative or Tory Government with Mr. Wedgwood Benn being replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare as the new Secretary of State for India.


28. Ibid.

29. Ibid. p. 1357.

30. See before, p. 135.


34. IRTC (Second Session) 7th September 1931-1st December 1931. Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee (Vol. III.), Tenth meeting dated 13 November 1931, p. 1382.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid. p. 1385.


42. CWM. Vol. XLVIII. p. 449.
43. Ibid. p. 119.

44. Keer D., op. cit.


46. Ibid. p. 332 (Resolution Passed)

47. Ibid. pp. 335-336.

48. Ibid. p. 337.

49. M.C. Rajah's presidential address at the All-India Depressed Classes' Conference dated Bombay the 10th July 1932. IAR. Vol. II (1932), pp. 368-373.

50. Ibid. p. 369.


52. There were of course some prominent Hindu leaders who supported the claims of the Depressed Classes as for example Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir A.P. Patro, Dewan Bahadur A. Ramaswami Mudalier, N.M. Joshi, A. Rangaswami Iyenger, Dewan Bahadur M. Ramachandra Rao and others including also Dr. B.S. Moonje and Brahmo Liberal Chimanlal Setalvad.


54. The Times of India, 8 March 1932.


56. Ibid. p. 94.

57. Ibid. p. 346.

58. Ibid. p. 348.

59. Ibid. p. 581.
60. Ibid. p. 825.
61. Ibid. p. 832.
63. IFC. Vol. IV. p. 346.
64. The Times of India, 10 March 1932.
65. Ibid.
66. Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, 1 April 1932.
68. Ibid. p. 823.
70. IFC. Vol. IV. pp. 359-360.
72. Ibid. 31 March 1932.
73. Ibid. 1 April 1932.
76. The figures in the table are in millions. There are some discrepancies in the data and figures in some entries are approximate, not available and also under revision. See IFC. Report. Vol. I. Chapter X. p. 119.
78. Ibid. p. 458.
   BPSA . , pp. 159-160
82. Ibid . p. 160.
83. Sitaramayya P., History of the Indian National Congress 
   Vol. I., New Delhi, 1969, p. 663. For the whole text of the 
   Communal Award see Appendix VI, pp. 656-664.
84. Desai M., The Diary of Mahadev Desai, Ahmedabad, 1933, 
85. CWM. Vol. L., p. 469.
86. 'A Secret Note on the Problem of Depressed Class 
   Representation', Templewood Collection (Nehru Memorial 
   Museum and Library), MSS EUR E240, Vol. 65., p. 38. Quoted 
   in 'Casteism and the Communal Award': 1932' by Hasi 
   Banerjee in Bandyopadhyay S and Das S., 
   op.cit., pp. 131-132.
87. G.I., Home, Political No. 41/1/1932. A Secret Note on the 
   Communal Award.
88. On this see Page D., Prelude to Partition: The Indian 
   Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, New Delhi 
   (Oxford), 1982.
89. See extracts quoted by Hasi Banerjee from the India Office 
   Department note on Communal and Minority Problem in 
   Bandyopadhyay S. and Das S., op.cit., p. 134.
91. See extracts quoted by Hasi Banerjee from Templewood 
   Collection. op.cit., p. 134.
94. Ibid pp. 24-25.


96. Ibid. pp. 322, 326.

97. Quoted in Keer D., op.cit., p. 204.


100. IAR. Vol. II (1932), pp. 251-252.


104. For a more elaborate description of the negotiation see Keer D., op.cit., pp. 212-214.


106. BPSA., p. 169.

107. Ibid. p. 172.


110. Bandyopadhyay S., op.cit., p. 76.


117. Tripathi A., *op.cit.*, p. 203. Interestingly Tripathi had in this connection referred to a letter written to Sardul Singh which though intercepted by the Intelligence Branch is preserved in the government file itself. See G.I., Home, Political No. 3/33 of 1940 (A).


122. *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform* (Session 1933-34), Vo. I. part I, Report, p. 68.


"Then I asked: Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so, make it so?
He replied: All Poets believed that it does"  
~ William Blake.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 'A Memorable Fancy'.

The election results of 1937 were a great disillusionment for the Depressed Classes, now categorised under a non-pejorative term, Scheduled Castes. Of course Ambedkar had his own psephological analysis which claimed that Congress success at the poll was no indication of its acceptability among the Scheduled Castes. But it seemed a queer interpretation particularly when further endeavours were made for a complete polarisation through renewed demands for separate electorate. Once again there was recrudescence of the same old wrangle grown bitter still further by imperialism dangling the carrot of self-government for winning over the parties to support its war efforts. So nothing could be gained in the long run - the August Offer (1940), Draft Declaration (1942) and Wavell Plan (1945) all ended in fiasco.

Before that distressing finale Gandhi had all along tried to convince the Harijan leaders that their destiny is inextricably linked up with the general body of Hindu population and together they should fight the war against orthodoxy. But Ambedkar who had fresh in his memory the worst excesses of Brahminical insolence would stop not until separate electorate is gained. The two leaders each intending to do good to the people could agree with none. The nation still remained hopelessly vague about the future.
Towards a renewed claim for separate Electorate
and the variety of Colonial Response (1932-45)

The Communal Award provided for reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes. But it did not make any precise definition of the classes or castes or categories which would be entitled to vote in the special Depressed Class constituencies.\(^1\) The Poona Pact also did not make any definition of the Depressed Classes. The term had been in use to indicate social and educational backwardness. But such vague assertion could little help especially when such category has to be vested with some specific constitutional privileges. There were of course great difficulties in making a clear definition of the term and considering the varieties of customs in different localities one could not easily find an identifying mark for all of them which would be acceptable to all. The British Government's policy of classification of certain elements of the population as Depressed Classes could be traced back to the Census of 1901 when some of the Hindu castes were so classified on the basis of 'social precedence as recognised by native public opinion'.\(^2\) In the Census of 1911, the provincial Census Superintendents were instructed to enumerate those castes and tribes who were earlier classed as Hindu but who did not conform to certain standards of Hinduism or were subject to certain disabilities. The Census Commissioner had laid down ten specific categories
so as to include those 'who were not hundred per cent Hindus' and only five among them were supposed to belong to the Depressed Classes. (3)

The question of identifying the Depressed Classes according to a given definition received public attention in course of discussion on a resolution moved by M.B. Dadabhoy in the Imperial Legislative Council in March 1916. (4) It was then felt that the term should not be treated as synonymous with the expression 'Depressed Classes' which was much more comprehensive in its meaning. In 1917, Sir Henry Sharp, the Educational Commissioner of the Government of India, in his Seventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India for the years 1912-1917, used the term 'Depressed Classes' to mean only Hindu untouchable castes. But he noted at the same time that the term was also used to mean the educationally and economically backward Hindu castes who were not 'absolutely outside the pale of castes'. (5) The Franchise Committee of 1918-1919 divided the Hindu community into three classes and grouped the untouchable castes under 'Hindu-others'. (6) In the Census of 1921 the population of the Depressed Classes was enumerated without any attempt to define the term because it was apprehended that making of such social distinction in public report might be deemed invidious. In 1928 when the Indian Statutory Commission asked the Government of India to 'give a critical account of the total number of depressed classes in British India', the Government stated that no caste or tribe had been officially defined as Depressed and 'the question whether or not any group of the community
is socially depressed is a matter of local custom'. (7) The Statutory Commission used the term to mean only the Hindu untouchable castes i.e. those castes who cause 'pollution by touch or by approach within a certain distance' and excluded from its scope the 'aboriginals who are definitely outside the Hindu fold'. (8) In their memorandum to the second session of the Round Table Conference both Ambedkar and Srinivasan held that the Depressed Classes should be strictly defined as meaning persons belonging to communities which are subjected to the system of untouchability. In place of Depressed Classes they suggested some alternative nomenclatures such as 'Non-caste Hindus', 'Protestant Hindus' and 'Non-conformist Hindus'. (9) In the Census of 1931, the provincial Census Superintendent decided to confine the term to the Hindu untouchable castes by excluding from its scope Muslims, Christians and 'hill and forest tribes who had not become Hindu but whose religion was returned as tribal'. (10) In the Census of 1931 the same parameter was retained.

The Indian Franchise Committee tried to define the word in more categorical terms. "We consider...that the term depressed classes should not include primitive or aboriginal tribes, nor should it include those Hindus who are only economically poor and in other ways backward but are not regarded as untouchables". The Committee preferred to keep the term strictly confined within the limits of Hindu untouchables. (11)

When the Poona agreement was signed the need for defining the term was more keenly felt for it was quite certain that
the Poona recommendations would be incorporated in the forthcoming Government of India Act and the parties would have to participate in the contest for election. But given the Indian social situations the term Depressed Class would sound odious and "it was not the intention of the government to label any particular caste or tribe with the stigma of untouchability or depressed character."(12) Hence in a White Paper published by the government in March 1933 the term Depressed Class was replaced by another nomenclature Scheduled Caste.(13) The value-free term 'scheduled' was adopted, as the castes concerned would be entered into a schedule for electoral purposes.(14) Thus without fixing any criteria for the definition of castes the schedule enumerated a list of them which were to be treated as such.(15) Finally according to the first, fifth and sixth schedules of the Government of India Act 1935, His Majesty in Council issued the 'Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order in Council dated 30th April, 1936 containing a list of castes, races or tribes who were to be treated as Scheduled Castes.'(16) It was moreover stated that such castes, races or tribes as were included in the schedule would correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the Depressed Classes. It is interesting to note in this connection that the schedule accommodated also the names of certain tribes who were supposed to be not professing Hinduism. In Bengal the schedule included such tribes like Ho, Koch, Lodha, Mech, Munda, Oraon, Santal and the like. The inclusion of tribal element was definitely an indication of British sense of equanimity by which justice
was made to people hitherto disowned both by the Hindus and the Untouchables. But the inflated number of scheduled caste components resulted in further reducing Hindu seats - a phenomenon considered to be politically desirable by the colonial masters.

In the Government of India Act 1935 the provisions of the Poona Pact were almost fully embodied, with three additional seats for Bihar and Orissa. The allocation of seats in the provincial legislatures under the new Act was as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>General Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P. and Berar</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.W.F.P.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1585</strong></td>
<td><strong>808</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(17) The allocation of seats in the provincial legislatures under the new Act was as under: (18)
The Act also provided for 19 reserved seats for the erstwhile Depressed Classes out of a total of 250 seats in the Federal Assembly and 6 seats in Council of States having a total number of 150 seats. Further details regarding the mode of election and franchisal qualifications involving the vital interests of the depressed people were laid down in the relevant Schedules of the Act.

Before the election to the new legislatures could be held the need was felt for political mobilisation through parties in whose banner the Scheduled Castes may require to contest the election. In October 1936 Ambedkar had founded the Independent Labour Party of India which was to fight election as representative of the Scheduled Castes in Bombay. Elsewhere in India prominent Scheduled Caste leaders like M.C. Rajah, G.A. Gavai and V. Kurmiah held parleys with Gandhi in order to frame an election strategy on behalf of their community. Gandhi advised them to join Congress only if they were unable to build up a separate organisation of their own, strong and loyal to the country. "Your immediate goal", Gandhi advised these leaders "is to vindicate your status of absolute equality which is denied to you..." and for that Gandhi advised them first to organise "one undivided party" failing which "you will ally yourselves to that party which gives you the greatest advantage. In my opinion such a party is undoubtedly the Congress".\(^{(19)}\) A large number of Scheduled Caste candidates, therefore, contested their seats on the tickets of Congress which fielded its nominees on the
all-India level. There were also regional parties which contested for such reserved seats like the Madras Justice Party, People's Party, Depressed Classes League (Bengal), United Party and Nationalist Party (Orissa), National Agriculturist Party (U.P.), Non-Brahmin Party and Nationalist Raja Party (Central Provinces) and the like. (20)

Out of 146 constituencies in which 151 seats were reserved the Scheduled Caste voters constituted minorities in all constituencies except 8 of which 7 were in Bengal and 1 in the Punjab. (21) Among the 146 constituencies there were provision for three seats in 12, four seats in 9 and only two seats in 125 of such constituencies. The province-wise distribution of reserved seats was as under (22):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Madras</th>
<th>Bombay</th>
<th>Bengal</th>
<th>United</th>
<th>Punjab</th>
<th>Bihar</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Assam</th>
<th>Orissa</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Congress had prepared a general analysis of the electoral performance of the party in different Provinces including the Assembly and the Council. The party had won an absolute majority in the Legislative Assemblies of 5 provinces, namely, Madras, U.P., Bihar, the Central Provinces and Orissa. It also emerged as the biggest single party in four other provinces namely, Bombay, Bengal, Assam and the N.W.F.P. In the Assemblies
of Sind and Punjab the Congress was in a comparatively small minority. As for the performance of the party in the Scheduled Caste reserved seats the following analysis will speak for itself:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of S.C. reserved seats</th>
<th>Total no. of seats contested</th>
<th>Total no. of seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>129</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 151 Scheduled Caste seats, Congress contested in 139 seats and non-Congress parties and individuals (Independents) contested in 137 seats. Out of 26 uncontested seats the Congress could win 14 while the non-Congress candidates bagged 12 seats. That there was no contest in 26 seats indicated the political backwardness of the Scheduled Castes and want of qualified candidates among them to contest. Out of the 151 reserved seats Congress won 78 as against 73 won by the non-Congress elements. According to Ambedkar's analysis of the election results the Congress while winning majority of the
Scheduled Caste seats, won a minority of the Scheduled Caste votes. Ambedkar's findings had made it clear that the Congress won majority of Scheduled Caste votes in 38 seats, won 13 seats solely with the help of caste Hindu votes, 8 seats owing to the splitting of the Scheduled Caste votes and 19 seats on account of the lack of interest shown by the Scheduled Castes in election to their seats. Another curious feature of 1937 election is that in many cases in two-member or multi-member constituencies the caste Hindu voters showed a lack of interest in the election of the Scheduled caste candidates. Ambedkar had previously pleaded in favour of plural member constituency which according to him could best ensure the interest of the Depressed Classes in a joint electorate system. But it was later found that due to the adoption of cumulative voting system the caste Hindu voters had in many constituencies used their option not to caste any vote to the Scheduled Caste candidates and give all their votes to the caste Hindu candidates. This was even openly admitted in a nationalist gathering like a conference of Western and Central India Harijan Sevaks held under the presidency of shrimati Rameswari Nehru in the first week of June 1939. Once again this being a selfish game in politics is a clear indication that a large section of Congress voters considered the caste groups as political categories to be forestalled by all means and with the help of all the stratagem available in their arsenal. As a matter of fact the process of politicization of caste had become almost complete in 1937. The colonial policy of 'protective discrimination' had borne its expected results and at least in Bengal a movement which started in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries with 'social
aspirations and a spirit of protest against the existing social imbalances, ultimately turned into what may be called a politics of reservation'. The election results in Bengal would clearly reveal that while the alienation of the Scheduled Caste people from the mainstream politics was almost complete in 1937 their leaders gradually became more interested in concessions that could hardly benefit the masses 'whose socio-economic backwardness was ironically their major political capital'.(29)

At the time of the Poona agreement the leaders of the Depressed Classes expressed their apprehension that under a system of joint electorate they would be on a total rout by the electoral operation of the caste Hindu majority. At the same time the caste Hindu voters were also quite sure that they would never fail to show utmost interest in the election of the Scheduled Castes. The election results of 1937 proved that none of such assurance and apprehension was wholly true. Again while the Congress gains in the 1937 elections have been said to be spectacular it is also to be noted that the performance of Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party was also in no way very insignificant. It had put up 17 candidates, 13 for Scheduled Caste reserved seats and 4 for general seats and of these 11 reserved and 3 general seats were won plus 4 of 19 reserved seats in Central Provinces and Berar. The success was, according to some interpretation, due to the fact that in the years from 1936 through 1942 Ambedkar and the Dalits were caught up in waves of 'economic and political radicalism'. Also the I.L.P. was projected boldly "as a party of
workers and peasants: the fight against casteism was taken as a necessity for creating worker-peasant unity; and the Congress was condemned as a party controlled by exploiting classes which would neither end exploitation nor fight vigorously against British imperialism". However it is interesting to note in this connection that the early radicalism of the I.L.P. soon frittered away when the demand for separate electorate once again received the uppermost consideration of the leaders more significantly since when the Scheduled Caste Federation was formed at the initiative of Ambedkar. (30)

Ambedkar gave his grudging consent to the Poona Pact for he was afraid that he might be held responsible for any untoward event arising out of Gandhi's epic fast. But the 1937 election results had further embittered his mind because he felt that the poor performance of the Scheduled Castes was mostly due to the unsatisfactory terms of the Poona Pact. Even M.C. Rajah who had lent support to Gandhi and the joint electorate system had now changed his mind. The "Congress Party men in Madras", he complained."deviated from the Pact, so much so, that our community in the Legislative Assembly have to follow the Caste Hindus blindly". (31) So the demand for separate electorate in total rejection of the Poona agreement reappeared soon after the election was over. The demand began to grow more forceful as a result of the outbreak of the World War II which whetted the political aspirations of the subject people.
India was dragged into the so-called 'war to save democracy' against her will. The Congress was not unwilling to join with the British and the Allies in their combined fight against Fascism. But the party demanded that the saviour of democracy should save the subject people in their own colony in India that is to say the government should make a formal declaration of Indian independence before commandeering her resources for the purpose of the war.

The Congress demand raised the question of how to determine the political future of India together with what concessions might be made to its demand. It was then found that there was great division among the political parties themselves. The Viceroy was warned 'not to be misled into the position enunciated by Mr. Gandhi or to regard the Congress and the Muslim League as representing the whole or even the bulk of India'. Ambedkar felt sceptic about the future constitutional status of the Scheduled Castes. In his talks with the Viceroy on 9 October 1939 he complained that the Poona Pact had been far from satisfactory from the standpoint of the depressed people and that in the absence of multi-member constituencies they had not been able to secure adequate number of seats in the legislatures. He had also very categorically held that unless some method of securing the real representatives of the Scheduled Castes was adopted he would insist on separate electorates for them. On 11 October 1939, Rao Bahadur Srinivasan, M.C. Rajah and N.Sivaraj issued a statement in Madras along with some non-Congress leaders which repudiated the
Congress party's claim to represent all classes and communities of India. (33)

The division among the Indian leaders had afforded an opportunity for the government to fall back on the old policy of divide and rule. Lord Linlithgow declared that the Dominion Status was the goal of India. It was also stated that at the end of the war, His Majesty's Government would be willing to undertake modification of the Act of 1935 after 'consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes'. With regard to the demand for immediate transfer of control to Indian hands, the Viceroy said that he was willing to set up a 'consultative group' of representative Indians immediately to be associated with him, in an advisory capacity, in order to discuss the conduct of the war. (34) The viceregal statement of 17 October 1939 was almost reiterated in the August offer of the government (8 August 1940) in which it was stated that the government would establish self-government in India at the end of the War in consultation with the 'various communities, parties and interests'. But the August offer was rejected by the Congress owing to an underlying mischief in the scheme which was spelt out by the Secretary of State, L.S. Amery in his speech (14 August 1940) in the House of Commons - "India cannot be unitary in the sense that we are in this island... India's future house of freedom has room for many mansions". (35) However, the Sikhs, the Scheduled Castes and other organizations declared their willingness to accept the offer.
The most unfortunate part of the August offer was the attempt to bolster up the claim of the minorities and to pitch them against the Congress. The British authorities gave undue weightage to the anti-Congress stand of the separatist Scheduled Caste leaders particularly that of Ambedkar and held that the Depressed Classes as a community were opposed to the Congress. The authorities also enlisted such leaders' co-operation for the war efforts. Thus B.R. Ambedkar and M.C. Rajah were appointed as the members of the National Defence Council which was constituted on 21 July 1941. The rationale of the British policy of supporting Ambedkar and his followers as against the Congress is quite clear. However it may be noted here that at the same time when Ambedkar was chosen for the British favour he was coming into conflict with the British government on a number of issues and in August 1941 in a 'Mahar-Mang-Vethiya' conference held at Sinnar he had openly thundered against the government - "I shall direct attacks a hundredfold more bitter, more virulent, more deadly against the British than I have ever done against the Hindus". But then he had also met the Bombay governor in early July and he evidently had expectations of being given a post in the Viceroy's Council. It seems strange politics that he "was getting angrier and threatening ever stronger action but at the same time maintaining his government links (for example his place on the Indian Defence Council)."(36) However it may be noted in the present context that Ambedkar himself did not represent all shades of opinions within his own community. The All-India Depressed Classes League, a nationalist (in the sense joint electorite) organisation of the
Scheduled Castes endorsed the Congress party's stand on war and independence. The Executive Committee of this association, in its meeting held at Allahabad on 24 October 1939 under the chairmanship of Babu Jagajivan Ram, resolved that Congress was the one single political organisation which had a legitimate right to represent the various communities and interests in the country. The meeting further resolved that Ambedkar's statements did not represent the views of the Scheduled Castes as a whole and that his idea of repudiating the Poona Pact was harmful to them as well as the country. (37)

The August offer was rejected by the Congress. The British policy of relying on the support of the Congress adversaries including the Scheduled Castes could also little help the government to overcome the crisis. In the meantime Japan's victorious entry into the eastern sector of the war coupled with further changes in the global situations (marked by Chiang Kai Shek's visit of India and President Roosevelt's categorical assurance that the Atlantic Charter was applicable to the whole of the world - both events having taken place in February 1942) had necessitated reconsideration of Indian demands. On March 22, 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps came to India with fresh proposals to resolve the Indian political deadlock. The Draft Declaration, as the proposal was called, conceded to the Indians the right to make their own constitution, but the constitution was to be framed at the end of the War by a constituent assembly consisting of representatives elected by the members of the lower houses of the
provincial legislatures and the representatives of the native states. It was also stated that a treaty shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the Constitution-making body and the said treaty shall contain adequate provision for protection of racial and religious minorities in accordance with the past undertaking given by His Majesty's Government to the Minorities. During the interim period and pending the framing of a constitution a large share of responsibility would be handed over to the Indians who would be accommodated in the Viceroy's Executive Council.

While being condemned by Gandhi as a trifle, 'a post dated cheque on a crashing bank' the Draft Declaration appeared to be equally unacceptable to the Scheduled Castes. In a statement issued to the Press Ambedkar held that the Depressed Classes had been betrayed in the Draft Declaration. He argued that the constituent assembly promised in it would not protect their interests as their representatives would not only be 'a hopeless minority' in this body but also mere nominees of the Congress rather than their real representatives. He further pointed out that the proposed constituent assembly would be dominated by the Congress whose leader Gandhi, 'in spite of his endeavours in the matter of the social uplift of the Depressed Classes' was 'totally opposed to giving political recognition to the Depressed Classes in the constitution as a separate and distinct element in the national life of India'. The treaty proposed to be signed between the constituent assembly and His Majesty's Government, he further
pointed out, could not safeguard the interests of the Depressed Classes, because if India became independent the British Government would have no means to enforce the treaty. (38)

There were men in the official circle who also seemed to be in secret sympathy with Ambedkar. Sir D.T. Monteath, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India and Burma for example while expressing his doubt as to whether the Draft Declaration would be acceptable to the Depressed Classes confessed to Amery that the Depressed Classes were not granted as much effective safeguards as were granted to the Muslims and the Sikhs. It was further confided that "the influence that the depressed classes are likely to exercise in a constituent body composed on the basis proposed is not likely to be very effective - for the 'depressed classes' have not a long purse on which to draw". (39) Monteath's reading of the situation was substantially correct. On behalf of the Depressed Classes, Ambedkar and M.C. Rajah met Cripps on 30 March 1942. They pointed out that under the existing system of joint electorate their men would not be able to return their real representatives. Cripps allayed their fear by referring to the scheme of the negotiated treaty with the government which was proposed to be framed along the lines of the League of Nations' Minorities treaties. But the veteran emissary was not himself very confident about the effectiveness of such a treaty - "though this form of protection might no doubt seem to them inadequate, once granted the idea of self-government and self-determination for India, there was no other possible way by which we could intervene to protect any minority in India". (40)
Cripps was nevertheless hopeful that although not entirely satisfied Ambedkar and Rajah would not oppose the Draft Declaration. But in their letter to Cripps, Ambedkar and Rajah informed:

"We are all of us absolutely convinced that the proposals are calculated to do the greatest harm to the Depressed Classes and are sure to place under an unmitigated system of Hindu rule...

We request you to convey to His Majesty's Government our deepest anxiety regarding the future of the Depressed Classes and to impress upon them that we must look upon it as breach of faith if His Majesty's Government should decide to force upon the Depressed Classes a Constitution to which they have not given their free and voluntary consent."\(^{(41)}\)

Disappointed with the Draft Declaration, Ambedkar lost enthusiasm for co-operation with the government's war efforts and once out of sheer disgust he had even thought of resigning from the National Defence Council. Sir R. Lumley, the Governor of Bombay in one of his confidential communications to Linlithgow had further informed that Ambedkar felt bitterly disillusioned when "he had been as good as told that the Congress and the Muslim League were the only bodies which counted, and that if they agreed to the proposals, it would not matter what he or the Depressed Classes thought about them".\(^{(42)}\) Such a flat assertion of the imperial policy combined with the fact that he could not be till then accommodated in the Viceroy's Executive Council embittered the mind
of Ambedkar. As a result he was no more 'really keen to help' the government.

In the meantime, Ambedkar and some other Depressed Class leaders decided to organise an all-India platform for the Scheduled Caste through which they would start to mobilise and fight out their case. A conference of such people was held at Nagpur on 18, 19 and 20 July 1942 which was attended by representatives from all parts of India. In his address to the conference Ambedkar straightway accused the government of its differential treatment with the Scheduled Castes. He described the attitude of the British Government to the Depressed Classes as a Munich mentality, the essence of which was to save oneself by sacrificing others. He said that the Cripps proposal had clearly given to the League the right to create Pakistan. But no concessions were made to the just demands of the Scheduled Castes. According to him the Cripps proposals "were the result of a loss of nerve and of a sense of principle, a breach of faith and a sudden volte-face". It was then pointed out in no uncertain terms that the Scheduled Castes would not accept any new constitution unless it had their consent, recognised them as a 'distinct' and 'separate' element and contained provisions for their reservation through separate electorates. Simultaneously with separate electorate Ambedkar also demanded separate village settlements for the Scheduled Castes. This is radicalism or rancour manifest in its worst excess. But Ambedkar had his own arguments. He believed that so long as the Scheduled Castes lived in the outskirts of traditional villages
they would continue to remain untouchables and subject to the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus and would not be able to enjoy free life. (44)

It may be noted now that in spite of the bitter reaction of Ambedkar against the Draft Declaration, the Secretary of State and the Viceroy still counted on his support. This is because the British officials felt that Ambedkar's bitterness was to some extent also due to some personal factors - he could not obtain a position in the High Court which he aspired for long, he was also in a state of indebtedness and such failures must have kept him disconcerted for sometime. Lumley was quite sure that Ambedkar would change his anti-government stance if only he could be rescued from the state of his great mental frustrations, "I would very much like to see something done for him, and I hope that, if a further expansion of your Council is now possible, he will be included, - not on personal grounds alone, but so that we may retain the interest of the Depressed Classes". (45) The Viceroy also was in full agreement with the governor of Bombay - "As you know I have Ambedkar very much in mind, and I hope that it will be possible for me to do something for him - he has behaved very well so far as I am concerned,..." (46) Linlithgow kept his promise. On 2 July, 1942 it was announced by the Government that Ambedkar would be appointed as the member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and nearly three weeks after, on 20 July Ambedkar telegraphically took charge of the Labour portfolio in it. (47) Curiously the offer came on the same day when Ambedkar thundered against the anti-Depressed Class
The failure of the Cripps Mission leading to the Wardha Resolution of the Congress (14 July 1942) and launching of the Quit India Movement (8 August 1942) had necessitated further change in
British attitude to the political parties of India. Congress had to be counteracted by all means and for this purpose the Depressed Classes ever sore about the Congress seemed to serve as a natural ally for the government. So a deal of mutual give and take was arranged. The government would support the Depressed Classes' claim for separate electorate and in return to receive their support in its campaign to outmanoeuvre the Congress. The British government, therefore, sought to justify their opposition to the Congress party's demand for independence on the plea that the party did not represent such important elements of Indian national life as the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes and the States. On 31 July 1942, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote to Roosevelt, President of the U.S.A.: "The Congress party in no way represents India, and is strongly opposed by over 90 million Mohammedans, 40 million Untouchables and the Indian states comprising some 90 millions to whom we are bound by treaty."(50)

Both the Secretary of State and Viceroy considered it politically expedient to treat the Scheduled Castes as a minority community like the Muslims obviously with a view to counteract the Congress. This was clearly laid in one of Amery's communications to Linlithgow:

"It does seem to me as if it would be well worth while giving them a substantial leg-up and assimilating their position increasingly to that of the Muslims. There are, after all, politically very considerable
advantages in having two substantial minorities to whom consideration has to be paid,.." (51)

Nearly two weeks after the said communication Linlithgow replied, "I think there is a good deal in the point you make as to the political importance of recognising so great a minority as the Depressed Classes undoubtedly are". (52) Once again a month after Amery wrote to Linlithgow that the Scheduled Castes should be granted as much protection at least as representation in the Executive, and as for protection in the form of separate electorate, he remarked:

"Possibly too, after Gandhi's death, it might be worth considering whether the present anomalous electoral arrangements for the Scheduled Castes should not be altered and a direct communal basis substituted, as originally suggested."

The colonial patronage for the separatist claim of the Scheduled Castes was more clearly exposed when mainly under the persuasion of the Viceroy Ambedkar had submitted a memorandum (29 October 1942) on the grievances of the Scheduled Castes. The major political demand set forth in the memorandum was the adequate representation of the Scheduled Castes in the Central Legislature as well as the Viceroy's Executive Council in each of which they had only one representative at that time. The government expressed full sympathy for the demands laid down in the said memorandum.
Encouraged by the open support of the government the separatist Scheduled Caste leaders especially Ambedkar now came to fulfil his pledge to the government. Lumley wrote to Linlithgow (24/27 August, 1942), "Dr. Ambedkar responded to your suggestion by a very downright denunciation of Congress on behalf of the Depressed Classes". On 21 July, 1942 he made a strong speech declaring civil disobedience at that time as 'trechery to India' and 'playing the enemy's game' and urging all Indians as a patriotic duty "to resist with all the power and resources at their command any attempt on the part of the Congress to launch civil disobedience". Like Ambedkar, M.C. Rajah also responded to the bureaucratic suggestion and issued a statement at Madras on 15 August, 1942 criticising the Congress programme of action. He expressed surprise over the agitation of the Congress, because according to him, the substance of independence had already been promised by the government. Imperialism was therefore apparently successful-the vigorous support lent by the Scheduled Castes was a clear indication that the Congress' equation with the Indian nation to which the British rulers would hand over state power, could not yet be taken for granted.

But one need not look askance at their efforts because the Scheduled Caste largely responded in a way the colonial government expected them to. Of course the British sought to bolster up the separatist movement among the Scheduled Caste in a manner to suit their own imperialist ends. But the separatist demand of the Scheduled Castes was to a large extent the result of a desperate attempt to uphold the human rights of a people who believed that they had no other means of getting their rights recognised than using the tools
of separatism. To the Depressed Classes Welfare Association at Delhi, Ambedkar announced on 23 August, 1942: "I want to put the Depressed Classes on terms of equality with the other communities in India, I want to place the reins of government in your hands. You should share in the political power of the country on terms of equality with the Mussalmans". (58) In the winter of 1942, Ambedkar raised the question of the Depressed Classes in an international conference at Mont' Tramblant in Quebec in Canada. He presented a paper on the problem of the Depressed Classes which was read out by Sivaraj in the said conference. The gist of the paper was that while asking the British Government to grant independence, the Congress should ensure justice and fair play for the Depressed Classes. He gave a counter challenge to the Congress which had thrown a challenge to the British Government for immediate grant of freedom. Ambedkar had even questioned the validity of a freedom which would scarcely ensure the liberty of the masses.

"Now everybody in India outside the Hindus knows that whatever may be its title it is beyond question that the Congress is a body of middle class Hindus supported by the Hindu Capitalists whose object is not to make Indians free but to be independent of British control and to occupy places of power now occupied by the British. If the kind of Freedom which the Congress wants was achieved there is no doubt that the Hindus would do to the Untouchables exactly what they have been doing in the past." (59)

In the meantime, the second session of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation which was held at Kanpur on 29 and 30 January, 1944 under the presidency of Sivaraj, once again passed
the resolutions of the Nagpur session of July 1942, and submitted further demand for the special treatments of the Scheduled Castes in the post-war scheme of economic reconstruction. He then concluded his speech by appealing to the youths of his community "to forge sanctions by developing organisational strength... so that no party not even The British Government, would dare refuse to recognise their importance in the future scheme of India's constitutional development".

Questions of constitutional settlement for India remained in a stalemate position so long as the Quit India Movement was at its height. But the tempo of the movement gradually receded and on May 6, 1944 Gandhi was released from the prison so that negotiations may start once again for an early settlement of the question. To the Viceroy Gandhi offered to withdraw the civil disobedience if the government issued a 'declaration of immediate Indian independence', and formed a national government responsible to the Central Legislature. But the Viceroy refused to agree on the pretext of the crisis of war situation which was still continuing. Worst still was his offer which contains not merely a repetition of the August proposal of 1940 but also made a specific reference to the problem of the Depressed Classes whose solution was demanded by the government before any settlement of the constitutional deadlock in India. Curiously not even the Draft Declaration of March 1942 contained a pointed reference to the Depressed Classes, it having mentioned only a broad-spectrum category i.e. the 'racial and religious minorities'. The addition in Wavell's offer it was later known, made at the instance of the Viceroy's political boss, Sir Winston Churchill.
Having failed in his negotiation with the Viceroy, Gandhi next started to negotiate with M.A. Jinnah. But here again as Jinnah announced (27 September, 1944) "it had not been possible to reach the agreement". The only result of this fruitless discussion was that it had aroused fear in the mind of the depressed people. The Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled castes Federation expressed disapproval of Gandhi-Jinnah talks on the ground that a settlement between these two leaders would be a settlement between only the Hindus and the Muslims and therefore would be no better than a 'communal settlement of a sectional character'. Ambedkar brought a more serious charge. He said that the Congress was ready to be very generous to the Muslims, but at the same time held an "attitude of studied silence and cold indifference" to the Untouchables. He, therefore, demanded that the future constitution of India 'must be a tripartite constitution, a constitution in which Hindus, the Scheduled Castes and the Muslims will have equal place and equal authority'. He had further proclaimed that the Scheduled Castes would not accept a constitution in which they 'had no place', 'no power'. The communal problem, Ambedkar held, "was not merely a problem between the Hindus and the Muslims" and he warned that Gandhi would not be allowed to lionise the League by cutting out the legitimate shares of the Scheduled Castes.

In June 1945, Ambedkar published his famous work *What Congress and Gandhi have Done to the Untouchables*. The book was an indictment of the attitude of Gandhi and Congress towards the Scheduled Castes. In it was presented argument in support of the political and constitutinal recognition of the separatist claims of the Scheduled Castes. In this book Ambedkar attributed ulterior motives
to the efforts of Gandhi and his followers who were believed to have worked for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes. He held that the 'Harijan Sevak Sangh' was a 'charitable organisation only in name.' In reality it was a 'political organisation, the aim and objective of which are to draw the Untouchables into the Congress fold' and 'scotch any movement by them... to free themselves from the social, religious, economic and political domination of the Hindus'. He tried to prove that Gandhi was basically a conservative who sought to perpetuate the traditional social order of which untouchability was a part. (65) Ambedkar also challenged the claim of Congress to represent the Scheduled Castes. He showed how in the election of 1937 though Congress got majority of the Scheduled Caste seats in the provincial legislatures, only in 38 seats the Congress candidates got majority of the Scheduled Caste votes. As for the most reasonable solution of the problem of the Depressed Classes he expressed his preference for the original provisions of the Communal Award to the Poona Pact. He further maintained that as there was no possibility of disappearance of untouchability in imaginable future, the only way to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes was to treat them as a separate element which alone can protect them against the possible inroads of the Hindus. (66)

It may be noted however that the invectives used against Gandhi do not seem to be really based on a sound judgment. What appeared to be most uncharitable is that Gandhi was even criticised for being not himself sufficiently serious and sincere in his Harijan welfare work. But in reality he had attached topmost priority to this programme so much so that he was even criticised by ardent Congressmen including
Nehru who thought that Gandhi had distracted the attention of the nation from a major issue like Civil Disobedience for little gains on Harijan welfare programme. However, for Ambedkar with a different frame of mind, it was not unlikely to find fault with Gandhi.

Ambedkar's thesis for the treatment of the Scheduled Castes as a separate and distinct element in the future constitution of India did not go unchallenged. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari pointed out that the Scheduled Castes were evenly distributed all over India, in every village, in every town, in every district and in every province and were about ten per cent of the population. Their amalgamation with the rest of the population was so perfect that they 'have to be part of the general population and cannot isolate themselves into a separate democracy'.(67) He alleged that Ambedkar did not see 'the intrinsic difficulties of a revolutionary task' like the removal of untouchability and therefore underrated the achievements of Gandhi and Congress without any justification. To Rajagopalachari it appeared that Ambedkar represented the educated vested interests among the Scheduled Castes, who wanted to enjoy special benefit by retaining the 'Scheduled status'.(68)

Besides Rajagopalachari, there were men even among the community of the Scheduled Caste itself who disagreed on many points with Ambedkar. Thus Babu Jagajivan Ram speaking on behalf of the pro-Congress Scheduled Caste people expressed the desire of being treated as part of the Hindu society with such electoral facilities as may be available under the Poona Pact. His demand for the freedom
of the Depressed Classes and for an early redress of social, religious and economic exploitation in a manner that would enable them to 'stand for equality in Hindu society' did not prevent him from lending open support to the Congress party's demand for freedom. (69) Another Congress leader K. Shanthanam also wrote in refutation of Ambedkar's argument in support of separate electorate. According to him "the Harijans do not form an all-India community with common language, religion or any other special characteristics" and the vast majority of Hindus did not constitute 'a purposeful master class resolved to deal with the untouchable as a mere slave'. "The political segregation of the Scheduled Castes", Santhanam held further, "can only give a long lease of life to the dying caste system and so long as the caste system is in existence, the untouchables are bound to suffer socially and economically". The true remedy of their problem and the real salvation of the Scheduled Castes lay, according to him, in rapid industrial development of India by which these luckless people would become merged in the main body of Hindu agricultural and industrial workers. (70)

While such intolerable wrestle was going on for obtaining shares in the future government of India a non-official body of public leaders constituted by the Liberal leader Sir Tejbahadur Sapru in November 1944 devoted itself to the task of drafting a constitutional scheme for India that might be acceptable to all. This was indeed hoping against hope and when the recommendations of the Committee were published shortly after Wavell's brief departure for London (8 April 1945) it was found that the Sapru Committee proposals could
satisfy none. The Scheduled Castes were particularly bitter for they were to take seats in the Viceroy's Executive Council as part of the Hindus. Of course the Committee considered their representation in the Government of India Act, 1935 to be inadequate, but without fixing the number of increment in the quota of future representation the Committee left the issue for settlement by the constitution making body. Then again the Poona Pact scheme of election was also left unalterable for the next ten years. Ambedkar had already his misgivings for the Committee and although inclined at first to co-operate he later withdrew his consent because he 'disliked the composition of the Committee'. Naturally he opposed the recommendations on the ground that the Scheduled Castes held a minority position in the Committee. The All-India Scheduled Castes Federation, also in its Bombay session held on 7 May 1945 expressed its dissatisfaction with the Sapru proposals. The meeting passed resolutions by which it adhered to all its earlier demands as constituting "an irreducible minimum of the protection essential for the safety and security of the Scheduled Castes against the tyranny and oppression which is sure to follow in the wake of the rule of the Hindu communal majority".

By the middle of 1945 political situations in India were on a threshold of great change. The war in Europe had ended, but the war with Japan still continued. Attention was now focussed on the eastern front. India's strategic position in the war with Japan, once again came into prominence, as it did in 1942, when Sir Stafford was sent to India. Now that the hands of the British Government were
comparatively free, it was felt that a fresh attempt should be made to bring India whole-heartedly into the War. It is also believed that there was possibly some pressure from the Russian Government for ending the deadlock in India within an earliest possible time. Moreover the general election has been ordered in England. There was a general accusation from the Labour Party that the Churchill Government was thoroughly incapable of arriving at an amicable settlement with the Indian leaders. Churchill wanted to disprove this charge by showing that he was really very eager to solve the Indian deadlock. On June 4, 1945 Wavell returned from London after having his preliminary talks with the Home government. Ten days after his arrival, a new solution was offered on behalf of the British Government for ending the Indian deadlock. In a broadcast speech dated 14 June 1945 the Viceroy declared that this proposals were "designed to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government". The essence of Wavell Plan was to make a quick settlement in India with a largely extended Executive Council.(73) The extended Executive Council, it was proposed should consist of an equal number of Muslim and Caste Hindu representatives (five each) plus one number to represent each of the communities i.e. Scheduled Castes, Sikh and other groups.

Gandhi objected to the use of the expression 'Caste Hindu' in the speeches of the Secretary of State and the Viceroy and in his interview with the Viceroy on 24 June 1945 he claimed on behalf of
the Congress the right to choose any Muslim or Scheduled Caste candidate for the Viceroy's Council.

The Viceroy was aware that further discussion might be necessary to settle the constitutional problems and he arranged a Conference of the Indian leaders (including Gandhi, Jinnah, N. Sivaraj and Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader) which was proposed to be held on 25 June 1945 at Simla. But even before the Conference was to begin criticism of the Viceregal declaration was forthcoming at many quarters. Ambedkar regarded the scheme of the extended Council to be most unfair, unjust and a 'death-knell' for the Scheduled Castes. He wrote to Wavell on 7 June 1945 in which he gave a bit of his mind:

"Five seats to 90 millions of Muslims, one seat to 50 millions of Untouchables and one seat to 6 millions of Sikhs is a strange and sinister kind of political arithmetic which is revolting to my ideas of justice and common sense."

Ambedkar demanded that at least 3 seats should be given to the Scheduled Castes. Even the Secretary of State received many telegrams from various Depressed Class organisations in which his intervention was prayed for a little increase in the number of Scheduled Caste representatives in the Viceroy's Executive Council. At one time Amery seemed to have become sympathetic to the prayers of the Depressed Classes, and it came to be known that he thought for making provision of two seats for them. But the idea never
materialised. Amery was cautious about not to offend Gandhi whose recent objection to the use of the term 'caste Hindu' and whose strenuous opposition to the scheme of separate electorate at the time of Communal Award was still fresh in his memory. He did not, therefore, think it wise to give any concession which may be interpreted as granting 'separate representation for the Depressed Classes as a community.'(75)

The question of representation of the Depressed Classes was raised once again at the Simla Conference. Sivaraj objected to the Congress claim to nominate representatives of the Scheduled Castes. He said that they represented a separate element in the national life of India and had been recognized as such. He felt very strongly that the representation of Scheduled Castes in the Executive Council should not be less favourable as that allowed to the Muslims. Of course he did not press for parity but he insisted that the number of the Scheduled Caste members "should bear the same ratio to their population as the Muslim members bore to theirs". He wished to consult the Working Committee of his Federation before he could give his specific suggestion to the members of the Conference.(76)

The Simla Conference continued for about two weeks, from June 29 to July 14, 1945. It was then found that the plan was not acceptable to Jinnah. Master Tara Singh suggested that the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League should be put to arbitration. Sivaraj once again harped on extended representation of his community. But ultimately it was Jinnah who created the deadlock.
Disgusted at the obstinacy of the League Rajagopalachari remarked that 'the negative attitude of any particular group should not be allowed to stand in the way' of arriving at a settlement. Even Maulana Abul Kalam Azad felt unhappy for the vacillating attitude of the Viceroy - it 'ought not to have given the right of veto to any particular group to hold up the progress of the country'. But no amount of persuasion bore any fruitful result. The Viceroy took upon himself the sole responsibility for the breakdown of the Conference and on July 14, he formally announced the failure of the meeting. The tragic end of the Conference and the way the negotiations were allowed by an onlooking Viceroy to end most abruptly may naturally create a suspicion that the Wavell Plan was nothing but an election stunt arranged by the Conservative Government. Probably the British Government was no longer keen for a settlement because the general elections in England were over by that time. Next after the failure of the Simla meeting a conference of the provincial governors was held in August 1945 and decision was taken to hold General Elections in India very soon. The fate of the Depressed Classes remained undecided no less than the political destiny of the country which remained inscrutable at the time.
NOTES


3. BPSA. p. 43.


6. Fifth Despatch on Indian Constitutional Reforms (Franchise) 23.4.1919, p. 5.


17. Ambedkar B.R., op.cit., p.94. Bihar and Orissa hitheto a single province was split in two.


20. 'A Brief Analysis of the Election Results', IAR. Vol.I (1937), pp.168(a) - 168(p).


23. IAR. Vol. I (1937), pp. 168(a) - 168(p). Figures for Punjab, Orissa and Assam were not furnished in the analysis. For C.P. statement for only 19 seats were available.


25. Ibid. p. 155.

26. Ibid. Table 10, p.156, Table 11, p. 158.

27. BPSA. p. 170.


31. BPSA. p. 176.


35. Ibid. pp. 92-93, 95.
41. Ibid. p. 603. Letter of Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Rajah to Sir S. Cripps dated 1 April 1942. Document no. 487. The text of this letter was also sent to Amery in telegram.
44. BPSA. p. 260. 'The Political Demands of the Untouchables'. Resolution no. IV.
47. Keer D., op.cit., p. 353.


59. *BPSA.* p. 258.


71. Menon V.P., *op.cit.*, p. 175.


73. For the text of Viceroy's broadcast speech see Menon V.P., *op.cit.*, pp. 459-461.


76. Menon V.P., *op.cit.* p. 204.


The elections of 1946 held soon after the breakdown of the Simla Conference proved that the dissenting Scheduled Caste leaders outside the Congress were unable to win the poll. It then became clear that the schemes of social welfare for the Untouchables had to be geared through the Congress which unlike the followers of Ambedkar claiming separate electorate stood for unity of the country and assimilation of the Depressed Classes into the national mainstream. But the separatists did not seem to be ready to accept the verdict. Consequently they first took to satyagraha and then to further mobilising political opinion in England in support of their claim. However, most of such endeavours scarcely proved fruitful in the long run.

At a time when the dissenting leaders were pursuing their separatist scheme a few of them were accommodated first in the Constituent Assembly and finally also in the Interim Government. The critics of power-that-may-be became co-sharers of power themselves and together they ensured two foremost measures for the building of future India - universal adult franchise and abolition of Untouchability. With the transfer of power a new India was born, a sovereign, democratic republic assuring equality of rights for all.
On 21 August 1945, Lord Wavell announced the government decision to hold election to the provincial assemblies and the Central Assembly sometime in the winter of the same year. The elections were long overdue. They could not be held in time because of the critical situations of war. But now it was felt by His Majesty's Government "to convene as soon as possible a constitution-making body" as a preliminary step to hold elections and thereafter to undertake discussions with the popular representatives. The purpose for initiating such exercise, it was further announced by the Viceroy was that the "Government are determined to do their utmost to promote in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion the early realisation of full self-government in India". Curiously it may be noted here in parenthesis that the eagerness of the Labour Government to arrive at a settlement and grant self-government to India was a sham. Wavell tells us that the Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin hated the idea 'of our leaving India' and he felt that both Alexander (a member of the Cabinet Mission) and Bevin "are in reality imperialists and dislike any idea of leaving India".

Ambedkar was unhappy at the announcement of the election decision. The Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes
Federation opposed the proposed election to the Central Assembly as well as the idea of Constituent Assembly. The objection was not wholly without reason. The Scheduled Castes could not obtain their representation in the Central Legislature under the Government of India Act 1935, as the federal part of the Act had not been implemented and they had, therefore, only one nominated representative there. So election to the Central Assembly was opposed on the ground that the Scheduled Castes had no representation in it. The plan of Constituent Assembly was opposed because such a body would remain pliable to the wishes of the majority community and also because of the fact that the Scheduled Castes with a very small membership in the provincial assemblies would have remote chance to find satisfactory representation in the Constituent Assembly. Finally the Scheduled Castes would still stick to their old demand of immediate cancellation of the Poona Pact arrangement because they believed that a joint electorate system devised by the Poona Pact would not be able to send their real representatives in the Constituent Assembly. But all said, the Working Committee of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation decided to take part in the election and called upon all Scheduled Caste people to join their organisation which was claimed to be the sole representative body of the scheduled castes.\(^3\)

The results of the general elections in India were revealing in many ways. Elections to the Central Legislative Assembly which
was already held and of which the complete results became available towards the end of December 1945 showed that the Congress won an overwhelming success in the General constituencies and the Muslim League won every Muslim seat. Elections to the provincial legislatures which were held according to a staggered schedule also showed the same result. Thus Congress ministries were formed in six provinces. The election results now convinced Lord Wavell that the Congress commanded the support of practically all Caste Hindus and of certain other elements as well. The Viceroy also realised that the Scheduled Castes were divided and many of them even supported the Congress. The election results, therefore, strengthened the earlier colonial assumption that the political fate of the country need to be settled in consultation alone with the two representative parties of India namely the Congress and the Muslim League and the opinion of other sections, the Scheduled Castes for example need not be taken very seriously.

As for the performance of the Scheduled Castes it may be noted that their community fielded candidates for the election in three separate categories i.e. those belonging to the Congress, those nominated by Ambedkar's All-India Scheduled Caste Federtion and those belonging to the mushroom regional parties as well as independents. In the election of 1937 Ambedkar's followers contested mainly on a regional level. Now they had organised themselves at the all-India level and seemed to have gathered
enough strength to become an able rival of Congress. But the election results indicated an almost different picture. Out of 151 Scheduled Caste seats Congress won 123, the All-India Scheduled Caste Federation only 2 and other parties including the Independents 26.

Primary elections could be held only for 43 seats where the voters were exclusively Scheduled Caste people. In such constituencies the percentage of votes polled by the Congress, the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation and the Independent candidates were 29, 26 and 44 respectively. In all these contests Congress topped the poll in 20 seats, the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation in 13 seats and other parties including Independents in 10 seats. (4)

The election result and the reverses of the non-Congress Scheduled Caste candidates was interpreted by Ambedkar in his own way. Acting upon his poll analysis of seven Madras constituencies viz., Coconada, Ellore, Bandar, Tanjore, Mannargudi, Ariyalur, Sattur and Amalapuram, Ambedkar showed that many of the Scheduled Caste candidates who won the contest secured votes even larger than those obtained by Caste Hindu candidates. This is a clear enough indication that the winning Scheduled Caste candidates owed their success to the votes of the Caste Hindus and not of the voters of their own community. Then again Ambedkar made a statistical analysis of the results of primary elections and
compared them with those of the final election. Thereafter he pointed out that the Scheduled Castes candidates who were elected in the final round were found to be invariably the persons who had failed in the primary elections. This means that a successful Scheduled Caste candidate would have to remain as 'yes master' of his boss namely the Caste Hindus without whose support his political career would be doomed. Finally, Ambedkar also referred to the extreme disparity between the voting strength of the Hindus and the Scheduled Castes which according to him was largely responsible for the poor performance of the latter group of candidates in the election. He would therefore once again plead for a reversion to the Communal Award or a separate electorate system without which the Scheduled Caste people cannot have a true representative in any popular body. (5)

The results of 1946 election served as an eye-opener in another direction. In 1937 it was noticed that quite in a number of cases a large number of Hindu voters were reluctant to exercise their franchise for returning the Scheduled Caste candidates in the poll. In 1946 election the Caste Hindu voters felt more serious about election matters in the sense that most of them this time voted in favour of the Congress nominated or Congress sponsored Scheduled Caste candidate. This was the reason why Congress won majority of Scheduled Caste seats while winning minority of popular votes in primary elections.

The Congress not only captured an overwhelming majority of the Scheduled Caste but also of the general non-Muhammadan seats.
Regionwise election analysis had also revealed that in spite of the general trend of communal voting throughout the country, Congress was the only party which had to a partial extent spread its political influence over a large segment of Indian population cutting across the barriers of religion and caste. The N.W.F.P. Governor for instance, reported to Wavell in February 1946 that while Muslim officials and the 'bigger Khans' or landlords were all for the Muslim League, the Congress was still getting the support of the 'less well-to-do' Muslims due to its promises of economic reforms. In view of the general success of the Congress the British Government now felt convinced that the political settlement in India could no longer be kept uncertain on a plea of indecision among the different communities. In a debate in the House of Commons on 15 March 1946, Prime Minister Attlee therefore made a significant announcement - 'We are mindful of the rights of the minorities and the minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of the majority'. The announcement made it quite clear that ministerial changes in England had also led to a substantial change in the old imperial policy to the colonies. The idea of British trusteeship for the Indian minorities held by the former Prime Minister Churchill, had been discarded and the government did no longer seem to be willing to function under a paradoxical situation of making Indians responsible for governing themselves and at the same time retaining the so-called colonial
responsibility for the treatment of minorities. The result of the
election and the changed policy of the British Government on the
question of minorities indicated that Ambedkar's claim for the
treatment of the Scheduled Castes as a minority as distinct as
the Muslims would not receive any serious consideration.

On March 15, 1946, it was also announced that the British
Government would send a Cabinet Mission to India to resolve the
Indian political deadlock. On March 23 three cabinet members,
Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford
Cripps, President of the Board of Trade and A.V. Alexander, First
Lord of the Admiralty arrived in India. By then the trend of
elections already complete was indicative of sweeping Congress
victory in the Scheduled Caste seats. Nevertheless while
selecting leaders to hold discussion with the Cabinet Mission the
Viceroy betrayed his undue inclination for Ambedkar's
organisation. "If the trend shown by the elections", the
Secretary of State also commented, "...continues it is quite
possible that Dr. Ambedkar himself... would have no chance of
being elected to the Constitution-making Body". (8) He felt
helpless that in that case the true representative of the
'Depressed Classes' could not be accommodated in the said Body.
So the Viceroy decided to choose Ambedkar to represent the
Scheduled Castes. But then in view of the spectacular Congress
victory in the Scheduled Caste seats, the Viceroy had also to
invite three Congress Scheduled Caste leaders namely Jagajivan
Ram, Radhanath Das and Prthvi Singh Azad who represented the pro-Congress All-India Depressed Classes League.

Before the Cabinet Mission had started discussion with the leading individuals the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation in its meeting held at Delhi resolved that the future constitution of India must include proper safeguards for the protection of the rights and interests of the Scheduled Castes in a manner determined by the Federation which was claimed to be the only impartial spokesman of their community. Once again demand was placed for separate electorate and abrogation of the Poona arrangement. The Working Committee of the Federation also objected to the scheme of Constituent Assembly. A memorandum containing the viewpoints of the Federation was also submitted to the Cabinet Mission. Paragraph 5 of the said memorandum made a list of safeguards designed to secure to the Scheduled Castes adequate representation in Government and the Public Services. It was also specifically laid down that the Federation would never accept any constitution in which those safeguards were not included.

Three days after the said meeting of the Federation Ambedkar had a discussion with the Cabinet delegation on 5 April 1946. In course of that discussion Ambedkar said that he did not want a Constituent Assembly at all because he was afraid that it would be dominated by the caste Hindus, and the Scheduled Caste members
would be no more than a small minority which would always be outvoted even if 'a three-quarters or a two-thirds majority were required for the Assembly's decisions'. He was further apprehensive that "there would be an immense amount of corruption in the Assembly - members would be bought over to vote against the interests of their communities". (9)

In his long parley with the Viceroy Ambedkar had described that the mechanism of double election was responsible for a total discomfiture of the banafide Scheduled Caste candidates who could not win the election contest even though they polled highest in the primary election. He had also accused the Congress for overawing the voters in order to secure the return of candidates after its choice. As for the much publicised change in the attitude of the Caste Hindus he held that the condition of the Untouchables did not improve at all and in most cases they were in the same miserable position in which they had been before. To Ambedkar, the Scheduled Castes, therefore must be of necessity granted separate electorates for they would never have their own representatives without. Finally, while giving his opinion as to how communal questions can be settled Ambedkar said that the question should be referred to a conference of the leaders of the different communities. "If the conference failed to arrive at an agreed solution His Majesty's Government would have to make an award". He hoped that this would no doubt be accepted. At any rate some satisfactory settlement had to be worked out failing
which he thought "that if India became independent it would be one of the greatest disasters that could happen".\(^{(10)}\)

Three days after Ambedkar had his discussion with the Cabinet delegation, Jagajivan Ram, Radhanath Das and Prithvi Singh Azad, all representing the pro-Congress All-India Depressed Classes League were invited to exchange their views with the same delegation on 8 April 1946. In that meeting a memorandum prepared on behalf of the All-India Depressed Classes League was submitted to the delegation. The memorandum stated that the League had been most disappointed to note that Ambedkar and Sivaraj had originally been invited by the Delegation to represent the Scheduled Castes. The recently held election results, the League pointed out, had exploded the myth of popularity of Ambedkar and his Federation among the Scheduled Caste people. It was also proved beyond doubt that the majority view of the Scheduled Castes was represented by the All-India Depressed Classes League and not by an isolationist like Ambedkar and his party. The delegates then pointed out that so far defending the rights and interests of the Depressed Classes were concerned they were no less zealous than the Federation. "The difference between the Scheduled Castes Federation and the Depressed Classes League was that the Federation holds that the Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, but a religious minority of their own. The League view was that this was incorrect, in that the Scheduled Caste considered themselves Hindus, and had sacrificed much for the cause of Hinduism".\(^{(11)}\)
It may be noted here that the League's views were nearer the truth. The so-called Depressed Classes even with a self-estimated sense of minority cannot be identified as a minority so far as the number of their population is concerned and more so when some other backward people are also included within their category. Moreover Hinduism being essentially a way of life no one can excommunicate a large number of people form its fold especially when they would prefer to be called Hindus. Even Ambedkar with all his hatred for Hinduism 'got all the funeral obsequies performed by his son in the Hindu tradition' and got his head even tonsured after the death of his beloved wife who died as a Hindu. In his bereavement he had also put on a hermit's dress. No wonder then that most people would consider him a Hindu at least so long as he would not apostatize from its fold. It is not, therefore, correct to say that the Untouchables were a religious minority. The League representatives who met the Delegation further held that the main disability of the Scheduled Castes "was not religious or social, but economic, though there was in South India a certain amount of untouchability and social prejudice against them". Once again the League had not merely made a correct diagnosis of the ailment but had also prescribed a correct remedy for the disease - this 'would disappear when their economic status had been improved'.

The representatives of the Depressed Classes League firmly held that although they were not in favour o separate electorate
they would expect that in the future constitution of India the Depressed Classes would have adequate safeguards for the protection of their rights and interests which should continue as long as these classes do not reach the level of the Caste Hindus. As regards the Interim Government, the League was opposed to weightage being given to any community by depriving another community of its legitimate share. "But if it was decided to give weightage the Scheduled Castes must also be given weightage". With regards Interim Government the League further suggested that the Scheduled Caste members of the Provincial Assemblies should be allowed to form an electoral college to select persons to be included in the Central Government. "Any interim arrangement", it had very clearly pointed out, "which did not fulfil these conditions would be unacceptable to the Depressed Classes". (14)

After having had long interviews with different leaders the Mission next sat in conference in Simla which had its several meetings from 5 May to 12 May 1946. But the delegates could not arrive at a decision and it was then announced in an official communique that the Conference had failed to evolve an agreed plan and it was therefore left to the Mission to take a unilateral decision in the matter. The decision was announced on 16 May 1946. The most important recommendation was to set up a Constituent Assembly whose members were to be elected by the provincial legislatures by means of proportional representation with provision of reserved seats for the Muslims and the Sikhs. Secondly an Advisory Committee would be also set up which
'should contain full representation of the interests affected'. The function of the Advisory Committee will be "to report to the Union Constituent Assembly upon the list of Fundamental Rights, the clauses for the protection of minorities, and a scheme for the administration of the tribal and excluded areas, and to advise whether these rights should be incorporated in the Provincial, Group, or Union constitution". It was announced that in the interest of keeping administration in India running, an Interim Government would also be established and such a government need to have the support of the major political parties of the country. (15)

The proposals of the Cabinet Mission with regard to the problem of the minorities indicated that as announced earlier by the Prime Minister Attlee, the British Government were no longer concerned with the problem of the minorities in the sense that they would like to see the problem settled by the Indians themselves. This is the reason why it chose to refer the entire issue to the Constituent Assembly and more especially to the proposed Advisory Committee. Ambedkar, therefore, wrote a letter to the Secretary of State in which he first wanted to know whether the term 'minorities' in paragraph 20 of the Viceroy's statement also included the Scheduled Castes. He also wanted to be sure as to who would guarantee that the Advisory Committee 'does in fact contain full representation of the interests affected'? Ambedkar's third query was that whether His Majesty's
Government reserved to itself the right to nominate persons to the Advisory Committee from outside the Constituent Assembly so as to ensure full representation of the Scheduled Castes. Ambedkar also referred to paragraph 22 of the Viceroy's statement of 16 May which contained a provision for a treaty between the Constituent Assembly and the United Kingdom. He then wanted to know as to whether the proposed Treaty include "a provision for the protection of the minorities as was stipulated in the Cripps proposals? If the Treaty is not to have such a provision, how does H.M.G. propose to make the decisions of the Advisory Committee binding on the Constituent Assembly"?

What Ambedkar really wanted was a guarantee of the Scheduled Castes' rights from His Majesty's Government in Great Britain. But the British Government had already disowned that responsibility. In his reply to Ambedkar the Secretary of State pointed out that it is "certainly our intention that the term 'minorities' in paragraph 20 of the Statement includes the Scheduled Castes". As for the possibility of inducting a Scheduled Caste representative outside the proposed Constituent Assembly the Secretary of State made a cautious reply and said "we assume", that the Constituent Assembly "will desire that it (i.e. the Advisory Committee) should be fully representative". As a matter of fact the statement of the Secretary of State contained no guarantee in the manner Ambedkar expected him to make. The British Government, he made it abundantly clear would
interfere neither with the constitution of the Advisory Committee nor with the Constituent Assembly's decisions on the issue relating the protection of the minorities. (17)

The evasive reply of the Secretary of State and the so-called indifferent treatment made in the Simla deal announced by the Viceroy had largely worried the Scheduled Castes. A meeting of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation was held in Bombay on 4th June 1946 under the Chairmanship of N. Sivaraj to consider the situation arising out of the proposals made by the Cabinet Mission regarding the future constitution of India. The Working Committee passed a series of resolutions which contained open accusations against the British Government and the Congress. The government was accused of its lack of sympathy which became evident in so far as "the Cabinet Mission has not mentioned the Scheduled Castes even once in the course of their statement of 5000 words". The Mission, it was further alleged had violated the pledges given by His Majesty's Government "that no Constitution which had not the consent of the Scheduled Castes would be imposed upon them". The Working Committee had also reminded the authorities that the Cabinet Mission's recommendation was contrary to the spirit of the previous pronouncement of His Majesty's Government in which it was most certainly admitted that "the Untouchables were separate from the Caste Hindus and constituted a distinct element in the national life of India". (18) Another grievance of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation was that the Cabinet Mission had ensured the safety of
the Muslim community against the possible tyranny of the Hindus whereas no such protection was afforded to the Scheduled Castes who were more exposed to the violence of the Hindus. The experience of 1946 elections had shown that quite a large number of Scheduled Castes villages had been put to fire and their voters were belaboured by a partisan police force as also the common people belonging to that community were denied supplies from the ration shops - all at the instance of the Hindu Congress in order to compel these helpless people to vote in favour of the Congress nominees. These facts were not unknown to the government and the Cabinet Mission was also not unaware of such situations. Naturally the Scheduled Castes expected that the Mission would protect them from the Hindu tyranny by making provision for them for separate electorate and separate settlement. But their expectations were belied because the Mission showed "greater concern for the protection of the Muslim community than for safeguarding the interests of the Scheduled Castes". (19)

It may be noted here that the Mission had information that a section of the Scheduled Caste community felt bitter about its decision which they thought had made no provision for their representation. Therefore in one of its Press interviews held almost at the same time when the announcement was made the Mission declared "that they have made double provision for the representation of the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly and in the Advisory Committee". The working Committee of
the Federation however held that these provisions were 'absolutely illusory and unworthy of serious consideration'. The Committee explained that as the provincial Legislatures were not obliged to return a Scheduled Caste the Constituent Assembly may have none of them at all. The Working Committee of the Federation made it plain that:

"even if a few representatives of the Scheduled Castes should find place in the Constituent Assembly, they being elected by Hindu votes, they can never represent the true interests of the Scheduled Castes. As to the Advisory Committee it cannot be substantially different from the Constituent Assembly. It will be a reflection of the Constituent Assembly". (20)

In the circumstances stated above the Committee held that an electoral scheme under which a Scheduled Caste candidate winning the primary election contest had little chance for being returned in the final contest could scarcely ensure their entry in a representative body. Therefore the so-called guarantee of 'double provision' declared in the Viceroy's Press interview was nothing more than an eye-wash.

The resolution of the Working Committee when sent to the Viceroy for his consideration also contained a prayer for obtaining early amendment of the Cabinet Mission proposal on some major points. The amendments sought for are given below:
First, the Scheduled Castes should have the right to be represented in the Legislatures through separate electorates.

Secondly, the Constitution shall contain a provision making it obligatory on the Government to undertake the formation of separate settlements for the Scheduled Castes.

Thirdly, arrangement should be made in a manner that the Scheduled Caste candidates who topped the list in the last primary elections can be inducted as members of the Advisory Committee and be allowed also to elect five other representatives of the Scheduled Castes to the said Committee.

In conclusion of its charter of demands the Working Committee of the Federation held out a threat to the government and to the nation which seemed to be resembling the militant spirit of the Muslim League. The tone of its humble supplication had suddenly changed when the Committee stated that they would expect that the Mission proposals were amended in the light of their representation submitted to the Viceroy.

"Failing this, there will be no alternative for the Scheduled Castes but to resort to direct action. If circumstances require, the Working Committee, in order to save the Scheduled Castes from this impending catastrophe, will not hesitate to ask the Scheduled Castes to resort to direct action".
The Working Committee also informed the government that the trend of situations having convinced it of the inevitability of such a course of action the Committee had already authorized its President to constitute a Council of Action which would draw up the detailed programme of the proposed direct action.\(^{(21)}\)

But the petition and the threat, however much moving and appalling, failed to leave any impression upon the government. Two weeks after the said resolution was sent to the government the Viceroy wrote,

"I do not know enough about the wrongs and disabilities of the Scheduled Castes to feel really sympathetic or sentimental about them, ... I should not feel inclined to hamper the progress of India by special measures for them at this stage".

This is again a re-assertion of the Labour Government's policy that in India a minority must not be allowed to veto the progress of the majority. It may be however noted in this connection that although Wavell had expressed his unwillingness to support the cause of the Scheduled Castes so far as their franchisal and electoral rights were concerned, he was nevertheless convinced that "they are not capable of supplying for a very long time to come at any rate, the men of character, education and ability of whom India is so sorely in need". However he always sincerely wished that the Scheduled Castes "must be given their chance to develop gradually".\(^{(22)}\)
On having received an evasive reply from the government the Scheduled Caste leaders now once again turned to Congress and sought clarification from Gandhi as to what would be their status in the forthcoming constitution of free India. A printed leaflet seeking such clarifications was dropped into the car of Gandhi as he was proceeding to attend the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee. The same leaflet was personally handed over to him on 12 July 1946 by Rajbhoj, the General Secretary of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation. The leaflet contained the same old demand of separate electorate as well as the recognition of the claim of a scheduled caste candidate winning the primary election to be declared returned also in the final contest.\(^{23}\) Thereafter from the middle of July 1946 the Scheduled Caste people particularly the followers of Ambedkar including members of the Federation took to its proclaimed course of direct action albeit in a non-violent way. On 15 July a large group of Federation members started satyagraha at Poona against the Congress which was alleged to have deprived the Scheduled Castes of their legitimate rights of representation. The same day another demonstration was held in Lucknow where 223 people courted arrest as per a civil disobedience programme arranged on the next day. On 17 July, 89 Scheduled Caste volunteers from Bombay, Nasik and Baramati offered themselves for arrest in Poona by defying the ban on demonstration. Next day when the satyagrahis were brought on trial they read out before the trying magistrate a statement in support of their satyagraha.\(^{24}\)
In the meantime after the members of the Cabinet Mission had left for London (June 29, 1946) its work had come for review in both houses of the British Parliament. In the discussion of the House of Lords the Secretary of State referred to the Depressed Classes led by Ambedkar and said that they would have very full representation, through the Congress affiliated organisation. It was also stated that the Mission had interviewed the leaders of the Congress and was "convinced of their genuine desire to help the Depressed Classes". The Secretary of State also expressed the hope that the Advisory Committee would be generous in their allocation of seats to minorities. The speech of Sir Stafford Cripps revealed the same tone of optimism when he rose to give his views on the subject of protection of smaller minorities in the House of Commons. He also lent support to the views of Pethick-Lawrence and expressed confidence in the sense of justice of the majority party namely the Congress which would sure enough safeguard the rights and interests of the minorities. He also referred to the device of Advisory Committee and held:

"We believe that this method is more likely to produce sound and just results than an insignificant minority in the Constituent Assembly which is the most that could, by any electoral device, have been obtained for the minorities".

Frustrated everywhere Ambedkar became more critical of the Congress. In a Press interview on July 21, he once again
thundered against the Congress and remarked that the Scheduled Caste people had every right to demand that the Congress being the inevitable recipient of British authority in India must disclose its policy with regard the 40 million Untouchables of the country. He also claimed immediate abrogation of the Poona Pact which "was a virtual disfranchisement of the Scheduled Castes. In the end he issued a warning that if moral resources were exhausted, they would look for other means to register their protest". (27) Once againing this was a veiled threat that the satyagraha operation by the Scheduled Castes may soon give way to a strategy of direct action which could very well involve the nation in a state of civil war.

But thanks to the good sense that prevailed upon the majority of the Scheduled Caste people, nothing really calamitous happened in the long run. The only significant event worthy of being noted at this period of the year was the entry of Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly as a candidate sponsored by the Muslim League and seeking representation from Bengal far off his own country where his political influence was presumably on the wane. Wavell considered him to be 'not an attractive personality'. He was not wrong if one views him from his election performance. (28)

While satyagraha was going on the names of the Members of Interim Ministry were announced on 24 August 1946. Ambedkar was rather shocked to know that Jagajivan Ram was accommodated in the
Ministry and was given the portfolio of Labour. Shortly after this he had received another surprising news, that Jogendranath Mandal, a standing member of the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation was also inducted in the Ministry (Law) as a Muslim League candidate. Mandal's entry into the cabinet had no doubt increased the strength of the Scheduled Caste representatives in the Ministry. Curiously although having access into the cabinet with Muslim League support Mandal perhaps to avoid being called a renegade declared "that he had Ambedkar's full support for his joining the Interim Government". (29)

Judged on all sides the fate of Ambedkar did not seem to be very favourable. Persons of lesser stature, as some members of his community thought remorsefully, had their place in the Ministry while he alone was left out of it. Ambedkar now decided to take a last chance for making a further representation of the case of the Scheduled Castes before the members of the British Parliament. He had already prepared a memorandum which he got printed in London where he first approached the political bosses of England. On the last day of October 1946, Ambedkar had also talks with some leading British politicians connected with India. He discussed his Memorandum with both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. He also saw the former Prime Minister Churchill and Sir Samuel Hoare, the dispenser of the Communal Award. Churchill was partially convinced. He insisted that demands of the minorities, notably the Muslims and the Scheduled
castes 'for whom Dr. Ambedkar has the right to speak' must be satisfactorily met before the transfer of power. On November 5, Ambedkar had another round of discussion with the political dignitaries of England which included some influential M.P.s of the Labour Party. The discussion lasted for about an hour. Ambedkar placed facts and figures before the learned members of the audience. "But there seemed no hope for him to gain his points. There was lip sympathy and nod of assent here and there". But it served no meaningful purpose.

Thus came the end of a long series of struggle which although started with a bang had now ended in a whimper. Whatever might be the Conservative party's arguments on the minorities' protection, the Labour Government had decisively given up the earlier British policy of using the minorities for creating a political stalemate in the country. Under such circumstances both Ambedkar and his Federation looked like a spent force with perhaps the only recourse to work for the interests of the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly.

Most of Ambedkar's misgivings against the Hindus whom he held responsible for most of the miserable of the Untouchables originated because he could not trust that the Congress was really serious about the welfare of the Scheduled Castes. The Congress election manifesto of 1946 declared that the party has stood for equal rights and opportunities for every citizen of
India and has always held high aloft the ideal of "the unity of all communities and religious groups" of India. In formulating the constitutional rights of the future citizens of India the manifesto has not merely upheld the principle of universal adult suffrage but has also emphasised that there shall be no disability to any citizen by reason of his religion, caste, creed or sex and that all "citizens have equal rights in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort". But such pronouncements were taken for usual rhetorics of a political party. Therefore, Ambedkar was not convinced of the bonafides of Congress intentions.

Such distrust was manifest even when the Harijan leader had come to work as a member of the Constituent Assembly during the period of its early sessions. Then he had to be persuaded by a member of his own community Shrimati Dakshyani Velayudam who while addressing the members of the Constituent Assembly on 19 December 1946 remarked:

"I visualise that the underdogs will be the rulers of the Indian republic. I, therefore, appeal to Harijan delegates that they should not harp on separatism. They should not make themselves the laughing stock of future generations. Communalism whether Harijan, Christian, Muslim or Sikh is opposed to nationalism".

Velayudam was treated with a big hand in the House when she
further explained that Churchill and his imperial henchmen often appearing to have loudly defended the Harijan interests did not while in power pass any legislation to remove the social disabilities of the Depressed Classes. She had also made it plain that the so-called Harijan leaders propped up by Churchill with an imperial motive were rank communalists themselves since they forgot that "Harijans are Indians and they have to live in India as Indians" and their social disabilities need to be remedied with the support of the Indians and not the British Government. (33)

But all said Ambedkar's apprehensions were not totally unfounded. Perhaps he thought that the liberal pronouncements in the election manifesto only showed that the Congress was 'now half dissolving to a liberal thaw' (34) and it may change its attitude at any time in near future. Sensitive to the precariousness of its own position and haunted by memories and fears of satyagraha and civil disobedience, recently launched by the Depressed people, the Congress, Ambedkar thought, had proclaimed its liberalism which would be set at naught as soon as the party becomes entrenched in power. But there were indications of momentous change in the outlook of the nation which even the disconsoled Harijan leader could little imagine.

On April 29, 1947, the Constituent Assembly declared to the world: "Untouchability in any form is abolished and the
imposition of any disability on that account shall be an offence". It was a good fortune of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to move this resolution as part of the draft constitution. Of course the passage of this resolution did not result in the immediate abolition of untouchability root and branch, because sanction behind the practice of untouchability was social and not legal. But judged in the legal sense too this measure constituted a radical departure from the past policy of the British Government which not only hesitated to declare untouchability illegal but also extended legal support to it. It was therefore, a glorious day in the history of India when the ruling power in India declared its will to wash out the stigma of untouchability. The world Press described this event as the freedom of the Untouchables, the day of emancipation of the outcastes, a historic act proclaiming outlawry of untouchability and a victory for human freedom. The New York Times commented: "The advance toward wiping out their ancient stigma has been matched in modern times only by our own abolition of slavery and the freeing of the Russian serf". The New Chronicle, London, praised it as one of the greatest acts of History. The New York Herald Tribune described it as one of the fresh and clean beams of light in the post-war world. Then again, in the new constitution of which Ambedkar had been an architect provisions were made for the fundamental rights of the citizens and also for safeguards against their invasion. The constitutional proposals of Ambedkar also included provisions for the protection of the minorities including the Scheduled Castes as well.
Ambedkar complained that the Poona Pact had disfranchised the Depressed Classes whose real representative could be returned only through separate electorate. He had moreover lost faith in the sense of justice of the Caste Hindus and therefore demanded separate settlement for the Untouchables. Early since the beginning of the present century the Depressed Classes had also complained that the scheming Hindu elites had prevented their entry into the lucrative offices of the state and so they needed protective discrimination like reservation in matters of appointment and the like. The most effective answer to these age-long grouse and grievances came when Ambedkar already a member of the Constituent Assembly was also unanimously chosen to function as the architect of the future constitution of India. Yet this was not enough. The Congress party not only took anti-untouchability measures but also sought to utilise the services of the ever critical separatist leader, Ambedkar, in the building of free India by offering him the post of a minister in the first cabinet of the national government (15 August 1947). It may be noted in this context that once after returning from his recent visit of London (October 1946) Ambedkar remarked to a correspondent of the Globe Agency that the merger of the Untouchables into Hindu society "would become easier only when the Untouchables rose to the social status of the caste Hindus". (36) Although this is a desideratum till today Ambedkar's smooth entry into the cabinet was a great leap forward to this end. The rebel leader must have felt immensely surprised at the
gesture of the Brahmin Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. But he accepted the offer with a graceful remark - "one could serve the interests of the Scheduled Castes better from within the government than from without". 

The stormy petrel flew back to the shore and so ended the first phase of the struggle of the Depressed Classes.
NOTES


20. Ibid. p. 809, para 3.
21. Ibid. p. 811, paragraphs 6, 7 and 9.

29. Ibid. p. 386.
34. cf. Byron's characterization of Tsar Alexander:

Now half dissolving to a liberal thaw,
But hardened beck whene'er the morning's raw;
With no objection to true liberty
Except that it would make the nations free.

36. Ibid. p. 386.
According to an official estimate people belonging to the Depressed Classes numbered 60 millions in India on the eve of her independence. A large part of them were considered Untouchables by the orthodox Hindus. There were also others who though not Untouchables themselves belonged to the lower order of Hindu society and consequently were not considered as much respectable as those comprising the so-called higher castes of Hinduism. These lowly people especially the Untouchables had always rendered immense service to the Hindu society. But the tragedy with them is that they were never given due recognition and were denied of all privileges - social, economic and political to which they were most legitimatley entitled as members of a civilised society. Such deprivations were believed to be ordained by God and hence there were little discontents against the institutionalised disparity.

With the introduction of colonial rule in India her people became gradually acquainted with the ideas of west including the most familiar idiom of democracy. Large scale economic changes in the country had also contributed to the growing erosion of a traditional society. The so-called lowly people of an outmoded birth-ascribed society grew more and more conscious of their worth and eventually became rivals of high caste elites whose monopoly
of power became uncertain under conditions of a competitive society. Hence emerged a new tension in Indian society—the Depressed Classes claiming share of power proportionate to their number and the high caste people alleged to have been forestalling their demands on a number of pretexts.

At the opening of the 20th Century the colonial masters contrived to add a new dimension to the problem. First, it had granted separate representation to the Muslims (the Morley-Minto Reform Act, 1909) in the Legislature and thereby set a precedent on the basis of which the future claim for separate electorate could be built up by the newer groups aspiring power in a manner that the authority may be compelled to entertain it with almost equal validity. Secondly, it had further while undertaking the Census work in India furnished some manipulated data to show that the Hindu society was divided into various caste-groups such that it was no better than a medley of peoples each of whom deserved a differential treatment. Thus the existing social and cultural dichotomy within the Hindu society was now under a condition of colonial encouragement given a definite political shape. A conflict of socio-cultural identity was transformed into a conflict of interests.

But while always offering positive colonial inducements for the germination of a separatist spirit the Raj was also very careful to make a formal admission of the fact that division "by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organised against each other" and that it may be "fatal to the
development of representation upon the national basis on which alone a system of responsible government can possibly be rooted". (1) This is clearly double dealing which became most manifest at every stage when the Raj came out with its schemes of constitutional reforms. The Simon Commission did not agree to the proposal of separate electorate for the Depressed Classes and refused to apportion reserved seats more than the three quarters of the proportion of their population to the total population of an electoral area. Once again this policy was soon changed to one of openly sympathising with the Depressed Classes when backstairs settlement was made to appease them through grant of separate electorate ( Minorities Pact, November 1931) at the same time when the Round Table Conference was convened to find a solution of the question by means of a bilateral discussion. The Communal Award (1932) and the colonial pledge that the interests of the Depressed Classes would not be 'sacrificed' was a clear indication that the British Government was all serious about playing its role of the so-called saviour of the Depressed Classes. However the final somersault was yet to be demonstrated and it was only after the election both in India and England was over when that surprising announcement was made that the minority would not be allowed to stand in the way of future advancement of the majority. Thus imperialism, it can now be seen, had persistently followed a policy of sometime supporting and sometime deserting the cause of the Depressed Classes with the ulterior motive of divide and rule that constituted the very essence of Pax Britania.
The colonial administrators and ethnographer-historians like Herbert Rislay, Valentine Chirol and Rudyard Kipling and others had continually harped on the endless division of the Indian people as a justification of white men's burden in the colonies. Chirol, for example claimed that India was a 'mere geographical expression' which could never develop into a nation in the western sense of the term and that whatever political movements, with a pseudo-national character, existed in India, had their roots deep in traditional, instinctively anti-western sources. The so-called national movement headed by small elite groups had therefore, the particular interests of their own castes rather than the general interests of the people.\((2)\) The Depressed Classes were slowly persuaded to accept this colonial interpretation of history and being placed since long in a position of social, economic and political deprivations they were quite easily provoked to believe that the true emancipation of their community would come by way of secession from the mainstream and also by depending solely on the imperial system of dispensation of justice. This is the reason why a large section of the Depressed Classes kept themselves aloof from the struggle for independence against the Raj. Such indifference was not the least pronounced even during the days of August Revolution 1942 in which to believe Churchill, the 40 million Untouchables of India did not participate. Again this is the reason why not a few among the Depressed Classes openly avowed that they would rather prefer the continuation of the British rule to transfer of power in the hands of the
Congress which according to them would mean restoration of the oppressive Hindu raj in the country. Such an assertion although sounds very rude, even blasphemous is nevertheless a clear indication that the large bulk of depressed people would consider the alien government to be more benevolent and humane than most of their own countrymen.

In a sense the British Government was not unworthy of the faith reposed on it. It had, seemingly though, always upheld the cause of the depressed people in respect of whom its sole mission, as Lord Willingdon, Viceroy of India wrote to Secretary of State in February 1934, was "to raise them from degradation and merge them in the general level of the population". Evidently the British rulers chose to salvage this unfortunate people through a system of 'special protection' of the government. But the tools of special protection being itself discriminatory in nature was to be applied only when the basic presumption of a liberal-pluralist society is discarded outright by the government. For, under the laissez faire principle of a liberal-pluralist society an individual is chosen for economic and political rewards on the basis of his personal attainments and not at all on consideration of his group affiliation. But 'protective discrimination' being essentially in the nature of a reward making its conferment valid only on conditions of group affiliation of an individual surely brings about a change in the character of the society itself. As a result the principles of corporate pluralism began to emerge in what was previously a liberal-pluralist society only.
Both the government which offered its patronage (whether in the form of reservation of seats in the representative bodies or other kinds of special protection) and the people who were its beneficiaries had their own logic to justify the system from a supposedly sociological point of view. Till all the time before the enactment of the Morley-Minto Reforms the argument was basically one of affording some booster to the underdogs so that they may soon grow equal with others and start from the same point on the track in the nearest future. This is quite an accepted principle often applied for a harmonious growth of a society laden with much of social-economic imbalance for a long time. But there was a marked change in the attitude since when the Depressed Classes under definite colonial inducement asserted their right to such differential treatment on the ground of their being a minority of the Hindu society. The proponents of this view argued that the Untouchables being Hindu outcastes should be treated as a minority. Gandhi opposed this idea for in his perception the Untouchables although deserving protective discrimination were an integral part of the Hindu society. An historian with his hindsight may argue today that the Depressed Classes could, like the Black majority in some of the southern states of the U.S. easily consider themselves as a minority, since the concept of minority itself refers to a frame of mind which may not be always very relevant in the context of social realities. What is however very important to note in this connection is that the colonial expostulation about India's claim to nationhood
had provided the basic stimulus for the usual response of the Depressed Classes that found expression in a claim for immediate recognition of their minority status. The Depressed Classes, that is to say quite many of them therefore served the purpose of Imperialism. No wonder that injustices meted out to them by an unfeeling society had led the Depressed Classes to this strange rediscovery of their identity.

An analysis of the Depressed Classes’ movement in India reveals its changing characters at different points of time. Starting as a social movement for the emancipation of the Depressed Classes under the leadership of Phoole it assumed a political character in the 20th Century when Ambedkar and Gandhi came to champion their cause. But the movement initiated by these leaders revealed an elite-based conservative trend (in so far as it largely relied upon the support and sympathies of the government) which stood in sharp contrast with the more genuinely mass-based and radical caste movement that developed elsewhere in the country, among those who claimed to speak for the Bahujan Samaj in Maharashtra and among the untouchable Ezhavas of Kerala. (4)

The basically constitutionalist-loyalist movement of the Depressed Classes had its own limitations. As for example, there was no unanimity among the leaders. There were a number of caste-based associations among the Depressed Classes, such as All-India Sri Jadav Mahasabha (an association of Chamars in the United Provinces), All-Bengal Namasudra Association, All-India Prajapati Kumbhakar Association (Rajashahi), All-India Adh Dharma Mandal
(an association of the Chuhras of the Punjab) and the like. But there was rivalry between one community of the Depressed Class and another as in the case of the Mahars and Chamars of Bombay each of whom claimed superiority over other. The quarrel involving question of caste superiority could little enable the fighting communities to put a joint pressure upon the authority which was the common enemy for all of them. Thus Ambedkar's stand for a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes was opposed by B.J. Deorukhar and P. Baloo who as champions of the nationalist forum demanded joint electorate with the Hindus. However, their opposition to Ambedkar was believed to have been largely motivated by the traditional caste rivalry between the Mahars and the Chamars. At any rate even Gandhi was aware of such dissensions among the members of the Depressed Classes. It is stated that in an interview outside the Round Table Conference he said with a little bit of modest pride that Ambedkar represented only the Depressed Classes of that part of India to which he belonged, but there were others of the said class who expressed their "fullest faith in the Congress and disowning Dr. Ambedkar". (5)

It has already been stated that the Depressed Classes which started its campaign for social reform soon assumed a political character whereupon the important political parties of the country tried to win them over for immediate political gains. The Reform Act of 1919 had opened up the prospect of electoral politics in the land and this again had led to a recognition of the bargaining power of the backward people who had already
demonstrated their strength in Bengal in the panchayet election in the district of Midnapore. (6) Naturally therefore, the political parties often came to uphold the cause of the class of people with whose support they thought they would be able to gain some extra advantage over their rival parties in the country. This is the reason why the demands of Ambedkar and Srinivasan for special representation though opposed by Gandhi was sympathetically viewed by such leaders like B.S. Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberal leader Sir Chimanlal Setalvad.

Moonje, President of the Hindu Mahasabha in particular entered into an agreement (23 February 1932) with M.C. Rajah, President of the All-India Depressed Classes Association which gained for the Depressed Classes more advantages than what they got under the Minorities Pact (November 1931). It may also be noted here that Ambedkar also was no less aware of the bargaining potentials of the Depressed Classes. This is clearly revealed when he took to the strategy of pressure politics by coming to an agreement (Minorities Pact 1931) with the representatives of the Muslims and a section of the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the British community. This tactical move on the part of Ambedkar led to a further realignment of powers when Congress tried to build up a counterpoise through another set of leaders of the Depressed Classes namely Deorukhar and Shankarrao M. Patil. It may be incidentally noted in this connection that in spite of the Rajah-Moonje agreement of 1932 the Hindu Mahasabha’s support for the cause of the Untouchables did not go beyond interdining and temple entry. Even Ambedkar’s programme for reform of Hinduism
was not taken up with enough seriousness by the Hindu Mahasabha. Ambedkar also did not have pleasant memories of the Hindu Mahasabha particularly of the Shankaracharya and N.M. Kelkar who refused to stand witness in the Mahar Satyagraha case.

As for their ideological differences it appears that Ambedkar had criticised, nay even bullied Gandhi for his so-called lack of sympathies for the Untouchables which became clear since when he almost compelled them to agree with the terms of the Poona Pact in cancellation of the Communal Award which was more favourable to the Untouchables. But Ambedkar himself did not seem to be always quite sympathetic to the tribal people of India. It is said that when the Adivasi(s) claimed a little share of seat from the quota of the Untouchables they were told by Ambedkar that they could not be granted such share for their political consciousness had not touched the required standard. However when the same people claimed the same slice from the Muslim quota Ambedkar was quick to convey his consent. In the power sharing politics of India the culturally superior people are usually found to have always appropriated a lion's share for them. Ambedkar also acquiesced in this accustomed mode of settlement. Clearly enough this dualism in Ambedkar would scarcely justify his stand as the champion of all sections of the depressed people. This is possibly the reason why his criticism of Gandhiji often sounds so hollow in spite of their usual rhetorics and flamboyance. (7)

But then it was Ambedkar and his community and not Gandhi who had to suffer most the humiliations that were heaped upon
them because of their being born as outcastes. In Gandhiji's perception of Hinduism people do most certainly combine although they do not mix with one another always. In the perception of Babasaheb it was unfortunately an altogether different experience—people seldom mix and do not combine at all. It would be therefore a fruitless polemic to decide who was right and who was not. Gandhiji with his vision of one India lived till the time to see that she was not. Babasaheb with his misgivings for the Hindus lived long enough to accept the offer from a Brahmin Prime Minister to become himself the architect of the liberal democratic republic of India. The post-independence India offered a curious scenario of continuity and change all at the same time.

As a matter of fact both Gandhi and Ambedkar had their own limitations. Starting as true loyalists both of them tried the usual constitutional methods for the welfare of the Depressed Classes including the Harijans. But while Ambedkar being unable to purify Hinduism grew a rebel under condition of individual psychological strain, Gandhi remained firm to his principles and refused to compromise even when universally accused of bypassing questions of utmost national interests for minor matters. Frustrated in his mission Ambedkar chose to withdraw from the mainstream of the freedom movement and then decided to renounce Hinduism in disgust. For Gandhi, however, such frustrations had only convinced him of the dire need for taking up extensive programme of Harijan welfare in the country.

But neither Ambedkar nor Gandhi could realise that reservation
instead of making a permanent solution of the problems of the Depressed Classes would only lead to group rivalry for loaves and fishes. Moreover 'protective discrimination' being also discriminatory in nature generates tension in a society whose resources are limited. Given the condition of Indian society the benefit of reservation could be availed of by those known in the recent parlance as the creamy layer of the Depressed Classes of which the largest majority still continue to remain in the same miserable condition in which they lived in the past. Any serious attempt towards bringing about a real emancipation of these people should, therefore, start with a meaningful endeavour for striking at the root of this social problem. Such an attempt would clearly reveal that an overall improvement of the condition of the Untouchables is not to be expected as long as the nation fails to adopt effective measures of land reform. Moreover the crusade against caste and untouchability in order to be successful must have necessary linkage with the general struggle of the working class including the peasantry. (8) But none of the accredited leaders of the Depressed Classes nor even any of the political parties which championed their cause made any conscious effort towards organising this movement on a wider basis. As a result a movement which ought to have started with the willing consent of the people at large drew support only from strange visionaries, distraught reformers and political opportunists. The full scale emancipation of the depressed people remains unfulfilled even today.
NOTES

APPENDIX

Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order in Council
At the Court at Buckingham Palace
The 30th April, 1936

Present

The king's most Excellent Majesty in Council Whereas by certain provisions in the First, Fifth and Sixth Schedules to the Government of India Act, 1935 His Majesty in Council is empowered to specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races, or tribes which are to be treated as the scheduled castes for the purposes of those schedules:

And whereas a draft of this Order was laid before Parliament in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (1) of section three hundred and nine of the said Act and an Address has been presented by both Houses of Parliament praying that an Order may be made in the term of this Order.

Now, therefore, His Majesty, in the exercise of the said powers and of all other powers enabling in that behalf, is pleased by and with the advice of His Privy Council to order and it is hereby ordered, as follows:

1. This order may be cited as "The Government of India
2. Subject to the provisions of this Order, for the purposes of the First, Fifth and Sixth Schedules to the Government of India Act, 1935, the castes, races or tribes, or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes specified in Parts I to IX of the Schedule to this Order shall in the provinces to which those parts respectively relate be deemed to be Scheduled Castes so far as regards members thereof resident in the localities specified in relation to them respectively in those parts of that Schedule.

3. Notwithstanding anything in the last preceding paragraph—

(a) no Indian Christian shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste;

(b) in Bengal no person who professes Buddhism or a tribal religion shall be deemed to be a member of any Scheduled Caste;

and if any question should arise as to whether any particular person does or does not profess Buddhism or a tribal religion, that question shall be determined according to the answers which he may make, in the prescribed manner, to such questions as may be prescribed.

4. In this Order the expression "Indian Christians" has the
same meaning as it has for the purposes of Part I of the First Schedule of the Government of India Act, 1935 and the expression "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made by the Governor of Bengal exercising his individual judgement.

5. Any reference in the Schedule to this Order to any division, district or sub-division, tahsil, or municipality shall be construed as a reference to that division, district, sub-division, tahsil or municipality as existing on the first day of July, nineteen hundred thirty six.

M.P.A. Hankey

SCHEDULE

Part I - Madras

1) Scheduled Castes throughout the province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adi-Andhra</th>
<th>Gosangi</th>
<th>Pagadai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adi-Dravida</td>
<td>Haddi</td>
<td>Paidi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajila</td>
<td>Hasla</td>
<td>Painda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunthuthiyar</td>
<td>Holey</td>
<td>Paky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baira</td>
<td>Jaggali</td>
<td>Pallan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakuda</td>
<td>Jambuvulu</td>
<td>Pambada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandi</td>
<td>Kalladi</td>
<td>Pamidi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bariki</td>
<td>Kanakkan</td>
<td>Panchama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battada</td>
<td>Kodalo</td>
<td>Paniyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavuri</td>
<td>Koosa</td>
<td>Panniandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellara</td>
<td>Koraga</td>
<td>Paraiyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byagari</td>
<td>Kudumban</td>
<td>Paravan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chachati</td>
<td>Kuravan</td>
<td>Pulayan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2) Scheduled Castes throughout the province except in any special constituency constituted under the Government of India Act, 1935 for the election of a representative of backward areas and backward tribes to the Legislative Assembly of the Province:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chakkiliyan</th>
<th>Madari</th>
<th>Puthirai Vannan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalavadi</td>
<td>Madiga</td>
<td>Raneyar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>Maila</td>
<td>Relli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandala</td>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>Samagara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheruman</td>
<td>Mala Dasu</td>
<td>Samban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandasi</td>
<td>Matangi</td>
<td>Separi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devendrakulathan</td>
<td>Moger</td>
<td>Semman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghasi</td>
<td>Muchi</td>
<td>Thoti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godagali</td>
<td>Mundala</td>
<td>Tiruvalluvar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godari</td>
<td>Nalakeyava</td>
<td>Valluvan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>Nayadi</td>
<td>Valmiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vettuvan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part II - Bombay

1) Scheduled Castes throughout the province:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asodi</th>
<th>Dhor</th>
<th>Mang Gavudi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakad</td>
<td>Garode</td>
<td>Meghval or Menghwar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhambi</td>
<td>Halleer</td>
<td>Mini Madig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhangi</td>
<td>Halsar or Haslar or Hulsavar</td>
<td>Mukri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakrawadya-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nadia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dasar</td>
<td>Holaya</td>
<td>Shenva or Shindhava</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chambhar or Modhigar or Samagar
Chena-Dasaru
Chuhar or Chuhra
Dakaleru
Dhed
Dhegu-Megu
Khalpa
Kolcha or Kolgha
Koli Dhor
Lingader
Madig or Marg
Mahar

2) Throughout the Province except in the Ahmedabad, Kaira, Broach and Panch Mahals and Surat Districts-Mochi.

3) In the Kanara district-Kotegar

Part III (Bengal)

Scheduled Castes throughout the province
Agariya
Bagdi
Bahelia
Baiti
Bauri
Bediya
Beldar
Berua
Bhatiya
Bhumali

Jhalo Malo, or Malo
Kadar
Kan
Kandh
Kaora
Kapuria
Karenga
Kastha
Kaur
Khaira
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhuiya</th>
<th>Khatik</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhumij</td>
<td>Koch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bind</td>
<td>Konai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binjhia</td>
<td>Konwar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>Kora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhenuar</td>
<td>Kotal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhoba</td>
<td>Lalbegi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doai</td>
<td>Lodha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dom</td>
<td>Lohar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosadh</td>
<td>Mahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>Mahli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghasi</td>
<td>Mal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonrhi</td>
<td>Mallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadi</td>
<td>Malpahariya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hajang</td>
<td>Mech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halalkhor</td>
<td>Mehtor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hari</td>
<td>Muchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho</td>
<td>Munda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalia Kaibartta</td>
<td>Musahar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nagesia</td>
<td>Pod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namasudra</td>
<td>Rabha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nat</td>
<td>Rajbanshi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuniya</td>
<td>Rajwar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oraon</td>
<td>Santal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paliya</td>
<td>Sunri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pan</td>
<td>Tiyar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasi</td>
<td>Turi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patni</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part IV - United Provinces**

Scheduled Castes:

1) Throughout the province:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agariya</th>
<th>Dabgar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aheriya</td>
<td>Dhangar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Badi Dhunuk(Bhangi)
Badhik Dharkar
Baheliya Dhobi
Bajaniya Dom
Bajgi Domar
Balahar Gharami
Balmiki Ghasiya
Banmanus Gual
Bansphor Habura
Barwar Hari
Basor Hela
Bawariya Kalabaz
Beldar Kanjar
Bengali Kapariya
Beriya Karwal
Bhantu Khairaha
Bhuiya Kharat
Bhuyiar Kharwar(except Benbansi)
Boriya Khatik
Chamar Kol
Chero Korwa
Lalbegi Rawat
Majhwar Saharya
Nat Sanaurhiya
Pankha Sansiya
Parahiya Shilpkar
Pasi Tharu
Patari Turaiha

2) Throughout province except in Agra, Meerut. and Rohilkand divisions - Kori
Part V - Punjab

Scheduled Castes throughout the province:

Ad Dharmis  Chanal
Bawaria    Dhanak
Chamar     Gagra
Chuhra or Balmiki   Gandhila
Dagi and Koli Khatik
Dumna     Kori
Od        Nat
Sansi     Pasi
Sarera    Perna
Marija or Marecha Sapela
Bangali    Sirkiband
Barar      Meghs
Bazigar    Ramdasis
Bhanjra

Part VI - Bihar

Scheduled Castes
1) Throughout the Province:

Chamar    Dusadh
Chaupal   Dom
Dhobi     Halalkhor
Hari      Mochi
Kanjar    Musahar
Kurariar  Nat
Lalbegi   Pasi

2) In Patna and Tirhut divisions and the Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Palamau and Purnea districts:-
3) In the Dhanbad subdivision of the Manbhum district and the Central Manbhum general rural constituency and the Purlia and Raghunathpur municipalities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bauri</th>
<th>Ghasi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhogta</td>
<td>Pan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhuiya</td>
<td>Rajwar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhumij</td>
<td>Turi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part VII - Central Provinces and Berar

Scheduled Castes

Basor or Burud
Chamar
Dom
Ganda
Mang
Mehtar or Bhangi
Mochi
Satnamai

Scheduled Castes......................Localities.
Audhelia - In Bilaspur district
Bahna - In Amraoti district
Balahi, or Balai- In the Berar division and the Balaghat Bhandara, Betul, Chandra, Chhindwara, Hoshangabad, Jubbulpore, Mandla, Nagpur, Nimar, Saugor and Wardha districts.

Bedar- In the Akola, Amraoti, and Buldana districts.

Chadar- In the Bhandara and Saugor districts.

Chauhan- In the Drug district.

Dahayat- In the Damoh subdivision of the Saugor district.

Dewar- In the Bilaspur, Drug and Raipur districts.

Dhanuk- In the Saugor district, except in the Damoh subdivision thereof.

Dhimar- In the Bhandara district.

Dhobi- In the Bhandara, Bilaspur, Raipur and Saugor districts and the Hoshangabad and Seoni-Malwa tahsils of the Hoshangabad district.

Dohor- In the Berar division, and the Balaghat, Bhandara, Chanda, Nagpur and Wardha districts.

Ghasia- In the Berar division and the Balaghat, Bhandara, Bilaspur, Chandra, Drug, Nagpur, Raipur and Wardha districts.

Holiya- In the Balaghat and Bhandara districts.

Jangam- In the Bhandara district.

Kaikori- In the Berar division, and in Bhandara, Chandra, Nagpur and Wardha districts.
Katia- In the Berar division, in the Balaghat, Betul, Bhandara, Bilaspur, Chanda, Drug, Nagpur, Nimar, Raipur and Wardha districts, in the Hoshangabad and Seoni-Malwa Tahsils of the Hoshangabad district, in the Chhindwara district, except in the Seoni sub-division thereof, and in the Saugor district, except in the Damoh subdivision thereof.

Khangar- In the Bhandara, Buldana and Saugor districts, and the Hoshangabad and Seoni-Malwa tahsils of the Hoshangabad district.

Khatik- In the Berar division, in the Balaghat, Bhandara, Chanda, Nagpur and Wardha districts, in the Hoshangabad tahsil of the Hoshangabad district, in the Chhindwara district, except in the Seoni subdivision thereof, and in the Saugor district, except in the Damoh sub-division thereof.

Koli- In the Bhandara and Chanda districts.

Kori- In the Amraoti, Balaghat, Betul, Bhandha, Buldana, Chhindwara, Jubbulpore, Mandla, Nimar, Raipur, and Saugor districts, and in the Hoshangabad district, except in the Harda and Sohagpur tahsils thereof.
Kumbhar-
In the Bhandara and Saugor districts and the Hoshangabad and Seoni-Malwa tahsils of the Hoshangabad district.

Madgi-
In the Berar division and in the Balaghat, Bhandara, Chanda, Nagpur and Wardha districts.

Mala-
In the Balaghat, Betul, Chhindwara, Hoshangabad, Jubbulpore, Mandla, Nimar and Saugor districts.

Mehra or Mahar-
Throughout the Province except in the Harda and Sohagpur tahsils of the Hoshangabad district.

Nagarchi-
In the Balaghat, Bhandara, Chhindwara, Mandla, Nagpur, and Raipur districts.

Ojha-
In the Balaghat, Bhandara, and Mandla districts and the Hoshangabad tahsil of the Hoshangabad district.

Panka-
In the Berar division, in the Balaghat, Bhandara, Bilaspur, Chanda, Drug, Nagpur, Raipur, Saugor and Wardha districts and in the Chhindwara district except in the Seoni sub-division thereof.
### Scheduled Castes

#### Pardhi-
In the Narsinghpur subdivision of the Hoshangabad district.

#### Pradhan-
In the Berar division, in the Bhandara, Chanda, Nagpur, Nimar, Raipur and Wardha districts and in the Chhindwara district, except in the Seoni sub-division thereof.

#### Rujjhar-
In the Sohagpur tahsil of the Hoshangabad district.

### Part VIII - Assam

#### Scheduled Castes

1. **In the Assam Valley**

   | Namasudra | Hira | Mehtar or Bhangi |
   | Kaibartta | Lalbegi | Bansphor |
   | Bania, or Brittial-Bania |

2. **In the Surma Valley**

   | Mali or Bhuimali | Sutradhar | Kaibartta or Jaliya |
   | Dhupi or Dhobi | Muchi | Lalbegi |
   | Dugla or Dholi | Patni | Mehtar or Bhangi |
   | Jhalo and Malo | Namasudra | Bansphor |
   | Mahara | | |
Part IX - ORISSA

Scheduled Castes:

(1) Throughout the province:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>Castes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adi Andhra</td>
<td>Kela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audhelia</td>
<td>Kodalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bariki</td>
<td>Madari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basor, or Burud</td>
<td>Madiga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavuri</td>
<td>Mahuria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chachati</td>
<td>Mala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>Mang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandala</td>
<td>Mangan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandasi</td>
<td>Mehra or Mahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewar</td>
<td>Mehtar or Bhangi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhoba or Dhobi</td>
<td>Mochi or Muchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganda</td>
<td>Paidi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghusuria</td>
<td>Painda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godagali</td>
<td>Pamidi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godari</td>
<td>Panchama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godra</td>
<td>Panka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gokha</td>
<td>Relli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddi, or Hari</td>
<td>Sapari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irika</td>
<td>Satnami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaggali</td>
<td>Siyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandra</td>
<td>Valamiki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Throughout the province except in the Khondmals district, the district of Sambalpur, and the areas transferred to Orissa under the provision of the Government of India (Constitution of Orissa) Order, 1936, from the Vizagpatam and Ganjam Agencies in the presidency of Madras:-
Pan or Pano

(3) Throughout the province except in the Khondmals district and the areas so transferred to Orissa under the said Agencies :-


Dom or Dombo

(4) Throughout the province except in the district of Sambalpur

Bauri
Bhuiya
Bhumij
Ghasi, or Ghasia

Turi

(5) In the Nawapar subdivision of the district of Sambalpur :-

Kori
Nagarchi
Pradhan
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