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
Commission:

"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. 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 Mahasammilani' (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 Satsudras) 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. 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. In the same manner the wealthy Subarnabanik or the Saha samaj also came forward to justify their natural claim for institutional benefits.

Leaving aside Bengal, the caste spirit acquired much greater social and political importance in south India and Maharastra. 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.
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 Kammars 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'.(18)

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(19)

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, Chettiars, 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. (26)

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
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". (27) 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".\(^{(29)}\) 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.\(^{(30)}\) 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.\(^{(31)}\) The Tilis although they did not talk of communal representation, shared nevertheless the same apprehensions.\(^{(32)}\)

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".\(^{(33)}\)

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. 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. 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 Brahmins over the other communities, particularly in the Deccan. It was to remove this injustice that they wanted separate electorates. The Brahmins 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. Brahmins 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 Brahmins 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 Brahmans'.

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'.\(^{(44)}\)

\[1\]

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".
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.\(^\text{(51)}\)

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".\(^\text{(52)}\) 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.

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. 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 a 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
The 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total Population (mllions)</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>47</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 Despatch 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. 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".

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". 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.
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.


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.


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.


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. 1. 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.