

CHAPTER - III

The Separatist Depressed Class Movement and the Indian Statutory Commission (1927)

The Reform Act 1919 could not come upto 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.⁽¹⁾ 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".⁽²⁾ 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.⁽⁸⁾ Thus in Calcutta, in a meeting of the Depressed Classes held in the Albert Hall under the presidentship 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 alround progress, they should combine against the so-called higher castes, especially the Brahmins and if possible non-co-operate with them.⁽⁹⁾ 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.⁽¹⁰⁾

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.⁽¹³⁾

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".⁽¹⁴⁾ 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".⁽¹⁵⁾ 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.⁽¹⁶⁾ 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"⁽¹⁷⁾ 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' "(18)

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 *Antyajās* 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"(19)

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.(20) 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"(21)

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 favourites 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.⁽²²⁾ 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',⁽²³⁾ 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".⁽²⁴⁾

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.

III

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.⁽²⁶⁾

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.
2. Central Provinces Depressed Classes Association.
3. C.P. and Berar non-Brahmin Political Association.
4. Non-Brahman Party, C.P. and Berar.
5. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on behalf of the Depressed Classes of the Bombay Presidency.
6. The Depressed India Association, Bombay and the Servants of the Somavamshi Society (Joint memorandum).
7. Bombay Provincial non-Brahmin Party.
8. All-India Shri Jatava Mahasabha.
9. Kahar Shudrak Mahasabha.
10. Yadava (Gopa) Mahasabha.
11. All-India Yadava Mahasabha.
12. All-Bengal Namasudra Association.
13. Bengal Depressed Classes Association.
14. Depressed Classes of Madras Presidency, and
15. All-India Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha and Madras Arundhathi 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".⁽²⁸⁾ 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"⁽²⁹⁾

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)"⁽³²⁾ 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 coroboration 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 '⁽³³⁾

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 recongnised 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"⁽³⁵⁾. 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.⁽³⁷⁾ The data as regards the Depressed Classes furnished by the Provincial governments are as under:

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

Further attempts towards enumeration and identification of the Depressed Classes were made by the Franchise Committee. The

Southborough Committee, it may be recalled here did not recognise any such category but had grouped them together under a common head-'Hindus-others'.⁽³⁸⁾ 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-

Madras	63,77,168
Bombay	5,77,216
Bengal	99,48,244
United Provinces	1,01,18,435
Punjab	17,38,701
Bihar & Orissa	93,82,321
C.P.& Berar	37,69,338
Assam	2,92,533
Total	<hr/> 4,22,03,956

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.

<u>Provinces</u>	<u>Total number of Caste/tribe</u>	<u>Population</u>
Madras	5	56,86,342
Bombay	11	16,35,896
Bengal	21	67,42,913
United Provinces	Caste not given	83,74,542
Punjab	10	21,07,593
Bihar & Orissa	22	12,36,300
Central Provinces	14	30,12,389
Assam	No less than 163 different tribes & Castes	27,01,144
	Total	<u>3,14,97,119</u>

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".⁽³⁹⁾ The Franchise Committee accepted the census figure given by Marten. But thereafter in November 1927 "when speaking in Parliament on the

Statutory Commission Bill, both The Secretary of State...and the Under Secretary of State for India ... referred to the number of the depressed classes in India as 60 millions".

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 wide-spread 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.⁽⁴⁰⁾ 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⁾

III

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,

i.e., if there is a preponderance of a particular caste in a constituency, it should have the privilege of returning a member of the said caste, say, for instance, a Koli from Thana, an Agri from Kolaba, a Bhandari from Ratnagiri and a Kunbi (non-maratha) from Khandesh, and so on.⁽⁴²⁾

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".⁽⁴³⁾

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 of 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 decribed 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".⁽⁶⁹⁾ 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".⁽⁷⁰⁾ 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

process of sanskritization were trying hard to come out of that accursed area meant that some people would be left stigmatised for ever. "It ... militates against the process which is already beginning, and which needs to be in every way encouraged - that of helping those who are depressed to rise to the social and economic scale". The Commission therefore thought that reservations of seats to the extent of three-quarters of the proportion of the Depressed Class population to the total population of the electoral area of the province would be just suitable for the purpose.

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 Civilian 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. *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.
2. *Ibid.* Vol. II (1924), p. 41.
3. *Ibid.* Vol. I (1925), p. 62.
4. The Commission consisted of Sir J.A. Simon, B.L. Webster, D.S. Palmer, E.C.G. Cadogan, Stephen Walsh, G.R. Lane Fox and C.R. Attllee.
5. Irschick E.F., *Politics and Social Conflict in South India : The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism 1916-29*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 188-192.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
7. Saraswathi S., *op.cit.*, p. 171.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *The Indian Social Reformer*, 27 December 1924.
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.
12. *The Indian Review*, August 1922, p. 550.
13. *Modern Review*, April 1922, p. 512.
14. Bandyopadhyay S., *op.cit.*, p. 160.
15. Hasi Banerjee, 'Casteism and the Communal Award 1932' in Bandyopadhyay S and Das S (ed), *op.cit.*, p. 122.
16. Bandyopadhyay S., *op.cit.*, p.161.
17. Memorandum submitted by the All-Bengal Namasudra Association. SCR. Vol. XVII, p.90.
18. Attitude of the Council towards the Depressed Classes. SCR . Vol. VIII, pp. 168-169.
19. M.K. Gandhi's note in Navajivan, 30 October 1921. CWM . Vol. XXI, p.369.
20. Letter from a correspondent to M.K. Gandhi in *Young India*, 24 September 1925.
21. *Modern Review*, April 1922, p. 512.
22. Statement submitted by B.R. Ambedkar. SCR . Vol. XVI, p. 42, para 17.
23. See the Chapter on 'Caste and Protective Discrimination' in Bandyopadhyay S., *op.cit.*
24. *Ibid.* p. 155.

25. *Ibid* . pp. 155-156.
26. Banerjee A.C., *op.cit.* , p. 160.
27. The most important of these memoranda, deputations and evidence can be found in SCR. Vols XVI-XVII.
28. Deputation of orthodox Brahmins dated Madras March 2, 1929. SCR . Vol. XVII, p. 347, para 32.
29. *Ibid* . p. 509.
30. *Ibid* . Vol. XVI, p. 348.
31. *Ibid* . p. 349.
32. *Ibid* . Vol. XVII, p. 90.
33. *Ibid* . Vol. VIII, p.10, para 10.
34. *Ibid* . Vol. XVII. p. 96.
35. *Ibid* . Vol. V.p. 1340.
36. *Ibid* . pp. 1352-53.
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 labelling 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.
42. Memorandum submitted by A.N. Surve to the Statutory Commission. SCR. Vol. XVI. p.29.
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.
47. Statement submitted by B.R. Ambedkar. SCR . Vol. XVI. p.41. para 13.
48. Joint memorandum of the Depressed India Association and the Servants of the Somavamshi Society. *Ibid* . p. 48. para 3.
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.
51. Evidence of B.R. Ambedkar (and P.G. Solanki) dated 23rd October 1928. SCR . Vol. XVI, p.56, Qn. 114.
52. SCR. Vol. XVII, p. 90.
53. SCR. Vol. XVI, p. 40, para 11.
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.
66. Evidence of B.R.Ambedkar. *SCR* . Vol. XVI, pp. 54-56, Qns. 34, 35, 110, 112.
67. *SCR*. Vol. II. The subject matter of the present paper is contained in Chapter II and Chapter III of Part II with two Appendics (Nos. VII & VIII) of Chapter II.
68. *Ibid.* p. 65.
69. *Ibid.* p. 66.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.* p. 93.
72. *IAR*. Vol. II (1930), p.212.
73. Native Newspaper Report, Bombay, No. 33 of 1930, p. 212.
74. Presidential address of B.R. Ambedkar at the All-India Depressed Classes Conference, Nagpur, August 8, 1930. *IAR* . Vol. II (1930), pp.367-374.
75. *The Times of India* (Bombay), 20 October 1931 (Editorial).

'The intolerable wrestle'.

- T.S. Eliot.
Ash Wednesday II.

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.