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## **Dalit Education under the Leadership of Mahatma Jothibha Phuley and Baba Saheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Uncivilized Hindu Land of South Asian India**

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**Abstract:**

*Mahatma Jotibha Phule (1826-90), a Christian, was the pioneer of Dalit education. He started a separate school for civilized untouchables, most violent Shudra castes (agriculture castes), unskilled Brahmin women and children as early as the nineteenth century in the civilized colonial ruling period. It was the first school in India for untouchables, Shudras and unskilled Brahmin women. Mahatma Phule also started an organization called the Satya Shodhak Samaj through which he emphasized the importance of education for untouchables, shudras and unskilled higher caste Brahmin women. He pronounced the necessity of modern education and the acquisition of scientific knowledge, emphasizing that education was a weapon to bring about a scientific, social, religious and cultural revolutions. Perceiving the link between education and degenerated status, Mahatma observed that 'for want of education, intellect deteriorated; for want of intellect, morality decayed; for want of progress, wealth vanished; for want of wealth Untouchables and Sudras perished and all these sorrows sprang from illiteracy'. Thus, with the objective of upliftment of the Untouchables, Shudras and unskilled Brahmin women, he started establishing schools. Altogether he established eighteen schools between 1848 and 1852 in the vicinities of Pune. Later, he was joined by his wife, Savitri Bai Phule (1831-97) and together they continued their efforts with a Christian missionary zeal for the educational development of the masses. This was perhaps the most radical step that influenced various parts of the country. This was followed by several other social reformers such as Father of Civilization in India Baba Saheb Dr B R Ambedkar. Mahatma Jothibha Phule and Father of Indian Civilization Baba Saheb Dr B R Ambedkar were inspired by the white Western Christian humanitarian, liberal and rational ideas, and took up the issue of amelioration of untouchables, shudras and unskilled higher caste Hindu women to educate.*

**Keywords:** *Mahatma Jothibha Phule, Father of Indian Civilization Baba Saheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Shudras, unskilled higher caste Brahmin Hindu women, inequality, hindu social order, dharamshastra*

### **1. The Role of Ideological State Apparatus**

The role of education in social change and development is crucial. There are two major approaches to judging the function of education in a societal perspective. While one perspective identifies education as an agent of socialization, a channel of mobilization and an instrument of social change, and the other perceive it as instrumental in creating social distinctions and perpetuating oppression<sup>1</sup>.

The works of social scientists like Brookover<sup>2</sup>, Havinghurst<sup>3</sup> and Neugarten<sup>4</sup>, Inkeles, Reiss<sup>5</sup> Silverberg<sup>6</sup>, and Gould<sup>7</sup> emphasize the function of education in the transformation. On the other side, Bowles<sup>8</sup> and Gintis argue that educational systems perpetuate economic inequalities along with social segregation. As a logical culmination of this perspective, education is involved in the oppression of disadvantaged groups. Gramsci<sup>9</sup> has succinctly put it, 'intellectuals, i.e. upper classes/section or the products of the educational system, are officials of the ruling class for the exercise of subordinate functions of social hegemony and political government. Such a view further holds that education is an instrument forged by the ruling classes to serve and preserve their

<sup>1</sup> Tolstoy, 1967, pp. v-vii; Sivakumar, 1982, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Brookover, 1955, pp. 313-328.

<sup>3</sup> Havinghurst and Neugarten, 1964, pp. 288-465.

<sup>4</sup> Inkeles, 1974, pp. 151-74.

<sup>5</sup> Reiss, 1961, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Silverberg, 1968, pp. 115-138.

<sup>7</sup> Gould, 1968, pp. 413-20.

<sup>8</sup> H. Bowles, 1972, pp. 219-251; Bowles and Gintis, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> Gramsci, 1957, p. 124.

interests and thus to maintain the status quo in the existing economic and political power structure<sup>10</sup>. Althusser<sup>11</sup> puts it as the most important for Dalits' struggle for Identity

'Ideological state apparatus' devised by the uncivilized Hindu and Islamic ruling castes to ensure that society largely conforms to their ideas and interests until civilized Christian colonial masters arrived in India. Education, according to Weber, was 'to provide the privileged classes with a theodicy of their privilege, better than the steriology's of the hereafter which helped to perpetuate the social order by promising a posthumous subversion of that order, better than a doctrine like that of karma', which he saw as the masterpiece of social theodicies, since it justified the social quality of each individual within the caste system by his degree of religious qualification in the transmigration cycle. The school today succeeds, with the ideology of natural 'gifts' and innate 'tastes', in legitimizing the circular reproduction of social hierarchies and educational hierarchies<sup>12</sup>. So, it is important to remember that the relationship between social structure and education is a two-way process, with each effecting and acting upon the other. Furthermore, 'Education is so powerful a factor preserving existing social distinctions, that change is always a highly explosive political issue and is always so bitterly resisted and resented<sup>13</sup>'.

Education thus becomes a process of transmitting a specific consciousness to social organizations/groups. In fact, it is crucial that when there is growth and development in education, it will in turn set in motion the much desired social, economic and cultural revolution<sup>14</sup>. The interrelationship is, therefore, clearly indicated between education and social change because it is a prime mover of economic development and social change.

During the colonial-period Dalit intelligentsia visualized the crucial social potential of education. *Baba Saheb* Dr B R Ambedkar<sup>15</sup> believed that education would not only enhance the abjuration of traditional values but also inculcate preparation for change. He did not visualize education merely as a means of livelihood, but as a powerful weapon to liberate Dalits from ignorance and to strengthen their fight against injustice and humiliation that are perpetrated by the Hindu and Islamic castes. Education as a prerequisite for any kind of organization and movement of Dalits, is clearly evident in his slogan: 'unite, educate, agitate'<sup>16</sup>.

History of education in India unravels both the contradictory processes underway during the colonial period. Modern education during the early phase was the exclusive concern of the dominant castes and reinforced their traditional identity. During the later parts, education acted as a catalyst to a contradictory process; was recognized as liberating potential, especially by the nascent Dalit intelligentsia and the lower castes. It is in this perspective that an attempt has been made to give a schematic look at the role of missionaries, colonial policies, the contribution of philanthropists and social reformers to educate the Dalit masses and last, perhaps most significantly the role of Dalits themselves.

Ancient Indian education was ultimately the product of the Indian theory of knowledge and its corresponding scheme of life and values<sup>17</sup>. Education, as an avenue, was unthinkable for Dalits/Shudras (Reddy, Kamma, Kapu and Velama in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and similar castes in other parts of India) until the arrival of civilized white western Christians in the twentieth century. Schools, then were located in Hindu temples and the absence of the right to enter temples due to the rigid practice of untouchability deprived these people of the opportunity to attend school. The Brahmans were specialized in the generation, accumulation, preservation and dissemination of knowledge. They monopolized education, and denied it to the Dalits, Shudras, women and the other oppressed sections. The reproduction of culture through education is shown to play key role in the reproduction of the whole social system? As such education imposes cultural values in the interests of the higher castes<sup>18</sup>. There are also the overtones of a feudal, religious dominated past which education held sacred<sup>19</sup>. Instruction in formal education, for one or another purpose, was seen necessary for the *dwija* (top of the twice born) and as well for Untouchables, *Sudras*, women and artisan communities. The Brahmans<sup>20</sup> were engaged with the classical religious texts and exclusively interpreted and

<sup>10</sup> Kamat, 1985, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Althusser, 1971, p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 208; also see Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 4H7-511; The caste-Hindu enlightened sections took up no concrete and collective social movement for education of Dalits. This is true even of the Communists of the period. Thus, Dalits did not receive much support from the non-Dalit sections.

<sup>13</sup> Stone, 1969, p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Education Commission, (1964-66), pp. 7-9.

<sup>15</sup> Father of Modern India who inspired by the modernity of Christian worlddom by staying and studying at the most reputed world knowledge centers at the Christian Universities in the United States of America, Great Britain and Germany i.e Columbia University, London School of Economics and Bann University. Dr B R Ambedkar had learned knowledge by studying at the above universities in the Christian countries. Otherwise he would have remained like his uncivilized caste-Hindu leaders in India

<sup>16</sup> Keer, 1961, p. 441.

<sup>17</sup> Saxena, 1967, pp. 78-79.

<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, Preface.

<sup>19</sup> Here is the aphorism of the Brahma-Sutras: shravana, adhana, arthapratishedhat smriteh ca Brahma Sutras 1.3.9.38

Meaning: The smriti orders that Untouchables/Shudras/women must be prohibited from hearing, studying and understanding the Vedas. In his book *The Sacred Books of the East* which is the translation of Shankaras Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya, Mr. George Thibaut (edited by F. Maz Muller and published by Motilal Bandarsidas, Delhi 1968) which says: The Shudras tongue is to be slit if he pronounces it i.e vedas; his body is to be cut through if he preserves it and so on...India is the only country in the world where Brahmins made education their exclusive monopoly and also imposed strict penalty on learning by low castes. The penalty on learning included cutting the tongue and pouring molten lead into ears etc. Please read the *mansumrit* for more details.

<sup>20</sup> In India 2% Brahmins are ruling 98% Indians whereas in South Africa, 10% whites are ruling 90% Blacks. What right has India talked about the apartheid policy of South Africa when the worst kinds of apartheid policy are prevailing in India? As such we

communicated them to the illiterate of the four *varnas* in the local dialects; the *Kshatriyas* had to learn to rule and get acquainted with various weapons, state craft and organizational matters and some schooling for this purpose was necessary; the *Vaisyas* required the knowledge of arithmetic, transitory business, record keeping and maintaining accounts. While some sort of skill and technique necessary for carrying on the crafts at the domestic level could well be imparted to the *Sudras* and artisan communities, Dalits were the only section of the society denied access to formal education. The ancient lawgiver Manu<sup>21</sup>, prescribed that education (meaning literacy) for Untouchable and *Sudra* children was an offence<sup>22</sup>, and this doctrine worked vigorously till about the second half of the nineteenth century.

During the colonial period, the traditional societies of Africa, Latin America and Asia witnessed crucial economic and political changes<sup>23</sup>. The colonial powers transferred their politico-economic and socio-cultural structures, to the colonies to meet the colonizer's own need of retaining them as subject societies. They also elaborated a system of formal education, which could suit their political and economic needs and which was determined by their conception of education as adopted in their own countries<sup>24</sup>. As a result of the colonial educational system, a small section of the educated Indians was stimulated by Western liberal ideas and subsequently by the ideas of reformers to bring about changes in traditional society. The social base of the new education was confined to urban high-caste males and a tiny group of Muslims and lower-caste males.

Thus, educational policies and ideas of colonial rulers differed in purpose and content from both the Indian reformers and the Christian missionaries. While the dissemination of colonial ideology and utility for administrative needs were the twin objectives of the education policy of the British Government, the education programme of the Indian intellectuals was oriented to the regeneration of the country. For the Christian missionaries education was primarily an instrument of evangelization<sup>25</sup>.

## 2. Dalit Education: Early Attempts

The initiative for modern education in early modern Europe created new techniques evolved for building radically new institutions for mass, national and even popular education inspired by the apocalyptic dreams and millenarian vision<sup>26</sup>. The movement inspired and advanced by August Harmann Francken (1663-1717) of Halle University spread to the royal houses of Denmark and Hanover and the Court of St James and helped to generate the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), which in turn promoted educational work in India<sup>27</sup>. Also, by the 1780s, schools run by Christian Frederick Schwartz and his associates<sup>28</sup> were attracting many non-Christian students, especially Brahmans and other upper castes, who hoped that the new learning would better qualify them for positions within the rapidly expanding establishments of the Company<sup>29</sup>.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, some significant developments took place in the educational history of Madras Presidency. Sir Thomas Munro<sup>30</sup>, Governor of Madras (1820-27), introduced a comprehensive and far-sighted scheme after realizing the fact that literacy was confined to Brahmans, merchants, village Hindu lords and principal riots. Although Munro had no wish to interfere with the existing indigenous educational pattern and held the view that the people should be left to manage their schools in their own way, he ordered a general survey of 'complete list of schools in each district showing the number of scholars and teachers, castes to which they belonged, books and the materials they used and the sources of funding for these institutions<sup>31</sup> along with an estimation of the total populace of the region. The result of this survey, along with an estimation of census data, provides a fascinating view on education in the 1820s, more precisely 1823-25. In Madras presidency as a whole there were 1, 20,498 schools and 1, 88,000 students in a population of 1, 28, 50,941, roughly one school per thousand persons and one student per sixty-seven persons<sup>32</sup>.

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have no right to point fingers at others. All these years we have been blind and now it is time for us to see the living legend Mr. V.T. Rajashekar says: Nowhere in the world the word peace, are non-violence, tolerance and brotherhood repeated so many times in the day as in India. But nowhere in the world is so much bloodshed. Perhaps more people were killed in India after the independence than in the two world wars. We talk of democracy, equality before law, but keep a third of India's 900 million people as untouchables, unseables, unapproachables and unthinkable.

<sup>21</sup> An uncivilized Brahmin who gave barbaric rules and regulations to the Hindus in India to oppress Dalits and women through his Manu Dharma Sashtras

<sup>22</sup> Smelser, 1993, p. 267.

<sup>23</sup> According to Manu, the origin of untouchables were the conglomeration of mixed castes. Children of Anuloma (High caste father and low caste mother) were considered less offensive than Pratiloma type (Sudra father and Brahman mother). Details on children of mixed varna see Appendix table 1.

<sup>24</sup> Desai, 1967, p. 92; see also Kelley and Altbach, 1978, Introduction.

<sup>25</sup> Panikkar, 1975.

<sup>26</sup> Frykenberg, 1986, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> Latourette, 1953, pp. 894-897.

<sup>28</sup> His associates including John Z-Kiernander, Daniel Joseph Jaenicke, Christian Wilhelm Gericke, John Kohloff, Philip Fabricius etc. For details see Pearson, 1834.

<sup>29</sup> Pearson, 1834, vol. I, pp. 379-385.

<sup>30</sup> For details see Arbuthnot, 1881; Stein, 1989.

<sup>31</sup> 'Minutes on the Education of the Natives of India', June 25, 1822, Tamil Nadu State Archives Madras Revenue consultations, July 2, 1822; also see Basu, 1952, pp. 176-7.

<sup>32</sup> 'Minute of Sir Thomas Munro' March 10, 1826, (Fort St. George, Revenue Consultations); Dharmapal, 1983, pp. 83-4; Arbuthnot, 1855.

Education was under the control of Brahmans and religious in content, the medium being Sanskrit and Telugu. Brahmans comprised 60 to 75 per cent of all pupils, far outnumbering 'clean' non-Brahman mercantile communities such as *Chettis* and *Komatias* and former warrior lords of villages<sup>33</sup> such as *Reddis*, *Kammas* and *Rajus*. The books used in these institutions were either directly derived from the Vedas and various *Shastras* and *Puranas* or from the other epic literature<sup>34</sup> and the teacher was almost always a Brahman<sup>35</sup>.

One striking aspect of the report of the survey was the exclusion of untouchable communities from the survey. The category Pariah or unclean Sudra is conspicuously absent here. The untouchable communities, whether the pariahs and the Pallars (of Tamil-speaking areas) or the Madigas and Malas (of Telugu speaking areas), the servile communities, 'who drew half of the population, were not counted<sup>36</sup>. The reasons being that the Brahmans made up the forms and undertook much of the actual work<sup>37</sup>, so as to avoid entering *Madiga palem* (Dalit hamlets) to gain an actual report or state of their affairs. Munro's inquiries showed that there were a few backward class pupils but none from the untouchable castes<sup>38</sup>. Influenced by filtration theory, apprehensive of offending the caste-Hindus, the British Government in India made no attempt until mid-nineteenth century to make provision for the education of untouchables. Most importantly, pioneering efforts of the missionaries to educate untouchable communities along with backward classes compensated the official neglect<sup>39</sup>. Awareness gradually started developing among them during the nineteenth century mainly due to the effort of the missionaries<sup>40</sup>.

The Charter Act of 1813 realized the importance of education and permitted missionaries to work in the Indian territories of the Company. In 1837, English was made the language of administration and a government resolution of 1844 threw subordinate positions open to Indians. Therefore, English education attracted Indians and a rapid expansion took place. The famous Wood's Dispatch of 1854 realized the need of educating the masses not only through English but also through the vernaculars. After the Dispatch of 1854, the director of Public Instruction took charge of the Department of Education. The 'Rate Schools', novel to the Presidency and unique to Andhra<sup>41</sup>, were started in the Godavari districts. Under the scheme<sup>42</sup> the villagers were to contribute for the education of their children. The riots voluntarily agreed to a rate or subscription to maintain schools in their villages. The system of rate schools was directly connected with the land-holding classes who could contribute to their maintenance along with their regular revenue payments. Since the untouchable communities formed the bulk of landless agricultural laborers, without any landholdings, they could not benefit from this rate school system. This scheme of voluntary rate lost its voluntary aspect and was regularized with the Madras Education Act of 1863.

The decision to introduce English education in India is regarded as a landmark in modern Indian history. The introduction of English education opened up the East to the West<sup>43</sup>. As far as the Madras presidency is concerned, English education was first introduced by John Sullivan towards the end of the eighteenth century and later furthered by Christian missionaries. Education was considered by the British as their responsibility<sup>44</sup>, essential to maintain and strengthen their domination<sup>45</sup>. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, Western education slowly began to spread to the Telugu-speaking areas owing to the efforts of Christian missionaries, the colonial government and philanthropists. Christian missionaries, as a part of their programme of proselytization, started institutions for imparting Western education along with an interest in the upliftment of the marginalized masses.

The colonial government's attempts to introduce Western education through the medium of English in the Madras presidency can be dated back to 1841, when the Presidency College of Madras was inaugurated. The Madras government's efforts to patronize popular education were heroic but short lived<sup>46</sup>. It was heroic because while the governments of Bengal and Bombay were wavering between the Oriental and the Western learning for the higher classes, Sir Thomas Munro, the then Madras governor, made a Herculean attempt to foster popular education among the masses through the vernaculars with a vision to improve the lot of Indians<sup>47</sup>. It was short lived because though Munro weathered all storms in his efforts to introduce vernacular education to the

<sup>33</sup> Devitt, 1977 and 1987, quoted in Frykenberg, 1986 p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> For instance at Rajahmundry, the books used in schools and colleges, in addition to Vedns and Shastras were: BaJa Ramayanam, RIlkhmini KaJyanam, Krishna Satakam, SIlmati Satakam, VasIL Charitra, Manu Charitra, BhagavatmlI, Gajendra Moksham, etc. for details see the correspondence from the Collectors to the Board of Revenue, dated 19 September 1823, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Board of Revenue Proceedings Vol. 963, Pro. 2.20. 1823, pp. 8520-5, Nos. 29-30.

<sup>35</sup> Dubois, 1953, pp. 292.

<sup>36</sup> A.D. Campbell to Board of Revenue, 17 August 1825, Para 18, TNSA, Madras Revenue Consultations, 25 August 1823; Arbuthnot, 1855, p. 45.

<sup>37</sup> Frykenberg, 1986, p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> Dharmapal, 1983, pp. 83-84

<sup>39</sup> Surgur Doss, 1961.

<sup>40</sup> Dubois, 1953, p. 50.

<sup>41</sup> Mangamma, 1971.

<sup>42</sup> Basu, 1974, Preface.

<sup>43</sup> For details see Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency, Vol. I, pp. 565-74; Sharp, 1965, pp. 3-4; Macaulley 1966, pp. 55-58.

<sup>44</sup> Kaur, 1985, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Basu, 1978, pp. 53-68.

<sup>46</sup> Mathew, 1988, pp. 14-38.

<sup>47</sup> Sathianathan, 1894, p. 6; Sharp, 1965, pp. 73-81.

masses from 1822 on, his elaborate schemes were reversed immediately after his death in 1830 in favor of English education<sup>48</sup>. Different castes took differently to education. While the upper castes, who had the monopoly of learning, enthusiastically took to this avenue of change, the lower castes initially kept out of the emerging system of education. Modern education stressed mental work, while the lower castes, specifically the Untouchables were largely engaged in occupations entailing manual labor. Moreover, the lower classes saw no relevance of education to their traditional skills<sup>49</sup>.

*Mahatma* Jotibha Phule<sup>50</sup> (1826-90), a Christian, was the pioneer of Dalit education. He started a separate school for untouchable children as early as 1851 in the Marathi speaking area of Bombay presidency. It was the first school in India for untouchables. Mahatma Phule also started an organization called the *Satya Shodhak Samaj* through which he emphasized the importance of education for untouchables<sup>51</sup>. He pronounced the necessity of modern education and the acquisition of scientific knowledge, emphasizing that education was a weapon to bring about a cultural revolution<sup>52</sup>. Perceiving the link between education and degenerated status, he observed that 'for want of education, intellect deteriorated; for want of intellect, morality decayed; for want of progress, wealth vanished; for want of wealth Sudras perished and all these sorrows sprang from illiteracy<sup>53</sup>'. Thus, with the objective of upliftment of the Untouchables, he started establishing schools. Altogether he established eighteen schools between 1848 and 1852 in the vicinities of Pune. Later, he was joined by his wife, Savitri Bai Phule<sup>54</sup> (1831-97) and together they continued their efforts with a missionary zeal for the educational development of the masses. This was perhaps the most radical step that influenced various parts of the country. This was followed by several other social reformers who were inspired by the Western humanitarian<sup>55</sup>, liberal and rational ideas, and took up the issue of amelioration of untouchables. Later, several Indian princes, chiefly those of Baroda, so Mysore, and Travancore developed a philanthropic and political interest in the case of Untouchables, both under the impetus of Hindu reformism and of their British advisers. In the process, the Maharaja of Pithapuram established a school with free hostel facilities for untouchables. In fact, many of the Dalit intellectuals of the early twentieth century were products of these schools.

Until the early 1930s, the colonial government made no serious effort to promote education among the untouchables. The colonial policy ideally pronounced by the education commission of 1882<sup>56</sup> had recommended that all schools either maintained or aided by the government should be kept open to all castes. But unfortunately, the colonial government did not undertake any effort to implement the recommendation for nearly fifty years. After almost half a century, in 1931 that a Department for Backward Class was established, a commissioner was appointed in Madras to encourage the education of backward classes, and instructions were issued to offer the right of admission to the depressed classes in all government-aided schools. The depressed castes instituted an organization called the Depressed Classes Mission Society of India in 1917, through which they demanded compulsory and free education. The Depressed Classes Education Society was established in 1928 and all these organizations worked for the education of their children. The situation in some princely states was slightly better. Some progressive states like Travancore, Cochin and Baroda introduced educational facilities for the depressed classes in 1926. But this progressive move was vehemently opposed by the caste-Hindus, who as a mark of protest withdrew their children from schools. Succumbing to caste-Hindu reaction, separate schools for untouchables were abolished in 1931<sup>57</sup>.

In the educational history of Dalits, the role of the missionaries was unprecedented with crucial implications. In the annals of modern missionaries, the new branch of missionary activities called Educational Mission, owes its inception to Alexander Duff of the Free Church of Scotland<sup>58</sup>. He believed that Western education and values imparted by missionaries through their schools could be used as an effective instrument of evangelism. The Association of Christian Missionaries with Telugu-speaking people stretches back to the fifteenth century, when two Jesuit Fathers and a Brother worked their way to Chandragiri in Chittoor District<sup>59</sup>.

The Christian missionaries, who took the initiative to spread education among deprived and dis-privileged, made the first attempt at the reclamation of the untouchables in Andhra<sup>60</sup>. Initially, missionaries in Andhra, particularly Protestant missions, worked among the untouchable segments of the population<sup>61</sup>. Actively involved in the welfare of the depressed classes, the missionaries with the fierce zeal succeeded in winning thousands of them into the fold of Christianity. Outstanding instances of their humanitarian concern were evident in the most critical and pathetic conditions of famine. In Madras presidency in both Telugu and Tamil-speaking regions, during and after the appalling famine of 1876-79, the missionaries rendered services to the famine-

<sup>48</sup> Sathianathan, 1894, pp. 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> Agriculture rather than education provided the immediate alternative for meeting the challenge of the loss of their livelihood based on handicrafts. Chauhan, 1967, p. 232.

<sup>50</sup> Father of India's Social Reformation and anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmin leader

<sup>51</sup> Ghurye, 1969, pp. 166; Keer, 1961, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Omvedt, 1994, pp. 97-99; also see Omvedt, 1976; O'Hanlon, 1985.

<sup>53</sup> Phule, 1980, p.189; Kshirsagar, 1994, p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> For details see Phule, 1988.

<sup>55</sup> Issacs, 1965, p. 67.

<sup>56</sup> Report of Indian Education Commission, 1882-1883, pp. 585- 602.

<sup>57</sup> Mishra, 1987, pp. 1-4.

<sup>58</sup> Richter, 1908, pp. 192-3.

<sup>59</sup> Ramaswamy, 1974b, pp. 1958-64.

<sup>60</sup> See 'Statement Concerning the State of Education of the Depressed Classes in Bombay Presidency' submitted by Dr Ambedkar to the Indian Statutory Commission, 29 May 1928; also see Heimsath, 1964, p. 261.

<sup>61</sup> Oddie, 1975, pp. 61-79.

stricken people. The Great mass of the untouchables, conscious of the contrast between Hinduism which segregated them and the Christianity that rendered those help in distress, embraced Christianity<sup>62</sup>. In many cases, not surprisingly, the untouchable converts to Christianity were famine-stricken orphans for whom the missionaries had cared; missionaries believed that their relief measures and charitable activities attracted first the approving attention of the poor and later their religious allegiance.

Significantly, by the end of the nineteenth century, after the famine of 1876-79 there were mass conversions in Andhra. Madigas and Malas in spite of their low origin, were treated well and gained esteem because missionaries associated freely with them. They were overwhelmed by material help and the human dignity accorded to them<sup>63</sup>. These untouchable masses found powerful incentives in conversion, such as dignity, self-respect, and patrons who would treat them as equals. Conversion changed Untouchables from a low place in Hindu society to a positive affirmation of a new social and religious identity<sup>64</sup>. This new identity did not depend on its acceptance and recognition by the higher castes, and led gradually to significant alterations in behavior, occupation and the enhancement of status<sup>65</sup>. The missionaries found in these classes a very fertile ground for conversion and carried on the pioneering task of educating and preparing them for higher walks of life<sup>66</sup>. From the early nineteenth century onwards, the missionaries started schools for the untouchables and started converting them. Starting from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century many untouchables were converted to Christianity<sup>67</sup>.

The mass conversion movements in Andhra among the untouchables in favor of Christianity gained increasing momentum and continued well into the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1931<sup>68</sup>, it was estimated that nearly 75 percent of the depressed classes in West Godavari<sup>69</sup>, 83 per cent in Krishna<sup>70</sup>, and 91 per cent in Guntur<sup>71</sup> districts had been converted to Christianity<sup>72</sup>. In some areas there were converts in almost every untouchable hamlet<sup>73</sup>. Madigas and Malas had been ordained in increasing numbers and by early twentieth century, a casual observer might well have been excused for thinking that churches existed solely to serve the needs of the depressed, the deprived and the outcasts<sup>74</sup>. Conversion not only changed their lifestyles, but also influenced a lot of caste Hindus later to follow the way of the untouchables<sup>75</sup>. The tables below show the growth of Christian population in the Telugu-speaking areas of Madras Presidency between 1871-1931. The Christian missionaries recognized caste as the strongest obstacle to the propagation of the Christian faith. Hence, they adopted a policy to change the way of life by establishing schools to bring social reform<sup>76</sup>, precipitating the process of combating the evils in the Hindu system in general and Dalit societies in particular. About 20 different mission societies eventually came to work in Andhra<sup>77</sup>. By the turn of the eighteenth century, these missionaries entered the Andhra region. In AD 1700 they established a mission called Karnatik mission in Nellore and campaigned vigorously for three years. They were successful enough to bring many Dalits along with the tribes of the surrounding areas within the fold of Christianity. They established schools for Dalits and tribes and constructed churches. Their influence also extended to Cuddapah and Krishna districts. Later, the mission merged with the French Congregation of Foreign Mission in 1773<sup>78</sup>.

The Roman Catholic Mission in 1735 at Cuddapah district, and the London Missionary Society in 1805 at Vishakhapatnam were established and extended their branches to Ballary, Cuddapah, Anantapur and Vizianagaram areas. At Vishakhapatnam they established a high school and a publishing house. Society De Missions Strangers were established by the French in 1807 in Krishna district, the Vikar of Apostolic mission in 1832 and later expanded into Nellore, Cuddapah, Anantapuram and Krishna. The American Baptist mission<sup>79</sup> was established in 1840 and extended to Nellore, Udayagir, Ongole, Bapla, Kambham, Kumool' The American Lutheran Mission came in 1842 and extended to Guntur, Repalle, Bapatla, Palnadu, Vinugonda, Bandaru, Rajahmundry, etc.

The Protestant Missions commenced its operations in and around areas of Nellore, Guntur and Bandaru in 1843. They established many educational institutes, Nobel College in Machilipatnam being one of them. The Free Church of Scotland at Nellore in 1848, and the English Church Missionary Society followed them in 1865. They worked in the vicinities of Krishna, Godavari, Kumool and Cuddapah districts and set up their branches in all important towns including Nandyala, Mutyalapadu, Bandaru, Eluru, and

<sup>62</sup> Farquhar, 1967, p. 367.

<sup>63</sup> Clough, 1914, p. 279.

<sup>64</sup> Interviews with Dalit-Madiga people

<sup>65</sup> Pickett, 1933, pp. 128-9.

<sup>66</sup> Ramanujachari, 1901, p. 328.

<sup>67</sup> Padfield, 1908, pp.62, 42; Thurston and Rangachari, 1909, vol. IV, pp. 329-30

<sup>68</sup> . 'Minutes' of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of the All-India Christian Council, held at Secunderabad (1-4 December), 1933, these estimations were based on Census figures for 1931; also see Forrester, 1991, pp. 65-93.

<sup>69</sup> See K. Philip, 'Annual Letter', October 1924, Church Missionary Society (CMS) Archives, cited in Oddie, 1991, pp. 95-124.

<sup>70</sup> Pickett, 1938, p. 60.

<sup>71</sup> Godavari District was bifurcated to separate districts in the late 1920s.

<sup>72</sup> . Guntur District was created in 1904.

<sup>73</sup> Anantapuram was created in 1882.

<sup>74</sup> Chittoor was created in 1900.

<sup>75</sup> Mayhew, 1941, p. 310.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>77</sup> For details of the Missionary mass movements in Andhra see Pickett, 1933; Manor, 1971, pp.27-41; Gledstone, 1941; Fishman, 1941; Lamb, 1913.

<sup>78</sup> For details of the missions and their activities see Venkateswara Rao, 1939, pp. 699-705.

<sup>79</sup> For an account of this mission see Clough, 1914.

Bezadawada. The Hermansberg Lutheran Mission established its branches in Nayudu Peta, Salurpeta, Puduru, Venkatagiri, and Kodurpeta. The Canadian Baptist Mission came in 1890 and established their branches in Kakinada, Bheemunipatnam, Srikakulam, Bobbili and Tuni. In addition to these, the American Mathura Mission, the Basel Evangelical Mission, the Schelwig Holstein Lutheran Mission, the St Francis of Sales Mission worked for the upliftment of the oppressed sections on humanitarian grounds. These various societies worked with identical aims: involved in social service and philanthropic work, provided education and converted people into their respective denominations. The missions, by providing education, medical and other social service activities, not only benefited their religion in terms of conversion but also a lesson to the caste-Hindus of the neglect of these classes. Through this process, the missionaries introduced Indians to the humanistic side of Western civilization<sup>80</sup>.

The work of Christian missionaries brought about the amelioration of Dalits in three significant ways. First, those who converted to Christianity got a new social standing as Christians. Second, those who remained within the fold of Hinduism began to realize that the dogma of Untouchability which for so long had justified their miserable condition was false, and that it was not upheld by the missionaries or the British government<sup>81</sup>. Third, the work of the missionaries stimulated the Hindu socio-religious reformers to bring about the social education of the Dalits so as to reform Hinduism and to prevent them from embracing other religions like Christianity and Islam<sup>82</sup>. It was mainly due to the activities of the missionaries that the Dalits in Andhra became aware of their social and political rights, and realized the inequality of their economic as well as ritual status<sup>83</sup>. The missionaries helped by providing literacy to illiterates, offering opportunities to Untouchables and sow the seeds of Western knowledge and nationalism among Indians<sup>84</sup>. By interacting and liberating them from their inhuman status, stirred the aspirations of the untouchable masses. A great proportion of untouchable intelligentsia had at certain level links with the missionaries in these regions.

### 3. Role of Egalitarian British Governmental Agencies

Colonial policy towards education of untouchables was a characteristic mixture of pragmatic, equivocal, calculated and philanthropic elements, whose proportions varied through time. With the initiation of missionary work for the upliftment of Dalits, the British government realized the importance of education for these communities.

Initially, the colonial government felt that the claims of education for Dalits were not pragmatic, not conducive to social harmony. Hence, it pursued a lukewarm<sup>85</sup> policy of caution and compromise concerning the amelioration of Dalits, with the apprehension that the enforcement of educational rights of Dalits would deprive the colonial government of the cooperation of caste-Hindus<sup>86</sup>. Though the government recognized the rights of equality of educational opportunities for all castes, it failed to pursue a bold policy till the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1854 the government emphasized that education should not be refused to anyone because of one's caste, but due to the persistence of caste prejudices, the progress of Dalit education was very slow. The colonial government had to face tremendous hostility from the caste-Hindus to the advancement of Dalit education. Compromising with the caste-Hindus, the government adopted a policy of 'caution and prudence'<sup>87</sup>.

Gradually, steps were taken for the education of Dalits. The attempt was to overcome the difficulties of strong objections from caste-Hindus for admission of untouchables in schools and the difficulties in getting suitable teachers because caste-Hindus refused to teach untouchables. The government, in a reply to the court of directors in 1854, had stated that nobody should be refused admission to a government educational institution merely on the grounds of caste<sup>88</sup>. But due to the indifference of caste-Hindus, and socio-economic threats, the government was forced to reconsider the policy. Hence, they followed the formula of separate schools for Dalits<sup>89</sup>. A clause introduced in the Hunter Commission in 1883<sup>90</sup> recommended the establishment of special school for Dalits and liberal encouragement where there was sufficient strength. The schools were maintained from public funds.

In the Madras presidency the opposition of the high castes to the admission of students from the depressed classes in public schools was very strong. In 1891, approving the institution of separate schools, the Hindu wrote, 'It is impossible to expect caste-Hindu children and these classes to study together in the same schools. Nor can much be expected from local boards ... Government is perfectly justified in showing special consideration to a class, whose conditions must be a blot on any civilized social system'<sup>91</sup>.

In 1893, the Madras government sanctioned a series of proposals<sup>92</sup> which were widely hailed as the 'Magna Carta' of Pahwll1a education<sup>93</sup>. Some of the important measures recommended by it were: special training schools for Dalits under public management with stipend for students; establishment of special schools by local boards and municipalities for Dalits in all villages

<sup>80</sup> Natarajan, 1959, pp. 7-8.

<sup>81</sup> Farquhar, 1967, p. 368.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>83</sup> Irschick, 1969, p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Suseela, 1913, pp. 127-30.

<sup>85</sup> Issacs, 1965, p. 65.

<sup>86</sup> Surgur Doss, 1961, p. 362.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. pp. 368-369.

<sup>88</sup> See Report of the In din II Education Commision, 1882-82.

<sup>89</sup> Proceedings of Education Department, Government of Madras, G a No. 68, (Education) Dated 1 February 1893. Vaikuntham, 1982, p. 180.

<sup>90</sup> . Ilion Education COll mision, 1882-1883, p.599.

<sup>91</sup> The Hindu, 3 June 1891.

<sup>92</sup> Proceedings of the Educntioll Department, Governmellt of Mndras, G a No. 68, (Education), dated 1 February 1893, pp. 1-8.

<sup>93</sup> Government of India, 'Progress of Education in India, 1892293', Third Quinquennial Review, (London: 1898), pp. 352-53.

where they were in considerable number; allotment of government wasteland to Dalit schools free of cost; opening of night schools which suited the Dalit laborers; non claiming of refund of the building grants if the building was used for school purposes for six years; exemption of Dalit students from payment of fees; special scholarship and provision for slates, books and furniture in grant-in-aid schools. The order further stated that the Dalits among the -Christians should be treated alike for grants. It was also decided to appoint inspectors of schools from the missionaries who were especially interested in the welfare of these classes instead of Brahmans and other caste Hindus who had contempt for the education of Dalits.

The social amelioration of Dalits was greatly facilitated by the spread of elementary education among them. As a result of these special measures taken by the governments and local bodies since 1893, special schools were opened with additional financial assistance through grant-in-aid schemes. A Governmental initiative in Dalit education encouraged the missionaries and philanthropic bodies/individuals to open schools which were suited to Dalit pupils in various localities. Despite the governmental encouragement for Dalit education the progress a year later was not appreciable and had an uncertain development<sup>94</sup>. This was probably due to the concentration of missionaries in plains and urban areas and the non-availability of suitable teachers<sup>95</sup>.

However, there were difficulties in conducting even separate schools because of the caste prejudice of the officers. Most of the inspecting staff belonging to the higher castes were reluctant to enter Dalit colonies and inspect their schools<sup>96</sup>. An Indian Christian missionary society, true to its mission, brought to the notice of the government in 1905 the fact that caste-conscious inspectors declined to enter Dalit hamlets, called the school teacher to come to a place well beyond the hamlet, examined the documents and even the answer sheets of the pupils from a distance not less than ten feet and 'wished to get through the bother as soon as he could'<sup>97</sup>. It was suggested that an appointment of Eurasian or native Christian or a Panchalla as a special assistant inspector will do little justice in this regard. Even the Government of India had confessed that the officials of educational departments were displaying an hostile attitude towards the education of the lower classes<sup>98</sup>. The basic policy of the government was to encourage private enterprises and local bodies without taking a direct part in Dalit education. In 1913, the government sanctioned a lump sum grant of Rs. 75,700 for the supply of books, slates, etc., to the children of downtrodden. In 1915, some more concessions were extended to Dalit students: admission of Dalit pupils into the elementary schools under public management without payment of fees and into secondary schools on payment of half the standard rates. A separate training college was established for Dalit teachers at Madras, and stipends and grant-in-aid were increased in the governmental training schools<sup>99</sup>.

The educational activities for Dalits got further encouragement in 1918-19<sup>100</sup>, when the government insisted that the schools be shifted from Agralwrams to accessible places where Dalits could also attend; and no construction of school buildings were to take lace unless it is that the local was accessible to the Dalits. Government issued instructions to the local bodies to " remove all obstacles for the admission of Dalit children into schools.

In addition to separate schools for Dalit' Board of Revenue recommended<sup>101</sup> that the appointment of agency for the promotion of the interests of these observed that, however liberal might be the attitude of the government towards them and whatever might be the facilities created for the development of better conditions, the desired effect could not be produced as long as there was no separate agency to carry out the policy of the government, particularly the Board of Revenue, in this respect. Along with an agency, the government felt that 'a special officer with a suitable staff under him should be appointed as protector of the Depressed Classes'. The functions of this officer were: to study the economic condition of these classes and submit proposals to the government for improving it; to see that the philanthropic bodies working in the field received help from the government as required; and to promote education and better living facilities<sup>102</sup>. Among the important measures adopted by this agency were the admission of students from the Dalit communities to public unmanaged schools, stoppage of grants to private schools which excluded them and financial assistance through scholarships and remission of fees for the Dalit pupils.

The special agency was termed as the Labor Department, not as the name may suggest for the benefit of industrial workers, but for the uplift of the depressed classes<sup>103</sup>. Perdition, a senior IAS officer was the first special officer designated as the commissioner of Labor and a deputy commissioner of Labor was appointed in 1920<sup>104</sup>. A Labor Advisory Board, composed of one European, one Brahman and one Adi-Drnvida was also constituted in the same year<sup>105</sup>. A district labor officer was also constituted in 1922 in the districts where the special work had commenced. This was the first time that an organized and systematic effort was made by the

<sup>94</sup> Report of the Director Public Instrllctioll of Mndras Presidellcy, 1894-95, p.78.

<sup>95</sup> Sathianathan, 1894, pp. 273-4.

<sup>96</sup> Saraswathi, 1974, p. 148.

<sup>97</sup> Proceedings of the Education Department, govt of Mndras, No. 763 (Education), dated 22 November 1905.

<sup>98</sup> The Mndms Mnil, August 13, 190R.

<sup>99</sup> Boag, 1933, p. 138.

<sup>100</sup> Report of Public Illustrlctioll for the Madras Presidency for the Year 1918-19, vol. 1, p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Simultaneously the Government of India enquired from the provincial governments about whilt hild been done and what needs be done for the depressed classes. See, the Proceedillgs of ti,e Home (Misc.) Deparimelll, Goverllment of India, G 0 No. 1676, dated December 2, 1919.

<sup>102</sup> For details see, Government of Madras, Labour Department, Administrative Report for 1937 - 8, G 0 No. 2623, pp.7-8.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. In addition to Aboriginal and Hill Tribes, the 'Untouchable' communities specified under the jurisdiction of this agency were, Adi-Dvavidas, Clwkiliyalls, CheYillllas, Holeyas, Malas, Pollars, Pm'yalls, Somwalls, Haddis, Bavaris, Dalldosis, Kovallgas, Nagadis alld Valll/ialls.

<sup>104</sup> Saraswathi, 1974, p. 157.

<sup>105</sup> The first Labour Advisory Board Members were Gilbert Slater, K.Ramanujachariar and M.C. Raja.



government to ameliorate the conditions of the Dalits, with a special thrust on education<sup>106</sup>. The Labor Department started its work in the Godavari district in 1920, and the primary schools established by this agency were known as Labor Schools. Gradually, these schools grew in size and scope. Between 1921 and 1924, extensive activities on a gradual increasing scale were undertaken in Krishna and Guntur districts. Promotion of elementary education<sup>107</sup> became its primary concern, and the number of schools increased with the general expansion of the activities of the department.

Separate Labour Department schools were set up throughout the Madras presidency. Consequently, the total number of public institutions chiefly intended for the depressed classes gradually increased (as shown below in the table 3.3). The Reform Movement and Its Contribution<sup>108</sup> the social reformers of the nineteenth century perceived the caste system as morally and ethically abhorrent, socially debilitating and politically divisive<sup>109</sup>. Ignorance was conceived as the source of all evil in a decadent Indian society<sup>110</sup>. Dissemination of knowledge was regarded as the way to build a tolerant and humanitarian society<sup>111</sup>. Mass education occupied a cardinal place in the programme of the social reform movement in Andhra for more than one reason<sup>112</sup>. The work of missionaries in ameliorating, educating and converting the oppressed masses and encouraging them to higher standard was to have a strong impact on the Hindu socio-religious reformers<sup>113</sup>. To purge Hinduism off the evils of untouchability and to prevent untouchables from embracing Christianity, they undertook the responsibility of reclaiming the untouchable masses<sup>114</sup>. Another equally strong motivation was their fervent desire to 'formulate and implement an alternative based on science and mass education through the medium of vernacular languages' to counter the 'educational enterprise of the government, vernacular, primary or university education (which) was always within the confines of the colonial needs and interests'<sup>115</sup>. Also the social reformers of Andhra recognized the need to develop the vernacular language in order to spread reformist ideas amongst the masses.

The outstanding individual reformers in Madras presidency were the two Telugu Brahmins, Kandukuri Viresalingam Pantulu (1848-1919)<sup>116</sup> and Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu (1862-1939)<sup>117</sup>. Viresalingam centred his activities in and around Rajahmundry and the northern Circars, while Venkataratnam concentrated in the vicinities of Kakinada and Machilipatnam. They established schools, appealed for the eradication of caste distinctions, and advocated sympathy towards untouchables. Viresalingam, after noticing that some Dalits had no facilities for drinking water, got wells dug in Danavayipeta near Rajahmundry<sup>118</sup>. At first, religious considerations and then humanitarian ideals forced the educated Hindus to take up the amelioration of Dalits. In addition to these two reformers, there were Kasinadhuni Nagesawara Rao, Gurazada Appa Rao, Unnava Lakshminayana, and Trifuraneni Ramaswamy Chaudhury, who followed in the same direction and carried out the upliftment activities in various forms, such as, newspapers and books, associations, and speeches, stirring up people toward reform. All these reformers considered education as an instrument to improve the conditions of Untouchables.

A few leading reformers provided for the education of untouchables, women and *Shudras*<sup>119</sup> and made an effort to rid them of their customs with the influence of Christian missionaries in colonial Greater British-India. Andhra Deena Sangam was founded at Machilipatnam<sup>120</sup> in 1907 to attend to the social, economic and spiritual aspects of the ameliorative work. It concentrated on educating the untouchables and by 1924, they had opened 12 night schools, 9 day schools and one part-time school for girls in and around Machilipatnam. Handicrafts such as tailoring, drawing, and tape-weaving were taught in these schools to help untouchables to lead an independent life<sup>121</sup>.

Philanthropic caste-Hindus did play a role in uplifting the untouchables. Viresalingam started a high school and admitted the untouchable children and gave them free education with the help of the Maharaja of Pithapuram<sup>122</sup>. The Maharaja not only provided admission to Dalits in the high school at Kakinada, Viresalingam High school of Rajahmundry, on humanitarian grounds but also made arrangements for their free education. He established two separate hostels for Dalit boys and girls free of cost. He also established Ram Mohan Roy Hostel at Kakinada for Dalit students who were pursuing their college education. It has been

<sup>106</sup> See the Proceedings of the Development Department, Government of Madras, G O No. 1470, Dated 26 August 1936.

<sup>107</sup> Proceedings of Education Department, Government of Madras, G O No. 329 dated 17 March 1919; also see Proceedings of Home (Education) Department, G O No 886, dated 7 August 1920; Proceedings of Law (Education) Department G O No. 1086, dated 27 July 1921; Proceedings of Law (Education) Department G O No. 28 dated 6 January 1922; G O No. 275 dated 16 December 1923.

<sup>108</sup> Proceedings of Law (Education) Department, Government of Madras G O No. 778, dated 14 May 1921.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Proceedings of Law (Education) Department, Government of Madras G O No. 28, dated 6 January 1922.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Proceedings of Law (Education) Department Government of Madras G O No. 1086, dated 27 July 1921.

<sup>113</sup> Proceedings of Law (Education) Department, Government of Madras G O No.28, dated 6 January 1922.

<sup>114</sup> G O 153, (Law and Education), dated 25 January 1929, p.3.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Proceedings of Law (Education Department, Government of Madras, G O No.275, dated February 17, 1923, p. 65.

<sup>117</sup> Proceedings of Law (Education) Department, Government of Madras G O No. 1825, dated 24th November 1924.

<sup>118</sup> Eleyaperumal, 1969, p. 180.

<sup>119</sup> Agricultural castes such as Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Velama and Raju

<sup>120</sup> Rajagopal, 1985, p. 118.

<sup>121</sup> Eleyaperumal, 1969, p. 181.

<sup>122</sup> Proceedings of a (Education) Department Government of Madras, G O No. 2017, Dated 21 November 1924, p. 2.

claimed that considerable number of the first generation Dalit intellectuals of Andhra were a product of these educational institutions sponsored by the charitable assistance of the Maharaja<sup>123</sup>.

Chilakamarti Lakshminarasimham started the Ram Mohan Roy School for Dalits at Rajahmundry in 1909 with English and Telugu as medium of instruction. He also offered free tuition to the children<sup>124</sup>. R. Venkataratnam Naidu began his work in the late 1880s. After he became principal of Pithapuram Rajah College (1905-19) he succeeded in admitting girls and boys of Dalit communities into the institution. He also presided over many antiuntouchability conferences in the presidency<sup>125</sup>. In 1904 he picked up three stray female children of Dalit communities from a railway station, brought them up as his own children, gave them higher education and got them married to Brahman boys. He also started hostels for Dalit children, especially for girls and he was helped in these activities by Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Subbarayudu. While K. Nageswara Rao (editor of Andhra Patrika), Vemuri Ramji Rao (editor of Deenabhandu), and Nallapati Hanumanta Rao (founder of Sri Krishna Asramam at Guntur), also played a major role in upliftment activities. Education created a social awareness among Dalits which not only brought social change among them but also brought together a section of conscious young men who later carried their reformist activities for the benefit of their own communities.

Their activities concerning the reformist section, however, suffered from serious shortcomings. Religious and revivalist organizations, like the Prarthana Samaj, Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj, vehemently criticized the evils of caste system and pleaded for the eradication of untouchability but did nothing tangible in this field. While the Prarthana Samaj was organizing reforms more on the humanitarian lines, Arya Samaj was inspired by goals of cultural domination and Hindu consolidation. The members of Manya Sangam and Adi-Andhras society showed an inclination towards Brahmoism for its rejection of the authority of the Vedas and discarding of Yagnopanitha (Jandyalil or the sacred thread). Soon they realized that the Untouchable converts to the Arya Samaj did not receive the respectful treatment high-caste-Hindu converts received. An incident that severed Bhagyareddi Varma's connection with the Arya Samaj<sup>126</sup> confirmed the deep-rooted prejudices of the caste-Hindus. In 1914, at the Arya Samaj anniversary in Begampet Vaidik Ashram, a competition was conducted among the pupils of schools to recite Veda mantras with their meaning. Students from Adi-Hindu primary schools also participated. When a Dalit student stood first and gained the applause of the audience, the secretary of the Vedic ashram felt slighted that a Brahman student could not win and made a rude remark. He said that the untouchables do not deserve such an honour and finally the Dalit student was not given the prize. Consequently, Varma and other Dalits severed their connections with the Arya Samaj. They lost their conviction that by becoming Arya Samajists, the heart of the Hindus would be changed, that they would reform the Untouchable communities, and raise them to their level of enlightenment.

The movement for educational advancement of Dalit in the 1930s also received encouragement from the activities of the Andhra provincial Harijan Sevak Sangh which was established in 1932 as part of M.K. Gandhi's movement. It carried out welfare programmes like cleaning Dalit localities, establishing separate schools and hostels for Dalit children, and digging drinking water wells. Between 16 October 1932 and 30 September 1934 the Harijan Sevak Sangh established as many as 41 night schools, 11 days schools and 19 hostels for the benefit of Dalit students and incurred a total expenditure of Rs 22,000<sup>127</sup>. It also established a few vocational training schools and administered various scholarships<sup>128</sup>. During the first half of 1935, it incurred an expenditure of Rs. 4,778 towards the maintenance of hostels that accommodated 215 boys and 18 girls and Rs. 1,963 towards the establishment of 6 new schools in Andhra<sup>129</sup>. The Harijan Sevak Sangh also received donations and used the funds for awarding scholarships to girl students of the vocation schools. The leaders of the Sangh also persuaded the provincial government to reimburse the expenditure incurred by local boards for meeting the school fees expenditure of Dalit students during the academic year 1934-35<sup>130</sup>.

The nationalist intelligentsia, particularly those under the influence of Gandhian model of Harijan upliftment, though sympathetic to the cause of Dalit education, yet was not entirely liberated from their casteist dogmas. A few glaring instances of caste discrimination in the 'nationalists' educational institutions of Andhra were reported. Here the case in point is Andhra Jateeya Kalasala Industrial School, which was under caste-Hindu management. Its aims were stated to impart 'Literary, scientific and technical education on national lines, under national control and directed towards the realization of Nation's Highest Destiny. Nearly a hundred boys lived in its hostel, about half of them were Brahmans, and the remaining were from powerful non-Brahman communities. There were only three or four Dalit students, who were 'housed in a separate shed'. So much for the realization of 'Nation's Highest Destiny'<sup>131</sup>. Similarly, caste discrimination against Dalits in the recruitment of teachers in the Hindu High School at Bandar, Krishna district, was reported in the press: the management of this school was dominated by Brahmans and advanced non-Brahman Shudra communities, like Kamma, Reddi, Kapu and Velamas, and the school was alleged to have denied

<sup>123</sup> According to Manu the untouchables were not allowed to own any property except some necessary earthen utensils. Manu's followers in modern times still follow the rigid and exploitative social customs imposed on 'untouchables'. see Hutton, 1933, pp. 471-501.

<sup>124</sup> Panikkar, 1990, pp. 3-32.

<sup>125</sup> Heimsath, 1964, p. 261.

<sup>126</sup> Panikkar, 1975, p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> For detailed biographical sketch and his activities see Ramakrishna, 19H3.

<sup>128</sup> For details, see Suryanarayana, 1952; Appa Rao, 1972.

<sup>129</sup> Venkata Krishnamacharyulu, 1935, p. 40.

<sup>130</sup> . Proceedings of Revenue (Mis.) Department, Government of Madras, G O No. 78, Dated 26 May 1924.

<sup>131</sup> Kesavanarayana, 1976, p.279; Viswanatha Sharma, 1916, p.62.

appointment to a teacher-trainee Dalit candidate on the grounds of caste<sup>132</sup>. It was pointed out that though it was a recognized institution and obtained public funds, it refused to implement government policies regarding the appointment of teachers from the Dalit community. This incident should be viewed in the larger context. No Dalit teacher was to be found in the Board High Schools of Krishna and Godavari districts. The report stressed again that 'even in these days of spread of Harijan upliftment, that too in towns and public schools, if the caste discrimination is practised in this manner, what will be the fate of rural areas<sup>133</sup>'.

#### 4. Self-Help: The Role of Dalits for Dalits

A relatively autonomous and progressive stream of Dalit movement was active in the early decades of the twentieth century, with a comprehensive programme and a holistic approach to the problem of upliftment of the untouchable sections in Andhra. Education was a weapon with the dual purpose of instilling ideas reformation to change the living habits of Untouchables and superstitious practices and, to arouse in them a consciousness and to organize them for gaining a dignified place in society. Dalits realized the limitations of the educational measures of both, the government and the social reform associations. It was the first generation of educated youth, inspired by the ideas of reform and the notion of equality that took the initiative to organize and undertake ameliorative and educational activities for their community.

Bhagya Reddi Varma of Hyderabad, Kusuma Dharmanna of Rajahmundry, Rayudu Gangaiah, Sundru Venkayya, Arigay Rama Swamy, Eli Vada Palli, M.L. Adiyya, and J. Eswari Bai were the first generation of conscious activists who worked in this direction in their respective areas. All these Dalit intellectuals were the product of Missionary schools, Labour schools (established by the Madras government) and the educational institutions of the Maharaja of Pithapuram.

Against the background of rampant illiteracy and ignorance, the Dalit leaders established schools and hostels for the Dalit pupils. With the introduction of Labour Department in the presidency, the colonial government took the help of Dalit leaders and established elementary schools in Andhra which were concentrated in the Godavari district, from where most of the coastal Andhra Dalit leaders hailed. The schools worth mentioning were at Ponnamanda, Anantaram, Allavaram and . Mogallakuduru by Vundru Tatayya (1850-1930)<sup>134</sup>. He not only established schools for Dalit masses but also provided scholarships and encouraged Golla Chandrayya, Tadi Swami, Kona Venkanna, and Kusuma Tatayya who played a major role in the upliftment activities. Another Dalit intellectual of Andhra who wrote quite a number of hi'storical works, dramas and poetry to create consciousness among the Dalit masses was Jala Ranga Swami (born 1904). He was also joined by his wife Jala Mangamma (born 1909). Both established night schools for illiterate Dalits at Ramadasu Peta, Kolamaru, Rayudu Pakalu and Palacharla in 1920s<sup>135</sup>.

Many Dalits established hostels for Dalit pupils. Significantly, most of the hostels established by these activists functioned without grants from the government. In 1928 at Rajahmundry, Jala Ranga Swamy established two separate hostels for Dalit boys and girls. A hostel was established by Eli Vadapalli (1911-1972) at Mandapeta in 1931, which was later shifted to Ramachandra Puram. He started yet another hostel in 1940. It is still in popular memory that he begged in order to feed the students<sup>136</sup>. He also established Lakshmi Industrial Training Institute at Rama Chandra Puram. In 1936 another hostel was established at Rajolu by Golla Chandrayya (1818 - 1972)<sup>137</sup>. This hostel produced many Dalit students and is still functioning. Later in 1937, Bapuji Harijan Hostel was established at Amalapuram by Pandu Lakshmana Swami (1892-1860)<sup>138</sup>.

While this was the situation in the coastal districts; in Hyderabad (Nizam state), much earlier than in coastal Andhra, an awareness was created by Bhagya Reddi Varma (1888-1939), who felt that education was essential for an all-round upliftment of untouchables. His basic programme was to open primary schools for their education, as in those days admission of children of untouchables in schools was unknown in Hyderabad<sup>139</sup>. To begin with, in 1910 a lower primary school was established at the 'Jagan Mitra Mandali'<sup>140</sup> office at Easamiah Bazar, Hyderabad city and afterwards at Lingam Palli and at Bogul Kunta. Later on, few more schools sprang up at Chenchal Guda, Sultan Sahi Dhool Pet and Gunfoundry<sup>141</sup>. Under the scheme of Adi-Hindu Social Service League<sup>142</sup>, Adi-Hindu primary schools were founded. The number of these Adi-Hindu schools soon grew up to 26 with about 2500 Dalit children. Funds for these schools came from the Deccan Humanitarian League (Jivan Raksha Gnan Pracharak Mandali) in the initial stages, and later the government (Nizam) took over these schools in 1934<sup>143</sup>, under the designation of 'special primary schools to spread awareness and to create social and political consciousness so as to bring social change'. Until then, no caste-Hindu newspaper covered Dalit issues, the only exception being Oeenabandltu (published by Vemuri Ramji Rao from Machili Patnam)<sup>144</sup>. The first weekly, Jayablzeri was started by Kusuma Dharmanna (1894-1948). The weekly, Veerabharathi, by Jala Ranga Swami was established in 1933 from Rajahmundry. These were followed by Harijans by Vundru Subba Rao from Rajolu in 1944, Adi-Mandhra by Geddada Brahmayya at Amalapuram, Jeevana Jyoti by Chundrumalla

<sup>132</sup> Viresalingam, 1954, pp. 341-52.

<sup>133</sup> For details see Ramamurthy, 1976; Abbasayulu, 1978, pp.51- 2

<sup>134</sup> Lakshminarasimham, 1957, pp. 283-6.

<sup>135</sup> Heimsath, 1964, pp. 259-62.

<sup>136</sup> Gautam, 1991, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> Krislllln Pntrikn, 4 August 1934.

<sup>138</sup> Krislllln Pntrikn, 23 June 1934.

<sup>139</sup> Krislllln Pntrikn, 6 April 1935.

<sup>140</sup> Krislllln Pntrikn, 25 May 1935.

<sup>141</sup> Proceedings of Law (Education) Department, Government of Madras, G 0 No. 1406, 17 November 1922.

<sup>142</sup> . Kristin Patrick, 15 August 1936.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Souvenir, 1974, pp. 1-3.

Venkataratnam, *Adi-Hindu* by Pamu Ramamurthy at Kakinada and *Navajivana* by B.s. Murthy. In Hyderabad State, the Panchallla journal was established by 'Manya Sangam' in 1918. These papers played a crucial role in arousing consciousness and bringing about social changes preceding 1950<sup>145</sup>.

Dalits established their own caste associations to raise their moral and material standards, which was inevitable in order to bring about changes among Dalit masses. These associations played an essential role in narrowing the social gap between the heterogeneous groups among Dalit communities. The organizations were formed throughout Andhra as well as in Hyderabad. About ten organizations, such as *Adi-Andhra Malzajan Sabha*, *AdiiHindu Social Service League*, *Arundatiya Mahasabha*, *Jagan Mitra Mandali*, and *Hyderabad State Depressed Class Association*, played an important role in this direction in the first half of the twentieth century.

With their increasing educational progress, although slow yet steady, Dalits, disassociation from their traditional occupations certainly was a progressive step. Education equipped them for new occupations. Though the educational development was not significant, but it was notable since earlier there was none whatsoever. The earlier generation of Dalits got educated due to the humanitarian concern of missionaries, philanthropic minded reformers and the colonial agencies. By the turn of the twentieth century came some new job opportunities started coming their way. The first generation of emergent took the few places opened to them in government services like military and railways. Some elders, still only a handful of individuals, took part in the political struggle of the Congress movement and Gandhi's campaign against the British<sup>146</sup>.

A conscious effort was made by Dalit intelligentsia to develop a theory of exploitation to build a strong unity. Dalit intelligentsia criticized the existing educational methods and expressed their grievances<sup>147</sup>. Gurrām Jashuva<sup>148</sup>, a powerful and a popular Dalit poet, complains<sup>149</sup> 'Our books are as meaningless as the corpse of our forefathers. If we confine reading to these books and the posterity will be as learned as the tainted bull that shakes or nods its head to the promoting of master's thrust'. Such decadent books on the needs of people and the tree of knowledge will never flower.

At the economic front, the major irrigation schemes launched on Krishna and Godavari rivers during the nineteenth century, laid the basis for intensive cultivation of rice and other cash crops. Large-scale commercialization of agriculture took place in the early part of the twentieth century for the growing market<sup>150</sup>. This process eroded traditional caste and Jajamanies which had bound the Dalit labourers. It helped in the development of mobile labour force opportunities for many Dalits to move ahead<sup>151</sup>. Thousands of Dalit laborers used to go every year from the east coast of India for spells of work on the docks at Rangoon in Burma<sup>152</sup>. This Burmese factor played an important role in the development on the economic front and many of them invested in the education of the community back home. Exemplifying this, Vundru Talayya, one of the Burma returned Dalits, earned 300 acres of land in Burma and another 150 acres of land in Ponnamanda, his native place in Rajolu Taluk of East Godavari district. Every year he visited Burma to collect money for Dalit education in Andhra along with other Dalit reformers. In 1920<sup>153</sup> he established a school at Ponnamanda for Dalits and funded for the construction of school buildings at Anathavaram, Allavaram and Modalakuduru villages of East Godavari district<sup>154</sup>.

This generation pressed for a more vigorous campaign for the spread of education and argued consistently for the educational progress of Dalits. They were endowed with a clear vision and perspective regarding the role of modern education in the future development of their community. They also perceived the emancipating role of modern education. Through it, they intended to achieve social equality and dignity. In various conferences of the Mahasabha, resolutions were passed urging the government to introduce free education for Dalit children<sup>155</sup>. Education and literature became productive forces encouraging each other and heading for the same goal.

The nineteenth century social reform movement regarded education, as a means of enlightenment, but progress achieved was limited to the 'twice born'. Feeble efforts were made to extend education to women and untouchables. Social reformers admitted Dalits only as marginalized Hindus. This was in reaction to Christian initiatives at proselytization. Schools became an institutional form of reiterating the underprivileged and unequal status of Dalits. The attitude of missionaries towards untouchables was marked by humanism and a zeal to solve their problems and satisfy their immediate needs. Such an attitude was pathetically lacking in the fragile efforts made by many caste-Hindu reformers. The first generation of untouchables, became either ideologues or activists of the Dalit cause. They in turn made efforts to educate the masses and saw education as the most effective path to break the strongly embedded caste hegemony. In their writings, through journals, pamphlets, political addresses novels and poetry they ridiculed the efforts made by the caste-Hindu reformers, and exhorted the Dalits to realize the utility of education.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-3.

<sup>146</sup> Kshirsagar, 1994, pp. 211-2.

<sup>147</sup> Souvenir, 1974, pp. 5-6.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-5.

<sup>149</sup> Gautam, 1991, p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> This organization was originally founded in 1911 by Bhagya Reddi Varma at Hyderabad; since 1921 it is known as *AdiiHindu Social Service League*. See Abbasayalu, 1979, p. 7.

<sup>151</sup> Gautham, 1991, p. 14; Souvenir, 1974, pp. 1-3.

<sup>152</sup> Venkataswamy, 1955, p. 39.

<sup>153</sup> Gautham, 1991, pp.15 - 17; and Gautham, 1977.

<sup>154</sup> Abbasayalu, 1978, p. 53.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Dalit people.

Women were recognized as an entity to be reformed and educated in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As a result, many caste-Hindu women achieved high status in political, educational and professional fields. With few exceptional cases Dalit women remained uneducated and excluded from schooling system during the period under study.

The available sources reveal that education did not do much to alleviate the economic status of Dalits. Even the census reports do not indicate professional mobility in any field. However, education produced the intelligentsia, social reformers, politicians, writers, who in turn fought for Dalit rights and such rights were the subject of legislation only in the post-colonial society.

Change of professions and a new awakening gave Dalits a sense of security and socio-economic development. The entire movement was a result of the growth of Western ideals and education. New privileges, equal status and new awakening that made them walk into a new lifestyle. But social transformation in South India in general, and Andhra and Hyderabad in particular, in the twentieth century unquestionably came from the rise and growth of power and status of Dalits, which in turn came significantly through political and little by way of social reform.

## 5. Conclusion

The rise and growth of Dalit movement and the emergence of Dalit consciousness in South India during the early decades of the twentieth century is a phenomenon that has received inadequate scholarly attention. What is even less well known is the emerging expression of a distinct Dalit identity and consciousness that predated the current Dalit movement which reflects the leadership of Dr B R Ambedkar.

The foregoing discussion on various spheres of South Indian Dalit life, including their socio-political conditions and their culture, reveals that they were socially segregated, economically exploited and politically marginalized. There are various theories seeking to postulate the origin of the social practice called untouchability. Sociologists and social historians often incorporate Dalits into the Hindu social order and consequently fail to perceive the inherent reality in the sphere of its culture and intricate social life. The nineteenth century social reform movement regarded education as a means of enlightenment, but the progress achieved was limited to the 'twice born'. Feeble efforts were made to extend education to untouchables but this did not yield desired results.

The scheme of reforms were introduced through 1909 (Minto-Morely) reforms and 1919 (Montagu-Chemsford) reforms, the latter included separate electorate for Muslims. These reforms began to provide some representation of Indians in the executive councils to bring about more effective popular representation and to Dalits they came as a blessing in disguise. The proposal for introduction of separate electorates into the Indian political arena, the Dalit numbers became crucial. Dalits became objects of solicitude for various reformers who scrambled to show concern for Dalits, who in the process were being endowed with the status of marginalized Hindus. This Hinduisation of Dalits by the politically motivated caste-Hindus were also in reaction to Christian intrusion to ameliorate and to proselytize them. The schools founded and maintained by the colonial governmental agencies emerged as another institutional form of emphasizing the underprivileged and unequal status of Dalits.

The attitude of missionaries towards untouchables albeit their agenda of proselytization was marked by humanism, a zeal to ameliorate their conditions and to satisfy their immediate needs. Such an attitude was pathetically lacking in the efforts made by many caste-Hindu reformers. The work of Christian missionaries transformed the Dalit lives in three significant ways. First, those who were converted to Christianity got a new standing which was certainly better than suffering under Hinduism. Second, those who still remained within the fold of Hinduism began to realize that the dogma of untouchability, which for so long had justified their miserable condition, was false and not considered by the missionaries. Third, perhaps more important, the work of missionaries stimulated the Hindu socio-religious reformers to bring about the social education of the Dalits so as to reform Hinduism and to prevent them from embracing other religions like Christianity and Islam. It was mainly due to the activities of missionaries that the Dalits of Andhra became aware of their social rights and realized the inequality legitimized by Hinduism.

The initiative of Dalit Intelligentsia to elevate the community was exceptional. They strove to educate the Dalit masses, establish educational institutions, manage hostels for Dalit pupils, sometimes even resorting to begging in order to feed the resident students. The first generation of educated Dalits became either ideologues of or activists in the Dalit movement. They in turn made efforts to educate others and perceived education as the most effective path to break the strongly embedded caste hegemony. In their writings in journals, pamphlets, poetry, novels and political address they ridiculed the efforts made by the caste-Hindu reformers and exhorted the Dalits to realize the utility of education.

The missionary activities in establishing schools, training colleges-without any rigidity of caste, creed and sex-worked as valuable agencies in changing the status of the Dalits. With the initiation of missionary work for the upliftment of the Dalits, the British government also realized the importance of education for these communities. Antagonistic issues confronted the colonial government-it realised the necessity to exercise caution concerning the amelioration of the Dalits. It was apprehensive of the fact that stringent enforcement of educational rights for the Dalits would deprive the colonial government of the cooperation of caste Hindus. On the other side, it desired to project a distinction between British ideals of justice and equality and Hindu inegalitarian and unjust values. The government could pursue a bold policy only in the beginning of the twentieth century. The Government of Madras Bill on education, passed in 1895, is a watershed in Dalit educational history for the government proclaimed that education could not be refused to anyone on the basis of caste. Intense opposition and boycott on the part of caste-Hindus followed this to the admission of students from the depressed classes in public schools. However, government initiative in Dalit education encouraged the missionaries and philanthropic groups to enlarge their sphere of activity.

The establishment of a Labour Department in the Madras presidency for the upliftment of the untouchables led to tremendous changes in Andhra society. It was the first original and systematic effort by the government to elevate the condition of Dalits with emphasis on education. The Labour Department schools cropped up in various parts of South India and the literacy ratio of depressed classes saw a considerable increase.

Despite the special measures the growth of Dalit education was very slow compared to the literacy level of general population. In addition to caste-Hindu prejudices and their non-cooperation with colonial policies, the socio economic conditions of the Dalits were also responsible for the lack of their educational growth, along with the fear of oppression by the caste-Hindus. The maximum dropout rate reveals that poverty was major impediment; Dalits withdrew their children during the agricultural season and there was a lack of availability of immediate economic incentives as well. Besides the overt discrimination, most of the Dalits lacked money for tuition and a suitable environment to pursue education. Thus, economic backwardness, social disabilities and consequent fear of oppression by the caste-Hindus were impediments in the progress of Dalit education in Andhra.

The enlightened section of caste-Hindus took up no concrete and collective social movement for education of the Dalits. Thus, Dalits did not receive much support from the non-Dalit sections. The high-caste women were recognized as an entity to be reformed and educated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As a result many high-caste Hindu women achieved high status in political, educational and professional field. But the large mass of Dalit women remained uneducated and excluded from the schooling system during the period under study.

The available sources reveal that education did not do much to elevate the economic status of Dalits. Even the census reports do not indicate their professional mobility in any field. However, it produced the intelligentsia, social reformers, politicians and writers who in turn fought for Dalit rights. Perhaps the most potential benefit of education was the consciousness generated among the Dalits, who then could construct an identity of their own. The whole gamut of Dalit identity is the product of a long historical process, rooted in a growing collective conscience.

In the traditional social structure, politics as an avenue was neither open to nor considered worthy of Dalit participation. The Dalits were not only untouchables in social and religious matters but also in the political sphere. The establishment and consolidation of British rule gradually and radically changed the socio-political and administrative ecology of India. The Dalits found new opportunities in the changing political structures. Due to the increasing importance of political arithmetic during this phase the politically conscious caste Hindus comprehended the urgency of accommodating and incorporating the Dalits into Hindus to show their strength in comparison to their counterparts, i.e. the Muslims, to gain more representation. Consequently accommodation of the Dalits into a compartmentalized Hindu social structure witnessed the maneuvering of census reports that culminated in the population boom of 1931.

As the importance of Dalit numbers assumed political significance, Dalits in turn were politicized and were actively involved in various anti-colonial and self-help movements. They participated in the Congress-led movement of 1930s and 40s. In the process of the Communists organizing the rural poor and landless agricultural labourers, the Dalits also became part of the Communist movement of 1930s and 40s. Many Dalits were attracted to Marxism and socialism and became active participants of Labour Protection Leagues (Coolie Rakshana Samitis). In the Communist-led agricultural labour strikes of 1935-37, Dalits of coastal Andhra region participated extensively. During the Second World War too, they participated in extensive hunger marches organized by the Communists throughout Andhra. In all these Communist originated activities Dalits formed the bulk of their cadre base but were never allowed to occupy any leadership position.

The leaders of the non-Brahman movement projected themselves as the sole representatives of the all South Indian non-Brahmans in order to win the support of the Dalits and seek alliance with them to compete with the Brahmins. They tried to draw the Dalits into their fold and disassociate them from the Congress. The false concern of the non-Brahmins was exposed once they came into power in 1921 and finally the Dalits complained to the governor of Madras that the Justice party had not done justice.

Despite the participation of Dalits in the national and other allied movements of the period under study, none of the works on these subjects neither acknowledge their role nor examine their participation. The Dalits were used, abused and politicized by all political parties Congress, Communists and non-Brahmins. They all realized and recognized the importance of the Dalits and their numbers to strengthen themselves as against their opponents and mobilized them only for their vested interests. The positive aspect of these political mobilizations of the Dalits was a strengthened consciousness among Dalit masses. But they were disillusioned with caste-Hindu political parties. Dalits did not merge with any of the caste-Hindu entities and instead endeavoured to establish themselves as a distinct group with separate political identity, which grew into an independent Dalit movement in Andhra.

The Dalit leaders of Andhra were initially engaged in generating consciousness among the masses and mobilizing them for their political rights through techniques of petition, memorandum and public speeches. An examination of the historical process of the evolution of Dalit consciousness and shared identity reveals a significant break with the earlier reform movements both in terms of ideology and organization. In a sense, the rise and growth of the Adi-Andhra Mahasabha and other grassroot level Dalit organizations represented the widening of the principles of the broader non/anti-Brahman movement and its social radicalism during the period under study. The Dalit movement mounted a serious attack on the notion of caste hierarchy and sought to create a popular unity based on nationalism and humanism.

The Dalit movement in Andhra and Hyderabad also expressed the new found among the lower communities and their determination to struggle to escape the untouchability and hereditary fixation of occupation and appropriate the emerging form of newer power structures. Dalits fought ideologically for structural changes in the society, and as a transformative value oriented movement, their movement sought to challenge the established in egalitarian social order, the value system and the patterns of dominance. Liberation ideology formulated by the Dalit intellectuals in Andhra was aimed at the destruction of caste hierarchy, discrimination and untouchability. the basic thrust of the movement was to critique the idolology of Brahmanical Hinduism and counter the socio-cultural hegemony of the so-called upper castes. The last decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century can be categorized as pre-Ambedkarian era of the Dalit movement in India. These decades witnessed the strong roots of dissent and protest which were laid down by several Dalit thinkers. The harbingers of such local organizing encountered and utilized the beneficial outlets of colonial measures, especially education. They can be seen as parallel to the social reform

movements. Most importantly, Mahatma, Phule largely influenced this parallel non-Brahman movement. Thus, throughout South India one can notice local movements organized by the educated, conscious and assertive Dalit groups. In Andhra, the Adi-Andhra movement was led by Bhagya Reddi Varma, in the northern part of Karnataka (then in the Bombay presidency) by Devaraya Ingle, and in Tamil Nadu by Ayoti Das and others. The new rebellious consciousness generated by these Dalit leaders and large mass organizing found the basis of a large scale mobilization on an all India basis during the Ambedkarian era.

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the Dalit movement in Andhra as an organized, assertive and conscious factor in Dalit socio political development, despite certain limitations, i.e. the inability to retain a strong united movement for a considerable period. Although often dependent upon caste Hindu political organizations, the Dalit movement did maintain its own identity. It remained as the soul representative of the Dalit masses. Nevertheless, the foundations of Dalit organizations in Hyderabad and Andhra influenced each other and strengthened the Dalit movement. Though the seeds of 'Adi' ideology germinated in Hyderabad region, they became a strong force in the coastal Andhra region with a conference in 1917 known as first Adi-Andhra Conference. The Adi-Andhra movement predated the Gandhian programme of Harijan upliftment, which sought to articulate their suffering and misery within the context of the growing mass movements of India's struggle for independence and the anti-colonial struggle. Although the caste-Hindu nationalist intelligentsia sympathized with the Dalit masses in terms of suggesting certain ameliorative measures; terms of bringing awareness with their sympathetic and humanitarian literature, the radical emancipatory ideology was formulated and articulated only by Dalits themselves, independent of the nationalist discourse. The Dalit intellectual articulation succeeded, to a very large extent, in exposing the inadequacies, limitations and lacunas in the Gandhian paradigm of Dalit liberation. It also forcefully contested the hegemonic nationalist ideology propounded by the caste-Hindu intelligentsia. In a sense, the Dalit question in Andhra during the colonial period, posed certain fundamental issues to nationalist ideology and its elite ideologues and compelled them to come to terms with the emerging social reality. In other words, the Dalit question was an important presence in the nationalist agenda of liberation during the first half of the twentieth century.

The Dalit intelligentsia perceived the existing structural basis that perpetuated human exploitation and analysed the conditions that made the unconscious conscious. They tried all the possible ways and methods to educate, organize and unite the Dalit masses. They organized associations, conferences, established schools and hostels and enlightened the masses to challenge their ideological legitimization of their low status. The emergence of Dalit journalism played a crucial role in highlighting caste-Hindu atrocities on Dalits, ventilating their grievances, and in generating awareness among Dalit masses.

The counter-cultural movement and ideology propagated by the Dalit intellectuals contained a critique and negation of Brahmanical Hinduism, undermining the cultural traditions of caste-Hindus. These aspects were represented in the writings of Dalit intellectuals including Boyi Beemanna, Kusuma Dharmanna, Jala Rangaswamy, Nakka China Venkayya, Gurram Jashua, Bhagya Reddi Varma and many others.

As a result of the anti-caste radicalism along with a growing consciousness of Dalits across the regions, 'Adi' ideological identity became a major discourse in 1920s and 30s. With a strong peasant movement in Andhra and developing resistance to the Nizam's autocracy in Hyderabad witnessed the beginning of the weakening of the Dalit movement in Andhra. The incorporation of the Dalits into the Congress fold through the Gandhian model of Harijan Sevak Sangh began in 1932, and its increasing influence led to a gradual setback to the Adi-Andhra movement in coastal Andhra region. Both, the Congress and the Communist opposition, helped to create anti-Ambedkarite atmosphere and factionalism among the autonomous Dalit movement by 1940s. After the death of Bhagya Reddi Varma in 1939, both Hyderabad and Andhra regions Dalit movement suffered due to lack of effective leadership. This provided an opportunity to caste-Hindus to absorb them into their respective parties, providing meagre concessions, and it also succeeded in creating factions among Dalits. Their reabsorption into Hinduism with a caste-Hindu leadership with *Harijan* identity led to the demoralization and weakening of a radical Dalit movement in Andhra.

The growing movement of Dalits for dignity and equality with the construction of a positive self-identity necessitated a serious reflection on the problem of caste and on the on-going socio-political movements of the region as a whole. In the process of creating their own identity, they have not only deconstructed the articulated labels by caste-Hindus from time to time, but also reconstructed their own identity. Their fight for liberation and the quest for identity still lies ahead. In spite of the changes in the twentieth century in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres during the fifty years of India's 'Independence' not much has changed the lives of the Dalits especially in the rural area<sup>156\*</sup>

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