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STATEMENT

**concerning the state of education of the Depressed Classes in
the Bombay Presidency**

submitted by

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to the

Indian Statutory Commission

29th May 1928

Damodar Hall
Parel, Bombay-12
INDIA

***N.B.*—In this statement the expressions Backward Classes and
Depressed Classes are used interchangeably.**

I. From 1813 to 1854

1. Education under the British Rule in the Bombay Presidency must be said to have begun with the foundation of the Bombay Education Society in 1815. That Society did not continue its efforts to the education of European children. Native boys were encouraged to attend its schools at Surat and Thana and at the beginning of 1820 four separate schools for natives had been opened in Bombay and were attended by nearly 250 pupils. In August of the same year further measures were taken to extend native education. A special committee was appointed by the Society to prepare school-books in the Vernacular Languages and to aid or establish vernacular schools. But the wide scope of the undertaking was soon seen to be beyond the aims of a society established mainly for the education of the poor; and in 1822 the committee became a separate corporation, thenceforth known as the *Bombay Native School-book and School Society* which name was in 1827 changed into the *Bombay Native Education Society*. The Honourable Mount Stuart Elphinstone was the new Society's first President. The Vice-Presidents were the Chief Justice and the three members of the Executive Council of the Bombay Government; and the managing committee consisted of twelve European and twelve native gentlemen, with Captain George Jervis R.E., and Mr. Sadashiv Kashinath Chhatre as Secretaries. The Society started its work with a grant of Rs. 600 per mensem from the Government. As early as 1825 the Government of Bombay had along side begun to establish primary schools at its own expense in district towns and had placed them under the control of the Collectors. To co-ordinate the activities of these two independent bodies there was established in 1840 a Board of Education composed of six members, 3 appointed by Government and 3 appointed by the Native Education Society. This Board was in charge of the Education Department till the appointment of the Director of Public Instruction in 1855.

2. On the 1st March 1855 when the Board was dissolved there were in the Presidency of Bombay under the charge of the Board 15 English Colleges and schools having 2,850 students on the Register and 256 vernacular schools having 18,888 students on the Register. In the same report it is stated by the Board :

“24. In August [1855] we received a petition from certain inhabitants of Ahmednagar, praying for the establishment of a *school for the education of low castes* and engaging to defray one-half the teacher's salary, in accordance with the terms of the late rules. A school room had been built by the petitioners and the attendance of boys was calculated at thirty. The establishment of such a school was opposed to the prejudices of the richer and higher castes, and there was some difficulty in procuring a teacher on a moderate salary, but as the application was made in strict accordance with the conditions stated in the late notification on the subject, we readily complied with the request, and the school was opened in November. *We merely mention the subject, as it is the first occasion on which we have established a school for these castes.*” (Italics not in the original).

3. The statement by the Board that this was the first occasion when a school for the low castes was established in this Presidency naturally raises the question what was the policy of the British Government in the matter of the education of the Depressed classes before 1855 ? To answer this question it is necessary to have a peep into the history of the educational policy of the British Government in this Presidency from 1813 to 1854. It must be admitted that under the Peshwa's Government the Depressed classes were entirely out of the pale of education. They did not find a place in any idea of state education, for the simple reason that the Peshwa's Government was a theocracy based upon the canons of Manu, according to which the Shudras and Atishudras (classes corresponding to the Backward classes of the Education Department), if they had any right to life, liberty and property, had certainly no right to education. The Depressed classes who were labouring under such disabilities naturally breathed a sigh of relief at the downfall of this hated theocracy. Great hopes were raised among the Depressed classes by the advent of the British Rule. Firstly because it; was a democracy which they thought believed in the principle of one man one value, be that man high or low. If it remained true to its tenets, such a democracy was a complete contrast to the theocracy of the Peshwa. Secondly the Depressed classes had helped the British to conquer the country and naturally believed that the British would in their turn help them, if not in a special degree, at least equally with the rest.

4. The British were for a long time silent on the question of promoting education among the native population. Although individuals of high official rank in the administration of India were not altogether oblivious of the moral duty and administrative necessity of spreading knowledge among the people of India, no public declaration of the responsibility of the state in that behalf was made till the year 1813 when by section 43 of the Statute 53 George IV chap. 155, Parliament laid down that " one of the surplus revenues of India a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of British territories in India etc." This statutory provision however did not result in any systematic effort to place the education of the natives upon a firm and organized footing till 1823. For the Court of Directors in their despatch dated 3rd June 1814 to the Governor-General in Council, in prescribing the mode of giving effect to section 43 of the statute of 1813 directed that the promotion of Sanskrit learning amongst the Hindus would fulfil the purposes which Parliament had in mind. But what a disappointment to the Depressed classes there was when systematic efforts to place the education of the natives upon a firm and organized footing came to be made !! For the *British Government deliberately ruled that education was to be a preserve for the higher classes*. Lest this fact should be regarded as a fiction, attention is

invited to the following extracts from the Report of the Board of Education of the Bombay Presidency for the year 1850-51 :

“Paragraph 5th. Thus the Board of Education at this Presidency having
System adopted by laid down a scheme of education, in accordance
the Board based on with the leading injunctions of Despatches from the
the views of Court Honourable Court, and founded not more on the
of Directors. opinions of men who had been attentively considering
 the progress of education in India, such as the Pearl of Auckland, Major
 Candy and others, than on the openly declared wants of the most intelligent
 of the natives themselves, the Board, we repeat, were informed by your
 Lordship’s predecessor in Council that the process must be reversed.

“Paragraph 8th. Equally wise, if we may be permitted, to use the expression,
Views of Court on do the indications of the Hon. Court appear to
the expediency of us to be as to the quarters to which Government
educating the upper education should be directed, and specially with
classes. the very limited funds which are available for this
 branch of expenditure. The Hon. Court write to Madras in 1830 as follows
 : *‘The improvements in education, however, which most effectively contribute
 to elevate the moral and intellectual condition of a people, are those which
 concern the education of the higher classes—of the persons possessing leisure
 and natural influence over the minds of their countrymen. By raising the
 standard of instruction amongst these classes you would eventually produce
 a much greater and more beneficial change in the ideas and the feelings
 of the community than you can hope to produce by acting directly on the
 more numerous class. You are, moreover, acquainted with our anxious
 desire to have at our disposal a body of natives qualified by their habits
 and acquirements to take a larger share and occupy higher situations in
 the civil administration of their country than has been hitherto the practice
 under our Indian Government.’* Nevertheless, we hear on so many sides,
 even from those who ought to know better of the necessity and facility for
 educating the masses for diffusing the arts and sciences of Europe amongst
 the hundred or the hundred and forty millions (for number count for next
 to nothing) in India, and other like generalities indicating cloudy notions
 on the subject, that a bystander might almost be tempted to suppose the
 whole resources of the State were at the command of Educational Boards,
 instead of a modest pittance inferior in amount to sums devoted to single
 establishment in England.

“Paragraph 9th. The arguments adduced in the few last paragraphs appear
Retrospect to show that a careful examination of the real facts,
of Principal and an analysis of the principal phenomena which
Educational facts have displayed themselves in the course of educational
during the last ten proceedings in the Presidency, would not be without
years necessary. their uses, if made with sufficient industry and
 impartiality to ensure confidence, and with a firm determination to steer clear of
 bootless controversy and all speculative inquiries. The present epoch, also, appears

especially to command itself for such a retrospect, as in 1850 the second decennial period commenced, during which the Schools of the Presidency have come under exclusive control of a Government Board ; and it is obvious that as a considerable body of information ought now to have been accumulated, and as the majority of the present members have had seats at the Board during the greater portion of that time, they would fain hope that by recording their experience, they may shed some light on certain obscure but highly interesting questions, which are certain to arise from time to time before their successors at this Board.

A uniform system developing itself spontaneously both in Bengal and Bombay. Paragraph 10th. We now proceed to give as minute a detail as comports with our limits, of the principal educational facts which have forced themselves upon our notice, and we think it will clearly appear, when those facts are duly appreciated, that many of the disputed questions, which arise in the Indian field of education, will be seen to solve themselves, and that a system is generally evolving itself in other Presidencies as well as in Bombay, which is well suited to the circumstances of the country, and which, as the growth of spontaneous development, denotes that general causes are at work to call it forth.

Statistics of education in Bombay. Paragraph 11th. In the return on the following page, a comparative view is given of the number of schools and of pupils receiving education under Government at the period when the Establishments first came under the control of the Board, in 1840 and in April 1850. It shows, in the latter period, an addition of four English and 83 vernacular schools and a general increase in pupils of above a hundred per cent. The total number receiving Government education at present is 12,712 in the following proportions : —

English Education	...	...	1,699
Vernacular Education	...	...	10,730
Sanskrit Education	...	...	283

[comparison from tables : in 1840 there were 97 schools; number of pupils 5,491. In 1850, number of schools 185 and number of pupils 12,712.]

Same subject. Paragraph 12th. But the population of the Bombay Presidency is now calculated by the most competent authorities to amount to ten millions. Now on applying the rule of statistics deduced from the Prussian census as noticed in a former Report, (1842-43, page 26) a population of this amount will be found to containing fewer than 900,000 male children between the ages of seven and fourteen years and of course, fit subjects for school. It follows, therefore, that Government at this Presidency has not been able to afford an opportunity for obtaining education to more than one out of every sixty-nine boys of the proper school going age.

“Paragraph 13th. Further, it is admitted that education afforded in the Vernacular School is far from efficient. A great portion of the strictures of Mr. Willoughby’s Minute is directed against the defective character and insignificant results of these schools. The Board, not only acknowledge this fact, but they have been studious to point it out prominently for many years past, and indeed, in the opinion of some competent observers, have drawn too unfavourable a picture of the vernacular schools. But what are the obvious remedies for the defects indicated ? Mr. Willoughby describes them very correctly : ‘a superior class of school masters, normal schools, more efficient supervision, additions to the vernacular literature.’ These are all subjects, however, which have occupied the attention of the Board for many years past, and as to which not a step can be made in advance without additional expenditure. But we are given to understand from the letter of your Lordship in Council that’ it is not probable the Government will have the power, for a considerable time to come, to afford the Board additional pecuniary assistance.’

Conclusion that no means exist for educating the masses.

“Paragraph 14th. It results most clearly from these facts, that if sufficient funds are not available to put 175 vernacular schools into a due state of organisation, and to give a sound elementary education to 10,730 boys, all question as to educating ‘the masses’, the ‘hundred and forty millions’, the 900,000 boys in the Bombay Presidency disappears. The object is not one that can be attained or approximated to by Government; and Educational Boards ought not to allow themselves to be distracted from a more limited practical field of action by the visionary speculations of uninformed benevolence.

Views of Court of Directors as to the best method of operation with limited means.

“Paragraph 15th. The Hon. Court appear to have always kept the conclusion which has been arrived at in the last paragraph very distinctly in view. Perceiving that their educational efforts to improve the people could only be attempted on a very small scale, they have deemed it necessary to point out to their different Governments the true method of producing the greatest results with limited means. We have already cited their injunctions to the Madras Government on this head (Para 7) and their despatch to the Government on the same date enforces sentiment of exactly the same import : *‘It is our anxious desire to afford to the higher classes of the Natives of India the means of instruction in European sciences and of access to the literature of civilized Europe. The character which may be given to the classes possessed of leisure and natural influence ultimately determines that of the whole people.’*

Inquiry as to upper classes of India.

“Paragraph 16th. It being then demonstrated that only a small section of the population can be brought under the influence of Government education in India, and *the Hon’ble court having in effect decided that this section should consist of the ‘upper classes’, it is essential to ascertain who these latter*

consist of. Here it is absolutely necessary for the European inquirer to divest his mind of European analogies which so often insinuate themselves almost involuntarily into Anglo-Indian speculations. Circumstances in Europe, especially in England have drawn a marked line, perceptible in manners, wealth, political and social influence, between the upper and lower classes. No such line is to be found in India, where, as under all despotisms, the Will of the Prince was all that was requisite to raise men from the humblest condition in life to the highest station and where, consequently great uniformity in manners has always prevailed. A beggar, according to English notions, is fit only for the stocks or compulsory labour in the work-house ; in India he is a respectable character and worthy indeed of veneration according to the Brahminical theory, which considers him as one who has renounced all the pleasures and temptations of life for the cultivation of learning and undisturbed meditation on the Deity.

“Paragraph 17th. The classes who may be deemed to be influential and
Upper classes in India. in so far the upper classes in India, may be ranked as follows :

1st. The landowners and jaghirdars, representatives of the former feudatories and persons in authorities under Native powers, and who may be termed the Soldier class.

2nd. Those who have acquired wealth in trade or, commerce or the commercial class.

3rd. The higher *employees* of Government.

4th. Brahmins, with whom may be associated though at long interval those of higher castes of writers who live by the pen such as Parbhus and Shenvis in Bombay, Kayasthas in Bengal, provided they acquire a position either in learning or station.

“Paragraph 18th. Of these four classes incomparably the most influential, **Brahmins the most influential.** the most *numerous*, and on the whole easiest to be worked on by the Government, are the latter. It is a well-recognized fact throughout India that the ancient Jaghirdars or Soldiers class are daily deteriorating under our rule. Their old occupation is gone, and they have shown no disposition or capacity to adopt new one, or to cultivate the art of peace. In the Presidency the attempts of Mr. Elphinstone and his successors to bolster up a landed aristocracy have lamentably failed; and complete discomfiture has hitherto attended all endeavours to open up a path to distinction through civil honours and education to a race to whom nothing appears to excite but vain pomp and extravagance, of the reminiscences of their ancestors’ successful raids in the plains of Hindusthan, nor among the commercial classes with a few exceptions, is there much greater opening for the influences of superior education. As in all countries, but more in India than in the higher civilized ones of Europe, the young merchants or trader must quit his school at an early period in order to obtain the special education needful for his

vocation in the market or the counting house. Lastly the employees of the state, though they possess a great influence over the large numbers who come in contact with Government, have no influence, whatever, with the still larger numbers who are independent of Government; and, indeed, they appear to inspire the same sort of distrust with the public as Government functionaries in England, who are often considered by the vulgar as mere hacks of the state.

“Paragraph 19th. *The above analysis, though it may appear lengthy, is nevertheless, indispensable, for certain important conclusions deducible from it. First, it demonstrates that the influential class whom the Government are able to avail themselves of in diffusing the seeds of education are the Brahmins and other high castes Brahmannis proximi.* But the Brahmins and these high castes are for the most part wretchedly poor; and in many parts of India the term Brahmin is synonymous with ‘beggar’.

“Paragraph 20th. We may see then, how hopeless it is to enforce what your Lordship in Council so strongly enjoined upon us in your letter of the 24th April 1850,—what appears, *prima facie*, so plausible and proper in itself—what in fact, the Board themselves have very often attempted, viz. the strict limitation of superior education ‘to the wealthy, who can afford to pay for it, and to youths of unusual intelligence.’ The invariable answer the Board has received when attempting to enforce a view like this, has been, that the wealthy are wholly indifferent to. superior education and that no means of ascertaining unusual intelligence amongst the poor exist until their faculties have been tested and developed by school training. A small section from among the wealthier classes is no doubt displaying itself, by whom the advantages of superior education are recognized, it appears larger in Bengal, where education has been longer fostered by Government, than in Bombay, and we think it inevitable that such class must increase, with the experience that superior attainments lead to distinction, and to close intercourse with Europeans on the footing of social equality; but as a general proposition at the present moment, we are satisfied that the academical instructions in the arts and sciences of Europe cannot be based on the contributions either of students or of funds from the opulent classes of India.

“Paragraph 21st. *The practical conclusion to be drawn from these facts which years of experience have forced upon our notice, is that a very wide door should be opened to the children of the poor higher castes, who are willing to receive education at our hands.* But here, again, another embarrassing question arises, which it is right to notice : *If the children of the poor are admitted freely to Government Institutions what is there to prevent all the despised castes—the Dheds, Mhars etc., from flocking in numbers to their walls ?*

Social Prejudices of the Hindus. “Paragraph 22nd. *There is a little doubt that if a class of these latter were to be formed in Bombay they might be trained, under the guiding influence of such Professors and masters as are in the service of the Board, into men of superior intelligence to any in the community; and with such qualifications, as they would that possess, there would be nothing to prevent their aspiring to the highest offices open to Native talent—to Judgeships, the Grand Jury, Her Majesty’s Commission of the Peace. Many benevolent men think it is the height of illiberality and weakness in the British Government to succumb to the prejudices which such appointments would excite into disgust amongst the Hindu community, and that an open attack should be made upon the barriers of caste.*

Wise observations of the Hon Mount Stuart Elphinstone cited. “Paragraph 23rd. *But here the wise reflections of Mr. Elphinstone, the most liberal and large-minded administrator who has appeared on this side of India, point out the true rule of action. ‘It is observed,’ he says, ‘that the missionaries find the lowest castes the best pupils; but we must be careful how we offer any special encouragement to men of that description; they are not only the most despised, but among the least numerous of the great divisions of society and it is to be feared that if our system of education first took root among them, it would never spread further, and we might find ourselves at the head of a new class, superior to the rest in useful knowledge, but hated and despised by the castes to whom these new attainments would always induce us to prefer them. Such a state of things would be desirable, if we were contented to rest our power on our army or on the attachment of a part of the population but is inconsistent with every attempt to found it on a more extended basis.’ ”*

5. It is, therefore, obvious that if no schools were opened for Depressed classes before 1855 in the Bombay, Presidency it was because the deliberate policy of the British Government was to restrict the benefits of education to the poor higher castes chiefly the Brahmins. Whether this policy was right or wrong is another matter. *The fact, however, is that during this period the Depressed classes were not allowed by Government to share in the blessings of education.*

II. From 1854 to 1882

6. In their Despatch No. 49 of 19th July 1854 the Court of Directors observed : “Our attention should now be directed to a consideration, if possible, still more important, and one which has hitherto, we are bound to admit, too much neglected, namely, how useful and practical knowledge, suited to every station in life, may be best conveyed to the great mass of the people who are utterly incapable of obtaining any education worthy of the name by their own efforts ; and we desire to see the active measures of Government more especially directed, for the future, to this object, for

the attainment of which we are ready to sanction a considerable increase of expenditure." This despatch is very rightly regarded as having laid the foundation of mass education in this country. The results of this policy were first examined by the Hunter Commission on Indian Education in 1882. The following figures show what was achieved during the period of 28 years :

Primary Education

1881-82

			No. of scholars at school	Per cent on total
Christians	..	..	1,521	.49
Brahmins	..	..	63,071	20.17
Other Hindus	..	..	2,02,345	64.69
Mohamedans	..	..	39,231	12.54
Parsis	..	..	3,517	1.12
Aboriginal and Hill Tribes	..	..	2,713	.87
Low caste Hindus	..	..	2,862	.87
Jews and others	..	..	373	.12

Secondary Education

1881-82

			Middle Schools		High Schools	
			No of scholars at schools	P.c. on total No. of scholars	No. of scholars at schools	P.c. on total No. of scholars
Christians	..	..	1,429	12.06	111	2.26
Brahmins	..	..	3,639	30.70	1,978	40.29
Other Hindus	Cultivators		624	5.26	140	2.85
	Low castes		17	.14	..	..
	Other castes		3,823	32.25	1,573	32.04
Mohamedans	..	..	687	5.80	100	2.04
Parsis	..	..	1,526	12.87	965	19.66
Aboriginal and Hill Tribes	..	..	6	.05	..	..
Others (including Jews etc.)	..	..	103	.87	92	.86

Collegiate Education

1881-82

			No. of scholars	P. c. on total No. of scholars
Christians	..	..	14	3
Brahmins	..	..	241	50
Other Hindus	Cultivators		5	1
	Low castes		0	0
	Other castes		103	21.3
Mohamedans	..	..	7	1.5
Parsis	..	..	108	21.5
Aboriginal and Hill Tribes	..	..	0	0
Others (including Jews etc.)	..	..	2	0.4

8. The Despatch of the Court of Directors of the year 1854, for the first time recognized after a lapse of full 40 years that the duty of the state was to undertake the education of the great mass of the people. But there were still die-hards who had great misgivings as to the wisdom of the principle laid down in that Despatch and who were agitating for a reversal of that policy. The fears of dire consequences to the British Rule arising from elevating the Backward classes above their station in life still haunted men like Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control who in a letter to the Chairman of the Court of Directors dated 28th of April 1858 did not hesitate to strike the following note of caution :

* * * * *

“Paragraph 12. This result would not tend to create a healthy state of society. Our Government could not offer to the most educated of the lower class the means of gratifying the ambition we should excite.

“Paragraph 14. Education and civilization may descend from the higher to the inferior classes, and so communicated may impart new vigour to the community, but they will never ascend from the lower classes to those above them; they can only, if imparted solely to the lower classes, lead to general convulsion, of which foreigners would be the first victims.

“Paragraph 15. *If we desire to diffuse education, let us endeavour to give it to the higher classes first.*”

“Paragraph 16. These are but two ways of doing this — by founding colleges to which the higher classes alone should be admitted, and by giving in the reorganization of the army, commissions at once, to such sons of native gentlemen as may be competent to receive them.”

9. This antipathy of the European officers towards the untouchable classes was finally corrected by the Secretary of State for India in his despatch of 1859 which again reiterated the responsibility of Government for mass education.

10. Singular as it may appear *the recognition by the Government of its responsibility for mass education conferred upon the Depressed classes a benefit only in name*. For, although, schools were opened for the masses in the various districts the question of the admission of the Depressed classes to these schools had yet to be solved. Such a question did practically arise in the year 1856. But the decision of the Government was not favourable to the Depressed classes as will be seen from the following extracts from the Report of the Director of Public Instruction for the Bombay Presidency for the year 1856-57 :

“Paragraph 177. *Schools for Low castes and wild tribes*. There are no low class schools established directly by Government, and the supreme Government has expressed disapproval of such schools. The ordinary schools entirely supported by the state are in theory open indifferently to all castes. In the course of observation of my Report 1855-56 the Government issued the following order : “*The only case as yet brought before Government in which the question as to the admissions of the pupils of the lowest class to Government schools has been raised, was that of a Mahar boy on whose behalf a petition was submitted in June 1856, complaining that though willing to pay the usual schooling fee, he had been denied admission to the Dharwar Government School.*”

“On this occasion Government felt a great practical difficulty which attended the adjudication of a question in which their convictions of abstract right would be in antagonism to the general feelings of the mass of the natives, for whose enlightenment, to the greatest possible extent, the Government Educational Department has been established; and *it was decided as will appear from the Resolution* passed at the time with some hesitation, that it would not be right for the sake of a single individual, the only Mahar*

*Text of the Resolution passed by Government on the 21st July 1856 :—

1. The question discussed in the correspondence is one of very great practical difficulty.
2. There can be no doubt that the Mahar petitioner has abstract justice on his side ; and Government trust that the prejudices which at present prevent him from availing himself of existing means of education in Dharwar may be ere long removed.
3. But Government are obliged to keep in mind that to interfere with the prejudices of ages in a summary manner, for the sake of one or few individuals, would probably do a great damage to the cause of education. The disadvantage under which the petitioner labours is not one which has originated with this Government, and it is one which Government summarily remove by interfering in his favour, as he begs them to do.

who had ever come forward to beg for admission into a school attended only by the pupils of castes and to force him into association with them, at the probable risk of making the institution practically useless for the great mass of natives."

The proceedings of the Government of Bombay in this matter were noticed in the following terms by the Government of India, in a letter No. 111 dated 23rd January 1857 :

"Governor-General in Council thinks it very probable that the Bombay Government has acted wisely in the matter; but it desires me (i.e. Secretary to the Government of India) to say that the boy would not have been refused admission to any Government school in the Presidency of Bengal."*

On receipt of this letter it was resolved that Government of India should be assured that this Government would be most unwilling to neglect any means of rendering the schools throughout the country less exclusive than they practically are in the matter of caste; provided this could be effected without bringing the Government school into general disrepute, and thus destroying their efficiency and defeating the object for which they were intended. It was also determined that an enquiry should be made as to the practical working of the principle which was said to prevail in Bengal as affecting the general usefulness of the Government schools.

11. Inquiries as to the practice prevalent in Bengal revealed that the Bengal authorities contrary to the supposition of the Government of India had left it to the District Committees of Instructions to grant or refuse admittance to candidates of inferior castes, with reference to the state of local native feeling in each case. *The result of this was that the Depressed classes were left in the cold because the touchable classes would not let them sit at the fire of knowledge which the Government had lit up in the interest of all its subjects.*

12. Under these circumstances mass education as contemplated by the Despatch of 1854 was in practice available to all except the Depressed classes. The lifting of the ban on the education of the Depressed classes in 1854 was a nominal affair only. For, although the principle of non-exclusion was affirmed by the Government its practical operation was very carefully avoided; so that we can say that the ban was continued in practice as before.

The only agency which could take charge of the education of the Depressed classes was that of Christian missionaries. In the words of Mount Stuart Elphinstone they "found the lowest classes the best peoples". But the

*In a Despatch No. 58 dated April 28th, 1858 the Court of Directors passed the following order on this subject: "The educational institutions of Government are intended by us to be open to all classes, and we cannot depart from a principle which is essentially sound, and the maintenance of which is of first importance. It is not impossible that, in some cases, the enforcement of the principle may be followed by a withdrawal of a portion of the scholars; but it is sufficient to remark that those persons who object to its practical enforcement will be at liberty to withhold their contributions and apply their funds to the formation of schools on a different basis."

Government was pledged to religious neutrality and could not see its way to support missionary schools, so much so that no pecuniary grant was made in this Presidency to any missionary school in the early part of this period although the Educational Despatch of 1854 had not prohibited the giving of grants to missionary schools.

13. To find a way out of this *impasse* the Government adopted two measures : (1) The institution of separate Government schools for low caste boys, and (2) The extension of special encouragement to missionary bodies to undertake their education by relaxing the rules of grants-in-aid. Had these two measures not been adopted the education of the Depressed classes would not have yielded the results, most meagre as they were, at the stocktaking by the Hunter Commission in 1882.

III. From 1882 to 1928

14. After the year 1882 the year 1923 forms the next landmark in the educational history of the Bombay Presidency. That year marks the transfer of primary education from the control of Provincial Governments to the control of local bodies. It will therefore be appropriate to take stock of the position as it stood in 1923. The position of the different communities in the Bombay Presidency in 1923 in the matter of educational advancement may be summed up in a tabular form as follows :

Classes* of Population in the Presidency			Order in respect of population	Order in respect of education		
				Primary	Secondary	Collegiate
Advanced Hindus	..	..	4th	1st	1st	1st
Intermediate Hindus	..	..	1st	3rd	3rd	3rd
Backward Hindus	..	..	2nd	4th	4th	4th
Mahomedans	..	..	3rd	2nd	2nd	2nd

15. From this table one notices a great disparity in the comparative advancement of these different communities in the matter of education. Comparing these classes of people according to the order in which they stand in respect of their population and according to the order in which they stand in respect of their educational progress, we find that the Intermediate class, which is first in order of population is third in order of college education, third in order of secondary education and third in order of primary education. The Depressed classes who are second in order of population, stand fourth i.e., last in order of college education, last in order of

*The Education Department of the Government of Bombay has divided the population of this Presidency for departmental purposes into four different classes. In one of them are put the Brahmins and allied castes, who are collectively called "Advanced Hindus". The Marathas and allied castes are put in a separate class called the "Intermediate Hindus". The rest of the population comprising the Depressed classes; hill tribes and the crimina tribes are placed in a class by themselves and are designated by the term "Backward class". To these three classes there is to be added a fourth class which comprises the Mahomedans of the Presidency and Sind.

secondary education and last in order of primary education. The Mahomedans who are third in order of population are second in order of college education, second in order of secondary education and second in order of primary education; while the "Advanced Hindus" who occupy the fourth place in order of population stand first in order of college education, first in order of secondary education and first in order of primary education. From this we can safely say that in this respect there has been no improvement over the situation as it stood in 1882 relatively speaking.

16. The above statement which is based upon the Report of the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay Presidency for the year 1923-24 merely reveals the disparity that exists in the educational advancement of the different communities. But the disparity in the level of education among the different communities would be a very small matter if it be not very great. We can form no important conclusion unless we know the degree of disparity. To make the position clear from this point of view the following table is presented :

TABLE

Classes of Population	Primary Education, Students per 1,000 of the population of the class	Secondary Education, Students per 100,000 of the population	College Education, Students per 200,000 of the population
Advanced Hindus	119	3,000	1,000
Mahomedans	92	500	52
Intermediate class	38	140	14
Backward class	18	14	Nil (or nearly one if at all).

17. The above figures give the lengths as it were by which each community is a head of the rests in the matter of primary, secondary and collegiate education. They reveal a range of disparity between the different communities in this Presidency which shows that the position of some of the communities in the matter of education is most shocking. *From the statistics as given above two facts stand out to be indisputable. (1) That the state of education of the Backward classes in this Presidency is deplorable. In the matter of population they occupy a place as high as second. But in the matter of Education they occupy a place which is not only last but which also is the least; (2) That the Mahomedans of the Presidency have made enormous strides in education; so much so that within the short span of 30 years they have not only stolen a march over other communities such as the Intermediate and the Backward class, but have also come close to the Brahmins and allied castes.*

18. What can this be due to ? To the policy of unequal treatment adopted by the Government must again be our reply to this ever present question. How unequal was the treatment of the two classes will be evident

from the following extracts from the Quinquennial Reports on Education. With regard to the treatment of the Mahomedans in the matter of education the following observations in the third Quinquennial Report (1892-96) are noteworthy :

“Concerning the figures for Mahomedan Education in Bombay,..... the Director remarks that the increase would have been larger ‘ but for adverse circumstances’. It has long been recognized in Bombay that Mahomedans make a larger use of Public Institutions than the rest of the population..... On the general question of what has been done to encourage Mahomedan education, the Director writes :

‘In the first place, a Mahomedan officer is appointed to every District, either as Deputy or Assistant Deputy Inspector; and we have three Mahomedan graduates as Deputies, at Kaira, Sholapur and Hyderabad, while a fourth has been drafted into the higher grades of the Revenue Department. There is thus not a District where the staff is out of touch with the Mahomedan population. Again at Bombay, Karachi and Junagadh [a Muhammadan State in Kathiawar], special efforts have been made to provide High Schools for Muhammadans with low fee rates, and smaller schools have been opened by other Anjumans (Muhammadan associations) elsewhere. The Department also provides for their benefit special standards and maintains special schools in certain localities, and reserves for them one-third of the Provincial and Local Boards scholarships. Then, there are the special scholarships founded by Khan Bahadur Kazi Shahbuddin [at one time Diwan of Baroda]; and in Sindh a certain number of food scholarships have been given by the heir of the Native State of Khairpur for students attending in Arts College. (I had great difficulty in filling these up last year, though they are of the value of Rs. 25 a month). In Primary schools, Muhammadans are very leniently treated in the matter of fees. They are encouraged to come to the Training Colleges by special rules which require from them an easier test than from Hindus ;..... The Joint Schools Committee at Bombay has lately made special efforts to encourage Muhammadan education by the appointment of a Muhammadan Deputy Inspector.....’ ”

19. Compare with this the observations regarding the education of the Depressed classes in the fifth Quinquennial Report (1902-07) :

“959. Bombay—In the Central division of Bombay the low caste children are admitted free into schools and receive presents in the form of books, slates etc..... In Kathiawar only three children of the Depressed castes are receiving education. In the Southern division there are 72 special schools or classes of them, most of which are under unqualified teachers.”

20. This unequal treatment has its origin in the recommendations of the Hunter Commission. How partial was the Hunter Commission to the Mahomedans will be evident if we compare the recommendations it made

in their behalf to those it made in the interests of the Depressed classes. With respect to the Mahomedans the Commission made seventeen recommendations of which the following are worthy of note : —

- (1) that the special encouragement of Mahomedan education be regarded as a legitimate charge on local, on Municipal, and on Provincial funds.
- (7) that higher English education for Mahomedans, being the kind of education in which that community needs special help, be liberally encouraged.
- (8) that where necessary graduated system of special scholarships for Mahomedans be established to be awarded (a) in primary schools and tenable in middle schools ; (b) in middle schools, and tenable in high schools; (c) on the results of Matriculation and. First Arts examinations, and tenable in colleges also.
- (9) that in all classes of schools maintained from public funds a certain proportion of free studentship be expressly reserved for Mahomedan students.
- (10) that in places where educational endowments for the benefit of Mahomedans exist and are under the management of Government the funds arising from each endowment be devoted to the advancement of education among the Mahomedans exclusively.
- (11) that where Mahomedans exist, and are under the management of private individuals or bodies, inducements by liberal grants-in-aid be offered to them to establish English teaching schools or colleges on the grant-in-aid system.
- (12) that, where necessary, the Normal Schools or classes for the training of Mahomedan teachers be established.
- (14) that Mahomedan inspecting officers be employed more largely than hitherto for the inspection of primary schools for Mahomedans.
- (17) that the attention of Local Governments be invited to the question of the proportion in which patronage is distributed among educated Mahomedans and others.

21. Everyone of these recommendations made by the Hunter Commission was necessary in the interests of the Depressed classes also. But when we come to analyse the recommendations made by the Commission in the interests of the Backward classes we do not find them directing that education of the Backward classes be regarded a legitimate charge on Government funds, that scholarships and proceedings be reserved for them, that special inspecting staff be kept to look after their educational needs or that public patronage be given to them by way of encouraging the growth of education amongst them. All that we find the Commission saying is that (1) the principle that “no boy be refused admission to a Government College or School merely on the ground of caste,” be now reaffirmed as a principle and be applied with due caution to every institution, not reserved for special

races, which is wholly maintained at the cost of public funds, whether provincial, municipal or local, (2) that the establishment of special schools or classes for children of low castes be liberally encouraged in places where there are a sufficient number of such children to form separate schools or classes and where the schools already maintained from public funds do not sufficiently provide for their education. As a matter of fact the recommendations made by the Commission for the Mahomedans were far more necessary in the interests of the Backward classes than in the interests of the Mahomedans. For even the Hunter Commission, presided as it was by a chairman of pronounced sympathies for the Mahomedans, had to admit that "the inquiries made in 1871-73 went to prove that except in the matter of the higher education there had been a tendency to exaggerate the backwardness of the Mahomedans." Notwithstanding this the only recommendations made by the Hunter Commission were the two mentioned above. Even these two recommendations made by the Commission regarding the Depressed classes were not calculated to do much good. They were bound to be futile. The reaffirmation of the principle even if it be for the fifth time was useless. For under the proviso inserted by the Commission the enforcement was to be avoided in practice. Similarly the opening of the separate schools for the Depressed classes was hardly possible which again was bound to be sterile. Separate schools involving additional expense could hardly be acceptable to a Government to which primary education was a task. Besides the proviso that such schools should be opened *where Backward classes were in large numbers* was sufficient to negative the recommendations simply because in rural parts the Backward classes can seldom be found to be living in one locality in large numbers.

22. It is difficult to understand why the Hunter Commission paid such a scant attention to the educational needs of the Backward classes. If it felt necessary to be generous towards the Mahomedans, it should have at least seen that it was just to the Backward classes who were far behind the Mahomedans in education, wealth and social status. Once the Hunter Commission had thrown the Depressed classes into the background they remained there and the Government never paid any attention to them. As an example of this neglect, attention may be drawn to the Resolution of the Government of India in the Department of Education dated Delhi the 21st February 1913. It was one of the most important resolutions ever issued by the Government of India in which they decided "to assist local Government by means of large grants from imperial revenues as funds became available, to extend comprehensive systems of education in the several provinces ". In that Resolution they were particular to point out to the Provincial Government the educational needs of "Domiciled community" and the Mahomedan community. But they had not a word to say in the whole Resolution about the Backward classes. The Bombay Government readily accepted the suggestion and appointed in 1913 a Mahomedan on Education Committee to make recommendations for the promotion of

education among the Mahomadans. One feels righteous indignation against such criminal neglect on the part of the Government particularly when it is realized that the large grants given by the Government of India after 1913 were given by way of fulfilment of the declaration made by His most Gracious Imperial Majesty the King Emperor in replying to the address of the Calcutta University on the 6th January 1912 in which he said :

“It is my wish that there may be spread over the land a network of schools and Colleges, from which will go forth loyal and manly and useful citizens, able to hold their own in industries and agriculture and all the vocations in life. And it is my wish too, that the homes of my Indian subjects may be brightened and their labour sweetened by the spread of knowledge with all that follows in its train, a higher level of thought, of comfort and health. It is through education that my wish will be fulfilled, and the cause of education in India will ever be very close to my heart.”

IV. From 1923 and after

23. The Reforms Act came into force in 1921. Education was made a transferred subject in charge of a minister and a rapid advance in education was naturally expected at his hands. The Backward classes had, however, their doubts as to whether any benefit would accrue to them from the transfer of education to the control of the ministers. Already they had suffered in the matter of education at the hand of the bureaucracy. In the first period of existence the bureaucracy did not permit them to receive the benefits of education. In the second period the bureaucracy did not help them to get education. All the same the bureaucracy was too much enlightened to deny the principle that the Backward classes had a right to education. The Backward classes were not prepared to predicate the same enlightenment of the Indian intelligentsia which was struggling to replace the bureaucracy. As the Indian intelligentsia had its roots in the part in which the Backward class had no recognized rights, the latter were apprehensive that the past may again be made to live in the present.

24. Unfortunately their doubts came true and it may be truly said that under the Reforms the Backward classes in the Bombay Presidency have fallen from purgatory to hell. This may appear to be a very strong commentary on the existing situation. But the situation for in Backward classes of the Bombay Presidency created by the Compulsory Primary Education Act (Bombay Act No. IV of 1923) can hardly be described in any other words. The Compulsory Primary Education Act is in a very important sense a “fraud”. It was claimed for the Act, it was calculated to change the character of the primary education from being voluntary to compulsory. The Act does nothing of the kind. A reference to section 10 of the Act is sufficient to expose the “fraud”. The system is as voluntary as it was before and will remain so indefinitely. For, not only there is no obligation to make it compulsory, but there is even no time limit fixed within which to fulfil the obligation. Apart from this the Compulsory Primary Education Act has

made a most extravagant change in the administrative machinery for the control of Primary Education. Hitherto the control and management of Primary Education was entrusted to the Provincial Government and the whole of the expenditure on primary education was defrayed out of Provincial revenues except a small grant by the Local Boards amounting to one-third of their revenue from certain defined sources. Under the Compulsory Primary Education Act the position is reversed. The control and management of Primary Education is now entrusted to District School Boards (which are committees of District Local Boards) and instead of the Local Boards giving grants to the Provincial Government the Provincial Government is required to give a grant to the District School Board. Such extravagant and wild was the spirit in which this change was conceived that the Act gives to these School Boards power to appoint its own executive officer—a privilege which is denied even to such an advanced Corporation as the Municipality of Bombay.

25. The Sabha think that this change is a most revolutionary change and is bound to be detrimental to the best interest of the Presidency and particularly of the Backward classes. It must be borne in mind that the vital necessity of education has not been realized by all the classes of the population. The popular belief is that education is nobody's concern except that of the Brahmins. It is only a few, who have taken to politics, that care for the spread of education. The School Board must be drawn from the many uniformed villagers who being brought up in the tradition that education is the concern of the Brahmins only must be indifferent to it and are bound to be opposed to make it compulsory. Education if it is to be efficiently administered must for some time to come, remain with the Provincial Government under the direct control of the Legislative Council where the few politicals who know the necessity of education are likely to be. The transfer of education from the Education Department to the School Boards, therefore, means transfer from well-trusted quarters to unworthy hands. But if the transfer is harmful to the progress of education in general, it is detrimental to the interests of the Backward classes in particular. It must be borne in mind that although there may be some doubts as to whether the generality of the people do or do not believe in education, one thing is certain that they do not believe in the education of the Backward classes. As to the attitude of the higher classes towards the extension of elementary education to the lower classes of the community the Hunter Commission observed : " Several witnesses have replied that positive hostility is shown to the admission of low caste boys to school. A Madras witness mentions the case of a school for Cherumans, the ancient slave caste, being established at Calicut, but the Nayars and Tiyas used to waylay the boys as they went to school and snatch their books out of their hands..... *In our discussion on this subject it was brought to our notice that in some parts of the Central Provinces and of Bombay special objections were*

entertained by the rural communities to the instruction of low castes on the ground that education would advance them in life and induce them to seek emancipation from their present servile condition. In his report for the year 1896-97 the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay quoted a case in which the action of the Local Officers of the Kaira District in requiring the admission of low caste pupils led to five or six large schools being closed for years and to the huts and crops of the low caste people being burnt in one village and to the imposition of a heavy punitive post on that village for two years."

26. Such being the attitude of the rural communities, how can it be expected that the School Boards drawn as they largely will be from the rural communities will discharge, faithfully, their trust in the matter of the education of the Depressed classes ? To give the School Boards the control over the education of the Backward classes is to make the prosecutor the ruler. No wonder that Resolutions are passed by the Backward classes condemning the transfer of the control of Primary Education to the School Boards. It would have given some relief if the School Boards were manned by representatives of the Depressed classes in adequate numbers. But that is not the case. The representation of the Depressed classes in self-governing bodies from the Council down to the Local Boards has been planned by the Government after the manner of a curator who is not anxious to keep more than one specimen of each species in his Museum. Government nominates one member from the Depressed classes to the District Local Board out of some forty members and the School Board is directed to co-opt one member from the Depressed classes. In the principle of co-option there is always the danger of the wrong man being co-opted—a danger which the Depressed classes of East Khandesh have had to face in the recent School Board elections. But supposing the right man is co-opted, what can a single individual do in a hostile group of 15 which is the maximum strength of a School Board ?

27. If Government is sincere in the matter of promoting the education of the Depressed classes then there are certain measures which Government must adopt. The Sabha has its own convictions as to what Government should do in this connection and would like to state the same in the form of proportions as follows :—

- (1) Unless the Compulsory Primary Education Act is abolished and the transfer of Primary Education to the School Boards is stopped, the Sabha fears that education of the Depressed classes will receive a great set-back.
- (2) Unless compulsion in the matter of Primary Education is made obligatory and unless the admission to primary schools is strictly enforced, conditions essential for educational progress of the Backward classes will not come into existence.

- (3) Unless the recommendations made by the Hunter Commission regarding the education of the Mohamedans are applied to the Depressed classes their educational progress will not be an accomplished fact.
- (4) Unless entry in the public service is secured to the Depressed classes there will be no inducement for them to take education.

28. In making these comments upon the management of the educational affairs of the Presidency under the Reform in their bearing upon the Depressed classes the Sabha is not oblivious to the special provisions made for the education of the Depressed classes in the form of a few hostels and a few scholarships for higher education. But the Sabha begs to point out that it is useless to make provision for higher education of the Depressed classes unless steps are taken to ensure the growth of Primary Education. Besides there is no guarantee that such concessions will continue. On the other hand they that depend a great deal upon the policy of the particular Minister in charge of Education and upon the voting strength of the Depressed classes in the Legislative Council, both of which are uncertain factors and cannot be depended upon.