

**UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN INDIA:
A HISTORICAL STUDY OF POLICY DEBATES (1910-1950)**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

CHANDRA LEKHA SINGH



Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies

School of Social Sciences

Jawaharlal Nehru University

New Delhi-110067

India

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ZAKIR HUSAIN CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
UGC-CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDY (CAS)
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067

Dated: 22/7/2019.

DECLARATION

I, Chandra Lekha Singh, declare that this thesis entitled *Universal Elementary Education in India: A Historical Study of Policy Debates (1910-1950)* submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my bonafide work. I further declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

Chandra Lekha Singh
Chandra Lekha Singh

CERTIFICATE

Certified that this thesis entitled *Universal Elementary Education in India: A Historical Study of Policy Debates (1910-1950)* submitted by CHANDRA LEKHA SINGH, in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University has not been so far submitted, as part or full, for any degree of this or any other university. This is her own original work, carried out in the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies.

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Dr. Parimala V. Rao

Dr. Parimala V. Rao

(Supervisor)

Zakir Husain Centre for
Educational Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawahar Lal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Prof. S. Srinivasa Rao

Prof. S. Srinivasa Rao

(Chairperson)

Prof. S. Srinivasa Rao
Chairperson
Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

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Abbreviations

AIWC	: All India Women Conference
BLC	: Bombay Legislative Council
BRPE Bill	: Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act
CABE	: Central Advisory Board of education
C.P.	: Central Provinces
CWMG	: Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi
D.P.I.	: Director of Public Instruction
E. E. Bill	: Elementary Education Bill
E. H & L.	: Department of Education Health & Lands
INC	: Indian National congress
ISR	: Indian Social Reformer
MLC	: Madras legislative Council
NCWI	: National Council of Women in India
NPC	: National Planning Committee
PEA	: Primary Education Act
PEC	: Primary Education Cess
PLC	: Punjab Legislative Council
U.P.	: United Provinces
WIA	: Women's Indian Association

Introduction

The year 2009 was a watershed in the history of elementary education in India when *The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009* was enacted by the Indian Parliament. Although the Act was not devoid of shortcomings, yet it was a victory of an almost hundred years' long battle started by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1911. Gokhale Presented Elementary Education Bill in 1911 in the Imperial Legislative Council but the Bill failed by 38 to 13 votes. Gokhale's effort started a lively debate towards the compulsory education of masses. His Bill did not make its way to Select Committee for further consideration but paved the path for legislation in various Provincial Legislative Council during the period 1918 to 1930. With the onset of Provincial Autonomy in 1937, Gandhi's Basic Education Scheme occupied the educational scene of the country. The constitution of free India was adopted in 1950 with Article 45 directing the State to *endeavour towards free and compulsory elementary education of all children*. Thus, Gokhale's initiatives towards free and compulsory education of masses culminated in Article 45 of the constitution of free India. From the time of Gokhale's Bill until the country gained independence, free and compulsory education was a debated issue.

This study aims to investigate, historically, the issues and challenges associated with the universal elementary education in India by undertaking the critical analysis of the state policies and the associated debates, both in public domain and in the political circle. Spatially, the study is delimited to British India and, temporally, it encompasses the period between 1910 and 1950, as 1910 being the year when the journey towards universalisation made a head start and 1950 was the year when the Constitution of free India, containing the provision for advancement towards universalisation, was adopted. It aims to find answers to hitherto unexplored, but pertinent questions such as Why did the Gokhale's Bill fail? What were the factors that promoted its downfall? How was the first Primary Education Act of the country, the Bombay Primary Education Act, contested? What were the obstacles in its path? How was the Basic education scheme debated? Why was elementary education not provided as a fundamental Right to the children of the free Nation?

Compulsory primary education (1813-1900): An overview

In India, the Charter Act of 1813 was the first step towards the State's responsibility for education. Section 43 of the Charter Act required that

It shall be lawful for the Governor-General in Council to direct that out of any surplus which may remain of the rents, revenues, and profits arising from the said territorial acquisitions, after defraying the expenses of the military, civil and commercial establishments and paying the interest of the debt, in manner hereinafter provided, a sum of not less than one lac 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 promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.¹

However, the little expenditure in education was not for educating the masses but for 'encouragement of the learned natives of India.'² There was a wider acceptance to the view that the government would do enough if it educates the classes who would, later on, take up the education of the ignorant masses. A letter from the Court of Directors to the Government of Madras, dated 29th September 1830, asserted:

The improvement in education, however, which most effectually contribute to elevate the moral and intellectual condition of a people are those which concern the higher education of the higher classes of the persons possessing leisure and natural influence over the minds of their countrymen. *By raising the standards of instruction among these classes, you would eventually produce a much greater and more beneficial change in the ideas and feelings of the community than you can hope to produce by acting directly on more numerous class.*³

Desai argues that William Adam was probably the first to recommend compulsory education.⁴ William Adam in his report suggested that '[t]he next form in which Government influence may be conceived to be employed for the promotion of education is by making it compulsory, and enacting that every village should have a school.'⁵ However, at the same time, he maintained that 'the period has not yet arrived when this obligation can be enforced.' While he suggested that a law 'direct and intelligible' would be preferable to a mere recommendation' but at the same time maintained that 'it would be premature'⁶ because:

¹ H. Sharp, *Selections from Educational records 1781-1839* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1920), 22.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 179. Emphasis in original.

⁴ D. M. Desai, *Compulsory Education in India* (Bombay: Indian Institute of Education, 1953).

⁵ J. Long, *Adam's report on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar 1835, 1836 and 1838* (Calcutta: Home Secretariat press, 1868), 254.

⁶ Ibid.

Those who in respect of caste or wealth constitute the higher classes do not need any such coercive means to induce them to instruct their children. Those who in respect of caste may be called the middle classes are convinced of the advantages of education, but they are in general poor and many of them would feel such a measure to be severe and oppressive. The lower classes consisting both of Hindus and Musalmans and of numerous sub-divisions and varieties of caste and occupation greatly exceed the others in number, and they are for the most part by general consent consigned to ignorance. In many villages they are the sole, in others the most numerous inhabitants, and such a compulsory law as I have supposed would be received with universal astonishment and dismay—with dismay by themselves and with astonishment if not derision by the superior classes. A national system of education will necessarily have chiefly in view the most numerous classes of the population, but in their present state of moral and social preparation we can approach them only by slow and almost imperceptible steps. We can effectually raise them only by aiding their voluntary efforts to rise; and at present the prejudice against their instruction is nearly as strong and as general in their own minds as in the minds of others.⁷

Adam's recommendation, however, was not taken up by the government. Lord Auckland in his minute of 24 November 1839 favoured extension of education 'among those who have leisure for advanced study, of the most complete education in our power.'⁸ However, he clarified that by this, he did not mean that 'elementary education for the mass of the people is a thing necessarily to be neglected, or postponed for an indefinite period.'⁹ Though he refrained from 'acting immediately and powerfully on the mass of the poor peasantry of India' and suggested that 'the practical question, therefore, to which I would before all others give my attention is to the mode in which we may endeavour to communicate a *higher* education with the greatest prospect of success.'¹⁰ This minute of Auckland formed the basis of the Downward Filtration Theory followed by the British government in later years.

The first government document to admit State's obligation towards the education of masses was the despatch from Court of Directors, popularly known as Wood's Despatch of 1854. After appreciating government's earlier policy of downward filtration, the despatch raised concern towards the need for the education of masses:

We shall, therefore, have done as much as a Government can do, to place the benefits of education plainly and practically before the higher classes in India. Our attention should now be directed to a consideration, if possible, still more important, and one which has been hitherto, we are bound to admit, too much

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lord Auckland's minute, para 9, in H. Sharp, "Selections from Educational records," 155.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

neglected, namely, how useful and practical knowledge suited to every station of life, may be best conveyed to the great mass of the people, who are utterly incapable of obtaining any education worthy of name by their own aided 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.¹¹

It did not, however, require the government to take full responsibility for educating the masses but introduced the system of grants-in-aid. After the mutiny of 1857 Lord Ellenborough, the President, Board of Control came up with the conviction that the policy of government sanctioned by the 1854 despatch was responsible for the mutiny. He believed that the government's policy led to the expansion of education among the masses while leaving the upper classes in the state of ignorance:

I believe we rarely, if ever, induce parents above the lower classes to send their children to our schools, and we should practically, if we succeeded in extending as we desire, give a high degree of mental cultivation to the labouring class, while we left the more wealthy in ignorance.¹²

Expansion of education among the ignorant masses, he argued,

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. We should create a very discontented body of poor persons, having, through the superior education we had given to them, a great power over the mass of the people.¹³

Backing the downward filtration theory, he asserted:

Education and civilisation 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. If we desire to diffuse education, let us endeavour to give it to the higher classes first.¹⁴

All the Directors of Public Instruction protested against the views of Ellenborough and suggested that it would be desirable in the long run to continue to act on the policy dictated by the Despatch.¹⁵

¹¹ Wood's Education Despatch, 1854, para 39-41.

¹² Report of the D.P.I., Bombay, 1856-57, 9-11, cited in Desai. "Compulsory Education in India," 13.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Desai, "Compulsory Education in India," 14.

In 1852, Government of Bombay asked for the response of Captain Wignate, the Revenue survey commissioner of Bombay, regarding levying of local fund cess of 6 pies or 1 Anna in each rupee of land revenue. In his reply regarding the purpose for which the collected fund should be used, he suggested opening schools for agricultural classes and insisted that ‘none but the children of cultivators should be admitted to them.’¹⁶ For the children other than that of cultivator he advocated that they might be admitted only on payment of fee ‘not less than two annas per mensem, and unless the accommodation is more than sufficient for the former [cultivators]’ because he believed that ‘[t]he trading classes can afford for the education of their children, and should not be allowed to appropriate what is intended for the agricultural class.’¹⁷ Further, he suggested that to prevent the failure of the scheme the attendance of the children should be made compulsory in such schools. Following is an account of his suggestion:

Every ryot holding land in his own name, and residing in a village, having one of these schools, should be required to send all his sons to schools on their attaining the age of six or seven years, and be required to keep them for at least three years, under penalty of a fine, not exceeding 10 rupees per annum, to be imposed when a child has not attended school for more than 6 months out of the 12, unless good and sufficient reasons can be assigned for his absence, unconnected with poverty or the child being required to tend the cattle or work in the field or at home. Any scheme for educating the agricultural class will, I am satisfied, fail, unless it makes the attendance of the children compulsory on parents.¹⁸

It can be seen that there are many similarities in the scheme suggested by Wignate with that of Gokhale’s Bill. The difference lies in that it was meant only for poor agricultural class while Gokhale’s Bill was not so specific.

Similar suggestions were made by T.C. Hope, the Educational Inspector, Northern Division, in Bombay Presidency. He went further and told the government that it should not hesitate in introducing the compulsion as ‘[t]he people are naturally accustomed to obey the decree of their rulers without resisting’ and that ‘[t]hey would prefer being in the equitable hands of government to those of their own jobbing headmen, sureties and castes, who now have the levying of educational contributions from them.’¹⁹

¹⁶ J.P. Naik, History of Local Fund Cess, cited in Desai, “Compulsory education in India,” 19-20.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Report of the D.P.I Bombay, 1857-58, 56F-56H, cited in Desai, “Compulsory education in India,” 21-22.

In 1882 Indian Education Commission headed by William Hunter was constituted to look into various aspects of educational development in the country. Inspired by the elementary education Acts of 1870 and 1880 in England, Dadabhai Naoroji in his evidence before this commission, contrasted the “British” policy towards elementary education in England with the “un-British” policy in India. ‘He described it as a “sad, sad tale” which allowed “nearly 25 million children to grow up in ignorance”.’²⁰ Jotirao Phule, in his statement before the Commission, pointed out that ‘primary education of the masses should be made compulsory up to a certain stage, say at least 12 years.’²¹ On the other hand, the landed gentry was opposed to the expansion of education among the masses. For instance, Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra argued:

You take away a farmer’s boy from the plough, the blacksmith’s boy from the bellows and the cobbler’s boy from his awl with the object of giving him liberal education... and the boy learns to condemn the profession of his father, not to speak of the loss to which the latter is put by being deprived of the son’s assistance at the old trade. Having done this the boy looks up to the government for employment: you remove him from a sphere where he would have been contended, happy and useful to those who depend upon him and teach him to be discontented with his lot and with the government.²²

However, despite this opposition, the Hunter Commission turned its attention towards the State’s responsibility for the education of masses. It recommended:

It is desirable in the present circumstances of the country to declare the elementary education of the masses, its provision, extension and improvement, to be that part of the educational system to which the strenuous efforts of the State should now be directed in still larger measure than heretofore... in all Board schools a certain proportion of pupils be admissible as free students on the ground of poverty: and in the case of special schools, established for the poorer classes, a general or larger exemption from payment of fees be allowed under proper authority for special reasons.’²³

The most important recommendation of the Hunter commission was regarding the inclusion of legislative means to ensure the expansion of primary education. It noted: ‘an attempt be made to secure the fullest possible provision for an expansion of primary

²⁰ Cited in J.P. Naik, *Elementary Education in India: The Unfinished Business* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 1.

²¹ Jotirao Phule’s statement before Hunter Commission in *Educating the Nation*, eds. Bhattacharya et al (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2003), 113.

²² Maharatta, 15 May 1881, 3-4, cited in Parimala V. Rao, *Foundations of Tilak’s Nationalism: Discrimination, Education and Hindutva* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010), 139.

²³ *The Report of the Indian Education Commission* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1883), 112.

education by legislation suited to the circumstances of each province,²⁴ but it was also the most neglected recommendation in terms of implementation.

Curzon's educational policy about official control of higher education had earned him a bad name among the Indian intelligentsia of the time. However, this is also equally true that he was very enthusiastic towards the expansion of education among masses. He held the view that,

The need for expansion of primary education was greater than at any time in the past; that the expansion of primary education had always been slow and that, if anything, the pace of expansion had become slower still since 1882; that the principal cause of the slow progress of primary education was the inadequacy of grants from Government funds.²⁵

Under the Viceroyalty of Curzon, a Resolution on the Indian Educational Policy was issued on 11 March 1904 under which the imperial grant for education to all Provinces was raised by 35 lakhs annually in 1905. Naik argues that '[i]t was originally intended that this amount should be exclusively devoted to primary education. But it was not followed in practice; a large part of it was spent annually for education other than primary.'²⁶

The above review reveals that until the beginning of the twentieth century, voluntary expansion was the prime means of spreading primary education among the masses. William Adam and officers such as Captain Wignate suggested compulsory education, but at the same time they were sceptical about its outcome, and the government took no serious note of it. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Gopal Krishna Gokhale started making his demand for free and compulsory education through Budget speeches in the Imperial Legislative Council. When these did not yield any concrete result, he moved the Elementary Education Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council.

Elementary Education Bill: Prelude

In addition to being actively involved in the political life of the time, Gokhale²⁷ channelised a great deal of his energy towards educational issues plaguing the Indian educational system

²⁴ Ibid., 113.

²⁵ Syed Nurullah & J.P. Naik, *A Student's History of Education of India* (Calcutta: MacMillan Company of India Pvt. Limited, 1974 (Sixth edn)), 262.

²⁶ J.P. Naik, "Objectives, Curricula and Methods of Teaching (1800-1947)," in *Collected Articles of Padmabhushan Prof. J.P. Naik Vol. I: Education and Development*, eds. Yeshwant R. Waghmare & A. Sai Babu (Pune: Authors Book & Indian Institute of Education, 2008), 26.

²⁷ Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born on 9 May 1866 in a poor Chitpavan Brahmin family of the Bombay Presidency. English education of Gokhale and his elder brother was the dream of his father, who could not fulfil it due to poverty. Nonetheless, he managed to get English education by the efforts of his elder

of the period. In 1896, at the annual meeting of the Bombay graduates' Association, Gokhale associated spread of primary education among the masses to the 'future salvation of our country.'²⁸ He considered that the question of universal education 'lies at the root of the moral and material advancement of our people.'²⁹ He argued,

Whether it is destitution, whether it is misery, whether it is squalor or whether it is disease that you want to fight you are forced to the conclusion that the first remedy of all remedies is to be able to remove the ignorance of the mass of the people and to give to the people the benefit of education. If you want to increase the wage, earning capacity of the worker, if you want the peasant to grow stronger and take better care of himself in his dealings with the money-lender, if you want him better to understand the benefits of sanitation, if you want him to grow out of superstitious beliefs...you will find that the first and foremost thing to do is to give him the rudiments of knowledge.³⁰

In his first budget speech at the Imperial Legislative Council in 1902, he spoke on the need of expansion of popular education among the masses through the introduction of a scheme of free and compulsory primary education in the country. Linking the question of the education of masses with the economic development of the nation Gokhale argued,

It is obvious that an ignorant and illiterate nation can never make any solid progress and must fall back in the race of life. What we therefore want — and want most urgently — is first of all a widespread diffusion of elementary education — an effective and comprehensive system of primary schools for the masses—and the longer this work is delayed, the more insuperable will be our difficulties in gaining for ourselves a recognised position among the nations of the world.³¹

Criticising the Government of India resolution of 1888 that, 'as the duty of Government in regard to Education was that of merely pioneering the way, and as that duty had on the whole been done, the contribution of the State to Education should thereafter have a tendency to decrease' he rebuked:

While in the West the Governments of different countries were adopting one after another a system of compulsory and even free primary education for their

brother. After graduation Gokhale joined the New English High School at Poona as an assistant master. In 1884, the founders of the New English School established the Deccan Education Society to work towards the spread of English education. Gokhale joined the Society in 1886 as a life member and later taught at Fergusson College run by the Society. He presided over the 1905 session of the Indian National Congress at Benares and was also nominated as a non-official member of the Imperial Legislative Council.

²⁸ D.G. Karve & D.V. Ambekar (eds.), *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol. III (Bombay: Asia Publishing house, 1967), 166.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ R. P. Patwardhan & D.V. Ambekar (eds.), *Speeches and writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol. I (Poona: Asia Publishing House, 1962), 40.

subjects, in India alone the Government was anxious to see its paltry contribution to the education of the people steadily reduced!³²

In this connection he put forward the proposal that subject of Education should be brought under the Imperial charge, so that ‘the same attention which is at present bestowed by the Supreme Government on matters connected with the Army Services and Railway expansion might also be bestowed on the education of our people’³³ because under the Provincial charge, no serious expansion of primary education was possible due to fixed and limited resources of local bodies. In his budget speech of 1906 at the Imperial Legislative Council Gokhale proposed that the ‘first step’ towards the expansion of popular education in the country was to make ‘primary education free in all schools throughout the country... The total receipts from fees in primary schools throughout India in 1901-1902 were only 30.5 lakhs of rupees, so the sacrifice will not be very great.’³⁴ The next step, he suggested,

will be to make this education compulsory for boys in the Presidency towns, and perhaps in a few other leading towns. When the minds of the people have been accustomed to the idea of compulsion in the matter of education, the area of compulsion may be gradually extended, till at last, in the course of twenty years or so from now, we have in our midst a system of compulsory and free primary education throughout the country, and that for both boys and girls.³⁵

To this proposal of Gokhale, the finance member, E.N. Baker, showed his sympathy in the following terms,

I have the keenest sympathy with every one of the objects on which the Hon’ble Member desires to see public money expended. In particular, I am greatly interested in his proposal for making, primary education free with the intention of ultimately making it compulsory. I hope and believe that some great scheme of this nature will eventually be carried into execution.³⁶

Gokhale considered this approval of Baker as the most ‘gratifying statement on the subject of free primary education’³⁷ and hoped that ‘before the budget for next year is presented, primary education will have been made free throughout India.’³⁸ On the issue of compulsion, he further opined:

My Lord, now that the Government has advanced as far as free primary education, I earnestly trust that no long interval will be allowed to elapse before the next step is taken, viz., that of making a beginning in the direction of

³² Ibid., 41.

³³ Ibid., 42.

³⁴ Ibid., 105.

³⁵ Ibid., 106.

³⁶ Ibid., 120.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

compulsory education. If His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda has found it practicable to make primary education compulsory in his State, I cannot understand why the British Government should not be able to overcome the difficulties that lie in its path. The best plan, as I urged last year, would be to confer powers, in the first instance, on Municipal Corporations in cities with a population of, say, a hundred thousand and over, to introduce compulsion for boys within their areas, the Government of India finding the funds required. The area of compulsion may then gradually be extended, till at last in twenty years or so, primary education should be compulsory in the country for both boys and girls. My Lord, we are already so far behind other civilised nations in this matter that no further time should be lost in making such a beginning.³⁹

However, this optimism of Gokhale could not stay for long as no concrete steps were taken by the government towards his proposal of the introduction of free and compulsory education. In the Budget speech of 1908, he reiterated:

Everywhere else throughout the world the State now accepts it as a sacred obligation resting on it to provide for the free and compulsory education of its children. The Gaekwar of Baroda has recently adopted measures to make this provision for his subjects. What every civilised Government provides for its people, what the Gaekwar is providing in his State, the Government of India must surely provide for the people of British territories. There is no escape from so obvious a duty, and every day's delay is a wrong to the people.⁴⁰

Lamenting the Government for its reluctance to fund primary education, Gokhale argued that it is not the lack of money but the lack of will on the part of the government with respect to primary education. He argued,

The money is there for whatever developments may take place immediately, and it can be found without difficulty as we go along, if the burden is distributed over a number of years and the task taken in hand in a resolute spirit. My Lord, I repeat the money is there or can be found without difficulty. Only the will has to be there and then we shall not be found merely discussing the difficulties of the problem.⁴¹

In the same year, efforts were also made by Mazharul Haque for free primary education of the masses, but nothing substantial turned out. Several years of Government's inaction in the direction of free and compulsory education led Gokhale to move a resolution in the reformed Imperial Legislative Council of 1910. The Resolution read thus:

That this council recommends that a beginning should be made in the direction of making elementary education free and compulsory throughout the country, and that a mixed commission of officials and non-officials be appointed at an early date to frame definite proposals...I propose that the State should now

³⁹Ibid., 121.

⁴⁰Ibid., 136

⁴¹Ibid.

accept in this country the same responsibilities in regard to mass education that the governments of most other civilized countries are already discharging, and that, a well-considered scheme should be drawn up and adhered to till it is carried out.⁴²

On assurance by the government that his scheme would be examined carefully, Gokhale withdrew his resolution. A direct outcome of Gokhale's resolution was the constitution of a separate Department of Education under the charge of Spencer Harcourt Butler. His resolution initiated a lively debate on the issue in the press and public. Indian National Congress and Muslim league passed a resolution in favour of compulsory and free primary education at the Allahabad session and Nagpur session, respectively, of 1910.

The concept of state-controlled compulsory education for the masses is essentially a modern concept. Gokhale was highly influenced by the developments in Europe and America regarding compulsory primary education. In 1717, King Frederick William I inaugurated the compulsory school system in Prussia, 'the first national system in Europe.'⁴³ His son Frederick the Great, 'vigorously reasserted the principle of compulsory attendance in the state schools, and established the flourishing national system, particularly in his *Landschulreglement* of 1763.'⁴⁴ This was followed by Germany and France. In France Universal compulsory education was the result of the French Revolution, but it became more systematic after 1882 when a series of laws pertaining to this was passed in 1882. In England, the first Parliamentary grant for elementary education in 1833 paved the path for State-controlled mass education system which finally culminated into the passing of the Act of 1870. Every country in Europe had established compulsory education by 1900, except Belgium, which followed by in 1920. Asian countries such as Japan and Ceylon had also introduced compulsory education in their territory. These developments in the international arena and the Metropole instigated Gokhale to introduce a Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1911 for the compulsory education of masses.

Review of Literature and Research gap

The debates on free and compulsory elementary in India during the period under review have not been studied exclusively. Most of the studies on the history of education are chronological and descriptive and fail to engage with the debates. The analysis of the

⁴² Karve & Ambekar (eds.), "Speeches and writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale Vol. III," 84.

⁴³ Murray N. Rothbard, *Education Free and compulsory* (Albama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1999), 25.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

discourses is essential as it provides us with a more profound understanding of the multiplicity of factors that served as the impediment in the path of free and compulsory education for the masses. Moreover, almost all the studies concerning the history of Indian education involve all the stages of education from primary to university level.⁴⁵ Nurullah & Naik's⁴⁶ work, which is one of the most comprehensive works on the history of Indian education, falls in this category. It is a descriptive study and provides a chronological development of Indian education from 1800 onwards. It deals with all the stages of education viz. Primary, Secondary and University during different periods of colonial as well as the post-colonial rule. Work by Ghosh,⁴⁷ though a departure from the chronological & descriptive study does not deal specifically with issues related to elementary education. Instead, it deals with all aspects of educational development from primary to university level during various phases of colonial rule and in independent India. Bhattacharya et al⁴⁸ have tried to put together the discourses in Indian education chiefly related to the evolution of the idea of National education. These documents deal with what National education meant to the leaders of the time, the debates on vernacular education, funding in education, on racial discrimination in government services, scientific and technical education, women's education and the elementary and primary education. In the section on Elementary and primary education, they have included, among other documents, the evidence laid

⁴⁵ T. N. Siqueira, *The Education of India: History and Problems* (Mysore: Oxford University Press, 1939); K. C. Vyas, *The Development of National Education in India* (Bombay: Vora & Co. Publishers Ltd., 1954); S. N. Mukerji, *History of Education in India* (Baroda: J.C. Shah, 1955); Atulananda Chakrabarti, *Thoughts on Indian Education* (New Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1958); F. E. Keay, *A History of education in India and Pakistan* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1964 (fourth edn)); B. D. Srivastava, *The Development of Modern Indian Education* (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1963 (second edn)); S. S. Dikshit, *Nationalism and Indian Education* (Jullundur: Sterling Publishers(P) Ltd., 1966); K. S. Vakil & S. Natarajan, *Education in India* (Calcutta: Allied Publishers, 1966 (3rd edition)); N. R. Parasnis, *The History and Survey of Education in Thana District* (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1967); S. N. Mukerji, *Education in India: Today and Tomorrow* (Baroda: J.C. Shah, 1969); Violet Paranjoti, *East and West in Indian education: with special reference to the work of Protestant mission* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1969); S. K. Nanda, *Reflections on Indian Education* (Ludhiana: Lyall Book Depot, 1969); P. L. Rawat, *History of Indian Education* (Agra: Ram Prasad & Sons, 1970); Aparna Basu, *The growth of Education and Political development in India: 1898-1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974); Aparna Basu, *Essays in the History of Indian Education* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1982); Nurullah & Naik, *A student's History of education*, 1974; Shiv k. Saini, *Development of Education in India: Socio-economic and political perspective* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1980); A.R Kamat, *Studies in Educational reform in India, Vol I: Perspectives for educational reform in India* (Bombay: Himalaya Publishing House, 1989); S. C. Ghosh, *The History of Education in Modern India 1757-1998* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 2000(revised edn)).

⁴⁶ Nurullah & Naik, *A Student's History of Education in India*.

⁴⁷ Ghosh, *The History of Education in Modern India*.

⁴⁸ Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Joseph Bara & Chinna Rao Yagati (eds.), *Educating the Nation: Documents on the discourse of National Education in India 1880-1920* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2003).

before the Education Commission of 1882 by concerned Indians such as Jotirao Phule, R. G. Bhandarkar, Dwarka Nath Ganguli and Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill of 1911. Bhattacharya remarks that '[a]s regards primary education for 'masses,' the nationalist position was slightly ambivalent in that its prioritisation over the claims of higher education' and he goes on to question 'did the middle classes who were the main beneficiaries of the government's investments in education do enough to spread education among the less privileged masses?'⁴⁹ The judiciously selected documents regarding elementary education compiled in this comprehensive work seek to find an answer to this question.

There are comparatively few studies explicitly devoted to the elementary stage of education.⁵⁰ Desai's work is the most comprehensive of these. This study takes into account a detailed discussion of provisions in Primary Education Acts of various provinces, implementation of these Acts and related difficulties and recommendations for achieving the goal of universalisation. Desai believes that political, administrative and financial problems hindered the progress of compulsory primary education between 1921 and 1950. He argues that the 'officials, as well as non-officials, have always attached greater importance to secondary and university than to primary education, and this has been a consistent feature of educational history during the last hundred and fifty years.'⁵¹ However, he fails to throw light on the root cause of this neglect. The following paragraphs attempt a review of the scarce literature available on the subject under five broad themes viz. Gokhale's Bill, Primary Education Acts, Basic Education Scheme, education of girls, education of depressed classes and Article 45 of the Constitution.

Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill

In the first place, the debates on Gokhale's Bill have not been studied extensively. Few studies which deal with the Bill, as a part of their more extensive study on other issues, argue that the financial crunch and political danger to the colonial rule were responsible for its failure.⁵² Basu argues that owing to the opposition from the provincial government; the

⁴⁹ Ibid. xvi.

⁵⁰ K.G. Saiyadain, "Primary Education," in *The Educational System*, ed. K.G. Saiyadain, 3-19 (Mysore: Oxford University Press, 1943); Desai, *Compulsory Education* 1953; J. P. Naik, *Equality, Quality and Quantity: the elusive triangle in Indian Education* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1975)

⁵¹ Ibid., 261.

⁵² Padma Ramachandran & Vasantha Ramkumar, *Education in India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2005); Saiyadain, "Primary Education"; Desai, *Compulsory Education*.

Bill could not be passed.⁵³ Though Basu in her work discusses at length the official reasons for the opposition of the bill, she does not throw any light on the reaction of non-official Indian members to the Bill. Saiyidain also subscribes to a similar notion that official unwillingness led to the failure of the Bill. He argues that official reasoning that there was no popular demand for it; that local governments did not favour the idea; that a minority of educated Indians were opposed to it; and that there was still room for the extension of primary education on a voluntary basis were responsible for its failure.⁵⁴ Bara opines that the Elementary Education Bill of Gokhale ‘was impelled primarily by the political exigency of raising an intelligent electorate out of the illiterate masses.’⁵⁵ All these studies, however, have overlooked the non-official Indian opinion on the bill and have failed to highlight the multiple factors that led to its downfall.

Primary Education Acts

Most of the studies concur on the fact that Acts of compulsory primary education coupled with the Indian ministries in the provinces led to significant scale expansion of primary education during 1921-32.⁵⁶ But this expansion was not as much as was desired from these Acts due to the indifference of local bodies towards introducing educational cess,⁵⁷ due to limited funds at the disposal of Indian ministers,⁵⁸ and due to shortage of teachers, buildings etc.⁵⁹ Regarding the indifferent attitude of local bodies to levy an educational cess, Debi observes that ‘members were afraid of imposing the cess lest they should thereby incur the displeasure of the voters who were also not educated in the spirit of voluntarily sending their children from the fields or other household errands to schools.’⁶⁰ Gupta argues that political developments dominated the national life of the country throughout the period 1919-35, and hence, little attention was paid to the cause of education. He further opines

⁵³ Basu, *The growth of educational and political development in India*.

⁵⁴ K.G. Saiyadain, “Primary Education”.

⁵⁵ Joseph Bara, “Colonialism and Educational fragmentation in India,” in *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 125-170 (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1998), 157.

⁵⁶ Mukerji, *History of Education in India*; Parasnis, *The History and Survey of Education*; Nanda, *Reflections on Indian Education*; Naik, *Equality, Quality and Quantity*; Saini, *Development of Education in India*.

⁵⁷ Mukerji, *History of Education in India*; Srivastava, *The Development of Modern Indian Education*; Saini, *Development of Education in India*; Basu, *Essays in the History of Indian Education*; Renu Debi, *Progress of Education in Assam* (Guwahati: Omsons Publication, 1987); W. V. Bhave, *Development of Education in Madhya Pradesh 1861-1947* (Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House, 2000).

⁵⁸ Srivastava, *The Development of Modern Indian Education*; Parasnis, *The History and Survey of Education*; Saini, *Development of Education in India*; Basu, *Essays in the History of Indian Education*.

⁵⁹ Paranjoti, *East and West in Indian education*.

⁶⁰ Debi, *Progress of Education in Assam*, 78.

that the Congress ministries paid some, but not satisfactory, attention to the problem of extending compulsory primary education except Bombay where compulsion was introduced in several municipal areas and all villages with a population of 1000, or more.⁶¹ On the other hand, Naik observes that Indian leadership after assuming control of education in 1921 made a bolder and more committed approach to the problem of equality in education and society by taking steps towards provision of free and compulsory elementary education to children, first in the age group 6-10 and then in the age group 6-14.⁶² Kamat,⁶³ Ramachandran & Ramkumar⁶⁴ argue that Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill followed by passing of Primary Education Acts in various provinces in the late 1920s helped to provide recognition to the principle of compulsory primary education. Saiyidain considers that the Primary Education Acts passed by various provinces between 1918 and 1930 could be regarded as the 'nearest approximation so far achieved to the ideal of introducing compulsory primary education in the country.'⁶⁵ Concerning the Bengal Primary Education Act, Acharya notes that in Bengal middle classes would not allow the spread of education at the cost of their educational interests. 'The alternative of an educational cess was considered an infringement.'⁶⁶ He further argues that in the Bengal Primary Education Bill of 1927 the entire debate on the bill was centred on the new education cess and the constitution of district school boards separate from the existing district boards and how by 1930 when the Act was passed, communal dimension was added to the issue. He argues, 'the Bengali bhadralok-whether Hindu, Muslim, nationalists or communists- made universal primary education an issue of power politics at the cost of the interests of the common people... the people for whom universal education was meant remained in the background as passive spectators.'⁶⁷ However, this study does not deal with the debates within the Bengal legislative Council holistically. Regarding the Primary Education Act in Central Provinces and Berar, the present Madhya Pradesh, Bhave⁶⁸ has discussed two amendments moved by S. B. Tambe and C.M. Thacker which empowered provincial

⁶¹ Ram Chandra Gupta, *Whither Indian Education: An appraisal of Indian Education from the Vedic Age to the present day* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1988).

⁶² Naik, *Equality, Quality and Quantity*.

⁶³ Kamat, *Perspectives for educational reform*.

⁶⁴ Ramachandran & Ramkumar, *Education in India*.

⁶⁵ Saiyadain, "Primary Education," 10.

⁶⁶ Poromesh Acharya, "Law and Politics of Primary Education in Bengal," in *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998.), 250.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁶⁸ Bhave, *Development of Education in Madhya Pradesh*.

governments to introduce compulsion if local bodies failed to do it. He highlights that these amendments failed. He further notes that legislation was enacted in 1928, giving the government power to enforce compulsory education in case a local body failed to do so but according to Bhave, ‘nothing has ever been heard regarding its application.’⁶⁹ The study does not highlight the reasons for the failure of the amendments and later on its non-implementation.

Basic Education Scheme

Gandhi’s scheme of Basic education has been widely studied. However, most of these studies tend to become hagiographic and end up in eulogising Gandhi's scheme of education as the nationalist tendencies remain the key feature of most of these studies. A critical analysis of the scheme and the debates surrounding it, particularly concerning the larger question of free and compulsory elementary education has, however, not been undertaken. This scheme has been considered as the most noteworthy feature of provincial autonomy, which led to good progress in the field of elementary education.⁷⁰ Sargent argues that the popularity of the scheme owes its sponsorship by Gandhi. Advocating the practical aspect of Basic Education scheme of Gandhi Paranjoti observes that Basic Education ‘exercises a marked influence on the prospective employment of the Pupil. Learning, in this case, instead of leading to unemployment, prepares the pupil for his future calling.’⁷¹ Gupta opines that the emphasis of Zakir Husain Committee on the educational aspect of the Basic Scheme rather than on the self-supporting element was a significant departure from the Gandhi's original scheme and was the most unfortunate thing to happen.⁷² Kamat argues that Basic education could not succeed because ‘it [Basic education] was considered inferior and meant for ‘inferior’ segments of people,’ due to ‘non-availability of (land for agricultural and (sic)) materials for the teaching of crafts’ and also because of ‘its expensiveness if it was seriously pursued.’⁷³ Bara observes that the Wardha Scheme was not only opposed by the middle classes but also by the masses because the ‘colonial system

⁶⁹ Ibid., 153.

⁷⁰ Saiyadain, “Primary Education”; Dikshit, *Nationalism and Indian Education*; John Sargent, *Society, Schools and Progress in India* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1968); Mukerji, *Education in India*; Nanda, *Reflections on Indian Education*; Rawat, *History of Indian Education*; Saini, *Development of Education in India*; N. G. Pawar, *Development of Educational System in India* (Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2004).

⁷¹ Paranjoti, *East and West in Indian education*, 305.

⁷² Gupta, *Whither Indian Education*.

⁷³ Ibid., 131.

had irreparably distorted the popular mind. Education and manual labour came to be considered opposites, and any new experiment was judged in terms of its expediency in leading to a white-collar job in town.⁷⁴ According to Pawar, the ‘failure of Wardha Scheme of education should be not sought in the basic philosophy of manual work, dignity of labour, mother tongue as medium of instruction but in the failure of government machinery of the times.’⁷⁵ Bala considers Basic Education scheme of Gandhi as the ‘first blue print of national system of education’ which was job centred, value based and mass oriented.⁷⁶ He further considers this scheme as the first model of vocationalisation of education in India. Sankhdhar argues that Gandhi’s scheme was a ‘philosophy for political emancipation, social justice, economic progress, communal harmony and religious intolerance through truth, peace and non-violence.’⁷⁷ These studies fail to undertake a critical analysis of Gandhi’s scheme and the related debates. A very recent study by Simone Holzwarth,⁷⁸ attempts to analyse Gandhi’s scheme from a transnational perspective. She has shed light on international connections in Gandhi’s educational thought, particularly with reference to the New Education Fellowship. Further, she has analysed the *Nai Talim* by undertaking an analysis of the photographs from Sevagram. These two aspects of Holzwarth’s studies provide a fresh approach to the study of Gandhi’s scheme of education. This study, however, fails to critically engage with the debates on Gandhi’s scheme, though there are few references to these.

Education of girls

Most of the studies dealing with the education of girls overlook the highly contested issue of compulsory and free elementary education for them. These studies argue that the prejudice against the girls’ education began to shed during the period 1921-1947.⁷⁹ Basu observes that by 1920s the old prejudices against women’s education were lessening and

⁷⁴ Bara, “Colonialism and Educational fragmentation in India,” 158.

⁷⁵ Pawar, *Development of Educational System in India*, 67.

⁷⁶ Shant Bala, “Gandhian Conception of Education - Its relevance in present times,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science* (Indian Political Science Association) 66, no. 3 (July -Sept. 2005): 531-548.

⁷⁷ B.M. Sankhdher, “Gandhi and the National Education movement,” in *The Contested Terrain: perspective on Education in India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Orient Longman), 296.

⁷⁸ Simone Holtzwarth, *Gandhi and Nai Talim: Rural craft education for a new village minded social order* (unpublished PhD thesis: Humboldt University, 2015).

⁷⁹ Aparna Basu, “A Century’s Journey: Women’s education in Western India (1820-1920),” in *Socialization, Education and Women: Explorations in gender identity*, ed. Karuna Chanana, 65-95 (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1988); Y. B. Mathur, *Women’s education in India 1813-1966* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973); Bina Lahkar, *Development in Women Education: Study of Assam* (Guwahati: Omsons Publications, 1987).

social barriers such as early marriage were being relaxed, leading to middle-class girls to receive at least primary and secondary education. Mathur opines that the introduction of dyarchy and provincial autonomy enabled the Indian ministers to abandon the hesitant and over-cautious policies of the British government.⁸⁰ Lahkar argues that female education was gaining momentum during the decade of the 1930s due to the realisation on the part of policymakers that education of a boy is the education of a person while the education of a girl would lead to the education of an entire family.⁸¹ Most Studies concur on the view that women's education had received a great deal of impetus by the third decade of the twentieth century due to Gandhi's call to women to join the national movement.⁸² Ahmad notes that women's education had become a public issue by 1920s despite opposition from several corners mainly because of the immense social and political awakening in India followed by intense reformist efforts made by social reformers with or without organised support. She argues that development in the direction of women's education was mainly confined to urban areas because private organisations which had a larger share in this regard were located in urban areas.⁸³ These studies fail to locate other hidden factors for the poor state of education of rural women. Patel conforms to the view that Gandhi's call for participation of women in freedom struggle during the second quarter of the twentieth century played a significant role in women's emancipation. However, she argues that 'Gandhi projected women as the potential vanguard of the non-violent process of social and political transformation without questioning fundamental structures of patriarchy.'⁸⁴ She opines that 'although Gandhi favoured female education for all sections of society, he too advocated women's education to improve their traditional roles as wives and mothers in the patriarchal family.'⁸⁵ Regarding the curricula for girls' education, most of the studies point out that the chief goal of girls' education was to train them as better wives and better mothers and hence the curricula were suitably tailored.⁸⁶ Rao unravels the tussle between leaders like Bal

⁸⁰ Mathur, *Women's education in India*.

⁸¹ Lahkar, *Development in Women Education*.

⁸² Mathur, *Women's education in India*; Lahkar, *Development in Women Education*; Karuna Chanana, "Social Change or Social reform: the education of women in pre-independence India," in *Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in gender identity*, ed. Karuna Chanana, 96-128 (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1988).

⁸³ Karuna Ahmad, *The Social context of women's education in India, 1921-81: Tentative formulations* (New Delhi: NMML Occasional Paper, n.d).

⁸⁴ Ila Patel, *Women's movement and women's education in India, Working Paper 116* (Anand: Institute of Rural Management, 1998), 4.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Gauri Srivastava, "The Contribution of Male intelligentsia to women's education in Bombay Presidency," in *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on education in India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 275-289 (New

Gangadhar Tilak, who was a staunch advocate of Brahmanical patriarchy, and reformers such as Ranade and Gokhale over the education of girls and their curricula. The studies by Bhave⁸⁷ and Rao⁸⁸ deal with some aspects of compulsion with reference to elementary education of girls. Bhave brings to light the fact that Ramabai Tambe, the nominated member of the C.P. Legislative council, moved a bill in 1935 for the amendment of the 1920 Primary Education Act to provide for the education of the girls simultaneously with that of the boys, but the bill was defeated by 36 to 26 votes. The study, however, does not take into account the debates during the introduction of the Bill. Rao, in her article, delves into the progress of female education in Mysore. Through her work, Rao brings to the fore several facts regarding girls' education in Mysore which were of rare occurrence elsewhere. These include the initiatives taken by a group of officials called 'Mysore Party' (who were Iyengar Brahmins), on individual basis, in 'starting girls' schools often in their homes, in rented rooms and village temple courtyards.⁸⁹ Rao argues that these schools were egalitarian in the sense that they included girls from all castes. Rao's work reveals that though there were objections from a particular section of the society regarding the teaching of English and Science to girls 'they did not acquire a keenly contested ideological battle the way it did in Maharashtra under Bal Gangadhar Tilak.'⁹⁰ Rao notes that 'Visvesvaraya's efforts to implement compulsory education for girls faced vigorous opposition.'⁹¹ The literature on women's education reveals the dearth of studies on compulsory education for girls.

Education of depressed classes

The education of depressed classes in general and the depressed class girls, in particular, has largely remained a neglected area in the history of Indian Education. The historical studies on depressed classes⁹² have dealt with the education of these classes as a part of

Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1998); Malavika Karlekar, "Woman's nature and access to education," in *Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in gender identity*, ed. Karuna Chanana, 123-165 (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1988); Parimala V. Rao, "Women's education and the nationalist response in western India: Part I Basic Education," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 14, no. 2(2007): 307-316.

⁸⁷ Bhave, *Development of Education in Madhya Pradesh*.

⁸⁸ Parimala V. Rao, "Elite Conflict and Women's Education in Princely Mysore, 1860-1947," in *Education in Colonial India: Historical Insights*, eds. Joseph Bara, Nandita Khadria, Ch. Radha Gayathri & Deepak Kumar, 351-373 (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁹² Raj Sekhar Basu, *Nandnar's Children: The Paraiyans' Tryst with Destiny, Tamil Nadu 1850-1956* (New

their larger study but no exclusive study has been undertaken to address the debates pertaining to education in general and compulsory education in particular, of these classes. Paik's⁹³ study highlights the role of Dalit leaders in their struggle for compulsory education. This work also addresses, historically, the double discrimination faced by the depressed class girls in their education. However, the debate pertaining to the education of these classes needs further.

Article 45

There are few studies which deal with Article 45 of the Indian Constitution briefly. Naik opines that Gokhale's Bill, followed by efforts of Indian leaders during diarchy and provincial autonomy and Gandhi's Basic Education was the stepping-stone towards the provision of Article 45 in the constitution of free India.⁹⁴ Regarding the absence of lower age limit in the Article 45 the Constitution and absence of the 'type' of primary education, he points out that '[t]his was done purposely to avoid controversies regarding "basic" education or the age of admission to elementary schools or making pre-primary education also compulsory.⁹⁵ Shukla attributes this to the shortage of finances which 'may permit only five years of schooling and that many children could start at 5 or 6.⁹⁶ Regarding upper age limit of 14 years in the Article 45, Shukla argues that it was due to 'Zakir Husain's plea who supported the Scandinavian model in which schooling continued up to 13 or 14 years of age as the child is more mature at these ages to develop the skills and these leanings have a more lasting impact.'⁹⁷ Srivastava considers that it was 'good that, in our constitution no lower age limit has been prescribed but only suggestion has been made to the states to endeavour to provide for nursery education.'⁹⁸ He opines that this Article was of unique importance from the viewpoint of equality. Moreover, he argues that the provision of free and compulsory education in the constitution of a 'poor country like India, and that within a period of ten years (the shortest period ever visualised in India under any plan), is an

Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2011); Rupa Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem: caste, religion and the social in modern India* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2016); M. S. S. Pandian, *Brahmin & Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2016 (sixth impression)).

⁹³ Shailaja Paik, *Dalit Women's education in Modern India: Double discrimination* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁹⁴ Naik, *Elementary education in India: The unfinished business*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁶ Shukla, "Nationalist Educational Thought," 34.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ K. N. Srivastava, *Education in free India* (Bombay: Orient Longmans Ltd., 1951), 58.

attempt that will be recorded in letters of gold in the history of educational development.’⁹⁹ Chakrabarty opines that Article 45 was the only concrete goal of educational advancement that the Constitution of free India set up but since these goals were put in the Directive Principles of State policy they remained as a target and reminder but ‘not a right to be enforced through judicial process.’¹⁰⁰ Sargent opines that reduction in the time limit for attaining the universal elementary education from forty years (as suggested by the Sargent plan) to ten years (in the constitution of free India) was the chief reason behind the non-accomplishment of the goals of universalisation of elementary education enshrined in the Indian constitution.¹⁰¹ On the absence of any specification regarding ‘basic’ or ‘non-basic’ in Article 45, Naik observes that it was not specified to avoid controversy regarding ‘basic’ education.¹⁰²

Juneja¹⁰³ in her article has shed light on the shifting of Fundamental Rights to the Directive Principles but did not locate it into the debate within the Constituent Assembly. In a recent study Juneja¹⁰⁴ argues that the phrase ‘up to 14 years’ was ‘embedded’ in the Article 45 from the Sargent plan. Absence of historical context leads to such superficial remarks. When seen in the context of elementary education debates during the preceding decades and the Basic education scheme of Gandhi, it would appear to be the natural corollary of these developments. Then, there are several factual errors in this study. For instance, Juneja refers to two Wardha Committees in her work, which is incorrect. Zakir Husain Committee was synonymously referred to as Wardha Committee, and it was the only Wardha Committee. Instead, there were two Kher Committees set up by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) to look into the recommendations of the Zakir Husain Committee.

The literature survey points to the glaring lacuna in the available body of literature on free and compulsory elementary education in India. The present study is an attempt to address these gaps and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the issues and challenges associated with the question of free and compulsory elementary education for all the children of the country.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Syamal Chakrabarty, *Twenty five years of Education in India*, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973), 2.

¹⁰¹ Sargent, *Society, Schools and Progress in India*.

¹⁰² Naik, *Elementary education in India: The unfinished business*.

¹⁰³ Nalini Juneja, “Constitutional commitments,” *Seminar* 464, (1998 April): 22–26.

¹⁰⁴ Nalini Juneja, “Constitutional mandate for free and compulsory education: New light on the intention of ‘The Founding Fathers’,” *Contemporary Education Dialogue* 12, no. 2 (July 2015): 208-237.

Objectives of the Study and research questions

1. To examine the debates on Gokhale's Bill.
 - Why Gokhale's bill, very minimal in its provisions, could not be passed in Imperial Legislative council?
 - What were the factors that led to its downfall?
 - What was the stance of non-official Indian members of the Council and the public leaders outside it over this issue?

2. To investigate the debates pertaining to Primary Education Acts in various Provincial Legislative Council.
 - How the first Primary Education Act of the country, the Patel Act, was debated?
 - What were the similarities/differences in the opinion of the Indian leaders and the officials during the passage of Patel's Bill compared to that during Gokhale's Bill?
 - How was the Primary Education Act debated in Provinces, such as Bengal, having more feudal setting?
 - What were the factors behind the failure of the Provincial Primary Education Acts?

3. To explore the debates on Basic Education scheme of Gandhi.
 - Under what socio-political context, Gandhi enunciated his scheme?
 - What criticisms were levelled against Gandhi's scheme?
 - Why the scheme could not succeed, given the amount of energy devoted to it and propaganda made by Congress?
 - How did the various provincial ministers take up the scheme?
 - In what ways did the scheme (re)shaped the trajectory of universal primary education in the country?

4. To explore the debates pertaining to the compulsion for girls and the depressed classes within the compulsory education debate?
 - How was the compulsory education for girls debated during Gokhale's Bill and during the passage of various Primary Education Acts?
 - Why was compulsory education for girls opposed?
 - What role did women's movement play in securing compulsory education for girls?

- How did the upper caste elite react towards the compulsion for depressed classes?
 - What factors led to the surge in interest of the upper caste elite leaders in the education of depressed classes?
 - How did the depressed class leaders take up the question of compulsion for their community?
5. To explore the evolution of the Article 45 in the constitution of India and the debates pertaining to it.
- Why was free and compulsory elementary education not kept in the list of fundamental rights?
 - How was the issue debated within the Constituent Assembly?
 - Why was the lower age limit concerning free and compulsory education not specified in Article 45?

Research Methodology

The present study makes use of the Historical method to undertake a critical analysis of the archival data on the State policies on elementary education. The debates in Imperial Legislative Council, Provincial Legislative council, Legislative Assembly, and in the Council of States have been scanned to study the opinion of British officials and the Indian leaders regarding the issue of free and compulsory elementary education. Proceedings of All India Kisan movement, Depressed Class conference, All India Women's conference was examined to investigate the consciousness among these organisations concerning free and compulsory elementary education of boys as well as girls. All India Educational conference proceedings were also scrutinised, in the course of the study, to find out the opinion of educationists over the issue. *Harijan*, Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi and Newspapers such as Times of India and Indian Social Reformer were consulted to examine the debate on Basic Education Scheme of Gandhi. Reports of various CAGE Committees, National Planning Committee and Constituent assembly debates were analysed to explore the genesis of the Article 45 in the constitution of free India. Journals and newspapers of relevant years were consulted to find out how the issue of free and compulsory elementary education for the masses was contested among the informed public.

Plan of the Study

The study is divided into six main chapters with Introduction and Conclusion. The Introduction includes a general background to the study and is divided into two parts. The first part sheds light on the general overview of compulsory education in nineteenth-century India and the next part deals with Gokhale's early initiatives in this direction. This is then followed by the statement of the problem, literature survey, research objectives, research questions and methodology of the study. Chapter 1 engages with the debate on Gokhale's Bill, within the Council and in the larger public domain. It attempts to locate the multiplicity of factors that led to the defeat of Gokhale's humble attempt. Chapter 2 on the Primary Education Act undertakes an analysis of debates during the passage of Bombay Primary Education Bill and Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill in the respective Provincial Legislative Council. A comparison of the discussions in the two councils, one in the industrial setting and the other one in feudal has been undertaken to understand the crux of the issue of compulsory primary education. Additionally, it also examines the debate in Legislative Council of the Punjab, Bengal and United Provinces after the Acts were passed in these Provinces to understand the opinion of the public leaders on its implementation.

The third chapter aims to undertake an analysis of the problems and challenges associated with the education of depressed classes and the related question of compulsion to them. It sheds light on the reasons behind caste Hindu leaders' concern towards them. Then, it attempts to bring to the fore the issue of where and what to teach the depressed classes? Finally, the consciousness of the depressed classes themselves towards the question of compulsory education has been explored. Chapter 4 is dedicated to an analysis of debates pertaining to the compulsion for girls. The role of women's movement in the extension of compulsory primary education to girls has been explored. In Chapter 5, the role played by the larger socio-political context in the promulgation of Gandhi's scheme has been examined. Then, the debate on Gandhi's scheme of Basic Education, the reasons for its halt after a spurt of enthusiasm have been explored. Chapter 6 examines the discourses on compulsory education as Fundamental Right vis-à-vis Directive Principles of the State Policy. The developments from Zakir Husain Committee to the two Kher Committees of CABE have been explored followed by Sargent Committee's recommendations. These documents served as the foundation on which Article 45 was based. The minutes of the Fundamental Rights Sub-committee, Advisory committee and the constituent assembly debates have been explored to trace the genealogy of the Article 45. Chapter 6 is then

followed by the Conclusion which presents the concluding observations of the study and its limitations.

Chapter 1

Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill: Beginning of an era

I do not ask to see distant scene
One step enough for me¹⁰⁵

This was the least desire expressed by Gokhale when he introduced the Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1911. Gokhale's Bill was the first vocal attempt towards legislative action for compulsory elementary education in British India. This bill brought the issue of Universal Elementary Education to the fore and made it a highly debated topic of the day. Though it could not be passed into an Act it served to galvanize the officials, non-officials and the educated public of the time towards universal elementary education. This chapter aims to shed light on the response to Gokhale's Bill and the ensuing debate. In doing so, the objective is to uncover the plausible reasons for the failure of the Bill.

1.1. Elementary Education Bill

The formation of the separate department of education, one of the proposals of his resolution of 1910, urged Gokhale to take the pioneering step in the direction of universal elementary education viz. universalisation through legislation. On 16 March 1911, he introduced the Elementary Education Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council hoping that 'Government are alive to the necessity of moving faster and that it will not be long before vigorous measure are taken in hand to ensure a more rapid spread of mass education in the land.'¹⁰⁶ The object of the bill was to 'provide for the *gradual introduction* of the principle of compulsion into elementary education system of the country.'¹⁰⁷ On the importance of universal education, Gokhale argued:

Even if the advantages of an elementary education be put no higher than a capacity to read and write, its universal diffusion is a matter of prime importance, for literacy is better than illiteracy any day, and the banishment of a whole people's illiteracy is better than illiteracy is no mean achievement.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1; See also G.K. Gokhale, *The Elementary Education Bill* (Poona: Arya Bhushan Press, 1911), 10.

¹⁰⁷ Statement of Object and Reasons, Annexure to Appendix A, Legislative, Legislative, no. 3. Emphasis added; See Appendix I.

¹⁰⁸ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 2.

He further reiterated

Elementary education for the mass of the people means more than a mere capacity to read and write. It means for them a keener enjoyment of life and a more refined standard of living. It means greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual. It means a higher level of intelligence for the whole community generally.¹⁰⁹

For him, universal education was as crucial for humanity as light and air are needed for human health. He remarked, 'he who reckons these advantages lightly may as well doubt the virtue of light or fresh air in the economy of human health.'¹¹⁰ He went on to suggest that 'one important test of the solicitude of a government for the true well-being of its people is the extent to which, and the manner in which, it seeks to discharge its duty in the matter of mass education,'¹¹¹ and urged the government to 'wake up to its responsibilities much more than it has hitherto done, before it can take its proper place among the civilised Governments of the world.'¹¹² Gokhale presented a comparative analysis of free and compulsory elementary education among the countries of the world (both east and west) with that of India and argued:

whether we consider the extent of literacy among the population, or the proportion of those actually at school, or the system of education adopted, or the amount of money expended on primary education, India is far, far behind other civilised countries.¹¹³

Not only he cited the example of western countries such as America, England, Ireland, Denmark, the Netherland, France, Germany etc but he also placed before the council the precedent of Japan, 'which came under the influence of the West less than half a century ago, and has already successfully adopted a system of universal education.'¹¹⁴ Citing the case of Ceylon he argued, 'the conditions of Ceylon approximate closely to those of Southern India...in regard to mass education, however, Ceylon is far ahead to-day of India.'¹¹⁵ He put before the Council the testimony of Royal Education Commission (1886)¹¹⁶ of England and that of the Ceylon commission¹¹⁷ of 1905 in support of his

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 3

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁶ This commission submitted that it is to compulsion that the increase of the numbers on the roll is largely attributable. Cited in Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings*, 4.

¹¹⁷ This commission noted: with the exception of one or two districts of the island, little good will be done by any system which does not enforce compulsory attendance....that compulsory attendance is

argument for the necessity of compulsion. He was also inspired by the Gaekwad of Baroda's¹¹⁸ initiative in the direction of free and compulsory elementary education. He concluded that 'if the history of elementary education throughout the world establishes one fact more clearly than another, it is this, that without a resort to compulsion no State can ensure a general diffusion of education among its people.'¹¹⁹

Gokhale introduced certain safeguards to the Bill to assign it a permissive character.¹²⁰ One such safeguard was divulsion of responsibility of introduction of compulsory education on local bodies:

[T]he first steps in the direction of compulsion should be taken by our local bodies. And even here I am willing that the first experiment should be made in carefully selected and advanced areas only. When the public mind is familiarised with the idea of compulsion, the Government may take the succeeding steps without any hesitation or misgiving.¹²¹

This was suggested in order to meet the opposition to the bill on the ground that British Government as a foreign government cannot afford to risk the unpopularity which the measure will entail in contrast to the Gaekwad of Baroda, who was an Indian Prince and hence 'could force compulsion on his subjects without serious opposition.' Gokhale opined that local bodies 'reproduce in British territory conditions similar to those which obtain in Feudatory States,'¹²² hence, the British government could be saved from courting unpopularity on this ground. However, at the same time, he also insisted that Provincial and Imperial governments should retain ample power of control in their own hands 'to prevent injudicious zeal on the part of Local Bodies.'¹²³ Clause 3 of the Bill, directed towards this end, empowered Provincial and Imperial Government to notify areas where compulsion may be introduced. The basis of choosing a Municipality or a District Board for compulsion was the 'extent to which education is [was] already diffused within its

desirable we have no doubt. Cited in Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings*, 4.

¹¹⁸ Gaekwad of Baroda was the first among the princely states to introduce the system of free and compulsory education in his state on experimental basis in ten villages of Amreli taluka in the year 1893. In 1901, the experiment was extended to the whole Taluka and finally in 1906 primary education was made compulsory and free throughout his State for boys between the age of six and twelve, and for the girls between the ages of six and ten.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Statement of Object and Reasons, See Appendix I.

¹²¹ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 5.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 6.

area.¹²⁴ Gokhale suggested that ‘areas where one-third of the school-going age children were already at school, the question of introducing compulsion might be taken up for consideration by the Local Body’ as this limit ‘exclude for several years to come all District Boards, and bring within the range only a few of the more advanced Municipalities in the larger towns in the different Provinces.’¹²⁵

The period of compulsion, according to the Bill, was for four years between the age of six and ten to keep the burden of additional expenditure involved to minimum possible level. The bill provided for exemption from attendance on the grounds of non-availability of school within a reasonable distance (One mile) from boy’s residence, sickness, infirmity, domestic necessity, the seasonal needs of agriculture etc. (clause 5). Clause 8 of the Bill was a highly contested clause. This clause empowered the Local bodies to levy special education rate with the previous sanction of the Local Government. Though the Bill did not provide for free elementary education, it had a provision for the remission of fees if the monthly income of the parent was less than Rupees ten (Clause 9 (1)). To ensure compulsion, Clause 10 (1) of the Bill required the constitution of special school attendance committee to

make careful enquiries and prepare and maintain lists of children who should be at school within their respective areas and take whatever steps may be necessary to ensure the attendance of children at school, including the putting into operation the penal clauses of the Bill against the defaulting parents.¹²⁶

The Bill included penal clause (Clause 12 (1), (2) & Clause 13) for defaulting parents on the grounds other than those mentioned in the exemption clause. Clause 16 of the Bill sought to empower the local government to exempt certain classes or communities from compulsory education. This exemption clause remained an integral part of all the Primary Education Acts enacted later in various provinces, as will be seen in Chapter 2. As a measure of safeguard, the Bill did not apply to girls because of the ‘special difficulties likely to be experienced in extending the principle of compulsion at once to girls’¹²⁷ though Gokhale believed that ‘the education of girls is with us even a greater necessity than that of boys.’¹²⁸ Nonetheless, the Clause 17 of the bill empowered the Government to extend compulsion to girls at a later date. As far as expense on free and compulsory education was

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 6-7

¹²⁷ Ibid. 5.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 6.

concerned, Gokhale suggested that the State should bear at least two-thirds of the new expenditure and remaining one third by the local bodies. He argued:

It is obvious that the whole working of this Bill must depend, in the first instance, upon the share, which the government is prepared to bear, of the cost of compulsory education, wherever it is introduced. I find that in England the parliamentary grant covers about two-thirds of the total expenditure on elementary schools. In Scotland it amounts to more than that portion whereas in Ireland it meets practically the whole cost. I think that we are entitled to ask that in India at least two-thirds of the new expenditure should be borne by the State.¹²⁹

Gokhale emphasised that the question of universal diffusion of education depends on the ‘hearty and sympathetic co-operation of the Government and the leaders of the people.’ While the government had the responsibility of adopting the policy and thereafter providing funds for it, Gokhale insisted that the leaders of the people

must bring to this task high enthusiasm, which will be not chilled by difficulties, courage which will not shrink from encountering unpopularity, if need be, and readiness to make sacrifices, whether of money, of time or energy, which the cause may require.¹³⁰

He asserted that, if the Bill passes into law, ‘the educated classes of the country will be on their trial’¹³¹ and hoped that ‘if a beginning is made without further delay, if both the government and the people persevere with the task in the right spirit, the whole problem may be solved before another generation rises to take our place.’¹³²

1.2. Response to Gokhale’s Bill

Gokhale’s vocal attempt towards the introduction of compulsory elementary education set the stage for a lively debate on the issue, both within and without the Council. The English educated leaders influenced by Western liberal ideas supported the Bill for they believed that education should not be a monopoly of the few but should be extended to all human beings. For instance, Bhupendranath Basu argued that the light of knowledge had illuminated India since ancient times when the whole world was in darkness. But he lamented that ‘even then a large section of Indian society were [sic] submerged in utter darkness.’ Drawing upon the liberating spirit of western ideals, he urged that time has come when education should be extended to all:

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

we have felt- those of us who have been educated in Western ideals have felt- that the time has come when knowledge should no longer be the special privilege of the few but should be extended to all.¹³³

Pointing to the Brahminical monopoly of education Basu argued that ‘in our country there was compulsion in the matters educational in Hindu times. That compulsion was in favour of ignorance.’ He urged the government to favour the Bill:

Why should you not in the 20th century impose a compulsion in favour of knowledge? For, my Lord, it is the great pride of British rule in India that they have, for the first time in the History of India, made knowledge, which was the privilege of the few, the heritage of the many, and because we wish that that heritage should be extended, should be amplified, that all our countrymen should partake more largely than they do in the benefits of that heritage.¹³⁴

Another important reason for the support the Bill could garner was the safeguards included in it. The supporters of the Bill considered that the permissive character was the strongest part of the Bill. For instance, Nawab Saiyid Muhammad Bahadur¹³⁵ praised the permissive character so that at least it would enable to make a beginning in the direction of universal education of the masses. Thakur Khushapal Singh of Kotla gave his whole-hearted support to the Bill as it had enough safeguards imparting it a permissive character. Tanjore municipal council noted that the ‘bill provides sufficient safeguards against any hasty decision on the part of local body. [...] The Bill is modest and if it errs at all it errs in being somewhat over-cautious which is itself a reason for accepting it.’¹³⁶

The responsibility conferred on local bodies in the Bill to take steps towards compulsion in their area was a safeguard which was highly appreciated because it would assure that it was the result of people’s will thereby posing no danger to the government. Mazharul Haque argued that ‘responsibility of initiating compulsory education upon the people themselves’¹³⁷ would enable in securing the government’s support as it will not bring unpopularity to government. Bhupendranath Basu remarked: ‘it is not a compulsion which

¹³³ Ibid., 21.

¹³⁴ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 45.

¹³⁵ Saiyid Muhammad Bahadur was a congress man and presided over the 1913 congress at Karachi. He was nominated to the Imperial Legislative Council in 1903 as a non-official member representing the Madras Presidency and served till his death in 1919.

¹³⁶ Report of the committee to consider E.E. Bill of Gokhale, in enclosure to Letter from M. R. Ry K. Anantarama Aiyar Avargal, Chairman Municipal Council, Tanjore to Secretary to the Government, Educational Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 44, 59.

¹³⁷ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 17.

proceeds from above but it is compulsion which proceeds from below, from the very people themselves concerned in it,¹³⁸ so there should not be any objection to it. Malaviya considered it as ‘the wisest part of the Bill’ because ‘if there is to be any unpopularity created by the introduction or (sic) compulsion...it shall fall on the local bodies and not on the government.’¹³⁹ While supporters of the Bill praised the discretionary power given to local bodies to enforce the Act, the same was a cause of contention as well. Manekji Byramji Dadabhoy¹⁴⁰ saw in it ‘an element of danger’ because the local bodies were not ‘self-governing’ in the true sense of the term and were ‘more or less under official control’:

they do not entirely reflect the opinions and the wishes of the ratepayers... unless the bodies are thoroughly reconstituted on a truly popular basis, the position will remain unimproved. The power of applying the law within any Municipal area or District Board area will in practice be exercised by the District officer. The members will not count for much...no Municipality and no District board will have the temerity to seek to apply the law in opposition to the wishes of the District Officer...the District Officer will be the master of the situation, and the application or the non-application of this measure will be wholly dependent upon his will.¹⁴¹

Indeed, there was an element of danger in clause 3 of the Bill, but not as anticipated by Dadabhoy. He was concerned with the application of the law, rather than its non-application, by the officials. He was worried for the landed elite ratepayers instead of the poor peasants and feared that if officials enforced the law then landed elites would have to pay for the education of peasants, which would be an ‘unnecessary’ burden on the former. However, contrary to this there was always a higher probability of non-application of the law as the elite upper caste gentry were quite influential in these bodies and therefore, they could sway the opinion of officials against enforcement of compulsion. To reduce the official control, Dadabhoy suggested the creation of a School Board in each Division independent of the local executive and acting under the Director of Public Instruction, and to vest all the discretionary powers under the Bill in it. He further suggested that the members of the board should be elected and the qualification for the post should be payment of local rates and University education. These two conditions reflect the exclusionary character of his opinion as the little educated or illiterate peasants, working castes and the

¹³⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁴⁰ Manekji Byramji Dadabhoy was an industrialist and belonged to a highly reputed Parsi family of Bombay.

¹⁴¹ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 9

depressed castes would have no say in it and thereby ensuring that they remain outside the ambit of education (to be precise rudimentary education) forever. There were few supporters of the Bill, such as Vithaldas D. Thackersey, who did not concur with the idea of putting the responsibility on local bodies. He argued that he would have preferred that compulsory education would have been introduced as a national system by the government of India. Brushing aside the fear that government may encounter opposition from the people, he shared his first-hand experience at Baroda that the same class of people as in British India have welcomed compulsion, therefore, the fear of opposition was groundless. The Bill was also appreciated for its applicability in only selected localities, instead of entire British India, which could fulfil the condition of at least 33 per cent attendance. Jinnah's argument, while countering Sassoon David's opposition, reveals this contentment. Sassoon David outright opposed the Bill stating that 'time has not come for the introduction of free and compulsory education in India' as 'the financial position of the country does not warrant its introduction.'¹⁴² Muhammad Ali Jinnah clarified to David that 'no advocate of compulsory education has said that it should be made compulsory and free all over the country at once.'¹⁴³

The Bill was much appreciated and supported by the Press. Anglo-Indian Press such as *The Indian Daily News*, *The Times of India*, *Madras Mail and Madras Times* also supported the Principle of Gokhale's Bill. Editor of the *Indian Social Reformer* extending his support to the Bill wrote,

For our part, we support the Bill fully realising that it is less than a half measure and that it will not appreciably accelerate the pace of educational expansion. We support it nevertheless because it is an honest effort to accustom officials and non-officials in this country to the idea of compulsion in education and to reconcile them to the prospect of it.¹⁴⁴

Khalsa Advocate, on behalf of the Sikh community, extended its support to Gokhale's Bill in following terms,

we accord it [the Bill] our unstinted support. The principle of compulsion in matters of education will no doubt be an innovation so to say but it must not be forgotten that the gift of Vidya (imparting education) has been always regarded as the most precious of boons in this country...Can the Sikhs, the disciples and servants of the Gurus, then fail to hail with delight the provision of compulsory elementary education subject to such safeguards as may be found

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Indian Social Reformer*, November 26 1911, 150.

necessary...No community can be more deeply grateful for providing education and opening schools and colleges in our midst than the Sikhs.¹⁴⁵

It, however, expressed its anxiety for the literature that would be accessible to the newly literate masses:

conferring of the privilege of being able to read and write on the multitudes will mean giving them access to current literature good, bad, and indifferent, and the education of the masses may, in certain cases, result in opening up avenues of harm to the people themselves.¹⁴⁶

And urged the public leaders ‘to take steps to ensure as far as possible that unhealthy and obnoxious literature shall be weeded out by the time the masses are enabled to read and write.’¹⁴⁷

The safeguards in the Bill were also the reason for Butler’s acceptance of the Bill for circulation for general discussion. He argued the Bill was ‘like the baby in *Midshipman Easy*- a very little one’ which did not ask for the introduction of ‘general compulsion’ nor did it aim to ‘open up at once a very large and important reform.’¹⁴⁸ However, there was no dearth of those who considered that the Bill had too many safeguards to make it a dead letter. Councillor of Bezwada Municipal Council, V.L. Narasinhm Pantulu Garu opined that ‘considering the present need for mass education the Bill offers only a modicum of supply[...] the Bill errs on the side of over-caution and to some extent affects [...] the very object for which it is brought into existence.’¹⁴⁹ He suggested that a definite period of five or six years may be fixed in the Bill to bring the whole municipal area of every municipality gradually and to the districts ‘else’, he anticipated ‘it would be too long before their areas could be declared for compulsion and longer still for other parts of the country.’¹⁵⁰

After the motion for consideration of Gokhale’s Bill was carried, the Government of India asked various provincial governments to record their opinion on the Bill. As the Bill put the responsibility of enforcing the Act, if it was passed into Law, on the Local Bodies, the opinion of these bodies from various provinces was also sought. However, except Madras, no other province enquired in detail. Government of Madras asked Municipalities and District Boards to express their opinion on the Bill. Some of the District Boards in Madras

¹⁴⁵ Khalsa Advocate, 15 september 1911 in *Servant of India Society papers*, No. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 29

¹⁴⁹ Letter from V.L. Narasinhm Pantulu Garu, Municipal Council Bezwada to the Chairman Municipal Council Bezwada, legislative, legislative, No. 12, 42.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 43.

also invited the view of Taluka Boards under them. After one year of circulation for inciting public opinion, the Bill was again put in the Council for reference to a Select Committee. Discussion ensued in the Council after which the motion for referring the Bill to a Select Committee was put to vote. The motion was lost by 13 to 38 votes. Along with officials some non-official Indian members also opposed the Bill. In the proceeding paragraphs, the discussion on Gokhale's Bill within the council, opinion of gentry and local bodies outside the council have been discussed.

There were three categories of responses- first, those who gave unqualified support to the Bill without any remark on clauses of the Bill. Most of the local boards in Madras Presidency belong to this category. The public meetings of gentry held in different places in various provinces also fit in this category. Second, then there were those who supported the Principle of the Bill but objected to certain clause of the Bill, in most cases the Clause 8 and 17 or suggested amendment of few clause such as Clause 5, Clause 16 etc. The objections to the provisions of the Bill weakened their support for the Bill. This category was crucial for the government as well as for Gokhale. While Gokhale considered them to be in favour of the Bill, the government regarded them too qualified to be regarded as either neutral or against the Bill. The third category of response includes those who were opposed not only to the Principle of the Bill but also had objections to particular clauses of the Bill. These last two categories include officials as well as non-officials. A perusal of these responses points to five main tropes for opposition to the Bill. These are political, social, economic, religious and educational.

1.2.1. Political: Bill as unnecessary, premature and politically dangerous

Majority of official opinion on Gokhale's Bill concurred that the Bill was unnecessary and premature. Moreover, they thought that it might create discontent among the masses leading to political instability to the British government in India. Madras government argued that 'Bill is unnecessary, premature and open to objections of a serious character on educational, financial and political grounds.'¹⁵¹ They opined that in rural areas compulsion would arouse great hostility especially during cultivation season and the 'odium would fall entirely upon the government, for the ryot and the labourer would not understand the machinery of attendance committee' and would think that 'their appearance in the court of

¹⁵¹ Letter from L. Davidson to Secretary to Government of India, 2 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 5.

a magistrate, infliction of fine and possibly even imprisonment' are by the 'ordinary coercive procedure of the Sircar.'¹⁵² They suggested that since the government of India cannot meet the entire cost of compulsory education '[t]he alternative is the combination of compulsory methods with the imposition of a special cess.' But at the same time, they cautioned that 'in the present state of public opinion such a measure would be attended by grave political danger.'¹⁵³ On the contrary, V. Krishnaswami Aiyar¹⁵⁴ differed from the members of the Government and wrote in his note of dissent that the 'Bill is desirable & necessary; that it is conceived in best interest of education and there is no reasonable probability of political or other danger arising from its enforcement.'¹⁵⁵ He, instead, cautioned that it would be somewhat problematic for the government if they choose to resist the enlightened public opinion:

real political danger lies in resisting a large mass of enlightened opinion, supported by European missionaries and by large number of Englishmen connected with the administration of the country, so as to leave abiding source of irritation & bitterness and a standing theme for a widespread public agitation.¹⁵⁶

As far as the opinion of local bodies is concerned, majority of them favoured the principle of the Bill, but very few qualified their opinion. The President of the District Board Salem expressed his viewpoint that 'the proposal to make elementary education compulsory may be admirable in theory, but in this country it is not yet within the range of practical politics, and the Bill as it stands is premature.'¹⁵⁷ A.O. Koreishi, District Deputy Collector, Panch Mahals refuted the claim that there is a demand for universal education and argued:

demand, if at all, emanates from the educated classes, and the masses are still impervious to such a call, nay would in, many cases resent it as an encroachment on their rights...the ordinary Indian villager cannot yet dispense, cattle grazing, cattle watering etc. He has yet to learn the value of elementary education for his children as an economic asset.¹⁵⁸

In United Provinces, the Lieutenant Governor claimed that the majority of officials consulted opposed the Bill and among non-officials, fifty per cent were in favour of the bill

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ V. Krishnaswami Aiyar was Lawyer and judge of Madras High court. He was appointed by British government as a member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Madras.

¹⁵⁵ V. Krishnaswami Aiyar, Note of Dissent, 1 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Letter from L.E. Buckley, President District Board Salem to Secretary to Education Department, legislative, legislative, No. 12, 14.

¹⁵⁸ AO Koreishi, Esq, District Deputy Collector, Panch Mahals to the Collector Panch Mahals, No. 55, 124-125

and fifty per cent against it. Resisting the compulsion, he noted that ‘[s]uch introduction is not only impractical. It is fraught with serious danger.’¹⁵⁹ Dwelling on his experience with the Province for an extended period, he opined:

After thirty five years’ observation of the local conditions that the people have not yet developed sufficiently to justify this govt in applying the principles of such a bill to a single division or portion of a division in this province...there will not be an alteration in conditions likely to render an application of those principles possible in the next twenty years. Whatever be the safeguards, and whatever be the machinery employed, the result of application of those principles at the present moment or in the near future will not be likely to improve attendance...there will be a tendency for parents to nurse undeveloped grievance that education is being forced on their children, that their views are not considered and that there is an effective divorce between parental control and government orders.¹⁶⁰

Regarding penal clause of the Bill, he was quite apprehensive of its effect:

There are portions of this province where the parent if punished for omission to send to school the child whom he is training as an agriculturist may possibly retaliate on the member of the school committee responsible for his prosecution in an illegal manner... these are not unfound forebodings. Those who know the Jat agriculturists of the western districts will read them as wholesome warnings.¹⁶¹

However, such considerations for ryot’s opinion was never part of official discourse while imposing a high rate of lagans on them and use of the coercive measures by the government machinery to exact the taxes. Supporters of the Bill were charged by the Lieutenant Governor ‘to eschew facts and trust to sentiments.’¹⁶² Malaviya who had recorded his support for the Bill in the Council did not submit his opinion when invited by the Lt. Governor. This made the latter to observe that ‘there are few gentlemen in this province who are so well qualified to express views on such a subject’¹⁶³ and lamented that qualified persons as Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sundar Lal Bahadur did not submit their opinion on the Bill. So, the opinion of the supporters of the Bill was brushed aside as being sentimental, and view of those was considered necessary who did not care to submit their opinion. The ultimate aim was to corner the matter under these pretexts. One of the causes of backwardness of U.P. was the indifference of the educated elites towards the masses,

¹⁵⁹ Letter from L. Stuart, Secretary to Government of United Provinces to the Secretary to the Government of India, No. 8, Legislative, legislative, 1.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

while in Bombay and other forward provinces the educated public opinion created pressure for reforms in the educational sector. The apathy of intelligentsia led the government to hush the matters of immense public interest. D.C, Baillie, the member of Board of Revenue, United Provinces wrote to the government that:

so far as these provinces are concerned, any measure providing for compulsory education is premature by probably several generations...majority of those belonging to low caste, in these provinces, are uneducated, the proportion being one out of hundred males or in many cases, less thus making the introduction of compulsion difficult.¹⁶⁴

Therefore, he urged, 'I would not by legislation put it in the power of a comparatively small proportion of educated people to impose their own ideas upon the bulk of the people contrary to their wishes.'¹⁶⁵ The critical point to note here is that Baillie assumed that the Bill if passed onto Act, would be applicable throughout the country at once. While the Bill had an explicit provision that only those areas with 33 per cent or more children attending the school will be required to ask for compulsion. Similar objections were raised by other officials in the United Provinces. The Chamber of commerce, Cawnpore opposed the Bill because 'time is not yet ripe for the application of compulsion to the system.'¹⁶⁶ J.S. Campbell, Commissioner of Kumaon Division, considered that the Bill was 'premature and likely to prove dead letter.'¹⁶⁷ C.F. De La Fosse, Director of Public Instruction, United Provinces expressed his complete sympathy for Gokhale's Bill. Not for the necessity of the cause taken up by Gokhale but because he thought that through such a Bill based on the Irish Education Act of 1892 which had 'notoriously failed,' Gokhale was in reality not 'aiming at the introduction of the principle of compulsion.'¹⁶⁸ Further, he believed that the Bill got a good deal of support from the educated classes 'who may not be... reflecting the views of the masses,'¹⁶⁹ and who tended to be 'actuated by the motives of philanthropy (sic) and patriotism than by reason.' De La Fosse proposed that the idea of compulsion be dropped, and instead more power be conferred on Local Bodies through an Act for 'levying education rates and instituting committees in order that they may keep efficient every

¹⁶⁴ Letter from D.C. Baillie, Member Board of Revenue to the Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, legislative, No. 11, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Letter from A. D. Pickford, Assistant Secretary, Upper India, Chamber of Commerce, Cawnpore to Under Secretary to Government, U. P. Legislative, legislative, No. 8, Serial No. 14, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from J. S. Campbell, Commissioner Kumaon Division to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, legislative, No. 30, 26.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from C.F. De La Fosse, Director of Public Instruction, United Provinces, to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, legislative, No. 28, 19.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 23.

school provided by them and may provide such additional school accommodation as may from time to time be deemed necessary.’¹⁷⁰ H. Starte, Assistant Collector of Bijapur, opined:

Any attempt to apply it to the Bijapur District would be both inadvisable and highly unpopular...the most important needs in education seem to be a curriculum more useful to some of cultivators, better school buildings, better trained and better paid staff of teachers. When these have been improved and the minds of the people have become ready for compulsory education, then the time will come to consider action on the part of Government as contemplated in the present Bill.¹⁷¹

The Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab noted that ‘the majority of the people of this province are at present strongly opposed not merely to compulsory education but to any education whatever.’ He further opined that, ‘the favourable reception accorded to the Bill both in the press and on the platform is due not so much to any intimate merit in the Bill as to the immense popularity enjoyed by the Hon’ble mover of the Bill.’¹⁷² Similar opinion was expressed by Butler in the Council during the discussion on the Bill. He attributed the support to the principle of the Bill by local boards to ‘his [Gokhale’s] persuasive eloquence.’ Gokhale replied that he did not attend ‘a single Board meeting anywhere.’ Butler argued ‘It was not necessary. The Hon’ble member’s influence is so great that he hypnotises from a distance.’¹⁷³

Apart from officials, some non-officials considered the Bill to be politically dangerous. Nawab Muhammad Abdul Mazid’s views are worth noting here for the severity of his remarks and for instilling the fear of insurgency if the Bill was passed into law. He wrote to the government in most scathing terms that under the extant circumstances ‘education should never be made compulsory’ and that the ‘introduction of compulsory education will be the introduction of an innovation unheard of in India.’¹⁷⁴ He asserted that the Bill would create discontentment among the masses because the punishment for non-attendance and for employing boys in notified areas ‘is a thing which will go a great deal to produce a feeling of discontent. Government will be considered to be cause of all this and will be held

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ H. Starte, Assistant Collector, Central Division, Bijapur to the Collector of Bijapur, 19th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, no. 55, 161.

¹⁷² *The Elementary Education Bill*, Legislative, Legislative, A, June 1912, no. 37, p. 5.

¹⁷³ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 38.

¹⁷⁴ Letter from Nawab Muhammad Abdul Majid, Barrister-at-Law, of Allahabad to the Under Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, Dated 11 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 45, 74.

responsible for the consequences.’¹⁷⁵ Regarding the compulsion in rural areas he cautioned the government in the following terms:

As a loyal subject of the Crown, I most humbly submit that education in rural areas will mean the spread of discontent in a wider area. When control of seditionists, and of those who are discontented in towns, is already taxing the energies of the Government to its utmost, what will be the result when such an area is expanded, is not for me to foretell. The experience of towns is an incontrovertible proof that the result will be most disastrous to the welfare of the country.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, he warned the government about the spread of socialist ideas if compulsion was brought into force:

The Government of India and the landed classes will then be put to face a dangerous labour problem. Socialist ideas which are absent from our country, are bound to come into existence. The people who are in affluent circumstances will be looked upon with envious eyes. Their wealth will be considered to be illegal gains which will be considered to be fit to be divided among all.¹⁷⁷

Another cause of disharmony, according to Majid, would be annoyance among the ‘lowest classes, who for centuries have been following their professions quietly [...] and will blame the State, and instead of thanking the Government, will on the contrary abuse the Government.’¹⁷⁸ Mirza Habib Husain, Headmaster at Hosainabad High School, Lucknow submitted a comprehensive report, running in 18 pages, to the Government. He believed that to make ‘elementary education free and compulsory in India as a whole or any portion thereof, is premature, impracticable and harmful for the people and dangerous for the State.’¹⁷⁹ While agreeing to the Principle of Gokhale’s Bill, he criticised him for not taking the actualities of life in India under consideration, as there can be no comparison between India and European countries or the native State of Baroda. Regarding Baroda, he argued that the masses of Baroda believe in the ‘divine right of the ruler’ and this ‘simple thing can make things possible in a native state which are not possible here in British Territory.’ Moreover, he opined, in a native State ‘the words of the rulers are final’ and what is possible

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 29-30.

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Nawab Muhammad Abdul Majid, Barrister-at-Law, of Allahabad to the Under Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, Dated 11 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 45, 74.

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Mirza Habib Husain, Hosainabad High school, Lucknow to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, No. 13, Serial no. 64, 17.

‘on a small scale is not necessarily possible on a large scale.’¹⁸⁰ Valentine Chirol argued that the Bill was valued ‘in the minds of disaffected politicians,’ because it encourages

the hope that the extension of primary schools may serve, as has that of secondary schools, to promote the dissemination of seditious doctrines, especially among the ‘depressed castes’ to which the political agitator has so far but rarely secured access.¹⁸¹

The *Spectator* raised an alarm that the army of unsatisfied teachers would become an army of agitators and eventually would pose a danger to British rule:

There are already over 100,000 teachers engaged in giving elementary education in India, and if education became compulsory it is calculated that this figure would be multiplied five. As their salaries at present average only just over 10s a month, they would have every reason to be discontented with their lot, and in this way we should secure the presence of an army of agitators largely of our own raising.¹⁸²

Another objection raised by *Spectator* was that due to increased taxation, the burden would also fall on poor peasants who in turn may cause agitation and unrest. Hence it observed: ‘India, therefore, must go without an extension of elementary education. Ignorance spells contentment, and ignorant the masses must in consequence remain.’¹⁸³

Nonetheless, the supporters of the Bill refuted such apprehensions and urged the government to make a beginning in the direction of compulsion by referring the Bill to Select Committee. R.N. Mudholkar argued:

Whatever other criticism may be passed upon the Bill it cannot be said that it exposes the Government to this risk. On the contrary, it throws upon the leaders of the people- the aristocracy of birth, wealth and talent- the responsibility for taking the necessary action for opening the doors of knowledge to the ignorant and the depressed masses. I do not think that the government would have incurred any odium if they have taken the initiative and brought forward a measure similar to Mr Gokhale’s.¹⁸⁴

Further he brought to the notice of government that apart from Indian National Congress and the Muslim League the Mahars, at the Conference of Mahars, ‘have stated their conviction that general education is the first requisite for the amelioration of the condition

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in *India*, 15 October 1911, in *Servant of India Society Papers*, F. No. 10.

¹⁸² *India*, 15 October 1911, Mr. Gokhale’s Education Bill, Attack by the “*Spectator*,” *Servant of India Society Papers*, F.No. 10.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Rao Bahadur R. N. Mudholkar to the Deputy Commissioner Amraoti, 4 June 1911, Legislative, Legislative, no. 51, 107.

of the depressed classes and have expressed their approval of the elementary education Bill.’ Moreover, he argued, ‘[o]ne has only to move among mill hands, factory operatives and artisans to see how widespread is the appreciation of education among the working classes. They would certainly welcome all action calculated to give them better opportunities and facilities.’¹⁸⁵ The President of Southern Maratha Jain Association urged the government that they should not fear political danger to their rule in India due to acceptance of the measures of the Bill and extolled the government for their courageous steps such as Banning of *Sati* despite oppositions:

The Government have happily shown that they are far too strong to be in any way deterred from following a beneficent course by the chances of their actions being interpreted into injustice or oppression. They have stopped *sati* and thus come in the way of a time-honoured barbarism. They have espoused the cause of the child-wife and aroused the forces of reactionism. They have given political concessions and thereby enabled the revolutionary extremists to attribute weakness to the government. All these and a host of other measures bespeak the possession by Government of a sufficient amount of courage not to waver for a moment from taking every advancing step in the great work of educating the masses of India.¹⁸⁶

They advised the government that non-acceptance may arouse anarchists to accuse the government of rejecting the Bill. ‘Not because they thought it to be too premature or financially heavy, but because it would have emancipated the masses of India and the Government did not wish that this should be so!’¹⁸⁷ therefore it would be in the interest of the government to give their approval to the Bill. Malaviya argued that when compulsory vaccination was introduced people had to subject themselves to the provisions of the Vaccination Act ‘whether they will it or not’ and that ‘nobody has heard that the people have strongly resented it, much less it has led to riots or disorder.’ He further asserted that the people had to submit to the introduction of water works and drainage ‘for general good, and have had to pay taxes, to undergo hardships, prosecutions, and so on.’ Based on these examples, he opined that even if people are not prepared to accept it ‘the principle of compulsion has to be introduced’ and ‘it only casts an additional duty upon us to educate them to do so.’¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Letter from Payapa Jakkapa, President Southern Maratha Jain Association to Government of Bombay, 27 October 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 25, 3.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 69.

1.2.2. Social factors

The complex social structure of Indian society characterised by the caste system was a very crucial factor in the denial of education to lowly and downtrodden masses belonging to lower and depressed castes. The debate on the elementary education bill, therefore, could not remain untouched by the issue of caste and it provided the complexity to the question of universal education. There were objections to Gokhale's Bill because he had presented an analogy of countries where rigid distinctions of caste did not exist and that the Indian social structure was not comparable to that of countries of the West. Harcourt Butler pointed out: 'the genesis of this Bill was not a spontaneous demand by the people who were likely to be affected by it, but a vague desire for progress based upon a statistical comparison of India with other countries.'¹⁸⁹ He further argued that the case of India was different as

India, with its numerous and varying types of men, its 1,400 castes and sects, its multiform creeds and languages, its many scripts...with its early marriage and its seclusion of women- India, I say, cannot usefully be compared with countries where none of these obstacles exist, where there are no untouchable castes.¹⁹⁰

President of the District Board Nilgiris, P.S.P. Rice opined that the case of England and India was not comparable as England was a rich and heavily taxed country with well-educated people as compared with the masses in India. L.J. Sedwick, Assistant Collector, Karad Division was not in favour of the Bill as 'the difference between conditions of India now and the condition of England and Ireland when compulsory education was introduced is enormous...the percentage of educated persons at present existing in India is far less than in the other two cases.'¹⁹¹ A.O. Koreishi, District Deputy Collector, Panch Mahals submitted:

In my humble opinion, the time has not yet arrived when elementary education in India can be made either free or compulsory, it is futile and misleading to compare India with any European country or even an Asiatic island where the conditions are totally different from those that obtain in India...in India, half or nearly a half of the population (barring the negligible percentage of educated females) is still by religion, custom or habit excluded from free movement in society and from participating in the benefits of education. Under such circumstances, it is unfair to compare the progress of education in European countries with that of India. The comparison with the Philippines, Ceylon and

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Letter from L. J. Sedwick, Assistant Collector, Karad Division, to the Collector of Satara, 10 June 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 138.

Baroda is equally inappropriate since the former two, apart from the advantage gained by their insular position, have been under European influence and domination for a much longer period than India has been, and the latter does not reckon amongst its population so heterogeneous a mass as the rest of India. Baroda, perhaps, is a most favoured tract for a system of universal education. It is compact, and in that sense homogeneous, and the territory is mostly situated amidst a rich fertile country bereft of the disadvantage which cling to some other parts of India. The population is chiefly of the higher order or of the Ujli-paraj class, and hence there is not the same difficulty which would be met with in other parts of India.¹⁹²

Interestingly, he argued that the percentage of the population receiving elementary education in India would double itself 'if half of the total population (i.e. females) who, by custom and tradition have never, until very recently, been in receipt of education, is excluded from calculation.' He further asserted, 'this percentage would easily beat that of the more or less homogeneous Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain if a further reduction is made from heterogeneous Indian population of aborigines, low castes, and depressed classes.'¹⁹³ Thus, by excluding the 'less eligible' from the scheme of education, Koreishi recorded his appraisal of the British government's effort towards educating the upper caste male. Chief Commissioner of central province remarked:

In none of the countries mentioned is there the same language difficulty; in none of these countries are there the same varieties of script; in none of these is there the same diversity of religion; and in none of these is the same sex differentiation. Last but not least, in none of them does any question arise of low castes, untouchables & pariahs.¹⁹⁴

Mirza Habib Husain argued that 'England was not a (sic) agricultural country... nor did there exist people in countless numbers who could be considered worse than "dogs & cats" and whose touch (if not very shadow) would pollute a fellow citizen.'¹⁹⁵ He opined that for one school elsewhere in the world, India would require at least five schools, and in some provinces not less than seven on the grounds of sex, language, and caste. First of all, he suggested, two separate schools for the two sexes will be required. The language issue between Hindus and Muhammadans will 'immediately on the introduction of compulsion' become 'ten times more serious than at present.' Thus, the language question, coupled with

¹⁹² Letter from A.O. Koreishi, District Deputy Collector, Panch Mahals to the Collector Panch Mahals, Legislative, Legislative, no. 55, 124-125.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ *The Elementary Education Bill*, Legislative, Legislative, A, June 1912, no. 37, 7-8.

¹⁹⁵ Letter from Mirza Habib Husain, Hosainabad High school, Lucknow to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, No. 13, Serial No. 64, 6.

sex prejudice, would necessitate the provision of four schools (two for boys and two for girls). Next, he pointed out, that higher castes do not allow their children to sit with depressed castes and 'efforts to educate them together have failed and often ended up in disastrous results.' He substantiated this fact by quoting the census report of 1901, which stated:

Cases are by no means rare where the efforts made to enforce an equality of treatment for the depressed castes have led to large schools remaining closed for years and even to the disturbances of the peace and the destruction by fire of the crops and huts of the people belonging to these castes.¹⁹⁶

Thus, in total, five schools would be required corresponding to one school anywhere in the world, as per Husain's calculation. For untouchable class, he did not consider a separate school for boys and girls as he wanted to 'curtail the expenditure' and believed that for these classes 'boys and girls will, therefore, be huddled together in one school till they are sufficiently enlightened to demand, like other, separate schools for girls.'¹⁹⁷ He urged that under such circumstances the expenditure on education need to be multiplied with five and it would be impossible for a poor country like India to bear such a huge cost. A large proportion of this expenditure would fall on poor shoulders in the form of increased taxation and special education rate. This would inevitably lead to discontent among the masses. Thus, 'the question of the dangers to the state...lurks behind the proposed legislation.'¹⁹⁸ Hamid Ali Khan, Barrister-at-law, noted that the two countries England and India, are so dissimilar that no comparison is possible. Referring to the caste system in India, he opined that Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya & the Sudra have their functions assigned to them from time immemorial and which each of them is best fitted to perform. He remarked, even free and compulsory education cannot make Sudra into Brahman as, 'for untold years of drudgery and slavery have killed in him the very germs of those qualities and characteristics which distinguishes a Brahman.'¹⁹⁹ For England, he asserted:

England is perfect stranger to caste system. There a Sudra becomes a Brahman. A common labourer may one day become professor of a university or Prime Minister of England... it will take centuries and centuries, I say before you will

¹⁹⁶ Census Report 1901, quoted in Letter from Mirza Habib Husain, Hosainabad High school, Lucknow to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, No. 13, Serial No. 64, 13.

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Mirza Habib Husain, Hosainabad High school, Lucknow to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, No. 13, Serial No. 64, 13.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹⁹ Letter from Hamid Ali Khan, Barrister-at-Law to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 19, 9-10.

be able, by means of education, to turn, if at all, the materials of a raw *Julaha* into a genuine *Saiyid*.²⁰⁰

The Zamindar association of Muzaffarnagar though approved the principle of the Bill they, however, were cautious in that 'it should not be made compulsory at once for all classes of people irrespective of caste and class.'²⁰¹ They suggested to the government that 'great care will have to be exercised in this direction with a view to the effect it might produce on the menial classes in allowing them to give up their profession for higher advancement in social scale.'²⁰² They opined that other countries do not have caste or social system like that in India and hence in those countries education to the masses could be given without any interference with social or religious customs

but in India social customs are so fixed & crystallized and the principle of heredity is so imbued in the distribution of social and economic duties that anything that is likely to lead to future disturbances & difficulties should be carefully avoided.²⁰³

These testimonies point to the fact that the distinguishing feature of the objections or opposition to the Bill, was the persistent anxiety of upper caste and landed elites (Hindu and Muslims) for the disruption of 'harmony' of caste-based social structure which assigned occupation based on the accident of birth rather than on the basis of one's aptitude and merit. There were three threads of argument for opposition to compulsory education:

1. First was the problem of pollution of caste Hindu children by those of the so-called untouchable children.
2. Second, there was great anxiety among upper castes, endorsed and reinforced by Muslim landholders and British officials, that once educated the lower castes would turn their head away from their ancestral occupation and would clamour for government jobs.
3. As a solution to this problem, it was contended that lower caste does not need similar education to that available to upper castes, that is literary education. Their education should have a utilitarian bias so that they do not alienate from their occupation assigned to them by their position in the caste system.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 10.

²⁰¹ Letter from Lala Sukhbir Sinha, Honorary Secretary Zamindar Association to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 20, 12.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

1.2.2.1. Problem of untouchability

Untouchability was a significant obstacle in the education of depressed castes or the so-called untouchables. A detailed discussion of the issues concerning the education of untouchables has been undertaken in Chapter 3. Here an attempt is made to shed light on the debates concerning compulsory education of these castes. The explicit mention of the problem arising out of compulsion viz. the mixing of upper caste children with untouchables has been found in the opinion of local bodies. For instance, Malabar District Board, though approved of the general principle of the Bill, at the same time maintained that introduction of compulsion in areas under the board was a matter of grave practical difficulty. For the number of new schools required to be opened would be more than generally estimated for each desam of the district because of caste and religious distinctions. The President wrote:

In Malabar caste distinctions are sharply defined and caste feelings runs high. The mappilla will not send his children, as, it is to the Hindu school, and as matters stand at present, it is impossible to imagine a high caste Nayar boy seated side by side on the same bench with a cheruma or a Nayadi or a Paraya boy. It is extremely likely that in order to make even compulsion serve which the Hon'ble Gokhale has in view, two or three schools would be required in every desam.²⁰⁴

There were also suggestions to add the phrase 'on the score of social customs' in Clause 5 as an excuse for non-attendance of untouchable children to avoid mixing of untouchables with high caste children. The District Board Tinnevely, for instance, was 'unanimously of opinion' that in the Clause 5, regarding exemption from compulsory attendance, the phrase 'or on the score of social customs' should be added after the phrase 'on religious grounds' to protect children belonging to higher castes whose parents 'may be unwilling to allow their children to mix with pupils belonging to the low castes.'²⁰⁵ They further suggested that 'provision for separate schools for higher and lower castes is necessary' to avoid the 'withdrawal of the boys of the higher castes from the school' due to admission of lower caste boys in the same school and that in the absence of separate schools 'the high caste boys would be denied the advantage of elementary education.'²⁰⁶ The Board emphatically wrote: 'there can be no doubt that in this Bill the caste question is one of much difficulty

²⁰⁴ Letter from C.A. Innes, President District Board Malabar to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 6.

²⁰⁵ Letter from R. W. D'E Ashe. President District Board Tinnevely to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 21.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

and of the very greatest importance.’²⁰⁷ Similar recommendation was made by the Municipal Council Palamcottah because, the council reasoned, admission of a Panchama boy may lead to such schools being

deserted by all the high caste boys. In such cases the Panchama parent would be in fix if he is to be prosecuted for not sending his son to a school where he is not likely to have a proper reception. In the same manner the parent of a boy of a high caste will find it hard if he is compelled to send his boy to a school where there are low caste boys as will happen to be the case where isolated high caste houses are situated in a village abandoning in low caste people. It would take a long time before caste differences are eradicated even in civilised centres.²⁰⁸

Chanda Municipal Committee expressed their apprehension regarding caste mixing in the following terms:

Parents belonging to the higher Hindu castes will very generally object to send the boys to school where they will come into contact with low caste boys. The effect of such objection is likely to be that many boys of high caste parents who are too poor to educate their children at home will go without tuition, whereas the bulk of the boy of the lower castes will be educated. The committee are however unable to suggest a way in which the difficulty, may be overcome.²⁰⁹

In a memorandum submitted to C.A.C Streatfeild, District officer of Benares Division, it was urged that it would not be practical to ‘compel a young Brahman boy to go to the same school as a chamar.’²¹⁰ The fear of pollution by the touch of lower caste children was so intense in the mind of upper caste that they did not consider a separate sitting arrangement of lower castes, in the same classroom, as a remedy enough to overcome the pollution problem because there were chances of getting polluted during play. This trepidation can be seen in the following argument of Chanda Municipal Committee: ‘[I]t would not help very much to arrange for high and low caste children to sit separately during tuition as that would not prevent the children coming into contact while playing, etc.’²¹¹ L.J. Sedwick, Assistant Collector, Karad Division, wrote that Mamlatdars are generally in favour of the Bill and demand that ‘the depressed classes should be exempted from the operation of the

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Letter from K. G. Krishnaswami Aiyar, Chairman Municipal Council Palamcottah to the Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 39.

²⁰⁹ Proceeding of a special meeting of the Municipal committee Chanda to consider Gokhale’s Bill, Legislative Legislative, No. 51, 92.

²¹⁰ Letter from H.V. Lovett, Commissioner of Benares division to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 17, 4.

²¹¹ Proceeding of a special meeting of the Municipal committee Chanda to consider Gokhale’s Bill, Legislative Legislative, No. 51, 92.

Bill for the present.²¹² President District Board Salem thought that compulsion would serve to harass poor Panchamas whose children have a share in earning their livelihood:

Most Hindus of the four upper classes realise the benefits of education and compulsion is not needed. It is the panchama class that will be most affected by the Bill...it would be cruel kindness to compel a child of 8 or 9 to go to school when he is in a position to earn Rs 3 as his master's dog boy. Compulsion will unnecessarily harass those educating their children in their own way and prove a hardship to those most likely to benefit by literary education.²¹³

P. D. Kirane, Mamlatdar of Bhimthadi, submitted:

If compulsion is resorted to in the case of boys between six and ten years of age, the present attendance of 460 would increase by some 200 boys...Most of these additional 200 boys would have to come from depressed classes, such as Mahars, Mangs and the like, and not from any other higher classes, for the latter have already been sending their boys to school, as soon as they reach the school going age. Experience as regards the depressed classes has not been very encouraging. We have seen that the attempts of the Municipality to educate the boys of these classes by affording them every possible facility and concession, have not been successful, and it is even doubtful how far the proposed compulsion will have any salutary effect on them. I am therefore humbly of opinion that unless and until these classes are sufficiently impressed, in course of time, with advantages of education, the compulsion sought to be introduced, will perhaps have its ill effects.²¹⁴

There is evidence from Chairman District council, Sagour which reveals that the education of depressed castes was not a matter of concern for the local bodies. These castes were, in a sense, non-existent for these bodies, as far as schooling of their children was concerned. Despite the exclusion of a section of the population from school, the Chairman of District Council considered that compulsory education was already in force because all the children of respectable castes were at school. The Chairman presented the statistics of a typical village karrapur according to which within a radius of one mile from the school out of 131 boys between 6 and 10 years of age, inclusive, 48 boys attended the school and 31 boys belonging to very low caste, mostly chamars did not attend the school.²¹⁵ According to him, compulsion was already in force as

²¹² Letter from L. J. Sedwick, Assistant Collector, Karad Division, to the Collector of Satara, 10 June 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 138.

²¹³ Report of the Sub-Committee appointed to consider the Elementary Education Bill, 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 16.

²¹⁴ P. D. Kirane, Mamlatdar Bhimthadi to Collector of Poona, 25th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 156.

²¹⁵ Letter from C. Brown, Chairman District Council to the Deputy commissioner Sagour, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 95.

the kotwar goes round the village every morning to call boys to school. Parents who refuse to send their children are, in many districts, brought to the tahsil headquarters and admonished. If the attendance at a particular school is low, the mukkaddam and kotwar are blamed by the executive authorities.

However, he added that ‘such pressure is only applied to parents living near a school, perhaps within a mile, and only to parents not entirely destitute, belonging to the more respectable castes.’²¹⁶ Thus, though the intended beneficiaries of compulsory education were out of school still compulsion was considered to be in force.

The exemption of depressed castes using Clause 16 of the Bill, for whom the compulsion was of utmost importance, was also recommended by several local bodies. The Malabar District Board suggested that to overcome the problem of contact by lower castes ‘some of the lower castes can be exempted from compulsion under clause 16 of the Bill’ though they fully recognised the fact that ‘it is just these lower castes that compulsion is intended to get hold of.’²¹⁷ The collector of Ballia came up with the proposition that to overcome the ‘great difficulties’ that ‘would arise on account of caste feelings the unclean castes would have to be exempted.’²¹⁸ He noted that clause 5 would almost be impossible to continue or it might be held to include the whole agricultural community or might include all Brahmans, to avoid problems arising out of caste mixing. It is interesting to note here that how Clause 5 and 16 of the Bill intended as a safeguard was under threat of abuse during early stages of the Bill itself. Sensing the danger of misuse of the Clause 16 the Principal of Queen’s College, Benares criticised it and asked: ‘Is this an attempt to compromise with caste prejudices, so that, wherever it may be expedient, the Chamar or Bhangi or some untouchable class may be “exempted” – in plain language, excluded- from the privilege of compulsory education?’²¹⁹ On the whole, he opined that ‘present is not the moment for legislation in the nature of experimental interference with conditions to which analogies drawn from the West have often proved to be inapplicable at the end.’²²⁰ The Municipal Council Ootacamund opined that ‘the provision of the Bill exempting different classes [Clause 16] are so vague as to render the measure largely inoperative.’²²¹-Raja Muhammad

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Letter from C.A. Innes, President District Board Malabar to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 6.

²¹⁸ Letter from L. M. Jopling, Collector Ballia to H.V. Lovett, Commissioner of Benares division, No. 17, Legislative, legislative, p. 8.

²¹⁹ Letter from A. Venis, Principal Queen’s college Benares to Secretary to the Government of U. P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 22, 13.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Letter from E.F. Handcock, Chairman Municipal Council Ootacamund to the Secretary to Education

Ali Muhammad Khan of Kaisarbagh Lucknow, opined that the safeguards in the Bill are a testimony to the fact that the author of the Bill is convinced that ‘even in the smallest area the introduction of the element of compulsion is impossible without making a number of exceptions and still he insists on its introduction.’ And according to him, ‘these exceptions... are of a nature which takes away the compulsory character of the measure.’²²² He pointed out that the local committee, which had been entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing compulsion or exemption, would consist of members of various castes, religions, professions and different customs and habits and

it is hopeless to expect a body composed of such units to act in union especially at a time like the present when the political interests of the various classes in India are at conflict and when education alone has been found to be the only passport to success.²²³

He pointed to the education of depressed classes who were classified as Hindus in the census in order ‘to obtain numerical superiority with a view to gain political ends.’²²⁴ He objected to the analogy of Western countries, presented by Gokhale in his speech, as in ‘Europe education had to be enforced on a people who were one nation, spoke the same language, had almost the same religion, and were bound by the same social & moral rules as those by whom the law was enforced.’²²⁵ He opined that the ‘Bill with all its safeguards, is imperfect, unworkable and total [sic] unsuited to the needs of the country’ and refused to use compulsion ‘to gain political ends’ and suggested to make education within reach of all by making it free for all those ‘who cannot afford to pay for it.’²²⁶ Dadabhoy considered that the problem of the caste system in India would require separate school for higher and depressed castes, which would further increase the cost of education:

The problem has become infinitely more difficult in India by the caste prejudices of the people, and there is a consensus of opinion that high-caste boys will not join the same school as ‘untouchables.’ We want, therefore, a very much larger number of schools than what the population would otherwise require. This means increased cost.²²⁷

Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 45.

²²² Letter from Raja Muhammad Ali Muhammad, Kaisarbagh Lucknow, to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 24, 15.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 16.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., 17.

²²⁷ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 19.

The problem of pollution gave rise to another issue of separate schools for depressed castes. As this would incur more expenditure, the idea of compulsion was downplayed. The above testimonies reveal this ugly aspect of debates on compulsory education.

1.2.2.2. Alienation of lower castes from their hereditary occupation

Another contested issue that came up during the debate on compulsion was the upper caste anxiety regarding the estrangement of lower castes from their ancestral occupation. This was supposed to have three effects. First, alienation from ancestral occupation would not only create a scarcity of labour, but it would also lead to upward social mobility, which was unacceptable for those who have been oppressing them for generations. Second, the exploitation of literate peasant or other manual workers would be difficult once they become literate and aware of their rights. Thirdly, it would increase competition in the job market. These anxieties of upper caste and upper-class gentry and British officials are reflected in the following paragraphs on the debate on Elementary Education Bill.

During the introduction of the Bill in the Legislative Council, the Maharaja of Burdwan scathingly rebuked the idea of compulsion as it would raise the aspirations of lower castes:

I beg leave to state that if his [Gokhale's] intention be to educate the poorer classes of Indians, the lower classes among whom we find mostly agriculturists or artisans, then remembering that a practical training of their special professions is also very necessary, should we always encourage this acquisition of a little learning?...I doubt very much, my Lord, if all these little luminaries who would come out from these schools would condescend to look after their ancestral homely occupations or would rather be inclined to get a cosy room and an electric punkah.²²⁸

Gangadhar Rao Chitnavis,²²⁹ as a Landholder, expressed his worry for the problem arising out of educating the lower classes. For him the problem was not the 'temporary diversion of infant labourers from the field and the workshop to the school' but 'it is the tendency of all intellectual education to breed in the recipient a distaste for manual labour and thus to wean him from the family pursuits that contain the germs of an evil, insidious but potent.'²³⁰ He lamented that the caste system 'has already divorced labour from intellect thus

²²⁸ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 11.

²²⁹ Chitnavis represented the Landholders constituency from the Central Provinces & Berar from 1895 to 1916. He was awarded Knighthood by the British Government on 12 December 1911.

²³⁰ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 12.

producing abnormal conditions in the labour market.’ Here he did not mean to correct the wrong done by the caste system by educating the labouring castes, but contrary to this he expressed his anxiety for the ‘large intellectual class’ which the caste system had produced and ‘whose well-being is a matter of serious concern to Government.’ He, therefore, warned that ‘[a]nything which swells this class, without a commensurate widening of the area of employment, must be viewed with alarm.’²³¹ Thus, Chitnavis considered the education of lower castes as a danger to the interest of the upper caste in the job market where the entry of the former would create competition for the latter. To prevent this, he opposed the education of lower and the depressed castes and raised the alarm that ‘education, ill-directed and not properly controlled, has its evils.’²³² He reiterated the same opinion when the Bill was being discussed in the Council after one year. Chitnavis questioned the utility of educating lower castes for instead of improving the labour this would develop in him the longing for leisure and distaste for manual work:

Moreover, it is a question if, after all, so large an expenditure should be incurred, perhaps at the expense of the other legitimate duties of the local bodies. Doubts have been raised about the utility of rudimentary knowledge among the working classes. Agricultural labour, far from improving, deteriorates in quality also from disregard to irksome details and want of application which association in early life with better classes of people, absence of manual labour during a long period and the vitiated taste for ease inseparable from school produce in the recipient.²³³

Raghunath Narsinha Mudholkar²³⁴ gave a befitting reply to Maharaja of Burdwan’s and Chitnavis’s claim that education of lower castes would alienate them from their profession.

He retorted:

When it is stated that a knowledge of three Rs, would turn the head of a boy and make him unfit to follow his vocation in life, that an agriculturist’s son would sit in his room and ask for an electric fan, I am forced to say that the actualities of life are not taken into consideration and the experience of other people are entirely forgotten.²³⁵

It is interesting to note here that Mudholkar’s statement is an attempt to pacify the opponents’ anxiety by convincing them that even after being educated they will not aim for government jobs or crave for better facilities as their life circumstances would not permit

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 22.

²³⁴ Mudholkar was elected into the Council from Central provinces.

²³⁵ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 14.

that. Instead, he argued, they would become skilled agriculturist and labourers as the examples from other countries such as America suggests. He exemplified that in America, not only the education of captains, foremen or overseer was important but those of ‘actual workers- the operatives is also universally recognised...and equally conducive to the improvement of industries.’²³⁶ Regarding peasants, he opined that their education would enable them to read the leaflets and tracts issued by the agricultural department which would not only be beneficial to them but also the efforts of the government would be rewarded:

The agricultural department is issuing in several provinces most useful leaflets and tracts for the purpose of suggesting various things of advantage to the agriculturist...and if those who are against this kind of primary education would not give that little modicum of knowledge, which would enable those people to read these leaflets and pamphlets, not only would the purpose of Government be defeated but those men would be kept forever in darkness and poverty.²³⁷

Similar arguments were made by R. R. Gangoli that,

[t]here may be few cases in which the heads of the boys may be turned in the early stages of transition but their aspirations are bound to be limited to the actual circumstances of their families and to the money which they can command.²³⁸

These remarks point to the fact that the upper caste gentry, influenced by liberal ideas of the West, supported the Bill. Nonetheless, they could not entirely do away with the upper caste anxieties and tried to console their caste brethren and themselves that life situations of the lower and depressed caste would not permit them to move upwards in socio-economic scale. Another argument put forth by Mudholkar in favour of education of masses was that educated masses would facilitate better governance when more power was conferred to local bodies as a result of progressive decentralisation. This idea took further roots after Reforms of 1919 as will be seen in Chapter 2. Contesting the remark of Dadabhoj that little learning is dangerous thing Vithaldas D. Thackersey retorted:

I cannot understand how it can be dangerous if a poor agriculturist can read and write and put his signature to Marwari bills after reading the amount that is mentioned therein, instead of as at present without knowing what the bill contains. I cannot understand how it would be dangerous for these illiterate people if they were prevented from being defrauded by moneylenders and by those who buy their produce. I do not understand how it would be dangerous if they kept their accounts and were in touch with the central markets and knew

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ R. R. Gangoli, President Karwar Municipality to the Collector of Kanara, 8th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 168.

exactly how their prices compared to the central markets. Well Sir, I cannot understand how it would be dangerous if they could read the leaflets that have been the results of experiments obtained at enormous expense to the Government of India. They could see the fares mentioned on the railways tickets and thus make it unnecessary for the railways to employ special jamadars, as is now the case, to prevent the people from being defrauded by the railway servants. And above all, Sir, I cannot understand how it would be dangerous if they got the benefit of the newspapers now-a-days published for their benefit at great expense from the public Exchequer.²³⁹

H. R. Nevill, District officer of Ghazipur, diluted the entire idea of compulsion and recommended its enforcement be confined to only ‘those sections of the community which in the past have been regarded as educated classes; and to such educated classes there is no need to apply compulsion.’²⁴⁰ He urged that the majority of the population, which is agriculturist believes that education ‘is positively antagonistic to agriculture.’²⁴¹ He suggested that before the general scheme of education is attempted on a large scale, it would be better not to ignore the existence of caste and traditional occupations and work along the line of technical education to these castes. Nevil demanded that in view of such issues, Clause 6 should be scrapped as it ‘aims a blow at many industries, in which parents depend on the co-operation of their children.’ Moreover, he argued, ‘injury to such industries will be more than temporary because the educated child despises, and in most cases, desires to depart from his traditional occupation.’²⁴² W.S. Cassels, District officer of Nainital, pointed out that ‘that in the District of Nainital uneducated persons chiefly belong to lowest castes’ but ‘there is a little demand amongst the lowest castes for elementary education.’ He also revealed that even if any demand for education exists among lower castes ‘it is not encouraged by the teachers, who belong usually to higher castes.’²⁴³

It was feared that the compulsion would hamper agricultural productivity. One Ganeshram from Raipur with particular reference to Chhattisgarh apprehended that if compulsion were introduced, it would severely undermine the agriculturists in their ordinary avocations. However, he opined that ‘this law should come into force in more advanced and enlightened areas where agriculture is not the chief or main occupation of the people.’²⁴⁴ Instead of

²³⁹ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁴⁰ Letter from H.R. Nevill, District Officer Ghazipur to H.V. Lovett, Commissioner of Benares division, Legislative, Legislative, No. 17, 6.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid., 7.

²⁴³ Letter from W.S. Cassels, District Officer of Nainital to J. S. Campbell, Commissioner Kumaon Division, 8th June 1911, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 8, Serial No. 30, 26.

²⁴⁴ Ganeshram to Deputy Commissioner Raipur, 18th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 105.

appreciating the Bill for the promotion of education among peasant and other manual working castes apprehensions were raised by local bodies that these ignorant masses would not appreciate the effort of government but would develop discontent. K. J. Agashe argued that instead of compulsion persuasion should be followed because compulsion

will create discontent among the ignorant and illiterate population of village. There is an idea prevailing in their minds that education, no matter whether it is primary or secondary, enervates the body, makes a man unfit for agricultural and other manual labour...Instead of producing good results it will create a feeling of dissatisfaction in the minds of the classes for whose benefit the Bill is intended.²⁴⁵

Similarly, A.R. Gulwadi opined that the Bill would not be welcomed by Kunbis as they ‘cannot spare their boys of school-going age to attend schools for acquiring a knowledge of the three R’s to the detriment of light field work that is gradually got done by these boys.’ He suggested that section 16 of the Bill would be helpful in such cases to exempt ‘Kunbis and such other classes who are most backward and who may not be ready for more than one reason for sending their boys to schools.’²⁴⁶ Thus, the exemption clause was not only suggested for exempting untouchables, as discussed in the last section but also agricultural castes even though these were the sections of the society for whom compulsion was needed. Gulawadi suggested another ‘remedy’ that night classes would be the ‘most suitable means of educating children of these classes.’²⁴⁷ Similar suggestion was made by A. M. Damle that ‘[t]he instructions to agriculturists and artizan boys should be imparted through the medium of night schools...the boys of agriculturists and artisans, I believe, would derive very little benefit from the new scheme.’²⁴⁸ J. F. B. Harthsthorpe, Assistant Collector of Kaira opined that attendance of a large number of children of agriculturists in schools would be detrimental to agriculture. He noted: ‘If an increased number of agricultural children were compelled to attend school, it would have a bad effect upon the present, as well as the future of agriculture upon which the welfare of the bulk of the population depends.’²⁴⁹ The president District Board, Nilgiri P. S. P Rice argued:

²⁴⁵ Letter from K. J. Agashe, Chairman District Local Board Sholapur, to The Collector of Sholapur, 17th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 148.

²⁴⁶ A. R. Gulwadi, Acting District Deputy Collector, Central Division to the Collector of Ratnagiri, 19/20 May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 176.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ A. M. Damle, President Ratnagiri Municipality to the Collector of Ratnagiri, 8th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 174.

²⁴⁹ J.F.B. Harthshorne, Assistant Collector of Kaira to the Collector of Kaira, 22nd June 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 131.

there are very many openings for an English boy which are closed to the Indian... the amount of learning which compulsory primary education will confer, will be just enough to create discontent amongst the agricultural classes with their hereditary occupation of following the plough and not enough to fit them adequately for any other calling.²⁵⁰

Nonetheless, concerns were raised by a few officers that the excuse for attendance in section 5 (b) were liable to be misused. A. L. Brayne Assistant Collector Wai Division noted that 'Section 5 (b) leaves a wide path of escape...particularly the words 'domestic necessity' which will be a way of escape when the seasonal needs of agriculture cannot be offered as an excuse.' He argued that 'herding of cattle' and crop protection would be counted as a domestic necessity and would be used as the excuse for not sending children to school. He suggested 'to remove this section and instead allow the local body the powers of granting annual holidays extending to a month or six weeks when the principal crops are ripening to harvest and being harvested if such be deemed necessary.'²⁵¹ C. Ransford, Head Master Central High School Mercara opined on Clause 16 that 'the Object of the Act is defeated by exempting particular classes from compulsory education. No class or community should be immune.'²⁵² A. Rama Row, Sub-Assistant Inspector of Schools, Coorg lamented that Section 16 of the Bill 'permits of some of the very backward classes in Coorg such as Yaravas and Kurabas being exempted for the present.'²⁵³

Above discussion reveals that the upper caste gentry and the government officials reinforced the caste distinctions and attempted to keep lower and depressed castes away from the benefits of education so that the 'social harmony' was preserved. Moreover, many British officers tended to appropriate the class division in the Metropole with the caste system in the colony. Their classist attitude not only engendered the caste-based discrimination in Indian society but also had an impact on the educational choices available to lower and depressed castes. This is best illustrated by the argument of G. H. Cowan, the Assistant Collector of Belgaum. He opined that the major ill effect of universal elementary education in the West had been 'to depress agriculture by making it a less desirable

²⁵⁰ Letter from P. S. P. Rice, President, District Board, Nilgiris to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative paper No. 12, p. 9.

²⁵¹ A. L. Brayne, Assistant Collector Wai Division to the Collector of Satara, 19th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 139.

²⁵² Letter from C. Ransford, Headmaster Central High School, Mercara to the Commissioner of Coorg, Legislative, legislative, No. 46, 79.

²⁵³ Letter from A. Rama Row, Sub-Assistant Inspector of Schools, Coorg to the Commissioner of Coorg, Legislative, Legislative, No. 46, 80.

occupation than almost any other open to the average man.’ Dismissing the question of the education of the lower castes because there existed no utilitarian basis to educate them, he asked:

What on earth is elementary education going to do for the small land-owner or labourer in this country? He has no Bible that it will teach him to read (or at least to be able to read). He has no vote and if he had possibly the less he read of the vernacular press the better.²⁵⁴

He emphasised that in Villages Brahmans, Kulkarnis, Patils, goldsmiths, shopkeepers, money-lenders and rich landowners send their children to school as ‘[f]or the people of these classes the ability to read, write and sum has practical value’²⁵⁵ and also because ‘[f]or a small percentage elementary education in the village is the first step towards a professional calling or Government service.’²⁵⁶ But for the peasants, he believed that ‘the village school is simply a ‘creche’. Very few will ever make any use whatever of what they learnt.’²⁵⁷ Further, he apprehended that after getting an education, the peasant would aspire for a high standard of living. Thus, he opined, ‘to compel all the children of whatever class in any rural area to go to school can do no possible good and might do harm’ and suggested that ‘the presidency town is the only place where a case for compulsory education might be made out.’²⁵⁸ Similar disquiet was expressed by D. G. Mackenzie, that education of lower castes would increase the demand among them for government jobs:

[T]he growth of a large half-educated class in this country has been one of the most serious menaces to public tranquillity in recent years; and cases have come to my own notice where Kunbis have applied for the post in revenue or other departments on the ground that they had been educated up to say the vernacular Final, and that they did not care for field life...it is very doubtful whether they would be of much more use in the field of intellectual or literary study. Apply this on a large scale, and it seems that the same fate would befall the masses of Indian as has already happened to a great extent in England; and the result would be infinitely more serious in a country like India, which is essentially agricultural, and has few large industries to support an urban population.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ G. H. Cowan, Assistant Collector, Southern Division and President Saundatti-Yellamma to the Collector of Belgaum, 4th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 158.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 159.

²⁵⁹ D. G. Mackenzie, Assistant Collector and President Malegaon Municipality to the Collector of Nasik, 10th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 153.

Mirza Habib Husain believed that compulsion would cause ‘injury to desi arts, trades, industries &c’ because

the agriculturists, artizans (sic) and untouchables, have their traditional occupations and hereditary trades. Their field is their school and their home their workshop. The longer you keep them away from the field or workshop in an elementary school, the more slowly will they become efficient in their home occupations...[Theses classes would develop a] distaste for manual labour... for some imaginary gains.²⁶⁰

Pandit Jwala Prasad, Deputy Commissioner, Hardoi opined ‘compulsory education seems to be quite unsuited to a conservative country like India’²⁶¹ and cautioned that ‘smattering that will be conferred, much against their will no doubt in some cases, on the children of sweepers and such communities’ might be dangerous as ‘little learnings [are] dangerous things.’²⁶² Apprehensively he noted,

if the project is carried out I fear some of the lower classes will be rendered too high for their position in life, and I am afraid this state of things will lead to a great deal of social and political inconvenience.²⁶³

He suggested to the government that higher education was more crucial for the country and it would be ‘a mistake to divert funds which could be profitably employed in encouraging higher education towards the utopian scheme.’²⁶⁴ Nawab Mirza Mehdi Hasan from Lucknow commented that experience of other countries could not be applied to India as India differs from these countries on the grounds of climate, habits and customs. He regretted that Gokhale did not make any distinction of castes among whom the education should be enforced. He opined that ‘distinction is essential between the creeds deserving education and the creeds who should be left for manual labour’ as for boys of menial classes ‘will give up their hereditary professions and a great inconvenience will be caused to the public as well as to themselves in earning their livelihood.’²⁶⁵ Nawab Abdul Mazid propagated the idea that the lurking danger of working caste disobeying their traditional job and their aspirations to become a clerk after getting educated would make Zamindars

²⁶⁰ Letter from Mirza Habib Husain, Hosainabad High school, Lucknow to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, No. 13, Serial No. 64, 11.

²⁶¹ Letter from Pandit Jwala Prasad, Deputy Commissioner, Hardoi, to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 26, 18.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Letter from Nawab Mirza Mehdi Hasan from Lucknow to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 27, 19.

unsympathetic towards education cess. Expressing the anxiety of labouring classes to give up their occupation he further remarked,

[T]he last subject that I wish to bring to the notice of this Council is the labour question, which is sure to come up into existence if education is made compulsory, and it is sure that to have serious effect on the landed classes in this country. When the mass of the people are educated, the agriculturists, the labourers and artizan (sic) classes will at one commence to dislike their present condition. They will consider themselves to have risen to a higher level. Many will give up their hereditary trade and profession higher than the one they had been pursuing hitherto.²⁶⁶

Zamindar Association of Muzaffarpur, though favoured the principle of the Bill, had anxiety regarding upward social mobility of lower castes:

If the lower classes will receive education they will most probably leave their profession and aspire for higher duties and the association do not know how the difficulty of replacing them will be met. It is said that if they will receive education they will do their work more diligently and carefully, but past experience has shown that instead of making any improvement in their profession they have left them as discarded.²⁶⁷

Landholder Malik Umar Hyat Khan, while opposing the Bill argued that through his experience he could say that,

every boy who once passes his primary education, that is, up to primary standard, will never work as a cultivator...Education is a power and certain classes in India in my opinion are depressed...they read only with the wrong object. When they have received education they will only use it in their own way; I mean they will always disabuse [sic] it.²⁶⁸

Sharp assented to the arguments of upper caste, landed elites (Hindu and Muslims) and European officers discussed in the preceding paragraphs and used these reasonings to frame government's contention against the Bill. This is substantiated by the following statement of Sharp:

We must consider the ways of the village and the frame of mind of the *raiyat*. The ways of the village have at least the sanction of centuries and are not devoid of excellencies. We cannot hustle those ways. The *raiyat* is no fool, he is not going to leave his old ways, and he is not going to forego his son's help in the fields for education in a school which he feels will do his son no good.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 29.

²⁶⁷ Letter from Lala Sukhbir Sinha, Honorary Secretary Zamindar Association to Secretary to the Government of U.P., No. 20, Legislative, legislative, p. 12.

²⁶⁸ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 34.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

1.2.2.3. Employment of lower and depressed caste children

The education of lower and depressed caste children was closely linked with the question of child labour. Under the compulsory system of education, these children would be unavailable for work in mills or on fields, thereby creating a scarcity of cheap labour. To avoid this situation, the local bodies, mill owners and landed gentries came up with several suggestions. Thana Municipality advocated age range of 6 to 9 to facilitate the employment of children in factories as per Factory Act. They reasoned:

they [parents] will be deprived of the benefits of the much needed supplements to their own slender incomes made by the earnings of their children who are generally at the ages of 8 or 9 expected to be earning units in their poor families, the Factory Act permitting of children above 9 being employed on factory labour and therefore the Board are unanimously of opinion that it would not be expedient to apply this Act, in its present form, to town like Kurla inhabited mostly by mill hands and other poor people of the backward and labouring classes, before having it modified by making the compulsory education quite free for these classes (without any limit of income) and by altering the age limits to 6 and 9 instead of 6 and 10 to bring it in a line with the Factory Act as otherwise it is likely to clash with the interests of the mill industry by depriving it off (sic) the much needed child labour already scarce.²⁷⁰

A middle path was suggested by a few local boards to address the ‘problem’ of the scarcity of child labour. For instance, Nagpur municipality and Nagpur district board suggested that ‘there should be a provision in the Bill exempting the children of *bona fide* agriculturists during certain periods of the year’²⁷¹ when ‘their presence in the fields may be urgently needed to help their parents and guardians in agricultural operations, such periods being specified and fixed in advance by notifications in the local official gazette’²⁷² and ‘that the maximum hours of attendance should be fixed in the Bill say at three hours during every day that the school remains open.’²⁷³ R. L. Gharat, Landholder from Kolaba wrote to the government that in section 4 of the Bill the hours of attendance may be fixed at 3 hour a day as children engaged in cattle grazing can support their parents and at the same time learn 3Rs and therefore ‘the people will feel grateful to the government that would thus give the blessings of education to their children without interfering with their work.’²⁷⁴ He

²⁷⁰ Extract from the proceedings of the Special General Meeting held on 10th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 110.

²⁷¹ Extract from the Proceedings of a Meeting of the Nagpur Municipal Committee, 22nd July 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 87.

²⁷² Extract from the Proceedings of a Meeting of the Nagpur District Council, 26th June 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 88.

²⁷³ Extract from the Proceedings of a Meeting of the Nagpur Municipal Committee, 22nd July 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 87.

²⁷⁴ Letter from R. L. Gharat, Landholder, Kolaba district to Government of Bombay, 3rd February 1912,

further added that the existing Anglo-vernacular schools should run as heretofore and in these same school buildings, 3-hour school should be started for those who want *free* knowledge of the three Rs. Therefore, he argued, this arrangement would not require any additional expenditure in ‘new school houses, furniture or other things’ and only employment of ‘some additional teachers and a few Assistant Deputy Inspectors is all that will be required.’²⁷⁵ The Municipal Council Palamcottah suggested that the Clause 4 of the Bill should include time limit for attending the school which should be ‘not exceeding three hours’ as more extended hours of schooling may be ‘unsuitable for the children of the labouring classes’ who need the ‘labour of their young boys also and cannot afford to keep their boys in school for more than three hours every day.’²⁷⁶

Further, this Council also recommended the omission of clause 6 relating to employers as it considered that ‘Municipal and other institutions have to employ boys for making roads and other purposes and it will be a sorry plight if municipal and other officers are prosecuted for the same.’²⁷⁷ In Coimbatore Municipal Council, the majority approved the Bill. The opposed minority thought that with very few exceptions, all classes of the population except affluent ones supplement their income by using the daily or monthly earnings of their children under ten years of age, to deprive them of the same will be a serious hardship. The capitalists did not want to lose cheap child labour, and at the same time they tried to get rid of any responsibility for educating employed children. Their anxiety was quite clearly revealed in the following recommendation of D. N. Chaudhri from Raipur.

A mill manager who employs boys from an area to which the Bill does not extend should not be deemed guilty of any offence under this law...in this view I think the law should be enforced only in the place of the native residence of the parent...for instance, a parent with his child migrates from a village in chhatisgarh to a town in Bengal in search of factory labour. His native village is exempt from operation of the law, but his place of migration is not. A factory manager employs his child. Can he be guilty of an offence under the Act? I submit he should not be. It is no concern of the Bengal Municipality or the District Board within the Jurisdiction of which the boy is employed to educate him. Moreover, the mother-tongue of the boy being Hindi, it will do no good to him to attempt to give him elementary education in Bengali, which is a foreign vernacular to him.²⁷⁸

Legislative, Legislative, No. 26. 1.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁷⁶ Letter from K. G. Krishnaswami Aiyar, Chairman Municipal Council Palamcottah to the Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 38.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁷⁸ Opinion on Elementary Education Bill, D. N. Chowdhri, 15th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 104-105.

He proposed a modification of section 5 and 14 of the Bill to the effect that exemption may be granted on the ground that ‘there is no school in the locality in which the parent may be residing teaching in the native vernacular of the child.’²⁷⁹ Rajaram Tukaram, chairman of the School Board, Bandra Municipality considered Clause 14 to be ‘vexatious’ and proposed:

It should be modified in such a way that the responsibility of the employer should be removed if he undertakes to arrange for the education of the boy employed to the satisfaction of the School Attendance Committee. This is necessary in view of the fact that many boys and girls are employed in mills, factories etc as well as by private gentlemen.²⁸⁰

Raja Chandrachur Sinha of Chandapur Rae Bareli suggested that since the low caste boys such as, ‘barbers, Bari, Ahir, Julaha, Nadaf, Gujar etc.’ learn their menial work, during young age, which is also a kind of training, he would suggest striking down of Clause 6. For ‘it will not be possible to get an ordinary servant to even for a man who is used to get his work done only by means of servants.’²⁸¹ Therefore, he suggested that in Clause 5 of the Bill another reason for exempting boys from attendance should be added that the ‘boy has accepted service with the consent of his parents.’²⁸² Raja Muhammad Tasadduk Rasul Khan of Jahangirabad, while supporting Gokhale’s Bill opined that Clauses 6 and 14 should be expunged because parents or guardian were responsible for employment or not of their boys and any such provision prohibiting employers not to employ children would ‘debar the poor and ill-fed classes of people from earning the means of their livelihood and subject them to sheer indigence and penury.’²⁸³ He also raised doubts that ‘introduction of free and mass education would enhance the rate of labourers’ wages and the pay of the servants, who on the score of this educational qualification, will grow presumptive and become more costly than what they are now,’ but assented towards this disadvantage for ‘commendable results of social and political importance.’²⁸⁴

Hamid Ali Khan, Pointing to Clause 6 of the Bill remarked that it would affect the livelihood of both the poor boys and parents and objecting to clause 5 (b) he opined that it

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Rajaram Tukaram, Chairman, School Board, Bandra Municipality, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 111.

²⁸¹ Letter from Raja Chandrachur Sinha, Chandapur, RaeBareli, Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 15, 2.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Letter from Raja Muhammad Tasadduk Rasul Khan of Jahangirabad, to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 16, 4.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

‘would hardly allow the poor boys- and they count by millions- to attend the school.’²⁸⁵ He argued that Clause 16 & 5 take away the very life of the Bill and the Bill would remain a dead letter.²⁸⁶ Despite pointing to these shortcomings of the Bill he refused any suggestion to abolish these clauses as he was against the Bill itself. He argued,

What will elementary education do? Will it make *Julahas* better weavers or *Kisans* better judges of the season, who, ignorant and untutored as they are, can give many a practical lesson on the subject to the educated and the scientific of the civilized countries.²⁸⁷

Mirza Habib Husain argued that the Bill had an ‘indirect provision for encouraging beggary’ because in accordance with the Clauses 6 & 14 ‘thousands of poor children working at mills, printing presses or in private employ will be thrown out of work, only to learn the evil lessons of the streets and to lead many a poor parent & widowed mother to beggary.’²⁸⁸ Gangadhar Rao Chitnavis argued that as a representative of landholders he must oppose compulsion in their interest. The value of child labour in the agricultural economy was the reason behind his opposition. He argued:

With depopulation going on in villages by means of plague, malaria and exodus to towns and consequent scarcity of labour, any weaning of children from the side of their parents for even such a good object as education is likely to be felt a calamity.²⁸⁹

The above discussion reveals that the upper caste and upper-class elites along with British officials opposed compulsion on the grounds of untouchability or for the fear that education would lead to upward social mobility resulting into lower and depressed castes’ alienation from their occupation assigned to them by their birth. To avoid the upheaval of social structure many leaders instead of outright rejecting the education of the lowly castes suggested a different curriculum for them consisting of manual instruction and technical training so that they remain associated with their hereditary occupation. This has been discussed in the following paragraph.

On the question of the content of education, Gokhale’s Bill provisioned 3Rs and any subject prescribed by the department of education from time to time. Most of those who supported

²⁸⁵ Letter from Hamid Ali Khan, Barrister-at-Law to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 19, 10.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 11.

²⁸⁸ Letter from Mirza Habib Husain, Hosainabad High school, Lucknow to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, No. 13, Serial No. 64, 10.

²⁸⁹ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 20.

or opposed the Bill opined that teaching of 3Rs was enough for lower castes and that additional subjects would not only burden them but would also make them unfit for their ancestral occupation. The President of the District Board Tinnevely pointed out that instruction in only the three Rs would be sufficient for protecting the lower and depressed castes from palpable fraud. For ‘the introduction of other subjects will lengthen the course of instruction too much and increase the number of hours the boys will have to attend school on each day’ which would drastically interfere with the ‘ordinary manual work of the boys’ and hence ‘would create a most serious discontent.’²⁹⁰ Braithwaite, Inspector of Schools, in the VIII circle in U.P., opined that ‘on its [free and compulsory elementary education] good points it is hardly necessary to dwell’ but ‘its bad points are not easily visible.’²⁹¹ One of the adverse effect of universal education, according to him was, ‘removal of the children from their natural environment during the years when they should be learning their father’s trade’ which has had ‘worse effect among artisans and has gone far to give the death blow to domestic industries and cottage industries.’ Moreover, he opined that keeping children indoors training their eyes and brains and neglecting their arms and fingers has resulted in the introduction of ‘manual instruction in schools which is not only expensive but unproductive and after all only a subterfuge.’²⁹² The other harmful effect of universal education, according to Braithwaite was that it was too literary which ‘undoubtedly unfit boys for their life work’ and therefore suggested that it should be confined to the teaching of the three Rs only. Abdul Nazfi noted, ‘take the case of an agriculturist. What elementary education will you give him? If you give him elementary education, the result of which will be to make him a gentleman, but not good agriculturist, that will be an injury to the country itself.’²⁹³ The Municipal Council Mannargudi opposed ‘education compulsory to such an extent as to be prejudicial to the training and interests of agricultural labourers.’²⁹⁴ To counter the ‘danger’ posed by the education of working castes there were several suggestions to make the curriculum practical enough to train them in their respective vocation. Maganbhai S Desai, for instance, Vice President Nariad Municipality proposed

²⁹⁰ Letter from R. W. D’E Ashe. President district Board Tinnevely to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 22.

²⁹¹ Letter from J.H. Stone Acting D.P.I Madras, to the Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 34.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Letter from N.G. Ponnaiya, Chairman Municipal Council Mannargudi to the Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 43.

an alteration in clause 2 of the Bill to include ‘rudimentary knowledge of agriculture or other local occupations in addition to the courses specially named in the definition.’²⁹⁵

1.2.3. Economic factors

Among the most contested clause of the Bill were the ones pertaining to the finances, viz Clause 8 for levy of special education cess and Clause 9 for the remission of fees for parents whose income was less than Rupees 10. When the Bill was presented in the Council for the first time in 1911, Dadabhoj objected to the diversion of the revenues of local bodies towards elementary education. He argued, ‘it is out of question...the provision for the levy of an educational rate is impracticable and injudicious...the country will not cheerfully submit to additional taxation even for free education.’²⁹⁶ He lamented that though the Irish Education Act, on which Gokhale’s Bill was based, included clause 18 for the payment of Parliamentary grant for the support of elementary education the Gokhale’s Bill ‘does not place on a legal basis the financial obligation of the Government.’²⁹⁷ Another elite opposition came from Maharaja of Burdwan who objected to the provision of levy of special education rates. He argued, ‘why a person who educates his children at home or in schools or colleges should be compelled to pay tax, however, small; for a purpose which does not concern him directly.’²⁹⁸ Even after one year of deliberation on the Bill, this view of Dadabhoj remained unchanged, and he again rejected the idea of special education cess during the discussion on the Bill within the Council in 1912. He argued:

[I]f there is to be a special education cess, there is nothing to prevent in principle the imposition of special cesses for equally urgent needs like sanitation, medical relief, improved communication, etc. Can any responsible government be expected to sanction such heavy taxation in the teeth of universal opposition?²⁹⁹

In a similar vein, Gangadhar Rao Chitnavis objected to the Bill for its levy of special education rates because the level of local taxation, then existing, was sufficiently high:

The cost of a satisfactory scheme of compulsory education, which must be *free*, for a vast country like India, is so enormous that it cannot be said to be within the range of practical politics...Any suggestion of fresh taxation in a poor country like India cannot under the circumstances be seriously entertained.

²⁹⁵ Maganbhai S. Desai, Vice President Nariad Municipality to the Collector of Kaira, 19th May 1911, No. 55, 133.

²⁹⁶ Elementary Education Bill, *Extract from the proceedings of meeting of Council held on 16th March 1911*, Appendix B, Legislative, Legislative, no. 4, 9.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁹⁹ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 17.

There is a general feeling that the money should be found by the Government of India.³⁰⁰

Syed Shams-ul-Huda, opposed taxation for primary education of masses and suspected, ‘whether those whose pockets are intended to be touched would willingly come forward out of mere love for education?’³⁰¹ Mazharul Haque responded to this opposition by urging the non-officials that:

[i]t is unfair to the Imperial exchequer that the government of India should bear the whole burden: we should also exert ourselves a little...I believe that the people of the country should cheerfully bear this burden of taxation so that they may be able to raise the condition of the masses of the country.³⁰²

Agreeing to Haque, Nawab Saiyid Muhammad Bahadur added that the question of empowering the local bodies to levy special education rate is ‘very necessary and cannot be avoided considering the larger and higher interests involved.’³⁰³ Bhupendranath Basu, however, made a significant observation that Gokhale

has not indicated the source or the class of people from which the cess is to be realised. There will be great objection and valid objection if this cess were realised from the poor agriculturists or other poor people who are hardly able to pay.³⁰⁴

N. Subba Rao Pantulu tried to appease the opponents of the education cess by arguing that ‘if once people are convinced that the measures proposed will be beneficial to them, they would voluntarily take it up and make it a success.’³⁰⁵ Gokhale’s reply to opponents of the special education cess was:

I am unable to accept this opinion... I feel strongly that, if primary education is ever to be compulsory, local bodies will have to bear a fairly large share of the burden which it will impose. This is the case in all countries where the system of compulsory education prevails; and those friends of mine who object to the levy of a cess might as well object to compulsory education and be done with it.³⁰⁶

Rebuking Dadabhoy’s disapproval for levy of special educational cess as a Capitalist attitude Gokhale argued:

Mr. Dadabhoy is against the levy of a local cess which may have to be imposed in order that the children of poor people may be educated. Mr. Dadabhoy the

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

other day proposed that the excise duty on cotton goods should be done away with, not on the ground that its burden falls on the consumers who are the poorest of the poor, but because the amount, if added to the profits of the mill industry, will mean a better return for the mill-owners. Mr. Dadbhoy also wants unrestricted hours for factory labour, for that means better dividends for capitalists. He is consistent all through; but his consistency need not appeal to this Council; and I think an attitude like his will hardly commend itself to those who wish well to the masses of the people.³⁰⁷

He further argued, 'if we are not prepared to bear a cess for educating the children of the mass of our own people... we may as well cease talking about improving the lot of the mass of the people.'³⁰⁸ He reiterated that only way for the country to advance and take its place among the nations of the world was that the mass of people in this country must be raised to a higher level and that was only possible through the spread of education among the ignorant masses. 'A reasonable part of this money [for spread of mass education] must be raised locally, as is being done in other countries, or else we may leave the matter all alone.'³⁰⁹ Ramananda Chatterjee, the editor of *Modern Review*, supported the Bill, however, regarding the levy of special education rate he opined:

If any other course were available, we would on principle be opposed to the levy in *India* of a special education rate for providing elementary education free to boys and girls... India is already as highly taxed as it can be; nay, probably it is more highly taxed than it ought to be.³¹⁰

But in the absence of Government's support and impracticability of voluntary subscription schools he supported the rate levying clause of the Bill. He urged the more affluent classes 'of the people who, for the good of the country, may be able with some sacrifice to bear a little extra taxation,' and exhorted that 'our public spirit is on trial.'³¹¹ He proposed that 'elementary education should be made free to all, rich and poor alike' instead of remission of fees on the grounds of poverty as

children of such [poor parents for whom fee is remitted] cannot hold up their heads erect, literally and metaphorically, as among their peers. The dwarfing of manhood is a great evil. Nothing can compensate for it. What every child is entitled to as a matter of right, should not be given to him as charity proceeding from pity.³¹²

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 32

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ *The Modern Review* 9, no.4 (April 1911): 437.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

Chatterjee urged that the Zamindars and Taluqdars derive all their wealth from agricultural classes, therefore 'it is only becoming that these rich people should contribute largely to the funds necessary for the education of the classes whose hard labour enables them to live in luxury.'³¹³ Thakur Khushupal Singh of Kotla urged the government to ensure that the Zamindars are not taxed twice 'as they already pay cesses which include school cess.'³¹⁴ The Zamindar Association of Muzaffarpur though supported the Bill for its *permissive* character they were not in favour of levying of a special education rate as they considered that, 'the *raiyyat* is already overburdened with taxation and this tax if levied will convert the boon into a feeling of hardship.'³¹⁵ Thus, the question of funding the education of masses was the most critical one as the government was unwilling to contribute towards it, and the landed classes were opposed to the levy of special educational cess. Some local bodies advocated for the removal of Clause 8 of the Bill altogether. The District Board Trichinopoly submitted to the government that 'the clauses of the Bill relating to education rate should be omitted' in view of the following reasons:

In the first instance it would work inequitably, because certain local areas will receive the benefit of compulsory education at the expense of the rest of the country. And ultimately and really result in a scramble, there being nothing to prevent every local body going up to government with a request to introduce the measure in its own local area, saddled as it is with a special burden on the locality.³¹⁶

Nawab Muhammad Abdul Mazid opposing the levy of education rate retorted:

Who will pay the education rate? Certainly not the zamindars. They are already paying school rates. If those at the expense of others pose as well-wishers of the country are to pay such rates, it would be most salutary.³¹⁷

He argued that in many places Zamindars and tenants pay a school tax and therefore 'Zamindars and tenants will raise a howl all over India, and object with as much force as lies in them to pay such a tax.'³¹⁸ Further, he considered that the power to levy rates was injudicious as the 'local Boards do not contain a sufficient number of Muhammadans, the

³¹³ *The Modern Review* 9, no. 6 (June 1911): 640.

³¹⁴ Letter from Thakur Khushupal Singh, Kotla, to the Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 13, 1.

³¹⁵ Letter from Lala Sukhbir Sinha, Honorary Secretary Zamindar Association to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 20, 12.

³¹⁶ Letter from E.W. Legh, President District Board Trichinopoly to the Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 25.

³¹⁷ Letter from Nawab Muhammad Abdul Majid, Barrister-at-Law, of Allahabad to the Under Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, 11th September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 45, 74.

³¹⁸ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 29.

Bill if passed will be one-sided only, and will benefit the Hindus alone.’³¹⁹ Commissioner of Coorg noted that

financial grounds are likely to prevent the Bill, if passed, from coming into operation for a very long time, and that until the necessary funds can be foreseen the passing of the measure will be premature...the introduction of the Act would mean raising of additional funds by the District Boards and Municipalities, and this would involve a cess of about 2 to 3 annas in the rupees on land revenue- a tax which would be very greatly resented.³²⁰

Damodar Nilkanth Khare at Wardha District Council opined that ‘[t]he levy of special local rates as proposed by Mr Gokhale will be strongly objected by people who are not expected to realise the importance of elementary education.’ He contended that even if these rates were levied, they would be insufficient to meet the expenses and urged that

it must be made plain in the body of the Act itself that the Local Government shall bear all expenses for providing house accommodation and for payments of the teaching staff in all primary schools, provided the local rates, special and ordinary, are not enough to meet a proportion of the said expenses.³²¹

K.N. Deshmukh, at the same council, supporting Khare’s recommendation suggested

to increase the general taxation to such an extent as may be absolutely necessary for the purpose, because by doing so the pressure of taxation will not be specially felt and resented by the people of any particular area where the Act would be made applicable and its sting will be removed.³²²

Citing the availability of limited resources, the president, District Board Nilgiri, P. S. P. Rice urged:

Is it wise or desirable to force education upon the unwilling, seeing that we do not possess the purse of fortunates and that the influx of the compulsory pupil must lead to the entertainment of more teachers and so to the diversion of the money for the sake of the unwilling to the disadvantage of the willing.³²³

The Malabar district Board put the onus of accepting the Bill on the government as it believed that education rate would meet only a fraction of the expenses involved in compulsion and ‘greater part of the expenditure involved in financing such a measure

³¹⁹ Letter from Nawab Muhammad Abdul Majid, Barrister-at-Law, of Allahabad to the Under Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, 11th September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 45, 74.

³²⁰ Letter from L. T. Harris Commissioner of Coorg to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Coorg, Legislative, Legislative, No. 46, 76.

³²¹ Extract from the proceedings of the District Council, Wardha, Note of D. N. Khare, Chairman District Council, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 89.

³²² Extract from the proceedings of the District Council, Wardha, Note of K. N. Deshmukh, member District Council, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 91

³²³ Letter from P. S. P. Rice, President, District Board, Nilgiris to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 10.

would fall on the local government.’ They Maintained that ‘it is mainly for the government to say whether the Bill can be accepted on financial grounds as a measure of practical politics.’³²⁴

Calicut Municipal council approved of the general principle of the Bill but showed its inability to implement it in its municipal areas as it found the Bill premature for its municipality and also unworkable because of the ‘heavy additional taxation that will be required to meet the expenditure.’³²⁵ The Sub-committee appointed by the District Board Salem to look into the matter approved the general principle of the Bill but suggested that ‘in the early stage the whole cost of elementary education should be borne by the state. Elementary education should not only be compulsory but free as far as possible.’³²⁶ However, the chairman of the sub-committee while generally agreeing with the majority of the members of the sub-committee dissented on certain aspects. He considered that the educational cess ‘will be most unpopular because the rural population is not educated up to the point of providing funds for elementary education.’³²⁷ He opined that compulsion and levy of special education rate would cause widespread discontent.

The Municipal Council Palamcottah approved the general principle of the Bill except ‘in so far as it relates to the levy of extra taxation for educational purposes.’³²⁸ Municipal Corporation of Bombay though approved of the general principle that primary education should be free and compulsory opposed the Bill as they thought that ‘the method embodied in the Bill is not likely to attain the object in view in a practical and satisfactory manner.’ They advocated that

the charge of primary education should be considered one of the Imperial concern and Government should be prepared to deal with it out of Imperial funds, as far as possible now, and certainly when free and compulsory primary education is introduced.

They did not approve of the ‘sections dealing with the levy of fees, and...way in which the burden of taxation would be distributed, as calculated to be unjust and unequal in its

³²⁴ Letter from C. A. Innes, President District Board Malabar to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 6.

³²⁵ Letter from Rao bahadur C. Gopalan Nayar, Chairman Municipal Council Calicut to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 13.

³²⁶ Report of the Sub-Committee appointed to consider the Elementary Education Bill, 1911, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 16.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Letter from K. G. Krishnaswami Aiyar, Chairman Municipal Council Palamcottah to the Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, No. 12, 38.

incidence on different parts of the country or province.’ Besides financial difficulties, the Bombay corporation also registered their opposition to the Bill on the ground that

the system of voluntary notification embodied in the Bill is not likely to be embraced to any very large extent, and that the probable result will be that on the one hand it will not serve to hasten the pace of the introduction of compulsory primary education, and on the other Government may be induced to take the initiative in the matter did not desire it.³²⁹

Contrary to Bombay corporation, the Madras Corporation resolved to provide full support to Gokhale’s Bill towards the cause of free and compulsory elementary education. They remarked, ‘the corporation keenly approves of the Hon’ble Mr. Gokhale’s Education Bill & are willing to incur additional expenditure if necessary, for the extension of free & compulsory education within the municipal limits of Madras.’³³⁰ T.M. Nair, who seconded the proposition, argued,

A big corporation like this with an income of Rs 23 lakhs spent only Rs 23000 on education. This is a very poor contribution indeed. Even if the proposed Bill cost them more, we should bear the additional charge and not grudge spending anything more. In Calcutta the corporation has already started schools for giving free elementary education & it is the time that we should wake up & state an opinion.³³¹

Regarding the remission of fee for poor parents having income less than Rs 10, it was agreed by almost everyone, supporters as well as opponents, that there should be no income limit for remission and that if compulsion was introduced it should be free because remission of the fee would be objectionable. Maharaja of Burdwan opined that in the first place there was no popular demand for compulsory primary education. However, if compulsion was introduced against this universal opinion, it should be completely free as against the current provision in the Bill which provided for the remission of fee for poor parents only. Similarly, Vithaldas D. Thakersey pointed out that the best thing is to have education free if it is compulsory as setting an income limit for the remission of the fee would be disputable. Mirza Habib Husain considered the income limit for the remission of fees to be fallacious because, in a country like India, there are one earning member to feed

³²⁹ Letter from Pherozezshah M. Mehta, President, Municipal Corporation Bombay to the Government of Bombay, 26 Feb 1912, Legislative, Legislative, No. 28, 1.

³³⁰ Letter from P. L. Moore, President Corporation of Madras to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 18.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

many mouths. He, therefore, suggested the calculation of poverty in India based on the expenditure instead of on income.

The supporters of the Bill, however, suggested various ways and means of raising funds for education. Bhupendranath Basu, for instance, proposed levying of Succession duty on Zamindars and graduated income tax on professional classes. He exhorted,

All talk about the improvement and the progress of the country becomes mere empty talk, becomes hypocritical cant if you are not prepared to undergo some sacrifice in the interests of your people. If you are not, then all this talk about the progress of the country may as well not be said, and may as well not be heard.³³²

He argued that due to the missionary schools and their teaching the lower classes have begun to feel the 'dignity of manhood and the position that they occupy in the social life of India' and urged that 'if the higher classes will not do their duty [now] they will be made to do it at no very distant time.'³³³ Similarly, Malaviya argued, '[w]e are prepared to support extra taxation for that purpose' and supported Basu's recommendation of a 2 per cent increase in customs duty. He further suggested export duty of 5 per cent on jute, higher import duty on foreign sugar and an increase in salt duty, if necessary. Regarding salt duty he observed,

[T]hough it is painful to suggest that the Salt duty should be raised, yet if it becomes necessary, we should be prepared to support an increase in the salt duty rather than allow the present state of things to continue in which nearly 94 per cent of our people, subjects of the most enlightened Government, are kept from the benefits of elementary education, and expose to the innumerable evils of ignorance.³³⁴

Gokhale calculated that four and a half crore rupees would be required to be spent on compulsory education. He suggested that out of these four and a half crore rupees, 3 crores should be funded by the government and 1½ crores by local bodies. Gokhale further clarified that since this amount was not required to be spent at once and that this was to be worked up to in ten years it needed a continuous increase in about 30 lakhs in annual expenditure on education. He further added Rs 10 lakhs a year, for ten years, for the *voluntary* education of girls and argued that Rs 40 lakhs a year was not too much for the government to find. He also suggested an increase in customs duty by 2 per cent i.e. from

³³² *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 44

³³³ *Ibid.*, 45.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

5 per cent to 7 per cent ‘without causing any serious hardship to anybody.’³³⁵ On the objection of remission of fee for poor parents with income less than Rs 10 per month and the demand that it should be free for all, Gokhale submitted that to ‘conciliate official opinion’ he had included this provision. Having failed to do so, he admitted, ‘I shall therefore be glad to go back to my original position in this matter that, where education is compulsory, it should also be free.’³³⁶ Regarding Gokhale’s estimate of 4 ½ crores Sharp opined that that is too low an estimate because

[t]he lower the strata of the population that we tap for the purposes of education, the more costly will that education become. We shall have to pay for the enforcement of attendance, if the system is to be effective; we shall have to pay for the free supply of books; we may have to pay for free meals. Then again there is the question of the girls, who cost more to educate than boys.³³⁷

On the question of non-availability of funds, Mazharul Haque countered the government by arguing that

When government of India are determined to carry out a scheme of their own, however expensive it may be, they never lack money; but the moment they are confronted with a popular demand, they bring out this eternal argument as an unsurmountable barrier. Take, for instance, the latest demand on the Imperial exchequer in connection with the removal of the capital from Calcutta. What an immense amount of money will be required to build up the new Imperial Delhi, so as to make it a capital worthy of the great Indian Empire, and still, Sir, you are going to provide this enormous sum.³³⁸

Regarding the question of taxation Raja of Dighapatia argued that he would not mind any new taxation ‘for so noble an object, provided it falls fairly and equitably on those who are least taxed in this country, and the bulk of the money necessary come from the Government treasury out of its ordinary revenues.’³³⁹ Bhurgri appreciated Raja of Dighapatia’s support to the Bill ‘[l]est the Council may have a wrong impression of zamindars as a class.’³⁴⁰ He emphatically said, ‘there are zamindars who not only like their tenants to be educated but are even ready to pay for such education.’ As evidence to this argument, he told the Council that ‘[t]he Sind zamindars have asked Government to levy a small cess on themselves and

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

to spend the proceeds of such a cess not only on the education of their children but also on the children of their tenants.³⁴¹ Sharp argued that even if we get the required money,

we do not want to see its distribution trammelled by iron and mechanical rules. Our distribution must follow the dictates of reason...what would happen to our technical education? What would happen to our higher education, regarding the concomitant claims of which we heard wise remarks from the Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University on Saturday last? And to turn to other things, what is going to happen to improvements in agriculture, communications, sanitation, and so forth.³⁴²

The real intention of government is revealed in the above argument of Sharp, which substantiates the view that it was not the scarcity of funds but the unwillingness to spend on the education of masses.

1.2.4. Religious factor

Gokhale's Bill also met opposition from the Muslim community on the question of language and religious education of Muslim boys. Aftab Ahmad Khan, Barrister-at-law from Aligarh approved and supported the Principle of the Bill but raised concern that if the Bill was passed into the law the 'whole system will be in the hands of Hindu teachers who will encourage the study of "Hindi" at the expense of Urdu which Muhammadan as a community wish to protect and improve.'³⁴³ He suggested that 'the proposed school attendance committee should have sufficient Muhammadan members, there should be an Urdu course for Muhammadan students, every teacher should be required to teach an Urdu course to Muhammadan student and a Muhammadan inspector should be appointed'.³⁴⁴

Nawab Abdul Mazid noted:

Unless special Muhammadan teachers who know how to instruct a Muhammadan boy as well as the subjects which a Muhammadan reads in a *maktab*, are particularized, the Bill instead of it doing good to the Muhammadan community will be injurious to them.³⁴⁵

He further considered that the power to levy rates was injudicious as the 'local Boards do not contain a sufficient number of Muhammadans, the Bill if passed will be one-sided only, and will benefit the Hindus alone.'³⁴⁶ Mazid raised apprehensions that in the provinces

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid., 79.

³⁴³ Letter from Aftab Ahmad Khan, Barrister-at-law, Aligarh to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 13, serial no. 68, 19.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Letter from Nawab Muhammad Abdul Majid, Barrister-at-Law, of Allahabad to the Under Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, Dated 11 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 45, 73.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 74.

where Muhammadan representation was not strong, as in United Provinces, the Bill would serve as ‘death blow [...] to the Urdu language’ and attempts would be made ‘to teach Muhammadan boys a Hindi language.’³⁴⁷ Further, he raised objections to the absence of religious education in the Bill consequently ‘a Muhammadan boy will have to give up his religious education.’ Regarding the provision in the clause that exemption could be sought on religious grounds he rebuked that under such a condition ‘taxes will have to be paid by all but only one community will gain the advantage.’³⁴⁸ Besides this, he raised questions concerning the constitution of the school attendance committee and the number of Muhammadan members in such committee. There were also objections regarding age range for compulsion in case of the Muslim community. A. Master, Assistant collector in charge Daskroi wrote that Muhammadan community ‘would prefer to have the compulsory age raised in the case of their community from between 6 and 10 to between 8 and 12 as ‘religious instruction in Koran Schools is given to children from 5 to 8 years.’³⁴⁹

Despite these objections of the Muslim community, the All India Muslim League provided its support to the Bill. There is a misconception that the Muslim League opposed the Bill. A perusal of the debate within the council reveals the contrary. Not only had Muslim league supported the Principle of the Bill but Jinnah also voted in its favour when the motion for referring the Bill to Select committee was put to the vote. The misconception stems from the fact that Mian Muhammad Shafi, a member of Muslim league and landholder from the Punjab, was a staunch opponent of the Bill. But Shafi was not heading the Muslim League so his opposition cannot be considered to be the opinion of the league. Though Shafi opposed the Bill at the annual meeting of the All India Muslim League, held at Calcutta, the League passed the resolution in support of the Principle of the Bill with a recommendation that special need of the Muslim community should be taken care of in the provisions of the Bill when referred to Select Committee. In the Council, Shafi presented himself as representative of the Muslim community and that the Muslim community was against the Bill. Mazharul Haque refuted this claim of Shafi and argued that ‘[W]e, the Musalmans of India are no more illiberal nor less patriotic than the members of other

³⁴⁷ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 27.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁴⁹ A. Master, Assistant Collector in charge Daskroi to the Collector of Ahmedabad, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 130.

communities³⁵⁰ and presented as evidence the support of The All India Muhammadan Educational Conference and The All India Muslim League to the Principle of the Bill. Supporting Haque's claim that the Muslim community were in favour of the Bill, Nawab Saiyid Muhammad from Madras argued that Madras Presidency Muslim League had unanimously passed the resolution in support of the Bill, and that their community in Madras was 'unanimous in thinking that the time has come when a beginning, however, guarded and modest, be now made in this direction.'³⁵¹ Muhammad Ali Jinnah, while supporting the motion for referring the Bill to the Select Committee, asked the government to 'find the money; if necessary tax the people...we should do all this to improve the masses of this country to whom you owe a much greater duty than to anybody else.'³⁵² He rebuked Abdul Mazid's and Shafi's argument that education would lead to agitation and asked the government

Sir, can you seriously argue that education means sedition? Do you mean that if you can get a boy who can read and write a little that he will become a political agitator? Can you seriously believe that? On the other hand, however, we know the blessings of education. We have learnt that from the British Government. They have been the first to open their eyes to it. They have brought us up to this level when we can stand in this council and deliberate upon the affairs of our nation and our country. I ask, Sir, where would the Hon'ble Nawab Majid be but for his education? I ask, Sir, where would the Hon'ble Muhammad Shafi be but for his education?³⁵³

On the question of alienation of lower castes from their occupation and on Mazid's apprehension of Socialist uprising in the country Jinnah contended that consideration of Humanity should be the utmost and that the Zamindars should see beyond their selfish motives:

Well, Sir, are you going to keep millions and millions of people trodden under your feet for fear that they may demand more rights; are you going to keep them in ignorance and darkness forever and for all ages to come because they may stand up against you and say that we have certain rights and you must give them to us? Is that the feeling of humanity? Is that the spirit of humanity? I say, Sir, that it is the duty of the Zamindars and of the landlords to be a little less selfish, they must not monopolise the pedestals, but they must be prepared to meet their people. They must be prepared to be brought down from their pedestals if they do not do their duties properly.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 52.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

He supported the motion to refer the Bill to Select Committee and urged that the recommendation made by the League regarding the requirements of the Muslim community should be given due consideration.

The opposition of Shafi, Abdul Mazid and other Muslim landholders cannot be categorised as Muslim opposition to the Bill. Instead, these were the oppositions of landed elites who wanted to maintain the *status quo* for their well-being instead of any concern for the Muslim community as a whole. The objections to the Bill on religious grounds were not serious. Part of the objection was addressed by Gokhale in the Council itself. Regarding the teaching of Urdu to the Muhammadan children, Gokhale suggested, after discussion with leading Muhammadan gentlemen, that:

Where 25 children speaking a particular language attend a school, provision should be made for teaching those children in that language; and further, where the number is less than that, it should be left to the community itself to say whether the children should come under the compulsory clauses of the Bill or not.³⁵⁵

The other objection pertaining to religious education of Muslim children could have been addressed had the Bill been referred to the Select Committee.

1.2.5. Educational factor

The objections to the bill on account of lack of qualified teachers, absence of proper school buildings, cost of schooling etc. have been discussed under this head. The dearth of trained teachers was one major hurdle in the scheme of Universal elementary education. The Director of Public Instruction, Madras, opined that compulsion was not needed in the Presidency because ‘the low attendance in schools is not due to unwillingness on the part of parents but due to lack of proper school buildings and due to low qualified teachers.’³⁵⁶

A.O. Koreishi, District Deputy Collector, Panch Mahals noted

In the present stage of voluntary education, a lack of good and efficient teachers is felt in most Local Boards and Municipal areas, and when compulsion is introduced...more schools are bound to spring up under inefficient teachers which would deal an indirect blow to the cause of healthy education, as there is every chance of the demand for teachers exceeding the supply.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 12.

³⁵⁶ Letter from J.H. Stone Acting DPI Madras, to the Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 36.

³⁵⁷ AO Koreishi, District Deputy Collector, Panch Mahals to the Collector Panch Mahals, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 124-125.

L.J. Sedwick, Assistant Collector, Karad Division, noted that there are not enough teachers available for extended education. Thakorram Kapilram, Chairman School committee, Surat City Municipality, argued:

The foremost difficulty that lies in the way of such legislation is the want of sufficient staff to teach the scholars who would be compelled to attend their housing.... I am positively certain that it will be a positive evil if introduced without an adequate and efficient staff of teachers...the framer of the Bill has in his anxiety to conciliate all shades of opinion provided the so-called safeguards which in my opinion have taken all life out of it and reduced it to a bare cripple.³⁵⁸

R.R. Gangoli argued that the quality of teachers needs much improvement:

[T]he whole class of teachers needs essential improvement as at present their qualifications are not what they ought to be. It is not their fault. Their monthly pay is R 9 or R 11. The meagre pay does not attract men of superior character or qualifications and the consequence is, their teaching does not extend beyond a mechanical routine of class books...I should therefore suggest that no Municipality which is not in financial position fit to pay liberal salaries to a high class of teachers should attempt to enforce the provisions of the Act when passed. All this amounts to theory.³⁵⁹

The efficiency of the School attendance committee proposed in the Bill was also under question. Government of Madras believed that the Committee 'would in practice be unworkable. [Because] [t]he public spirit which has been so productive of results in Japan does not exist in India.'³⁶⁰ A similar opinion was shared by President District Board Nilgiri that 'the country has not yet shown itself capable of such method of self-government on English lines.'³⁶¹ The number of years required for compulsory schooling and the age range for compulsion was yet another contested issue. There was one section which would consider four years as too short a period for literacy to remain permanent and thus found the Bill to be useless. The government of Madras, for instance, objected to four years of elementary education because 'four years cannot reasonably be expected to produce lasting results'³⁶² and emphasised on the necessity of extending the period by two years. Differing

³⁵⁸ Letter from Thakorram Kapilram Surat city Municipality to the Vice President, City Municipality Surat, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 114.

³⁵⁹ R. R. Gangoli, President Karwar Municipality to the Collector of Kanara, 8th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 168.

³⁶⁰ Letter from L. Davidson to Secretary to Government of India, 2 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, Paper no. 12, 3.

³⁶¹ Letter from P. S. P. Rice, President, District Board, Nilgiris to Secretary to Education Department, Legislative, Legislative Paper No. 12, 11.

³⁶² Letter from L. Davidson to Secretary to Government of India, 2 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative,

from other members of the government on the issue, V. Krishnaswami Aiyar noted in his minute of dissent:

It is a great exaggeration to assert that every man amongst those who only received a (sic) four-year training has an absolutely blank mind with reference to what he learnt in his early days. Reading, writing & arithmetic meet a man at every turn in his life whatever be his avocation... the value of that knowledge, small as it may be, in enabling the agriculturist, the day labourer, and the petty trader to carry on his avocations with more intelligence and less liability to deception cannot be overrated. He is more accessible to the knowledge of rules of hygiene & sanitation spread through leaflets and newspaper paragraph, and he must be regarded as altogether a happier man for the greater ability to accommodate himself to the forces of nature and the surroundings of modern life.³⁶³

Similarly, objecting to four years period of compulsory schooling, the Director of Public Instruction, Madras, opined that such a small period of education could not amount to permanent literacy. Then, some would consider an extension of compulsion to six years to keep the child away from labour for sound physical development. Councillor of Bezwada Municipal Council, V.L. Narasinhram Pantulu Garu, belonged to this category. He suggested that the period of compulsory schooling may be six years to 'educate the pupil better and for the preservation of his physique from deterioration when put to work when he is barely ten years old.'³⁶⁴ On the other hand, some suggested reducing the compulsory schooling from four to two years for specific castes as it would affect their earning capacity. One such recommendation was that of Collector of Ballia who recommended the compulsory elementary education for two years in case of trading and artisan classes as four years was a long period for these classes.³⁶⁵ It was also suggested by many local boards that age range of 6 to 10 was not suitable and recommended to increase the lower age from six to seven or eight and upper limit from ten to eleven or twelve. However, the reasons cited for this change were varied. K.N Deshmukh of Wardha District council suggested age for compulsion to be 8 to 12 years because of the 'reluctance on the part of the parents to send their children to school at an early age in rural areas' and because '[i]n such areas the average intelligence of the children is not so keen and sharp as to grasp the subjects to be

Paper no. 12, 3.

³⁶³ V. Krishnaswami Aiyar, Note of Dissent, 1 september 1911, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 11-12.

³⁶⁴ Letter from V.L. Narasinhram Pantulu Garu, Municipal Council Bezwada to the Chairman Municipal Council Bezwada, Legislative, Paper No. 12, 43.

³⁶⁵ Letter from L. M. Jopling, Collector Ballia to H.V. Lovett, Commissioner of Benares division, No. 17, Legislative, p. 8.

taught to them as is the case with the children in cities.³⁶⁶ K.N Agashe, who was not in favour of compulsion suggested that if compulsion was enforced the limit of age should be fixed from 8 to 12. As 'six years is too low and people would be found unwilling to send their boys to school at such a tender age.'³⁶⁷ A. M. Damle suggested age limit for compulsion to be 8 to 12 years for 'boys of the age of six may find it difficult to walk over a mile to the school-house.'³⁶⁸ M. M. Randive opined that compulsion should be for six years to enable children to acquire sufficient knowledge of vernacular language:

within the said period of four years, it is not possible for anybody to acquire a sufficient knowledge of Marathi or any other vernacular language. The object of the Bill is chiefly to impart education to agriculturists and other depressed classes and to protect them from defrauding creditors and to enable them to pass their future life with happiness. Even in the case of boys of Pandharpeshas, it is not possible to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the vernacular language within this short period. The period of compulsion may therefore, be six years that is from six to twelve.³⁶⁹

Objections were also raised on the ground that in the absence of proper school buildings and other facilities for education compulsion would be futile. A.H. Mackenzie, Principal of Higher grade Training college, Allahabad objected that 'it [the Bill] provides means for compelling children to go to school but does not make provision for their education when they got there' and pointed out that 'Boards are *not compelled* to provide efficient education and sufficient accommodation.' He suggested that a Clause should be there for 'defaulting boards' and opined that 'if such a clause is impracticable, its omission on the other hand makes the Bill unworkable.'³⁷⁰

Bhupendra Nath Basu countered the Government's argument of lack of school buildings by suggesting that:

[I]n our country amongst the humble dwellings of the poor we do not require the assistance of the Public Works Department and of chartered contractors to build elaborate houses for the education of the children of the agricultural and industrial classes. In my Province Bengal, a few bamboos cut from a neighbouring tope and a few bundles of straw would immediately give a nice

³⁶⁶ Extract from the proceedings of the District Council, Wardha, Note of K. N. Deshmukh, member District Council, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 91.

³⁶⁷ Letter from K. J. Agashe, Chairman District Local Board Sholapur, to The Collector of Sholapur, 17th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 148

³⁶⁸ A. M. Damle, President Ratnagiri Municipality to the Collector of Ratnagiri, 8th May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 174.

³⁶⁹ M. M. Randive, President (non-official) of the Pen Municipality, 22nd May 1911, Legislative, Legislative No. 55, 172.

³⁷⁰ Letter from A.H. Mackenzie, Principal, Higher grade training college, Allahabad to C.F. De La Fosse, Director of Public Instruction, United Provinces, Legislative, Legislative, No. 28, 25.

little school for boys to attend, and they will be happier in a school of that description than in any very elaborate and ambitious buildings which the Public Works Department may set up for them.³⁷¹

Replying to Basu's suggestion for bamboo and grass buildings, Sharp argued:

when the sun shines, it shines through the wall and shines on your book and perhaps through the roof on to your head. And when the rain rains, it also beats through the walls and probably you find yourself sitting in a puddle.³⁷²

He further argued that the cost of 'decent houses of bamboo and grass which shall give reasonable shelter are found to cost some Rs 500 or Rs 600 at least; and the necessary recurring expenditure on repairs with such materials is not light.'³⁷³ To such objections to the Bill on educational grounds, Gokhale replied:

My Lord, those who raise these objections ignore what is the primary purpose of mass education. The primary purpose of mass education is to banish illiteracy from the land. The quality of education is a matter of importance that comes only after illiteracy has been banished...teachers who could teach a simple curriculum of the 3R's, and houses hired by or voluntarily placed by owners at the disposal of school authorities, must do for the present.³⁷⁴

Proper educational facilities and trained teachers are a prerequisite for the success of any scheme of education. Criticism of an educational programme on these grounds reflects the concern of those criticising it and also paves the path for improvement. A scrutiny of the objections and oppositions to Gokhale's Bill reveals that except a few criticisms, discussed above, lack of proper educational facilities was not the chief cause of contestation for the Bill. This, in turn, is indicative of the fact that education of lower and depressed castes was the matter of least significance for the elite leaders of the time.

1.3. Concluding Remarks

An examination of the debate on Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill points to the fact that there were multiple factors for the failure of the Bill. The widely held notion that apathy of the colonial government towards the education of masses and their unwillingness to provide funds for the scheme were not the *only* factor but just one of the many factors.

³⁷¹ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 42-43.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Colonial government's indifference towards the Bill cannot be denied. But the question arises what instigated this indifference? The first reason was an *imaginary* danger to British rule due to the imposition of compulsory education on an unwilling population. If a foreign government could exact high taxes from an unwilling population, could impose Press Act to curb the spread of 'seditious' literature and so on and so forth then it could well have imposed compulsory education without any political upheaval. Had there been a collective pressure on the government from upper caste and landed gentries, as in the case of Hindu university movement, for enforcing compulsion the government would not have been able to cause Bill's debacle.

On the contrary, those elites who wielded influence on government and local bodies reinforced the government's apprehension by their arguments. This was done because these elites were against compulsory education of masses. At the core of this opposition was their anxiety for disruption of social 'harmony' based on the foundation of the caste system. Not only was there the fear of pollution by untouchable children when compulsion would come into force, but also there was the anxiety related to weaning away of lower and depressed castes from their ancestral occupation. They feared that education would create in them a distaste for manual labour, and they would clamour for a government job, which was the upper caste and upper- and middle-class monopoly hitherto.

Moreover, they also feared scarcity of labour, particularly cheap child labour if compulsion came into force. Another cause of concern was that the education of working castes would lead to an increase in the wages of the labourers, thus, affecting the pocket of mill owners and landed elites. Therefore, attempts were made to misuse Clause 5 and 16 of the Bill by exempting lower and depressed castes from attendance. Ironically, the Clauses which were put by Gokhale as a safeguard were on its way of abuse during the discussion stage itself, to exclude the very section of the population for whom compulsion was needed.

The levy of educational cess was opposed by landed gentry because they did not want to pay for the cause, which did not concern them. Again, the crux of this opposition was the motive to curb the spread of education among lower and depressed castes to maintain the social 'harmony'. Moreover, some elites suggested that specific social structure of Indian society would necessitate the provision of 4 to 5 schools in an area, based on caste, religion and gender, for one school anywhere in the world. Such inflated arguments rendered the official opinion against the Bill due to the considerable cost involved. Besides these opinions, provision of separate schools for untouchable population was considered to be a

necessity by upper caste and landed elites. This would require additional expenditure, which was too much for the government and the landed gentry to fund.

As far as religious and educational factors were concerned, these did not impact the Bill to such an extent to cause its failure. There is a misrepresentation in some studies that the Muslim League opposed the Bill. This is not correct. Though, the League raised concern regarding the teaching of Urdu language and religious education of Muslim children it supported the Bill so that these details could be sorted out once the Bill was referred to the Select Committee. The opposition of Muslim landholders cannot be regarded as Muslim opposition. Instead, these were landed elite opposition to maintain the *status quo*.

The Bill failed by 13 to 38 votes. Even if all the non-officials had supported the Bill, in the absence of official support it was not possible to pass it as the officials were in the majority. So, in terms of number, it can be argued that it was the official opposition, not the non-official Indian members' opposition which led to the defeat of the Bill. However, it is also equally important to note that the non-official opposition within the council and opposition of elite gentry in the larger public played a significant role in the *making up* of official opinion for the Bill, thereby leading to its downfall. The government used these opinions as evidence to prove that public opinion was against the Bill.

Chapter 2

Provincial Primary Education Acts: Window dressing legislation?

*This Bill, thrown out to-day,
will come back again and again,
till on the stepping stones of its dead selves,
a measure ultimately rises
which will spread the light of knowledge throughout the land.¹*

These were the optimistic remarks of Gokhale when the Bill failed in the Imperial Legislative Council. Nonetheless, Gokhale paved the path for free and compulsory primary education through legislation. At the Coronation Durbar, King George V announced £33,000 a year for education. On 30 July 1912, in the House of Commons at the time of the discussion on the Indian Budget, the under-secretary of State for India announced that this amount would be spent mainly on the extension of primary education:

Out of the total population, 15 percent of which may be taken to be of school going age, only 4 percent of the boys and 0.7 percent of the girls are at school. The educational grant of £33,000 a year announced at the Delhi Durbar is to be spent mainly on primary education, and that is but a prelude to a much more extensive programme. The programme which we hope to work up in time is as follows- we desire to increase the total number of primary schools by 90,000 or 75 percent, and to double the school going population. The schools will cost £25 each per year, and they will be placed in villages and other centres of population which are at present without schools. We are going to improve the existing schools, which now only cost about ₹-10 each per year, and the cost of these will probably have to be doubled.²

The momentum created by Gokhale's Bill led to this proclamation, which eventually resulted in the Para 10 of the Educational Policy of 1913. This Para while agreeing to the fact that primary education should have a 'predominant claim upon the public funds' refused to make it compulsory. It noted:

¹ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 14.

² Official report of the parliamentary debates, House of Commons, Vol. XLI (July 15 to August 7, 1912), page 1896. In J.M. Sen, *Primary Education Acts in India: A Study* (Calcutta: YMCA, 1925), 197.

For financial and administrative reasons of decisive weight the Government of India have refused to recognise the principle of compulsory education; but they desire the widest possible extension of primary education on a voluntary basis. As regards free elementary education the time has not yet arrived when it is practicable to dispense wholly with fees without injustice to the many villages, which are waiting for the provision of schools...In some provinces primary education is already free and in the majority of provinces provision is already made for giving free elementary instruction to those boys whose parents cannot afford to pay fees. Local governments have been requested to extend the application of the principle of free primary education amongst the poorer and more backward section of the population. Further than this it is not possible at present to go.³

The unfinished task of Gokhale was taken over by Vithalbhai Jhaveribhai Patel in the Bombay Presidency. He introduced a Resolution in 1916 and later a Bill, in 1917, for the free and compulsory primary education. This Bill was passed into Bombay Primary Education (District Municipalities) Act in 1918 and other provinces followed suit. By 1920, except Assam, all the Provinces had enacted the Primary Education Act.

In this chapter, I do not intend to delve into the details of these Acts or their implementation. Instead, a critical analysis of debates on the PEA will be the focus of this chapter. First, I have attempted to examine the discussions in the Bombay Legislative Council during the enactment of the first PEA of the country. The PEA in almost all the provinces remained a dead letter in terms of their enforcement. The most backward in this respect was Bengal, where not a single municipal body or district board asked for the implementation of the Act in their area. The most forward was the Punjab, with 57 municipalities and 1499 district boards under compulsion. In the next section of this chapter, an analysis of the debates in the Punjab and Bengal Legislative Council has been undertaken to understand the opinion of the leaders towards these Acts and to explore the reasons behind the failure of the same. In Bengal, where the PEA failed miserably, Rural PEA was enacted in 1930 to enforce compulsion in rural areas. The last section of this chapter deals with the debates during the passage of Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill in the Bengal Legislative Council.

In this study, Bombay has been chosen because the first Primary Education Act of the country was passed in this Presidency. The choice of Bengal was instigated by the fact that Bengal was one of the leading provinces of British India in the field of higher education, but it lagged far behind other Provinces with respect to primary education. Further, these

³ Indian Educational Policy: Being a Resolution issued by the Governor General in Council on the 21st February 1913, (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1915), 9.

two Provinces were chosen to compare the nature of debates in the former, an industrial setting and the latter with a more feudal structure.

2.1. Patel's Resolution

On December 6 1916, Vithalbhai Jhaveribhai Patel moved a resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council for 'an early beginning' in the direction of

making elementary education free and compulsory throughout the Presidency by introducing it in the first instance within the limits of its Municipal Districts and that a mixed committee of officials and non-officials be appointed to frame and submit definite proposals in that behalf.⁴

Like Gokhale's resolution and Bill, Patel's resolution was modest and unpretentious. Unlike Gokhale's Bill, it sought to introduce compulsion only in towns having municipalities, and non-municipal towns and villages were kept out of the ambit of the resolution. He based this resolution on the fact that the percentage of children at primary school to the school-going population in municipal towns was in between 33 and 84, making them 'quite ripe for the introduction of compulsory primary education.'⁵ In fact Patel considered them 'over-ripe.'⁶ Moreover, this resolution asked for compulsion for boys only. To pacify the government, he added that 'the measures for the introduction of compulsion may be adopted after the war is over, so that no additional burden will be thrown upon government while the war lasts.'⁷ He desired through this resolution that a committee was appointed to inquire into this question and be prepared with a definite scheme to introduce compulsion for boys in municipal areas after the war was over. The government raised similar apprehensions as raised during Gokhale's Bill that levying fine or prosecution of defaulting parents would lead to the unpopularity of the government and may provoke the masses against it. In trying to rid the government of their 'unfounded' fear, R.P. Paranjapye remarked:

The demand for free and compulsory education is not a demand forced by the government – it is a demand made by the people. If, therefore, there is any popularity, there is any unpopularity, let me assure government that that unpopularity will be shared to the fullest extent by all educated people. The educated classes of the country will bear their share to the fullest extent and government themselves can wash their hands of any unpopularity and throw the blame on the educated classes.⁸

⁴ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay, 1916, Vol. LIV (Bombay: Government Central press, 1917) 621-22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 625.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 627.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 629.

Gokuldas Khandas Parekh argued that '[o]rdinary people even of the lowest stratum have commenced to appreciate education...people at large will consider it the greatest boon to have free and compulsory education in the country.'⁹ Pandurang Anant Desai retorted, 'I do not see any substance in this argument at all because this compulsion is asked for by the people themselves and by representatives of the people.'¹⁰

The debate in the Council reveals that the demand for compulsory education was not just a demand for education of masses but was also linked with the identity of the 'Nation.' For instance, Paranjpye put forth the view that the advance of any country is mainly judged by its educational system and by the extent to which its children are being educated. Most of the non-official members who spoke in support of the resolution also shared this idea. Belvi argued, 'the spread of primary education is a thing by which our advancement in civilization will be judged by people living outside India.'¹¹ Paranjpye further argued that the educated classes were demanding free and compulsory education for the masses without any selfish interest:

Question of free and compulsory education has no element of personal gain to the educated classes in it. The children of the educated classes are already being educated. They are looking forward by means of their advocacy of this principle to raise their lower classes, to bring the lower classes up to their own level, and you will find that in this advocacy of free and compulsory education there is no selfish element of caste at all.¹²

Belvi reiterated Paranjpye's view that 'there can be no two opinions on this point that the general desire of the educated classes not only in the presidency of Bombay but in the whole Continent of India is in favour of the spread of primary education among masses.'¹³

Paranjpye insisted on opening more teacher training colleges to meet the demand of trained teachers and also on increasing the salary of teachers as 'a day labourer in these days very often gets more than the salary of an ordinary teacher.'¹⁴

An important feature of debate during Patel's resolution was an emphasis on the need for the literate labour force. Kashinath Ramchandra Godbole shared his experience as an

⁹ Ibid., 631.

¹⁰ Ibid., 639.

¹¹ Ibid., 637.

¹² Ibid., 630.

¹³ Ibid., 636.

¹⁴ Ibid., 629.

‘employer of labour’ that ‘the effect of elementary education on labourers is very marked’¹⁵ as such labourer ‘gives less trouble and gives a better outturn of work.’¹⁶ He opined that India could not progress in any way and any direction ‘until the 3Rs are known in every house in every village.’¹⁷ Siddhanath Dhonddev Garud opined that for political economy education was very necessary for the ‘training of labour for the necessities of the State and it should primarily be the duty of the state to provide the funds necessary for giving primary and elementary education to its subjects.’¹⁸ Phiroze C. Sethna observed that ‘if the labouring classes claimed some acquaintance with their pothooks and hangers they would be able to carry out their work more intelligently.’¹⁹ He linked the education of masses with their improved earning capacity and opined: ‘With greater intelligence brought about by education their position will improve materially, they will command better wages, and thereby be able to bear the burden of additional taxation should the same become necessary for the purpose of education.’²⁰

Some members raised their objection to limit the resolution to Municipal areas. Siddhanath Dhonddev Garud moved an amendment that committee that would be constituted should take up the enquiries in rural area also. Regarding funds, he shared the idea that ‘half the cost should be borne by the municipalities and Local boards and half by Government.’ BalKrishna Sitaram Kamat opposed Garud’s amendment for the inclusion of rural areas and opined that ‘if this resolution comes within the bounds of practical politics at all,... is due to the insertion of the words “within the limits of the Municipal districts” and that inclusion of rural areas also ‘would make the scope of the enquiry unwieldy.’²¹

Chunilal Vijbhukhandas Mehta supported the resolution because it would apply to only those municipalities which asked for free and compulsory education. During the debate, Mehta revealed a scheme of the Bombay Mill Owner’s association in which it was proposed that as an inducement to the factory children, a monthly bonus would be given to the children who would attend the schools daily. He asked the government that in addition to the remission of fees, the ‘practice of assisting the depressed classes by the grant of slates

¹⁵ Ibid., 630.

¹⁶ Ibid., 631.

¹⁷ Ibid., 631.

¹⁸ Ibid., 633.

¹⁹ Ibid., 642.

²⁰ Ibid., 642.

²¹ Ibid., 635.

and books should be extended.’²² Sardar Dulabawa Raisingji, opined ‘principal (sic) of compulsory and free education is believed to be a sound principle at present throughout the civilized world, and I think that it should be applied in a limited scope throughout this presidency.’²³ Sheikh Ghulam Hussein Hidayatallah, argued that ‘no measure short of free and compulsory education will improve the condition of the Mussalmans in this country.’²⁴ The specific needs of the Muslim community, one of the contested issue during the discussion on Gokhale’s Bill, came up again. Ebrahim Haroon Jaffer proposed that there should be a provision of Mahomedan teachers for the schools ‘in the absence of which any scheme for free and compulsory education will not prove successful.’²⁵ Mahadev Bhaskar Chaubal opposed Patel’s Resolution on the ground that ‘relations of this [Bombay government] government and the Government of India are such that even if this resolution is passed by the whole council this Government as a Government will not be able to accept it.’²⁶ He emphasised the fact that since the Resolution of 21st February 1913 was binding on the government of Bombay, it would be unconstitutional to move the Resolution or for the government to accept it. The Resolution was put to the vote and failed by 20 to 25. All the European members and the nominated members, official and non-official (with three exceptions) voted against it.²⁷ All the elected members and three nominated members Diwan Bahadur K.R. Godbole, B.S. Kamat and Rao Bahadur V.S. Naik, voted in favour of the resolution.²⁸ Thus, the resolution was lost by a shallow margin. The chief cause of its failure was constitutional, as observed by Mahadev Bhaskar Chaubal.

2.2. Patel’s Primary Education Bill

Walking into the footsteps of Gokhale, Vithalbai Patel moved the Primary Education Bill in Bombay Legislative Council on 25 July 191²⁹7 as a private member Bill. The Bill was titled:

A Bill to provide for the extension of primary education in municipal districts in the Bombay Presidency other than the city of Bombay.

²² Ibid., 641-42.

²³ Ibid., 643.

²⁴ Ibid., 645.

²⁵ Ibid., 638.

²⁶ Ibid., 646.

²⁷ Desai, Compulsory education, 107.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay, Vol LV, 1917 (Bombay: Government central press, 1918), 542.

The Bill was largely based on Gokhale's Bill, but it restricted compulsion to municipal areas only. Secondly, While in Gokhale's Bill Government was required to bear two-thirds of the expenditure Patel's Bill compromised on this through clause 18, which stated that: 'Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to affect the public revenue of the Bombay Presidency or to impose any charge on such revenues.'³⁰ This was deemed necessary to move the Bill in the Council because the Government of India permitted its introduction in the Council on the condition that: 'It will be necessary to add an express provision that nothing in the bill will affect the public revenues of the Bombay Presidency or impose any charge on these revenues'³¹

The Bill was then referred to Select Committee. The Select Committee made certain changes in Patel's Bill. G.K.Sathe, Chunilal V. Mehta and A.F. Pathan, the only Muslim member of the Select Committee, dissented from the Committee. Mehta and Sathe dissented regarding clause 11 of the Bill. Clause 11 of the Bill prohibited the employment of children up to 11 years of age. Sathe gave two reasons in support of his dissent. First, he submitted that it would invoke resistance from the labour class as it 'will tend to cut off some source of income of parents.' Second, it would have a negative impact on the development of municipalities implementing the Act. He observed:

The legislation being permissive, it may not be introduced simultaneously in all trade and industrial centres, and this being so, places where this is not introduced will be in a more advantageous position than neighbouring places where it is introduced.³²

Mehta shared the same sentiments as Sathe and was apprehensive of the fact that this may prevent the municipalities from implementing the Act.

The Select Committee rose the age of compulsory attendance at school to eleven years because they thought that 'this is the minimum period for which education should be continued if any lasting results are to be expected.'³³ Pir Baksh moved an amendment to raise the compulsory period to twelve years because he argued, 'in this country the health of the children is not favourable so as to enable them to grasp what they are taught.'³⁴ Patel opposed this amendment on the grounds that when the Bill would be extended to girls, it

³⁰ Bombay Government Gazette July 1917, quoted in Desai, *Compulsory Education*, 370.

³¹ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay, Vol LV, 1917 (Bombay: Government central press, 1918), 581.

³² *Ibid.*, 1063.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1059.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1075.

would create ‘special hardships’³⁵ for them. Regarding remission of fees, the committee considered that compulsory education should be free as those paying the fees will have been charged twice in the form of fees and the educational cess. A significant move of the Select Committee was the addition of Clause 15, from Gokhale’s Bill, regarding the exemption from attendance so that ‘children whose education cannot be conveniently arranged for, who should not be required to undergo the course of education which is compulsory in the district or for whose education sufficient provision is already made.’³⁶ This was a loophole in Gokhale’s Bill which Patel sought to remove because this would provide legal exclusion of the children of depressed castes by upper-caste authorities. Moreover, this also ensured that the upper castes were not compelled to send their children in government primary schools to study along with lower castes in the same school. This exemption Clause was not only added in Patel’s Bill but also was the distinguishing feature of Acts enacted in other provinces.

The Select Committee modified Clause 5 of the Bill regarding the number of councillors required to pass the resolution for implementation of the Act in any local area. The amended Clause required the support ‘of at least two-thirds of the Councillors present at the meeting, and secondly... [the support of] at least one-half of the whole number of councillors.’³⁷ Shridhar Balkrishna Upasani moved an amendment with respect to this Clause that ordinary majority of half of the whole number of councillors, ‘which is usually required for the passing of a resolution on any other subject, should be sufficient also for the passing a resolution for the introduction of compulsory education.’³⁸ Upasani argued that the presence of these two conditions would ‘come in the way of the passing of a resolution in favour of compulsory primary education.’³⁹ However, this amendment was opposed mainly on the grounds that the double safeguard was necessary to keep a check on any hasty decision by the majority. Sheikh Ghulam Hussein Hidayatallah, for instance, argued that ‘as this Bill affects the interests of the various communities, two-thirds of the number is a safeguard provided in this Bill... by a bare majority, any one community can carry a resolution against the wishes of another community.’⁴⁰ Paranjapye strongly opposed the amendment moved by Upasani on similar reasoning that ‘the principle of compulsion shall

³⁵ Ibid., 1075.

³⁶ Ibid., 1060.

³⁷ Ibid., 1090.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1091.

not be enforced in any municipality if there is a very large minority in that municipality opposing this compulsion.’ He explained that while the support of one-half of the total members ensures that there is a tremendous feeling in favour of compulsion, the vote in support of compulsion by two-thirds of the members present ‘will ensure that the minority against this Bill being applied is not of very considerable magnitude.’⁴¹ The amendment was put to the vote and lost. Regarding Clause 5, another amendment was put forward by Khan Bahadur Pir Baksh that the double safeguard provided in the Bill be substituted by the single condition that the resolution for compulsion should be passed if supported by at least two-thirds of the whole number of Councillors on the Board. Paranjpye again opposed this on the grounds that ‘simply more than one-third of the people sitting quiet at home and not wishing to be present at the meeting ought not to be allowed merely by their silence to stop such a measure being carried.’⁴² Patel considered the amendment as ‘too backward a step’ as ‘those who realise what the constitution of our district municipalities at present is will have no doubt that it is absolutely necessary that the proposed amendment should not be accepted.’⁴³ Thus, it can be seen that though the Bill put the responsibility for the introduction of compulsion on Local Bodies, it ensured that they did not misuse it. Diwan Bahadur Kashinath Ramchandra Godbole an amendment with reference to the Clause 7 (c) of the Bill that instead of exemption from attendance if a school is not within one mile of the child’s residence, the distance should be reduced to half a mile as it would entail great hardship on a child of six, seven and eight years of age. It was vehemently opposed by Paranjpye and Patel on the ground that ‘energy of children so far as walking is concerned is considerably more than he [Godbole] thinks.’⁴⁴ Patel asserted, ‘it would do more good to the health and the physique of a child making it compulsory for it to walk one mile to school and back the same distance.’ On the financial ground, he submitted that it would not be possible for municipalities to open schools at every half a mile of the residence of every child. Moreover, he informed the council that due to the Town Planning Act under operation in some of the municipalities, it would be impossible to locate schools other than those shown in the scheme. Interestingly, Godbole supported Sathe’s amendment for child labour, discussed in the next section, which was more hardship for a child than to walk a

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 1094.

⁴³ Ibid., 1095.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1106.

distance of one mile. The amendment was lost with sixteen members voting for it and twenty-two against the same.

2.2.1. Mill owners and issue of child labour

The mill owners and elite members of the Council made several attempts to modify the Bill so that they could not lose the cheap child labour without throwing off the Bill altogether. This section examines the debate pertaining to this issue.

Clause 10 of the Bill required that the trial of defaulting parents be carried out by Magistrate. Rao Bahadur Krishna Sathe moved an amendment with respect to this Clause that the prosecution of defaulting parents should be carried on by President of the Municipality Board instead of the Magistrate. This was a flawed amendment because it aimed at making the non-attendance less severe on parents, when the children were employed in factories, by misuse of power by the president, the influential gentry of the locality. Sathe argued that such complicated machinery was not required to deal with small cases as failure to comply with the attendance rule. He further reasoned that it would be a great hardship on poor parents, monetary as well as physical because they would have to travel long distances to taluka headquarter and would have to shell out money for defending their cases. Harchandrai Vishindas supported the amendment moved by Sathe on the grounds that trial before a magistrate would imply that offence was criminal leading to the unpopularity of the Act among the people. Balkrishna Sitaram Kamat opposed the amendment because 'it is the question of an independent mind being brought to bear upon the question... it would be far better if these cases are tried by an ordinary court than by the president of the municipality.'⁴⁵ F.G. Pratt, while opposing the amendment maintained that:

[U]nless these cases were taken before a magistrate there would be grave risk that the usefulness of the act would be to a large extent undermined and the act would be in a serious danger of becoming a dead-letter and it would not work at all in practice.⁴⁶

Pratt further argued,

If you are going to have compulsory education you must face the situation and make your act a really compulsory act, make the public really understand that these duties are enjoined upon them by the law and that they are bound to

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1115.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

comply with the provision of the act and that the failure to comply with them would be treated as an offence and would be punishable under the act.⁴⁷

Mahadev Bhaskar Chaubal opposed the amendment because President of the municipality 'who has the control and supervision over all municipal affairs...should himself be the trying judge!'⁴⁸ Further he reasoned that:

all the fines which will be inflicted and realised in these prosecutions are to be credited to municipal funds. Now if you say that all these trials should be before the President or Vic-President of a municipality, is his conduct not liable or open to aspersion?⁴⁹

On Sathe's apprehension that the public should be under the impression that offences under this act are venial and therefore offenders should not be regarded as criminals, Chaubal argued:

I do not at all agree with this proposition and am opposed to any attempt to sweeten the pill. I wish the public and the offending parents who bring themselves under the penal provisions of the law by keeping their children away from schools without reasonable excuse to realise to the full that they are criminals, and deserve to be penalised for the offence of encouraging illiteracy.⁵⁰

Shridhar Balkrishna Upasani supporting the amendment opined that

this act is meant for the good of the people and so far as possible it should be left to the good sense of the people to take advantage of it and we should secure its enforcement with their co-operation rather than create any misapprehension in their minds that any breach of the provisions of this act would be considered a moral wrong or a criminal offence.⁵¹

Vithalbhai Patel strongly opposed the amendment because it would be akin to 'prosecutor be the judge in his own cause.'⁵² The amendment was put to the vote and lost. Fourteen members voted in its favour and twenty-one against it.

Then, there were factory owners who demanded that in the definition of the 'child' children up to 13 years of age employed in the factory should be included. This was because the Factory Act barred the employment of children between 9 and 11 years of age. The factory owners did not want to lose the cheap child labour. They sought to employ the children of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1116.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1117.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1118.

⁵² Ibid., 1119.

this age range through the Primary Education Act by recommending an amendment to this purpose. Chunilal Mehta moved an amendment to redefine the word 'child' to include children up to 13 years of age employed in a factory. He provided two reasons for this. First, posing as the well-wisher of the poor working class, he argued, 'the class of persons now employed in factories who do not send their children to school is so poor, so illiterate, that it would be a real hardships to deprive them of the earnings of their children.'⁵³ Second, Mehta claimed that the children below fourteen years of age who were allowed to work as half-timer under the Factory Act were, in reality, working as full-timer by roving from one factory to another. He explained that, through his amendment, he sought to avoid this overwork by children and at the same time not prohibiting them completely from earning by working in a factory. He maintained:

the child will work for six hours in the morning and he will have to attend not more than three hours in a school which is to be provided either by the factory owners or by the municipality, and it will be the duty of both the factory owners and the school inspector to co-operate and see that the child does attend the school, and if the child does attend the school, he cannot attend for remaining part of the time in other factories.⁵⁴

Mahadev Bhaskar Chaubal urged factory owners including Mehta that instead of choosing to wreck the Bill they must support it by 'making it a point to employ children only above the age of eleven' and maintained that there is no inconsistency between the Bill and the Factory Act as the only result will be that the factory owners would not be able to employ the children between the age of nine and eleven. He argued that Mehta's stance of taking into consideration the hardship of only children of factory workers was a biased opinion as children employed in other areas were left aside. He retorted:

Why should we be so particular about this one employment in factories, and why should we ignore the fact that a number of other children who may be not be working in factories, but may have other occupation, will deprive their parents of the same assistance which the parents of factory children will be deprived of if they are compulsorily put to school?⁵⁵

He objected to raising compulsory age from 11 to 13 in case of children employed in factories on the educational ground that the age of eleven 'marks out a definite stage in the educational course' after which the child 'bifurcates into the study of English.' But if after

⁵³ Ibid., 1077.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1079.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1081.

the age of nine the child shifts to the factory school it would be an abrupt change as there would be a lack of consistency between the curriculum of primary school and that of the factory school. Moreover, Chaubal claimed that the idea of Factory Schools was an imagination of Chunilal Mehta as no such schools were operative in any factory in Bombay during that time. He argued:

I think perhaps it would be more correct first to start factory schools and then to ask this Council for an amendment of the law... I am not aware of any regular factory schools existing at present in Ahmedabad, Bombay or any other place...let them [factory owners] start factory schools, let the factory owners make provision for the efficient elementary education of the children whom they employed and then let them come before the council and say; "As we have started such and such schools and have made adequate provision for the education of the children whom we employ, there should be an exception in the case of such children". That would be a far more reasonable request to make than proposing at this stage a definition of the word "child" which would leave the parents of children not employed in factories grounds for reasonable complaint.⁵⁶

Patel argued, 'it is the duty of the State to protect the class of the population which is least able to take care of itself... [viz.] the children under ten and eleven years of age.' He further observed:

My honourable friend Mr. Chunilal Mehta wants that these children should work in factories six hours and then attend school for three hours. The school may be one mile from the residence of a boy that means one mile to go and one mile to come. So practically my friend Mr. Mehta wants that a boy of ten should work for ten or eleven hours of the day.⁵⁷

He asked the Council that 'whether it is in the interests of the children and of the country at large to allow the physique and health of a child to deteriorate in the manner suggested by my honourable friend Mr. Chunilal Mehta.'⁵⁸ The real motive of Mehta's amendment, viz. retaining of cheap child labour, was revealed when he observed: 'there is such a pronounced scarcity of labour in the districts, particularly in the districts outside Bombay, that industries are bound to be very materially affected.'⁵⁹ Despite all reasoning of Mehta, the amendment moved by him was lost.

After the above two failed efforts, the mill-owners and other employers of child labour succeeded in their endeavour through Sathé's amendment discussed below. Clause 11 of

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1081-82.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1083.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the Bill, as modified by the Select Committee, prohibited employment of children, for profit, between the age of six and eleven and imposed a serious penalty on employers of child labour. Rao Bahadur Ganesh Krishna Sathe introduced an amendment to this clause that there should be no 'wholesale bar on the employment of children' as they contribute Rs. 3 or Rs 4 per month in their family income. He argued that child labour was necessary because of its cheapness and to make up the scarcity of labour.

He observed if instead of a child an adult servant is employed one has to pay Rs 9 to 11 for the same job which could be done at Rs 3 to Rs. 4 by a child servant. Further, 'in mofussil places the question of labour is becoming very complicated and necessity is really felt of employing children 10 or 11 for doing really very light work.'⁶⁰ Exemplifying the case of England, he said, even in England when compulsion was introduced in 1876 employment of child labour was not prohibited and it was only after forty years that such an attempt was being made by Fisher and asked, 'shall we be justified in introducing such a clause in the Bill when we are making primary education compulsory for the first time in our Presidency?'⁶¹ Kashinath Ramchandra Godbole supported Sathe's amendment and opined that the labour class residing in 'mofussil municipal area for which compulsory education has been prescribed ought to be given an opportunity of utilising the earnings of grown-up children; otherwise their life in the city will be difficult.'⁶² Godbole further prescribed that '[t]hese children want education in the three R's only, and the three R's can be successfully taught to them in a half-time school or in a four hours' school' after which these 'children can utilise two or three hours a day in earning small wages which will be a contribution for the maintenance of the family.'⁶³ Dattatraya Venkatesh Belvi favouring the amendment argued:

The object of the Bill was to infuse better education among classes who do not at present take the advantage of the educational facilities which obtain in this Presidency. What will be the effect of keeping this particular clause as it stands in the Bill? Will it not frighten people who live in municipal areas and will it not lead to an exodus of the poor people from municipal areas where this act may be introduced?... will not that be an inevitable effect of keeping the wording as it stands? It is all very well for men who can make thousands a month to say that there should be no sweating of child labour...but we have to realise the position of poor parents who find it extremely difficult in this poor country to make two ends meet.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1126.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 1127.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1136.

He further negated the precedent of England for she being rich and because ‘even in England... it took over forty years to bring in a Bill which provides that the employment of children below a certain age, namely, 12... is penal.’⁶⁵ Supporting child labour he argued, ‘nothing can be more unreasonable than to say that children should not be put to hard labour even when they have to earn a small amount of money to supplement the income of their parents.’⁶⁶ On a similar ground, Purushottamdas Thakurdas supported the amendment:

After all what is there to prevent the labouring class and the other classes which the Select Committee have shown so much solicitude from migrating from within the limits of that municipality to neighbouring ones? In view of the fact that labour for the factory and labour for other purposes is getting scarcer day by day, and also in view of the fact that it will not be right to the parents of children that are employed in factories if we do not give them the credit of having the ordinary human feelings towards their children, is this council prepared to pass into legislation a clause the interpretation of which is admitted to err on the side of strictness if not on the side of severity?⁶⁷

He warned the Council that if this amendment does not get acceptance of the Council, it would be better to ‘oppose passing into legislation a most important clause in one of the first bills of its kind that is passed in British India, because this clause is much too strict.’⁶⁸ Pheroze C. Sethna supported the amendment believing that Sathe’s amendment was ‘but a paraphrase of the original clause of the Bill and removes whatever doubt there may be regarding casual employment.’⁶⁹ Responding to Sethna’s apprehension Balkrishna Sitaram Kamat clarified that Clause 11 of the Bill does not put a bar on the casual employment of children but prohibits it when a boy was employed ‘for the purpose of profit.’⁷⁰ He argued that if Sathe’s amendment was accepted

it would open up a door not only for casual employment but also for employment in factories and no hard and fast line could be drawn whereby we could employ boys for domestic purposes and prevent them from going to factory labour.⁷¹

He emphasised that the purpose of this Clause was to prevent the sweating of boys for factory labour. Further refuting Sathe’s recommendation, he noted:

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1137.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1138.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1139.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1132.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1128.

⁷¹ Ibid.

There cannot be a half-way house between these two things, if at all we care for conquering the illiteracy of the labouring classes, I believe we should not think of giving them schooling for short time as well as get work out of them.⁷²

C. N. Seddon opined that it is quite clear that ‘he [Sathe] intends to allow factory labour for children under eleven years who are forced to attend school, and this is what we particularly wish to avoid.’⁷³ He rejected Sathe’s amendment aiming to six hours work in a factory and four hours schooling for a child of nine years of age as ‘it would be a monstrous strain for a child to undergo... this impossible task should not be laid upon the children. We feel sure that it cannot fail to do them a serious injury.’⁷⁴ He further maintained that since only a few children are employed in factories so it will ‘have no serious effect upon the willingness of municipalities to adopt this act and to enforce compulsory education.’⁷⁵ Moreover, he opined that the municipalities like Sholapur or Ahmedabad, which have considerable factory interest, would be forced to adopt this act when other municipalities adopt them as they would not be able to ‘resist the pressure of public opinion if compulsory education is introduced in other places.’⁷⁶ He went on to say that ‘if any industry really requires the labour of children of 9 and 10 years of age, it is very questionable whether such industry is worth protecting.’⁷⁷ J. G. Covernton read an excerpt from Fisher’s speech as evidence of the detrimental effect of the child labour in England and the need thereof to curb it:

At the present moment the effect of our elementary school education is greatly harmed by the work which is imposed on children out of school hours... the general opinion of my inspectors is that of all the reforms affecting elementary education there is none more vital than the enforcement of strict limitation of the employment of children in their school going days. This is not merely a question of scholastic efficiency; it affects the physical welfare of the race. We have now an overwhelming mass of evidence to the effect that the health of our children suffers from premature or excessive employment...the report of our school medical service are [sic] full of them.⁷⁸

He argued that when this was the case in England where ‘general sanitary conditions of factories are superior to those in India’⁷⁹ the employment of children, of the age under

⁷² Ibid., 1128.

⁷³ Ibid., 1132.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1133.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

discussion, in India should be checked as far as possible. Covernton targeted Sathe for his ‘accidental’ confession that children are preferred to adult as they are cheaper than the latter on the grounds that

We surely ought not to allow children to be employed in occupations detrimental to their health, detrimental to their growth, and therefore detrimental to the rising generation and detrimental to the country. We ought not, I say, to allow work entailing results of that kind merely for the sake of saving employers the difference between three rupees and nine rupees.⁸⁰

Raghunath Purshotam Paranjpye opposed the amendment and argued that

the very fact that we are legislating for the purpose of compulsory education shows that we are, to a certain extent, invading the rights and conveniences of parents...there is no argument to say that this clause would work harshly towards parents or the employers, because the act is intended to do something harsh with respect to the parents and the employers in view of the larger interests of the children.⁸¹

Referring to the comments of those supporting the amendment that even in England absolute prohibition of employment was not sought, when compulsion was introduced, Paranjpye retorted, ‘going by the remark of some members it seems that we should wait in the same way, get 40 years’ experience of imperfect compulsory education, and after that experience mend our ways.’⁸² He said rather than losing sight of experiences of other nations ‘it is the duty of statesmanship to profit by those mistakes and not go on committing them again until we ourselves, by bad experience, find out the error of our ways.’⁸³ Countering Godbole’s argument that little children should not be made to walk one miles’ he asked him will employing the child labour be not a hardship on the health of poor children.

I was rather surprised to find the Honourable Rao Bahadur Godbole coming forward to support this amendment because only this morning he has been reading us a heart-rending tale of the difficulty which children would experience in walking to school at a mile’s distance. Now he does not find the least difficulty in allowing these boys to work in a factory for six hours in addition to four hours’ schooling.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1134.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1142.

⁸² Ibid., 1143.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Regarding the assertion that three Rs could be learnt in a short time, even in a half time school, he opined that it was not so, for

we are often tempted to judge from our own experience of a maturer (sic) age and deduce that what is suitable for us would be suitable in the case of children also. But children do require a certain definite length of time in imbibing and in digesting what is taught to them.⁸⁵

He expressed his anxiety that if the amendment is accepted, factory owners will develop this feeling that

provided he satisfies the main conditions, that is, if he allows the child to go to school for four hours there is no harm in the least in employing that child for any further length of time, and the evil of child labour will continue.⁸⁶

He exhorted that in the broader interests of the country ‘it is not right for children up to 11 years of age to be employed in such surroundings, in such hard and regular labour which certainly is not consistent with the healthy upbringing and education of the child.’⁸⁷

Munmohandas Ramji opposed the amendment and made a most outstanding and bold comment in response to the arguments put forward by those favouring the amendment that it would put a financial strain on the family of labourers working in a factory. He suggested that in such a condition ‘it would be quite open to these people to ask for more wages from the industry where they are employed.’⁸⁸ Further he remarked that, ‘[i]t is safe to ask people who want to employ young children to contribute more towards the employment of adults rather than ask for employment of young children and save money thereby.’ He stressed that,

If these children are properly grown, I mean physically and mentally looked after in their younger life, in their after life (sic) they will be better citizens, they will be better able to earn more and better fitted to endure the hard work of the day.⁸⁹

After the discussion, the amendment was put to the vote and carried with twenty-five members voting for it and 13 against it. This was the highly debated clause of the Bill and, its approval is indicative of the fact that from Gokhale’s time, the elites changed their strategy of dealing with such a Bill. This time instead of directly opposing the Bill, the elites chose to weaken the Bill by providing a back door for child labour. In this way, they

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1143.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 1144.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1145.

ensured that their interests were not harmed and at the same time pretended as a supporter of the education of working caste children, albeit as ‘half-timer.’

2.2.2. Muhammadan question

Another contested issue which came up during the debate on the Bill was medium of instruction. This question was implicitly linked with the teaching of Urdu to the Muslim children, as the discussion in the following paragraph reveals. A. F. Pathan, the only Muslim member of the Select Committee, dissented for no consideration being given in the Bill ‘for the education of children of the principal communities resident in their areas, giving instruction in their respective mother-tongues.’⁹⁰ Sheikh Ghulam Hussein Hidayatallah supported Pathan’s dissent and opposed the second reading of the Bill for non-consideration of the demand that Urdu shall be the medium of the instruction of Muhammadan children and that the School Committee should be representative of all important communities of the area. He was apprehensive that:

If this Bill is passed into law, it will effect to the new policy of Government and Urdu will not be the medium of instruction for the Mahomedan boys. The result will be that nearly 70 percent of the total population of the Mahomedans of the three divisions whose mother tongue is Urdu...shall have to pay the educational cess or tax, and they will be compelled to send their children to school where they will not be taught in their mother tongue. And if they decide not to send their children to school... they will be punished under the Bill.⁹¹

Abdul Kadir Pathan moved an amendment for instruction in the medium of vernacular such as Marathi, Gujarati, Kanarese, Sindhi, Urdu of the municipal district. It was supported by Sheikh Ghulam Hussein Hidayatallah and Ebrahim Haroon Jaffer. They argued that this amendment was necessary because otherwise people would have to pay educational tax and would be forced to learn a language which was not their mother-tongue and if they did not comply with it they would be punished. Their main concern was concerning Urdu as the medium of instruction in Muslim dominated districts. The amendment was put to the vote and was lost with nine members voting in favour of it and twenty-six voting against it. This was bound to happen in a Council with a Hindu majority.

Another bone of contention was the representation of Muslim members on the school attendance committee. Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgri moved an amendment that a school

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1061.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1068.

committee appointed under Section 28 of the principal Act⁹² or if not already appointed then under Clause 6 of the Primary Education Bill should be ‘representative of the Mahomedan community in proportion to the strength of that community on the Municipal Corporation.’⁹³ This was opposed by Chaubal because any such amendment could be moved with respect to the Principal Act and not with the Primary Education Bill, Secondly he asked Bhurgri as why he wanted Muslim representation on school committee but not on sanitation or any other committee. To this Bhurgri replied that it was due to the fact that ‘the school committee was going to have powers to bring people to trial.’⁹⁴ The Hindu majority did not consider the representation of minority and charged them for ‘carrying sectarian interests too far.’⁹⁵ The amendment was lost with twelve members voting in its favour and twenty-six against it. Among Hindu members who voted in its favour were Dattatraya Venkatesh Belvi and Raghunath Purshottam Paranjpye.

2.3. Aftermath of Primary Education Acts

The political context which galvanised the enactments of PEAs was the introduction of Dyarchy through the Reforms of 1919. On 20 August 1917, Lord Montagu announced in House of Commons the introduction of new reforms in India. When Reforms were formally introduced in 1919, education was part of the transferred list under the charge of provincial ministers. However, allotment of only primary education vis-à-vis entire education (primary, secondary and university) to the transferred list was a highly contested issue during the formulation of reforms. In their report of 1918, Montagu and Chelmsford recommended the formation of a committee ‘for advising on the demarcation of the field of provincial administration and the matters within that field which should be transferred to the control of ministers.’⁹⁶ Based on this recommendation a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Southborough on March 10 1919. The Southborough committee suggested that European education should be treated as a reserved subject and all the rest, including university, technical and secondary education, should be transferred

⁹² Primary Education Bill was construed as part of and supplementary to The Bombay District Act, 1901. The main Act mentioned here refers to this Act.

⁹³ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay, 1917, Vol. LV, (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1918), 1096.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 1099.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Fourth despatch in Indian Constitutional Reforms (division of functions), No. 3 of 1919 Government of India, Home Department, April 16, 1919, 1.

to the control of ministers. They proposed, however, to 'exclude the Hindu university at Benares and also chief's colleges'⁹⁷ thus making them institutions of All India importance. The opinion of local (Provincial) governments was much divided. The Bengal government desired to reserve collegiate and European education, the United Provinces Government held that education is best treated as a whole and favoured the transfer of entire education, the Punjab Government supported transfer of primary education only, the government of Bihar and Orissa were strongly opposed to the transfer of secondary, technical and collegiate education, the chief commissioner of Assam opposed the transfer of collegiate education, the government of Madras, wanted to keep education in reserved list only and that of Bombay favoured the transfer.⁹⁸ Regarding the transfer of primary education under the charge of Indian ministers, the fourth despatch on Indian Constitutional reforms noted:

On a review of all the circumstances, we consider that there is a compelling case for the transfer of primary education. It is that part of the field which will give the fullest and freest play to responsibility at once: it will be most responsive to patriotic effort; and it will be the nursery for the broad and enlightened electorate on which the future depends. The labour of bringing primary education up to a reasonable standard the need for almost unlimited development, the difficulties of gradually making it free and then compulsory—these and its many other problems constitute a task which will be enough, and more than enough, to occupy all the energy and ingenuity of ministers for years to come.⁹⁹

C. Sankaran Nair, who was heading Department of Education since 1915, and was a member of the Reforms Committee dissented from this view. He demanded that not only primary education, but entire education should be under the charge of Indian ministers. In chapter 1, we have seen the attitude of upper caste and landed elites towards compulsory education of masses. Instead of primary education for masses higher education for selected few, mostly belonging to upper caste, was a priority for the elite leaders. The government also did not want to give up control from higher education. This tussle led the Indian leaders to demand the transfer of entire education. The Reforms Act of 1919 transferred entire education, with few reservations, under the charge of Provincial ministers. The transfer of entire education retained the neglect of primary education. The voluntary expansion was taking place before reforms, and it gathered pace after the reforms. But the need was compulsory education, to bring into ambit the lower and depressed castes who were largely

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 24

⁹⁹ Ibid., 28.

neglected. The indifference of elite leaders towards the education of lower and depressed castes along with political considerations led to the loss of opportunity to make elementary education universal by devoting entire time, effort and available finance towards the cause of free and compulsory primary education.

Reforms of 1919 turned the attention of Indian leaders towards the education of masses so that the latter could exercise their votes 'intelligently.' It was realised that 'unless rapid progress was made in breaking down illiteracy the mass of the people of India could not be expected properly to exercise their rights of citizenship of a self-governing country.'¹⁰⁰ Hence, between 1918 and 1920, besides Bombay, the Provinces of Bengal, Madras, United Provinces, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, and Central Provinces passed the Primary Education Acts. In Assam the Act was passed in 1926. Thus, during Dyarchy, all the Provinces had Primary Education Acts in their statute book. These Acts differed from Province to Province in their detail such as financial share between local bodies and the Provincial Government, compulsion in rural or urban areas and compulsion for boys only or for both boys and girls. However, all were primarily based on Gokhale's Bill. The chief feature common to all the Acts was the authority given to the local bodies to take the initiative for compulsion in their areas and the provision of exemption of certain classes from the application of the Act. We have seen in chapter 1 that how the exemption Clause 16 was on its way of abuse during the discussion phase of Gokhale's bill. Instead of removing this Clause, all the Primary Education Acts contained it because it was a potent tool in the hands of local bodies to exclude lower and depressed castes from the ambit of compulsory education.

The debates in the two provinces of Bengal and the Punjab after the passage of respective Acts have been examined in the following paragraphs. Analysis of the discussions in the two Councils points to the lack of finances, inadequate provisions of the Act and the responsibility of compulsion put on local bodies as the chief cause of failure of the Acts.

2.3.1 Finance and taxation

In both the Punjab and Bengal lack of finance was an oft-quoted reason for slow progress in the direction of compulsory education in the former and non-implementation of the PEA

¹⁰⁰ J.M. Sen, *Primary Education Acts in India: A Study* (Calcutta: YMCA, 1925), 28.

in the latter. However, the liberal leaders in both the councils confronted the government for high expenditure on higher education. In the Punjab Legislative Council, Mian Muhammad Shah Nawaz, during general discussion on budget expressed his grievances for the slow progress in the direction of free and compulsory primary education owing to poor financial state and opined that the time was not ripe for the introduction of the Act. He noted,

I thought that within the next ten years, we could safely make each and every boy in this province to read and write...I am sorry to say that there is no prospect at present for introducing the elementary compulsory education. Our budget is so poor, it is really so disappointing, that I cannot say at this moment that the compulsory education should be introduced.¹⁰¹

Despite poor finances, he was against any additional taxation and argued that ‘the problem of compulsory education must stand over for the time being.’¹⁰² Many leaders believed that money could be found by stopping injudicious allocation of funds towards amenities in urban areas and by curbing expenditure on higher education. Ganpat Rai, representing the rural constituency, Lahore, expressed his disappointment over imprudent use of funds allocated for education in building costly school buildings in rural areas, palatial houses for officers and buildings for school & colleges in towns. He suggested that there was a room for the economy and instead of spending money on ‘electric lights, electric fans, swimming tanks and bathrooms in the towns’ and on ‘buildings for dogs in veterinary college at Lahore’ money could be spent on rural education. He moved a resolution for omitting demand for grant of ‘Rs 100,000 to the Punjab University for the erection of a hostel for the law college and building for the Zoology department.’¹⁰³ He argued that too much money was being spent upon education in cities and higher education and far too little on primary education in rural areas though the bulk of the revenue was derived from the rural areas. Rai further observed that the men who had benefitted from University education wanted to enlarge its activities, but in doing so, they were apt to forget the interests of the rural classes who were steeped in ignorance. Muhammad Jamil Khan supporting Rai’s resolution argued that ‘the inhabitants of big towns were already sufficiently enlightened, and now Government should take steps to give education to ignorant masses of the rural areas.’¹⁰⁴ Ganpat Rai also emphasised that education should be given preference over health

¹⁰¹ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol. I 1921 General Discussion on Budget (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1921), 102.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 278.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

and sanitation because when people are enlightened, then only they will be able to take care of sanitation and proper health care. He urged:

Education ought to have preference over medical and sanitation because we will not have sufficient money to have dispensaries in each village, but we can have sufficient money to have a primary school in each village. If people are literate, they know how to help themselves when they have got stomach trouble. But unless they have some education, they cannot realise the necessity of getting themselves treated after travelling a distance of 18 miles for attending a hospital.¹⁰⁵

He appealed to the Council that ‘the primary education of the rural areas is the first and foremost duty of this council and that attempt should be made to provide sufficient money for this purpose in the budget by some means or the other.’¹⁰⁶ Like Rai, Lala Atma Ram also urged that it was more important to spend on education than on sanitation as education helps in building one’s character and therefore it was an essential thing for a human being. He opined that to educate the masses it was necessary to make education free and compulsory and ‘that is possible when we manage to provide funds for it.’¹⁰⁷ However, Rai Bahadur Lala Hari Chand had contrary opinion that ‘[s]anitation is more important than education because a diseased person cannot be cured by education.’¹⁰⁸ Sardar Ujjal Singh submitted his grievance in following terms:

Funds are available and they are being wasted in opening new Arts colleges. My submission is that whereas it costs Rs. 10 to educate a boy in a primary school, it costs Rs 200 to educate a boy in a college. Instead of wasting money in Arts colleges and creating a class that always hunts after jobs you ought to introduce compulsion and spend money in a way when more useful purpose can be served.¹⁰⁹

Rai sahib Risaldar Sardar Raja Singh, urged that ‘adequate arrangements should be made for the education of the poor Zamindars, who are the inhabitants of rural areas, so as to enable them to look after their own rights.’ He regretted that in the absence of proper educational facilities Zamindars were unable to make use of government policy of ‘special concessions...to the Zamindars in the matter of appointments in the various departments.’¹¹⁰ Despite these concerns for the education of masses he wanted that the buildings and other

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 108

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 127.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol X A, 1927, Resolution regarding extension and improvement of female education (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1927), 304.

¹¹⁰ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol. I 1921 General Discussion on Budget (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1921), 134.

educational facilities should be provided by the government and not by the lambardars as required by some district boards. He urged,

primary schools are sometimes opened by the District Boards on the express condition that the Lambardars should provide houses for the schools. You can well imagine that people who are quite in the dark with regard to the advantages of education cannot bear to see a school started, when they are in the first instance called upon to furnish a house for it.¹¹¹

Then, there were affluent Zamindars like Khan Bahadur Sayad Mehdi Shah, who neither wanted to spend nor wanted compulsion because he thought that ‘compulsory education is not required as education is spreading by itself. This is better than introducing compulsory education.’¹¹² Khan Sahib Chaudhri Fazal Ali moved a resolution that for the education of poor zamindar children government should collect subscription from willing zamindars. This resolution was opposed by most of the members because they argued that they already paid sufficient taxes and it was the duty of District Boards to provide primary education and to spend at least 18 percent of their income on it. During later years, the question of the education of masses got prominence due to their role as electorates in the political economy of the country. This urged several leaders to ask for taxation for the ‘sake of national life.’

Pandit Nanak Chand exhorted:

All sections of this house are at one in this matter that they will not shirk their share of bearing taxation if they get primary education. Let us be taxed, let there be no reduction in the present taxation, but for the *sake of our national life*, it is necessary that you introduce compulsory primary education at once without any delay.¹¹³

Shaikh Muhammad Alam supporting the cause of compulsory primary education, which he considered as a ‘national demand,’¹¹⁴ said:

All the members of this dignified House are unanimous in this respect. All parties of this house are united in demanding this legitimate provision... it does not affect Hindu-Muslim relations which, they say, are strained in this province. It does not affect any political creed...illiteracy among our masses is a glaring mark of dishonour on our forehead, and it should be washed off by applying the *golden lotion of compulsory primary education*.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Ibid., 133-34.

¹¹² Ibid., 136.

¹¹³ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol X A, 1927, Resolution regarding extension and improvement of female education (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1927), 287, Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 290.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 289. Emphasis mine.

Gokul Chand Narang urged the Indian members of the Punjab legislative council to co-operate with the Government, 'to be prepared to make a grant, as large a grant as possible for the Department of education.' He further exhorted the members to 'support any Act of legislation that might be brought before this House to impose a new tax in order to have a larger fund for education so that it may be made not only compulsory but also free.'¹¹⁶ Regarding the reforms of 1919, he opined that,

If there is any virtue in this reform scheme it is at least this- we have driven a wedge into the bureaucracy in the form of ministers and one executive council member... the constitution gives them an opportunity; they are four against two and if they combine, if they co-operate with one another, they are bound to have what they want.¹¹⁷

He advised the minister of education that he must not 'hesitate to formulate proposals...ask for another crore of rupees next time for popularising primary education.'¹¹⁸ He further urged the education minister that if due to financial constraints, money was not available, then he should be bold enough to propose a new tax called the education tax. These arguments of Narang when read under the light of his classist remarks¹¹⁹ against education of the poor, is apparently empty political rhetoric. Chaudhri Afzal Haq, retorted 'Sir, I think that you are delaying the question of compulsion with a view that you may be able to say to other countries that the Indians are so backward that they cannot derive any benefit from compulsory education.'¹²⁰

Maulvi Wahad Hossain, in Bengal Legislative Council though expressed his concern for the slow progress in matters of compulsion but regarding imposition of a cess suggested that a cess 'may be essential' but should be kept 'to a light minimum by making it [primary education] compulsory and not free in some selected areas only so that half the cost which Government proposes to bear, maybe within the capacity of our exchequer.'¹²¹ Abdur Rahim also shared the same views that an education cess was inevitable but it 'should be made as light as possible, and the burden should fall mainly on those who can bear it best.'¹²² He condemned the Bengal Government for doing 'the least in this matter for the people. While the poor people of Bengal do much more for themselves than the people of

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ See f.n. 159.

¹²⁰ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol X A, 1927, Resolution regarding extension and improvement of female education (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1927), 306.

¹²¹ Official report Bengal Legislative Council, 1926 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1926), 64.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 86

other provinces.’¹²³ He further charged the government for doing ‘far more for the education of the better-off classes than other Governments in India. I am sorry to observe that the Government's motto seems to be “to those that have much more shall be given”.’¹²⁴ Maulvi Kader Baksh had disbelief that the primary education of masses would remain a distant dream as the municipalities would not be able to find the money by taxation as people were not in a position to pay. Putting the responsibility on the government, he emphatically suggested:

Whether there are contribution from municipalities or no contribution, whether there is a half and half scheme or any other scheme the Government are in duty bound to spend the entire amount and to provide for additional grants each year when Government feel that the claims of the masses have so far been neglected.¹²⁵

He questioned the Government of Bengal, “[i]s it creditable, Sir, on the part of the most civilised Government not to have been able to make primary education free in Bengal, when about 90 per cent of the population are illiterate?”¹²⁶ Similar opinion was presented by Babu Boroda Prosad dey. He rejected any further taxation for primary education and urged the government to provide the necessary funds by ‘retrenchments in the pampered departments.’¹²⁷ Maulvi Ekramul Haq lamented the government’s policy of disproportionate expenditure on higher education and neglecting the masses.¹²⁸ He expressed satisfaction that Government was cognisant of this fact and urged the Indian members of the Council to ‘help the Government by bringing resolutions in the Council that they do not want higher education any further, but they are quite ready to concentrate their energies on the education of the masses.’¹²⁹ To solve the problem of fund crunch Maulvi Ekramul Haq suggested the government to take a loan for spending on compulsory primary education:

Why not take a loan of 2 crores of rupees or more, if that be necessary; this money will be best invested for such a purpose, and now that we have got sufficient funds we shall be able to pay the necessary interest and after 10 years, I am sure, it will not be necessary to ask for more money and take a further loan for this particular purpose. After the people are educated they will be able to

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

handle their own affairs and will agree to any taxation on themselves for the purpose of getting funds for their own good.¹³⁰

Tarit Bhushan Roy expressed his anguish that ‘While the towns are swallowing up almost the bulk of the grants the rural areas which are infinitely larger are being denied substantial grants in the matter of primary education.’¹³¹ He condemned the government’s taxation measures as, ‘[i]t is not fair that taxation direct or indirect should be levied upon the dumb, voiceless and suffering millions of Bengal for meeting the costs of their primary education.’¹³² K.C. Ray Chaudhuri opposed the taxation scheme of government and explained that if the landowners, whom he referred to as land monopolists, were properly taxed enough money would be available ‘to introduce all sorts of schemes for building the real Indian nation.’¹³³ Reacting to the confession of the Finance Member Donald that for some years secondary and higher education took the lion’s share of the funds for educational expansion, he questioned, ‘[d]oes he or this Council think that expenditure on Secondary and University Education which represents more than 80 per cent of the total grant of Rs. 1.30 crores help in any way the building of the Indian nation?’¹³⁴ He charged the Government that they had no serious intention for the spread of primary education of the masses because,

Yielding to the nauseating agitation of the Bosses of the Calcutta University and complete surrendering to their agitation for funds for top-heavy and luxurious Post-Graduate teaching does not in the least show that the Government has any serious intention of tackling that supreme problem of nation-building by early introduction of primary education.¹³⁵

On the other hand, there were leaders like J.N. Gupta who believed that compulsory primary education of masses must wait till better finances were available:

In my humble opinion the introduction of Universal Primary Education Bill may wait till we receive a better recognition of our financial needs from the Government of India and till Government are in a position to make a substantial financial contribution to the scheme. It will be a grave political blunder to launch upon a scheme of universal primary education of the masses without the sympathies of the very people in whose interest it is conceived. There are many places in western Bengal where compulsory primary education is bound to be a failure. Under the present conditions, you cannot get pupils to go to school

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 101

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

where during the fever season the majority, of the people are down with fever.¹³⁶

A. Marr during the 1929 Budget discussion refuting the charge of the members of the House that there had been less spending on the Calcutta University, particularly in comparison to the Dacca University confessed that ‘Government in the past, in spite of its financial difficulties and its inability to discharge its responsibility for primary education, have contributed considerable sums towards the expenses of the Calcutta University.’¹³⁷ W.A. Jenkins agreeing to Marr’s confession said, ‘that no case can be made out for the charge that inadequate funds are provided for secondary education. On the contrary, more money is spent on secondary education than on primary education.’¹³⁸ On the question of taxation as proposed in the Primary Education Bill Maulvi Asimuddin Ahmad remarked

Regarding this Primary Education Bill, I want to say this only that, if the people have to pay a tax and if, in spite of this, primary education is not made compulsory, I do not see any necessity whatever for the introduction of this primary education and think that its introduction by Government should be opposed.¹³⁹

The reforms of 1919 made it necessary on the part of political leaders to take up the question of compulsory education of masses so that they could exercise their voting rights judiciously. The education of masses was now a question of training them in citizenship and a matter of crafting vigilant citizenry. The argument of Maulvi Ekramul Haq in Bengal Legislative Council bears testimony to this fact:

We want education to make our countrymen quite fit to shoulder their responsibilities as citizens of the land, for without education we cannot expect the masses to recognise their duties and responsibilities; without that they are a set of persons who will be guided and swayed by every political wind that blows, and every agitator that comes to them will have a hearing. Give the masses education, let them know which way their interest lies, and then they will be able to judge matters properly and no agitator, however eloquent, however thoroughly persuasive he may be, will be able to sway them. It is to the interests of the people themselves and it is also to the interest of Government that they should immediately start taking measures for the spread of primary and free education in the country.¹⁴⁰

Similar concerns were raised by Mahbubul Haq when he emphasised that

¹³⁶ Official report Bengal Legislative Council, 1930 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1930), 76.

¹³⁷ Official Report Bengal Legislative Council, 1929 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1929), 503.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 527.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 531-32.

¹⁴⁰ Official report Bengal Legislative Council, 1926 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1926), 99-100.

the education of the children is as necessary as their health because unless the children are of good physique, they will not be able to take full advantage of the education that will be imparted to them. And unless and until our children live a healthier and better life with good education you cannot expect them to be better citizens in the near future.¹⁴¹

These concerns led the leaders to ask the government to take charge of compulsory education as local bodies showed complete apathy towards it. The discussion in the two councils reveals that the financial scarcity was chiefly because of high expenditure on higher education and other amenities at the cost of compulsory primary education. The leaders in the Punjab asked for educational cess to enforce compulsory education while in Bengal they opposed any taxation because the Province was already heavily taxed and asked the government to take charge of compulsory education *in toto*.

2.3.2. Faulty provisions of the Act

The responsibility of introducing compulsion was put on local bodies in the PEAs of all the provinces. The Table 1 reveals that the local bodies in all the provinces took least interest in the matter of compulsion. The record of the Punjab was slightly better than other Provinces while the case of Bengal was worst. An analysis of the debates in provincial councils of the Punjab and Bengal reveals that it was being realised that the slow progress in the direction of compulsory education was due to the charge given to local bodies to bring the Act into operation.

Malik Firoz Khan representing rural constituency in the PLC lamented that even after two years of passing of the compulsory education Act nothing was done in that direction because ‘it had been left upon the local bodies to bring this Act into force.’¹⁴² He suggested that the Member of Education would

take into the question of making compulsory education a central thing and not leave it to the will of the local bodies and District Boards, because if it is left to them, the Compulsory Education Act will absolutely be useless and rural population will never benefit by it.¹⁴³

Further he suggested that all District Boards should have elected President who could be forced to ‘bring into operation any law concerning compulsory education.’¹⁴⁴ Chaudhri

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁴² The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol. I 1921 General Discussion on Budget (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1921), 109.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Afzal Haq regarded the authority put on local bodies to enforce the Act as the system of *voluntary compulsion*. He complained that the Government ‘is wasting money extravagantly on fruitless scheme of voluntary education.’ Further, he pointed out that in the municipalities where the compulsion was under operation it was a complete failure because ‘the provisions of the Act are defective and the net result of this kind of compulsion is the same which is produced by the voluntary system.’¹⁴⁵ Haq opined that under this Act the ‘inspectors of schools and attendance officers are very much handicapped. They ought to have been magisterial powers.’¹⁴⁶ He demanded ‘we want that system which is in vogue in England... in England the attendance officers have got magisterial powers which they frequently exercise for making boys attend the class.’¹⁴⁷

Table 1: Areas under compulsion by Provinces until 1929

Provinces	Date of Act	Areas under Compulsion	
		Municipalities and urban areas	District Board and rural areas
Madras	1920	21	3
Bombay	1918	11	-
	1920		
	1923		
Bengal	1919	-	-
United Provinces	1919	25	-
	1926		
Punjab	1919	57	1499
Bihar and Orissa	1919	1	3
Central Provinces and Berar	1920	3	66
Assam	1926	-	-
Delhi	In accordance with Punjab PEA 1919	1	-
Total		119	1571

Source: Hartog Committee Report, p. 85.

Haq reiterated, ‘unless this voluntary system is relinquished and unless we introduce the system of compulsion just on the lines of the English Act of 1918 we can never be in a position to reach our goal.’¹⁴⁸ He lamented that, ‘only those are taking advantage of this

¹⁴⁵ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol X A, 1927, Resolution regarding extension and improvement of female education (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1927), 283.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 284.

education who would have benefitted even if this system of compulsion had not been introduced.¹⁴⁹ Supporting Haq, Pandit Nanak Chand insisted that :

the government should take steps at once in the direction of introducing primary and compulsory education...the Primary Education Act which was passed sometime ago might be helpful just a little but we are not satisfied with that sort of help. We want an Act of the kind which is applicable to Japan and to England and we want, whatever may be the consequences, that our children should be sent to school just in the same manner in which they are sent to school in England and Japan.

Din Muhammad, scathingly remarked that passing of the Primary Education Act was akin to ‘unwilling debtor passing a cheque which is not to be honoured’¹⁵⁰ as municipalities tend to shelve the question urging poverty. Sardar Ujjal Singh, lamented that the ‘system of voluntary compulsion does not even touch the fringes of the problem.’ He argued that ignorant electors would be inconsistent with the future responsible government: ‘If we are sincerely anxious to avail ourselves of democratic institutions, if the Government is sincere about granting us such institutions, the first step it should take should be towards making elementary education compulsory.’¹⁵¹

In Bengal, the situation was worse than the Punjab. Not a single municipality had applied for compulsion till the first ten years of the enactment of the Bengal PEA. This inaction on the part of local bodies was criticised in the Bengal Legislative Council (BLC). Maulvi Wahad Hossain regretted the non-possumus attitude of municipalities of Bengal with respect to the Bengal PEA:

I may be met with a rebuff that the Bengal Municipalities have not evinced any desire to avail themselves of the provisions of the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 although 7 long years have rolled away. It is true. The passive attitude of the Municipalities of Bengal is an index to their rigid habit with which they revolve in the old grooves of fossilised ideas and fight shy of taking any initiative in the matter.¹⁵²

Criticising government for half-hearted effort he lamented, ‘while our Municipalities are showing indifference and passivity of mind, the Government are marking time by making tentative and sporadic efforts.’¹⁵³ Expressing his anxiety over the slow rate of development

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 295.

¹⁵¹ The Punjab Legislative council debates, General discussion on budget, Vol. XII, 4 march 1929 (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1929), 606.

¹⁵² Official report Bengal Legislative Council, 1926 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1926), 64.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

of primary education among the masses compared to other presidencies of British India he urged that certain degree of compulsion was necessary in the forward march and argued:

Compulsion and persuasion are said to be interchangeable terms. Like Siamese twins they are inseparable. Persuasion has failed; it has ended in dilatoriness and sporadic efforts. Compulsion is the next step in the march of progress. I therefore strongly appeal to the Government to take a bold step for giving effect to the provisions of the Bengal Primary Education Act and compel the Municipalities to act under section 3 of the Act. If the matter be left entirely to the discretion and whims of the Municipalities, the act will always remain a dead letter.¹⁵⁴

The Hartog Committee also pointed to the devolution of responsibility to introduce compulsion on local bodies as one of the reasons for the failure of PEAs.

Experience in Bengal, however, and, to a lesser extent, in other provinces shows that local option may result in almost complete inaction on the part of local bodies for a considerable period of time to come. It seems clear that a mere enabling statute will not provide any guarantee for the speedy and widespread application of compulsion...[A]part from technical flaws in the statutes, the main difficulties up to the present have been due to lack of experience and, in some cases, of interest on the part of local boards, to the inaction or inexperience of attendance officers and committees, to unwillingness to make use of the power of prosecution under the Acts and to delay in the conviction of defaulters.¹⁵⁵

The Committee emphasised that the control of compulsory education should be in the hands of the government to endure successful implementation of the scheme:

In our opinion, the responsibility for mass education rests primarily with the State; and the provision of educational facilities for all classes of the community and for all areas should not be left entirely to the mercy of local authorities, who may be unwilling, either for political or other reasons, to initiate schemes by which compulsion may be financed, or who, owing to the backwardness of the area or the people, may be unable to devise suitable measures for compulsion on their own initiative. Accompanied by necessary safeguards, the power to enforce compulsion should provide local Governments with the very necessary authority to supervise the expansion of mass education in the provinces in such a way that all areas and all classes of the community may benefit by the increased expenditure of public funds.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission: Review of growth of education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee appointed by the Commission (Hartog Committee Report), September 1929 (Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1929), 85-86.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 87.

2.3.3. The issue of caste

The question of education of the lower castes also gained attention in the two Councils. In response to a demand for reduction in grant for vernacular education, moved by Professor Ruchi Ram Sahni, Subedar-Major Farman Ali Khan retorted:

Whenever any measure for the education of the ignorant agriculturist is proposed, obstacles are put in the way. Amendments are moved to defeat the objects of the proposals. I ask why so much opposition is offered. It seems these people do not want that Zamindars should ever be educated. There exists fear in the minds of *banias* that if these people get educated they would be able to check their accounts and would not fall an easy prey to them...it seems all these people have formed a conspiracy against us. They want to keep us quite in the dark. They are afraid that if the zamindars get educated they would demand their rights which have been usurped by the *banias*. Sir, they propose to curtail the grants because their own children are sufficiently educated. They do not want that the other three-quarters of the people should at all learn to read and write well.¹⁵⁷

While moving a resolution for an intermediate college at Gujar Khan in Rawalpindi district, Khan shed light on the poor state of education in the district and expressed his grief regarding lack of education among army personnel and revealed how visit to Europe changed his views about education:

The British government is known to be the most civilizing Government. It boasts of spreading education. But the fact that the last 70 years have passed without educating the people of this corner of the province is a dirty blot on its name. It is still worse because of the fact that this district has rendered valuable services to the government during the recent war...we served in Afghanistan, in Burma, in Egypt, in China and in many other foreign places but we did not feel the need of education so much. But when we went to Europe it opened our eyes and we felt the real need of education. Now that we cannot get any education we should see that our children get it. They talk of compulsory education. I say let us have first voluntary education. We do not get even that.¹⁵⁸

Gokul Chand Narang during the discussion on this resolution showed utterly classist attitude and dismissed the need for education among poor classes on the grounds that the uneducated were in a 'privileged' position than the educated. He spoke thus:

I assure the mover that they are far better off than the so-called educated people whose condition they envy. The blessings which the uneducated people enjoy are as a rule not known to the educated, and education will make them as bereft of these as we now-a-days are... no doubt they have to sweat at the plough and graze flocks of sheep and herds of cattle but this is a very sacred work. Prophets

¹⁵⁷ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Resolution regarding depressed classes, Vol VIII-A (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1925), 1037.

¹⁵⁸ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol IX A (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1926), 115-16.

did the same. Moses grazed sheep and Krishna, whom so many Hindus adore, tended cows.¹⁵⁹

Din Muhammad in PLC, urged the inclusion of handicrafts, industries and agriculture in the syllabus to attract pupils and at the same time to ensure that they remained associated with their ancestral occupation. He further elaborated that inclusion of these subjects would help to solve the problem of unemployment as children coming out of these schools would have some occupation and they would not throng the government offices for becoming *babu*. Similar ideas were shared by Abdur Rahim in BLC, who urged Government that there should be a clear purpose behind the education of masses. That is, to ensure that the children

do not acquire a distaste for manual labour and in *fact feel that such labour is as honourable as any other form of labour*; their hands and eyes must be trained. They must be given instruction in their own village industries and crafts; they must be taught the simple rules of hygiene and health and the value of co-operative work and above all they must be instructed in the dictates of their religion.¹⁶⁰

Thus, the anxiety prevailed in the minds of elite leaders for the lower castes' alienation from their ancestral occupation. Nonetheless, leaders from non-elite background in both the Councils voiced their opinion for increase in expenditure on education of lower castes, viz., compulsory primary education.

2.3.4. Issue of wastage in education

The issue of wastage in primary education was highlighted in Provincial Council of the Punjab. One of the reasons of wastage, it was argued, was reduction in number of primary classes from five to four wherever compulsion was introduced. Sardar Randhir Singh, for instance, charged that wastage in education was on account of reduction in the number of classes in primary schools from five to four in the areas where compulsory education had been introduced. He noted:

The number of classes in the primary schools having now been reduced to four while there used to be five before, the students that come out of these schools after completing the course, do not find themselves able to read and write and keep accounts. This is a great loss which the rural population has suffered on account of the policy of compulsory primary education where it has been introduced. Previously those who had completed their five years' course could

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 117.

¹⁶⁰ Bengal Legislative Council, Official report (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1926), 87, Emphasis mine.

easily read and write and also could keep accounts and therefore I would request the honourable the Minister of education that he would kindly see that the old number of five classes in the primary schools is restored at least in areas the students of which do not go up for higher education. If the number of classes will be allowed to remain as it is then I might say that no good would have accrued to the rural population by the introduction of the policy of compulsory primary education and the time and energy spent in the primary schools with four classes would have been wasted.¹⁶¹

Pandit Nanak Chand suggested that to reduce wastage there should be six years course of primary education because with four years course children lapse into illiteracy and all the labour and money was wasted. George Anderson, the DPI opined that ‘compulsion is not urgently required for the purpose of expansion because additional pupils in large numbers are enrolled already each year by the voluntary system. He emphasised that ‘compulsion is required far more as a means of improvement.’¹⁶² Anderson opined that compulsion should be used as a means of prolonging the school life of the pupils and thus of ensuring that they attain a permanent grasp of literacy. For improvement he favoured that ‘we shall have middle schools with eight classes and primary schools with six classes.’¹⁶³ The Hartog Committee also opined that compulsion was required to reduce wastage and expressed their disapproval for voluntary expansion. They observed:

The adoption of compulsion is important and urgent as an effective means of checking the wastefulness of the present voluntary and haphazard system of primary education in India...Compulsion should be a means of reducing and not of increasing waste.¹⁶⁴

They opined that ‘extravagances in the present system...would tend to disappear under a system of compulsion’ and that the ‘[t]he introduction of compulsion should be regarded as an economical and effective means of filling up the present poorly attended upper classes of primary schools’ because:

The increased enrolment and regular promotion of pupils from class to class will necessarily tend to lower the average cost per pupil. With the increase in average enrolment, the total additional number of teachers required will be considerably less than is usually anticipated.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol IX A (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1926), 823-24.

¹⁶² The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol X A, 1927, Resolution regarding extension and improvement of female education (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1927), 299.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁶⁴ Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission: Review of growth of education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee appointed by the Commission (Hartog Committee Report), September 1929 (Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1929), 271.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The committee, thus, emphasised on consolidation through compulsion instead of expansion through voluntary means to reduce wastage in education.

2.4. Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill

The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act aimed at extension of primary education in rural areas 'with a view to make it compulsory within ten years.'¹⁶⁶ Primary education was to be free in areas where compulsion was introduced or in areas where education cess was levied even before introduction of compulsion. The age range was kept between 6 and 11 years. No explicit mention of girls was made in the Act but it stated 'for all children' implicitly implying that it was applicable to girls as well. The debate in the council also does not shows any explicit reference to compulsion or (no compulsion) for girls.

Nawab Mosharuf Hossain Khan Bahadur introduced the Primary Education Bill in 1928 which was referred to Select committee. The report of the Select Committee was presented to the house but due to dissolution of the Council the Bill lapsed. Again in 1929, after the formation of new Council, the Primary Education Bill was introduced by McAlpin. After reference to the Select Committee the report of the Committee was presented to the House, but the Bill was withdrawn by the Education Minister, Khwaja Nazimuddin with the undertaking that he would introduce the Bill in the August session of 1930. On 13 August 1930, Nazimuddin introduced the Bill in the Bengal Legislative Council. He told the council that the Bill was largely based on the report of the first Select committee with minor modification. One of the modifications was the cess ratio payable by tenants and landlords. The first Select Committee kept the ratio as 3 pice in the rupee for tenants and 2 pice in rupee for landlords and second Select Committee suggested 2 pice for tenants and 2 pice for landlords. The government considered that the fair ratio would be 4 pice for tenants and 1 pice for landlords. Nazimuddin argued that in his Bill he had kept the cess ratio to 3.5 for tenants and 1.5 for landlords as a compromise between the suggestion of two Select Committees and the Government opinion. He considered this ratio 'to be fair and reasonable for both the parties.'¹⁶⁷ After presenting the Bill Nazimuddin demanded that the Bill should not be referred again to a Select Committee again. He put forward two reasons

¹⁶⁶ The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930 (Alipore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1940), 9.

¹⁶⁷ The Bengal Legislative Council proceedings, Official report, Vol XXXV, Discussion on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 13 August 1930, (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1930), 207.

for this. First, the Bill had already passed twice through two Select Committees and further reference to a Select Committee would not only delay the passage of the Bill but may be shelved altogether. Second, he claimed that he had presided over several public meetings, largely attended by illiterate cultivators and through these meetings he discovered that people are clamouring for compulsory education even if they had to pay higher tax and wanted the Bill be passed into an Act as early as possible. He asserted that at these meetings the provisions of the Bill

[T]hat they will have to pay a tax was explained both in English and in Bengali and in all these meetings resolutions were passed calling upon me to see that the Bill is enacted into law in this session of the Council...they were most keen was that the Bill should provide compulsory education. They were not so much concerned whether they will have to pay a tax or not...the thing that they were most clamouring about was that they want compulsory, education and the Bill should be brought in as soon as possible.

Another important claim of Nazimuddin was that in some of the meetings resolutions were passed that the Bill should not be referred to a Select Committee. These assertions of the Education Minister are quite striking. Was there any such demand on the part of masses for primary education despite heavy taxation? This needs further corroboration. Paucity of time did not allow me to delve into this aspect further, but definitely this needs further exploration. This is because during the time when Gokhale presented the Bill any additional taxation was fiercely opposed by landed elites and they sought refuge under the argument that there was no demand for compulsory education among masses. Nazimuddin presented an entirely contrasting picture, particularly so when the burden of taxation was to be more on the masses. The landed elites when entered into power structure, through dyarchy, they started making policies in their own interest rather than that for the masses. Despite such a regressive and oppressive provision in the Bill, the Minister argued that ‘the welfare and progress of the masses are the first considerations of this House.’¹⁶⁸ Though the cess burden was lesser on the shoulders of the landholders they opposed this small cess as well. The opposition to cess on landholders came from Hindu members of the Council and therefore they wanted to refer the Bill to the Select committee. The education minister, however, feared that in Select Committee the Bill may be shelved altogether. A tug of war ensued between the Hindu and Muslim members of the Council on the issue of referring the Bill to the Select Committee. Nazimuddin was criticised by Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy, first, for his demand that the Bill should not be referred to Select Committee and, second, for

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 209.

claiming that the public opinion was with his Bill. Roy argued that Nazimuddin's claim were with respect to eastern Bengal only and that the people of Western Bengal had not been consulted:

Hon'ble Minister wants that a Bill which proposes to tax the rate-payers to the tune of a crore of rupees should be taken into consideration without reference to, a Select Committee. My hon'ble friend has come to that opinion evidently because he happens to have got some support for his Bill at a few meetings held in Eastern Bengal. But I would remind him that Bengal does not consist of Eastern Bengal only. What about the 11 districts in Western Bengal? Did he ever venture to address any public meeting in the suburbs of Calcutta or in the districts of Hooghly or Burdwan? If he had done so, he would have been convinced that the people would not support him in his proposal of rushing through the Bill in this manner.¹⁶⁹

W.L. Travers, presenting the view of British government (provincial) argued that the government was in favour of the Bill:

[T]he passing of a law which gives primary education to a province is a cause which is almost ingrained in every Britisher. We feel that we must vote for such a project every time, and we support, primary education for the people both as a community and individually.¹⁷⁰

He further opined that delay in the passing of the Act, when there was a demand from people, would convey the message that the Act was being delayed on purpose. To avoid this suspicion on the part of the people he opposed the reference of the Bill to the Select Committee. C.J. Cooper, representative of Indian Jute Mills Association opposed the reference of the Bill to Select Committee on ground that it would further delay the passing of the Act and charged the English educated Hindu elites for monopolising education.

The delay of a year in the passing of this Bill means that approximately 3 lakhs of children lose their chance of learning to read and write. The two years delay that has already taken place has deprived 6 lakhs of children of their golden opportunity. Whose children are these and who are the party who are advocating a dilatory expedient? Are you surprised that to our simple minds it does look as if the classes who have a monopoly of education are anxious to hold on to that monopoly!¹⁷¹

The support of British government and other Europeans such as Cooper to the Bill was severely criticised by Hindu members. They blamed the Education minister for rushing through the Bill with the support of Europeans, which was not suitable for development of a healthy democracy. Jatindranath Basu argued that the government

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 290.

have a majority behind them and they can ride roughshod over the minority. If they choose to so ignore the minority: they are welcome to do so. I cannot but voice the feeling that prevails this side of the House. I therefore support the motion for reference of the Bill to a Select Committee.¹⁷²

B.C. Chatterjee rebuked the education minister for his opposition to refer the Bill to the Select Committee ‘by enlisting the votes of non-Bengali voters’ when ‘a great majority of the Hindu members of this House want a reference to this question to a committee.’ He argued,

[T]hat is not democracy. If a Hindu or a Muhammadan member of the Bengal Government finds that he cannot carry a measure with a majority- of the combined votes of Hindus and Muhammadans, but has to rely on the votes of those sojourners, those birds of passage, who would not make India their home, but who come here to make up their pile and retire home—if he is going to do that, what does it mean? It means that Bengal can never have her freedom. You will always have Englishmen ruling over Bengal. Today. they are dictating to you because they are in agreement with you and tomorrow they will dictate to Hindus, if they happen to be in agreement with them [...] you are doing a very great wrong to your community, to my community, to Mother India.¹⁷³

Referring to the Reforms Act of 1919, Chatterjee cautioned Nazimuddin that he was going back from the principle of the 1919 Reforms by ‘invoking the votes of non-Bengalis in order to defeat his Hindu brethren’¹⁷⁴ instead of collaborating with them and help in the popular control of education. He charged the education minister for being partial and asked

But why did he go only to Eastern Bengal, inhabited, as it is, by a majority of his community? Why did he not go to Western Bengal which fills one-half of this province? If you want to carry this measure through against the opposition of the Hindu members, it would be democracy by half only and, Sir, democracy by half is worse than no democracy.¹⁷⁵

On the question of interest of European members of the Council regarding the Bill, Narendra Kumar Basu argued:

We all know that the villagers want education, but the anxious solicitude of the European members remind one that there is a Bengali saying that she who loves a child more than its mother is a witch. When we hear that Europeans want our boys and girls to be educated but that Hindus do not, we are reminded of that adage.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 243-44.

¹⁷⁶ The Bengal Legislative Council proceedings, Official report, Vol XXXV, Discussion on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 14 August 1930 (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1930), 292.

Maulvi Abdus Samad urged that for successful operation of the Act co-operation of Hindu and Muslim was vital. He advised Nazimuddin to accept the motion for referring the Bill to Select committee 'for the sake of the larger interests of the country and for the maintenance of unity and good relations that subsist between the Hindu and Moslem members of this Council.'¹⁷⁷ He, however, clarified that in case the Minister of Education chose to oppose the motion, he would be bound to vote in his favour as a he had to abide by the mandate of his community which was in favour of introducing compulsion as soon as possible. While refusing to accept the motion, the Minister in-charge of Education, Nazimuddin clearly expressed his apprehension that

if this Bill is referred to a Select Committee the Bill will most probably be shelved. I am not in a position to state how it will be done but this very keenness for time—for at least one month—makes me suspect that there is a plan by which this Bill may be shelved.¹⁷⁸

He appealed for the support of every member of the House to remove the blot of illiteracy from Bengal:

I appeal to every member of the House in the name of Bengal, in the fair name of the civilization of Bengal on which there is a big blot—the blot of illiteracy—to let us try to remove it. I appeal to this House not, to consider this question as a communal one but to realise that this Bill is meant for the poor of all classes; Muhammadans, Hindus and the depressed classes are interested in this. It will benefit everyone of them and I appeal to this House in the name of all to be just and fair and to support my motion.¹⁷⁹

This led to Walking out of 50 elected Hindu members from the Council chamber. The House was then adjourned. While adjourning the House, the President Manmath Ray Chadhuri, asked the members to reach a peaceful compromise. He insisted that '[t]he question is a very important one and I have no manner of doubt, that the House would like the matter to proceed on lines of least resistance and that no community as a whole should be altogether ignored.'¹⁸⁰ Hindu members were present at the next meeting of the Council, the motion was put to vote and was lost. At this stage again the elected Hindu members with some exception walked out of the Council.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 303-04.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹⁸¹ It could not be ascertained who walked out and who stayed because the proceeding has no reference to this.

The provision of cess on the Landholders, though smaller it was compared to that on tenants, was the chief objection of Hindu members of the Council. This fact was revealed during the discussion on the motion for reference to Select Committee, discussed above and during the discussion on Clause 29 of the Bill. Rai Bahadur Haridhan Dutt argued ‘the provisions of the Bill prejudicially affect them [zamindars] without any justification.’¹⁸² Referring to a high education cess, Shib Shekhareswar Ray categorized Hindu and Muslims into educationally advanced and educationally backward categories respectively and also he believed that in Hindus ‘spirit of democracy and nationalism is highly developed.’ On the basis of these arguments he asserted that being educationally backward Muhammadans would naturally support the Bill ‘even if it imposes a reasonably extra financial burden on them’ while Hindus, finding out that ‘the financial burden imposed is not compatible with the amount of benefit which the measure would bring them would try their utmost to oppose such a measure.’ Therefore, Hindus would ‘naturally demand that the underlying principles of the Bill should be broad-based on democratic and national foundations,’¹⁸³ argued Ray. This argument of Ray quite clearly reveals that while using the term ‘Hindu’ he was mainly referring to the Landholders and other English educated upper-caste elites while the illiterate masses were relegated to the background.

The clause 29 (1), chapter IV of the Bill on levy of Primary Education Cess (PEC) required that in any district or its part where provisions of this chapter was in force primary education cess would be levied on all the immovable properties on which road and public work cesses were assessed according to the Cess Act of 1889. This provision implied that even before the primary education was made compulsory, the PEC would be levied. It was a derogatory provision for tenants who had to pay larger cess ratio. Tamizuddin Khan moved an amendment that cess should not be levied up to three years of the enforcement of the Act, during which time the scheme of compulsory education should come into force. The amendment was opposed by M.J. Dash, the nominated official member, on the ground that three years was insufficient for introducing compulsion:

Unfortunately the resources available to the Department of Public Instruction are not such as to enable Government to provide facilities for the extension of primary education within a period of three years. It would be impossible to give effect to this proviso with the resources available; and it will mean that the

¹⁸² The Bengal Legislative Council proceedings, Official report, Vol XXXV, Discussion on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 13 August 1930 (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1930), 235.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 288.

whole operation of the Act will be negative (sic), if this proviso is accepted by the Council.¹⁸⁴

The amendment was put to the vote and lost. Another amendment was moved by Maulvi Abdus Samad to reduce the burden of cess on tenantry. He moved that the ratio of cess between tenant and Landlords should be proportionate, viz. 2.5 for tenant and 2.5 for the Landlord. He argued:

In my opinion the tenant's share has been rather disproportionate. This Bill we all know passed through Select Committee twice and, if I remember aright, the majority of the members of the Select Committee recommended that the tenant was to pay 2 pice and the landlord 3 pice. Now, in this Bill if it were provided that the tenant was to pay 3 pice and the landlord 2 pice, there might have been some justification to support the provisions of this Bill, but instead of that the Bill provides 1.5 pice for the landlord and 3.5 pice for the tenant. I submit, Sir, that the tenant is not in a position to pay this amount of tax. He has already, on account of the introduction of the union boards, to pay union rates, the road and public works cess, and in addition to these, this education cess is going to be levied upon him. Sir, as their representatives we all wanted that compulsory primary education should be introduced, but we do not know whether in actual operation of the Bill it would be a blessing in disguise or a cause of additional burden on them, because we do not know whether the tenant would be able to pay this amount of tax or not.¹⁸⁵

This amendment was supported by only one member of the Council, Maulvi Hasan Ali. He charged the Education Minister for overlooking the fact that 'the raiyats' capacity to pay further has come to an end just as his parcel of land has reached the limit of fertility.' Portraying the misery of Bengal tenantry, he urged:

Any casual observer who has come into contact with these unfortunate raiyats for a day even, [...] who has seen how these dumb millions manage to live a half-starved life and half-naked body, cannot but admit that the already over-taxed tenantry of Bengal cannot pay any further tax.¹⁸⁶

He retorted that it would be a penalty upon the tenants for their demand for compulsory education and asked the Minister not to 'impose tax upon them with vengeance' just because 'they are likely to derive more benefit.'¹⁸⁷ He vehemently repudiated the provision of only 1.5 pice cess to be levied from estate holders as '[t]hey form the richest, the most educated and, for the matter of that, the most responsible section of the people, having

¹⁸⁴ The Bengal Legislative Council proceedings, Official report, Vol XXXV, Discussion on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 25 August 1930 (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1930), 817.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 821-22.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 822.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 822.

many obligations towards the tenants.¹⁸⁸ Ali also questioned the limited contribution of 22 lakhs by the government of Bengal and insisted that the ration of cess should be kept at 2.5 pice for landholders and 2.5 pice for tenants. Nazimuddin opposed the amendment on the ground that for Zamindars, ‘who have the burden of collecting the whole cess of 5 pice and in case of a bad year [...] they may have to pay the full amount, and it would take them three or four years to realise the tenants’ share’ their contribution was not 1.5 pice as provisioned in the Bill but 3 pice, therefore ‘from the zamindar's point of view Government considered that the ratio is not unfair.’ Moreover, the Minister argued that ‘the contribution the tenants are asked to make is reasonable for the privilege of educating their children’ and ‘that they cannot, under any circumstances whatsoever, have their sons educated for less than what they are called on to pay under the cess provisions of this Bill.’¹⁸⁹ He maintained that the question of the cess ratio was ‘the crux of the Bill’ and appealed the members of the Council ‘not to jeopardise the Bill by carrying this amendment though which may compel Government to drop the Bill altogether.’¹⁹⁰ The amendment was put to the vote and was lost.

The Clause 30(4) required that every cultivating raiyat had to pay seven-tenth of the rent or annual value of the land held by him. Maulvi Abdus Samad moved an amendment to instead of seven-tenth one-half should be the PEC payable by the cultivating raiyat. In support of his amendment he argued that the collection of Zamindars had increased by ‘ten-fold’ since the time of Permanent Settlement while the rent payable by the tenant was being enhanced every now and then. Deliberating on the responsibilities of Zamindars under the Settlement scheme he asserted that though the zamindars agreed to carry on

the construction and maintenance of embankments and improvement of irrigation and other things but they have not complied with those provisions and they have done nothing for the amelioration of the condition of the tenantry. Therefore they are liable to pay more for the education of the raiyats, who may be considered as the children of the zamindars.¹⁹¹

Supporting Samad, Maulvi Hasan Ali charged the government for reducing the cess ratio to 3 pice for mines and quarries ‘but on what logic the House has not been enlightened as to that.’ He asked the government, ‘Are we to understand that they are, the most favourite

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 823.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 824.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 825.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 827.

persons of the Government?’¹⁹² The Education minister opposed the amendment by citing the reason that first,

the cess on mines is a tax on their net profit; it is practically a surcharge on income-tax. As regards the tenants the tax is not on their profit but on their rent. So there can be no comparison between the two.¹⁹³

and second the fact being that cess on mines would affect the mines that are in Bengal while mines in Bihar and Orissa did not have to pay an education cess, therefore, they would be in an advantageous position. Hence, the minister argued, ‘it is only fair that we should try to lighten the burden on the mine-owners.’¹⁹⁴ This amendment was also lost when put to the vote. An amendment similar to that of Maulvi Abdus Samad was moved by Maulvi Abdul Hakim recommending that the share of cess of the cultivating raiyats be reduced to two-fifth from seven-tenth. Delving on the miserable condition of tenants he argued:

The tenants or the cultivating raiyats are the poorest, the most wretched, and the most helpless class of people in this country. The primary reason for their poverty is the exploitations which are being perpetrated upon them by the landlords, the money-lenders and the foreign traders. In fact they are the worst sufferers among God's creatures on earth. When I think I see nothing but organised exploitations committed upon them from every side. In fact they are born in exploitation, they live in exploitation, and they breathe their last. in that exploitation. They are least able to pay any more tax on account of their wretched condition and extreme poverty.¹⁹⁵

Like Samad, he also pointed to the moral obligation of landlords towards the necessary improvement of sanitary, educational and agricultural condition of their tenants. He asked, ‘why they [landlords] should not pay the whole or a greater portion of this tax [PEC] to fulfil their moral obligations at this age when the democratic ideas are so rampant throughout the world?’¹⁹⁶ Hakim’s amendment met the same fate as that of Samad’s.

Apart from heavy cess burden on tenants and cultivating rayats, the Bill had another very regressive feature. Despite heavy cess, the education was not made free from the time of imposition of PEC. Instead, it was made free when compulsion was introduced in a district or its part. Thus, according to the Bill the tenant had not only to pay heavy PEC but also had to pay the fee of his children going to school from the day of commencement of the Act. However, the amendment moved by Khan Sahib Maulvi Bazlul Huq removed this

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 828.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 829.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 829-30.

anomaly and led to free primary education from the time of the imposition of the PEC in a district. While moving his amendment he observed:

It will be doing great injustice if the rate-payers are to meet education expenses over and above payment of education cess. It will be a great hardship—an intolerable hardship indeed. It will give rise to *bona fide* hue and cry and the people will lose their confidence. Distrust will reign supreme. It will give food to the agitation to fan the flame of discontent. [...] It is an anomaly that it is called free, though the people are paying for it. It is a most equitable demand and deserves no opposition.¹⁹⁷

Maulvi Azizul Haque supported Huq's amendment. He argued '[i]t is against all canons of business that while you tax the people for education you do not make education free and compulsory' and went on to say that he would have appealed to the League of Nations, if there was a possibility.

I would have appealed to the League of Nations, if that were possible pointing out that here is a Government that is taxing the people for the purpose of education, yet when that education is given on the grounds of some technical difficulties it is realising fees from the pupils, but probably I would be held out of order.¹⁹⁸

A.J. Dash opposed the amendment on the grounds that there was every hope that no fees 'will have to be realised' but the government did not want to be 'bound by any statutory provision.'¹⁹⁹ The motion was put to the vote and carried by 38 to 27.

While all the amendments moved regarding the ratio of PEC on the side of tenants were opposed, the one moved by I.A. Clark for reducing the cess on mines and quarries from 5 pice to 3.5 pice was accepted by the Education Minister. When accepting the amendment, he made the following remark:

Although the two Select Committees decided that the cess should be 5 pice on mines and quarries, but after going further into the question and after receiving a deputation from the Mining Association and the Mining Federation, I have come to the conclusion that it would be reasonable and fair if the amendment proposed is accepted. I, therefore, accept the amendment.²⁰⁰

The Perusal of the debate on the BRPE Bill also revealed the anxiety of English educated elites for the 'danger' of educating the manual working castes and class. In order to keep the manual workers within the pale of their occupation, Maulvi Abdul Karim suggested the

¹⁹⁷ The Bengal Legislative Council proceedings, Official report, Vol XXXV, Discussion on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 26 August 1930 (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1930), 869.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 870.

²⁰⁰ The Bengal Legislative Council proceedings, Official report, Vol XXXV, Discussion on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 25 August 1930 (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1930), 818.

addition of a clause in the Bill to prescribe syllabus of studies in primary schools catering to the 'needs' of the working class. He observed:

The present system of primary education has been in operation for over half a century. Has it proved suitable to the -requirements of those for whom it was intended? Has it made the agriculturists, better agriculturists or the artisans, efficient artisans? I am afraid the answer to this query will have to be given in the negative. On the contrary, it has proved detrimental to their interests in as much as it has created in them a distaste for manual labour and for their hereditary callings and mode of living, They do not care to improve agriculture or handicrafts, anxious as they are to follow occupations of an unproductive nature in imitation of the *bhadralogs*. They hate to earn their livelihood by manual labour and know nothing else by which they can earn an honest living. Thus they are not only unemployed but also unemployable, and they help to accelerate rather than retard the decadence of indigenous arts and industries and thereby aggravate the economic distress prevailing in the country. This is the reason why as I found in the course of my tours while in service, in some places the people far from showing an inclination to improve the schools, were eager for their abolition. In a certain place I was told that *Hari loot* would be offered on the day on which the local school would be abolished.²⁰¹

Dash did not accept the amendment on the ground that the government could get all the expert advice on particular questions of syllabus and courses of study whenever they require it. They should not be restricted by any statutory obligation to create a particular committee in the manner proposed by the mover of this amendment. The motion was put to the vote and lost.

The BRPE Act was the most regressive Primary education Act ever enacted in the country. This Act put a heavy burden of cess on the poor tenantry of Bengal while relieving the landed elites and mines and quarries owners, for the 'simple' reason that those at the lowest strata of the socio-economic hierarchy should pay for the education of their children.

2.5. Concluding Remarks

The above discussion reveals that there was a striking difference between the debate on Gokhale's Bill and that of Patel's Bill. While Gokhale's Bill was opposed based on the political danger, social structure, labour, financial, religious and educational grounds, Patel's Bill was mainly contested on the issue of child labour and issues of the Muslim community. This was because Patel's Bill was limited to municipal districts, which were industrial centres. As the above discussion shows that there was a consensus that the literate labour force was beneficial for industrial work. While in a feudal setting of rural areas, the

²⁰¹ Ibid., 786.

contrary was true. An illiterate labourer could not only be exploited, but also there was no danger to social structure. Gokhale's Bill met with serious opposition because it sought to educate millions of lower and depressed caste ignorant villagers, which was a danger to the socio-political system. Even in Bombay when the amendment was moved for extending the Bill to rural areas, it was opposed. So, the success of Patel's Bill lies in the fact that it was limited to municipal districts. A second important reason for its success was the amendment of clause 11, which ensured the availability of cheap child labour to the mill owners despite the primary education law. Thirdly, the Bill did not put any charge on the revenue of the government of Bombay, so it did not meet strong opposition from the government. The issues related to the Muslim community were not much contested and brushed aside for the simple reason that they were in the minority. Though the Bill was passed, and the first Primary Education Act was enacted, it remained a window dressing legislation because of three reasons. First, due to the onus put on local bodies for the introduction of compulsion, second, due to the inclusion of exemption Clause 15 and thirdly because of the Clause 11 which ensured that the mill owners were not deprived of the cheap child labour.

The issue of compulsory education gained prominence in the debates after the Reforms of 1919 due to linking up of education of masses with the national development and the need for a literate electorate to exercise their voting rights intelligently. The chief demerit of the PEAs was the devolution of responsibility to introduce compulsion on the local bodies which rendered these Acts ineffective. It was not only the financial crunch which led the local bodies' apathy but the social structure of the Indian Society as well. The influential upper caste and landed elites (Hindu as well as Muslim) in these bodies, due to their socio-political considerations played an important role in the inaction of these bodies towards the introduction of compulsory education, the chief beneficiary of which was lower and depressed castes.

The discussion in the Punjab and Bengal Legislative Council point to the fact that in both the Councils there was a consistent demand by the leaders to increase expenditure on primary education and to curb extravagant expenses on higher education. In the Punjab leaders urged for levy of educational cess if it was necessary, but in Bengal, any additional taxation was resisted because the province was already heavily taxed. The leaders in Bengal asked the government to take charge of the expenditure on primary education, and some of them also suggested to tax Zamindars to resolve the financial crisis to introduce compulsory

education. However, elites in both the Councils altogether opposed compulsory education, educational cess and additional taxation.

The BRPE Bill was a government Bill. The government supported the BRPE Bill as this Bill transferred the financial burden on the shoulders of those for whom the Act was enacted, thus relieving themselves and the capitalists. The discussion in the Council, examined in the previous section, reveals that the public leaders demanded that Bengal was already heavily taxed, and the government should take charge of the compulsory education without any further taxation or cess. Despite this demand, the government and the minister of education put the burden of disproportionate cess on the poor tenants in the name of providing education for their children. As long as the Indian leaders were on the side opposite to that of the government, they opposed any taxation as the taxation was hindering their interest. But as soon as they took charge of the office, they joined hands with the government in the exploitation of the oppressed tenantry of Bengal. The proportion of cess to be paid by Zamindars was small. Despite this, in the entire debate, not a single Hindu member argued against the imposition of a hefty tax on masses but kept on crying for heavy taxation on them and attempted to make it a communal issue.

The State-Capitalist-upper caste nexus defeated the real purpose of a Compulsory Primary Education Act. In Bombay, an industrial setting the Act provided a backdoor for cheap child labour to mill owners while in Bengal with a feudal social structure the Act reinforced the oppression of tenants by putting the financial burden on their shoulder. The Acts thus enacted, whether in Bombay or Bengal, remained a Window dressing legislation.

Chapter 3.

Education of Depressed Classes

From the point of view of the educationist a child may be said to belong to a depressed class if his or her presence in the common school is resented by respectable parents. It is in fact this prejudice, even more than their own disinclination for schooling, which has kept the depressed classes educationally backward.¹

The above definition of depressed classes by J.A. Richey aptly describes the reasons for the low educational status of untouchables. The lowest position accorded to them within the Hindu Social system due to the vice of untouchability tremendously affected their social, economic, political and educational status in the society. The idea of compulsory education was required to bring these and the lower castes (who were lower in social status but not untouchable) within the ambit of the education system. This is because for upper castes voluntary system was sufficient as they were aware of the importance of education for their children, but this was not the case with the untouchables and lower castes who had an indifferent attitude towards education due to their position in the Hindu social system. Moreover, even if some of these untouchable classes aspired to educate their children it was resented by the caste Hindus, due to their untouchable status. As seen in Chapter 1, attempts were made by the upper caste and landed elites to exclude these classes from the compulsory system by the misuse of exemption Clause 16 of Gokhale's Bill. This exemption Clause was an indispensable feature of all the PEAs and a potent tool in the hands of local bodies to exclude them. The objections raised by the upper caste and landed elites against the teaching of depressed classes together with the caste Hindu children required separate schools for depressed classes. Under the compulsory scheme, it meant doubling of expenditure which neither the government nor the elites were prepared to bear, thus, leading to the failure of Gokhale's Bill. Thus, the underprivileged, marginalised, and derogatory status of depressed castes, due to untouchability, accorded them the unique position within the compulsory education debate. This necessitated the further exploration

¹ J.A. Richey, *Progress of education in India 1917-22*, Eighth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1923), 206.

of the contestations regarding the education of these downtrodden sections of the Hindu society. The present chapter aims to highlight the issues related to the education of depressed classes in general and compulsory education in particular.

The term depressed class was in vogue for the untouchables during the early twentieth century. Gaekwad of Baroda, however, objected to the use of this term as the term 'depressed' is 'too elastic a term' as 'whole of the population of India, even the Brahmin himself is in a depressed condition' and suggested the use of the epithet 'untouchable' to specifically refer to those facing the brunt of the 'theory of untouchableness.'² On the degrading practice of untouchability, he argued:

Sanctity is a peculiarly Hindu idea. It is a distorted version of mental and physical purity...The polluting power of a cat is very small, of a dog is greater, but nothing equals the pollution of a pariah. The degrading of a man below beasts is the culminating point of this fabric of sanctity.'³

Till the end of the nineteenth century, the government records used the term 'low castes' to designate untouchables. However, later, the term 'depressed classes' was used to distinguish them from other backward classes who would not pollute when touched. In this study, I have used the term 'depressed castes' instead of 'depressed classes' because in the Indian context 'class' is a misleading term. It tends to camouflage the uniqueness and complexity of the caste ridden Indian social structure.

3.1. Why to teach untouchables? The political context

Traditionally the untouchables were outside the ambit of the education system. In the beginning of British rule, the government focussed on the education of upper caste, elite as well as poorer class, particularly Brahmins. In 1824, Mount Stuart Elphinstone, president of the Bombay Education Society observed that though 'missionaries find the lowest castes the best pupils; but we must be careful how we offer any special encouragement to men of that description' who were 'not only the most despised, but among the least numerous of the great divisions of society...if our system of education first took root among them, it would never spread further.'⁴ On this state of affair Ambedkar observed that 'if no schools were opened for depressed classes before 1855 in the Bombay Presidency it was because

² Rajendra Singh Vats, *The Depressed Classes of India: An enquiry into their conditions and suggestions for their uplift* (New Delhi: 1977 (reprint, first edition 1912)), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴ Quoted in Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 2 (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1982), 415.

the deliberate policy of the British government was to restrict the benefits of education to the poor higher castes chiefly Brahmins.⁵ Missionaries, with their evangelical motives, were the pioneer and also the chief provider of education to these castes during the early phase in nineteenth century. For instance in Madras Presidency for the year 1901-02 there were '425 schools under Board or departmental management and 2473 under private management' majority of which belonged to 'mission societies.'⁶ Even the quinquennial reviews did not have much information and statistics about the depressed castes because, as Nathan stated for the year 1897-1902, '[o]nly the Madras, Bombay, Bengal, Central provinces and Berar reports deal separately with the question of low-caste education, and the information is not sufficient to enable one to pronounce definitely on the general progress made in recent years.'⁷ During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Hindu elites contributed towards the cause of education of upper castes by opening schools, colleges and universities but remained indifferent towards the education of depressed castes. The following statement of A. Bourne substantiates this:

Hindus in general take little interest in these people [depressed castes] and practically all that has been or is being done to elevate them is the work of missionary bodies among whom, in this connection, the Theosophical Society may not improperly be included, and directly through local boards, and indirectly by means of grants by government.⁸

Richey noted another instance of elite indifference towards the education of depressed castes in Review of 1922. He wrote that in Fyzabad Division of the United Provinces 'the Zamindars, are reported to averse to elevating these classes, and they themselves are unambitious, and so it seems that what progress has been made is due to government, to its local officials and to certain middle class enthusiasts.'⁹

The liberal reformers such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Vithal Ramji Shindey took the initiative towards the 'uplift' of depressed castes by establishing The Servants of India Society (1905) and The Depressed Classes Mission Society (1906) respectively. Shindey moved following resolution for betterment of depressed castes in 1908 at the Indian National Social Conference:

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ R. Nathan, *Progress of education in India 1897-1902*, Fourth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: office of the superintendent of government printing, 1904), 392.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ H. Sharp, *Progress of Education in India 1907-1912*, Sixth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1914), 260.

⁹ Ibid., 207.

The Pariah is to be elevated not because he is a part of our nation but because he is a human being. And this is a humane, humanitarian Resolution. You may differ on national or regional lines, but you cannot differ on this resolution on purely humanitarian lines.¹⁰

However, barring these exceptions, prior to Minto-Morley reforms of 1909 the question of ‘uplift’ of depressed castes was not the concern of English educated upper-caste elite. It was not a matter of public debate. Due to the efforts of Shindey the Indian National Social conference, though, had begun to include the issue within the conference deliberations, it remained dormant owing to lack of active engagement of elite leaders of the time. The inclusion of the education of depressed castes in the mainstream political discourse started after the reforms of 1909. This was due to political necessity rather than any real commitment for their social uplift.

The conversion of depressed classes into Christianity and Islam owing to the unjust treatment meted out to them by the caste Hindus had ‘stirred up the Hindu community as the successive census reports showed thinning of Hindu population and swelling up of Muslim and Christian Population.’¹¹ By forming separate electorate for Muslims, ‘the reforms of 1909 set the waves against the Hindus.’¹² Muslims reasoned that Pariahs were outcastes and hence outside the gamut of Hinduism. In 1910, E.A. Gait, the Census Commissioner, issued a circular to census supervisors of all provinces of British India ‘to report as to the criteria which might be taken to determine whether or not a man is a genuine Hindu in the popular acceptance of the term.’¹³ This circular catalysed the Hindu leaders towards the cause of depressed classes.

It aroused a storm in high-caste circles, as well as much debate as to the meaning of the term Hindu, by suggesting the omission from that category of those excluded from temples and Brahman services or considered to be polluting by touch or proximity.¹⁴

Lajpat Rai wrote,

One fine morning the learned pandits of Kashi rose to learn that their orthodoxy stood the chance of losing the allegiance of six crores of human beings who,

¹⁰ Report of Twenty second Indian National Social Conference at Madras on 31st December 1908, 64-65.

¹¹ Chandra Lekha Singh, “Annie Besant’s defence of Indian caste system: A critique,” *History and Sociology of South Asia* 13, no. 1 (2019): 10.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Sukumar Muralidharan, “Patriotism without People: Milestones in the Evolution of the Hindu Nationalist Ideology,” *Social Scientist* 22, no. 5/6 (1994), 26.

¹⁴ Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 376.

the Government and its advisers were told, were not Hindus, in so far as other Hindus would not acknowledge them as such, and would not even touch them.¹⁵

The Indian National Social Conference condemned the circular and noted,

That this conference records its opinion that no attempt should be made in the census to introduce artificial distinctions among classes recognised as belonging to the Hindu community and in this connection views with great concern the recent circular issued by Mr Gait the census commissioner regarding the depressed classes.¹⁶

Rai further noted, ‘the Gait Circular had a quite unexpected effect and galvanized the dying body of orthodox Hinduism into sympathy with its untouchable population, because that was so necessary to avert its own downfall.’¹⁷ These circumstances led prominent Hindu leaders to speak for the amelioration of the condition of Pariahs in the early decades of the twentieth century. While some of these leaders had a genuine concern, most of them were politically motivated. Vithal Ramji Shindey, with humanitarian motive, moved the following resolution at the Indian National Social Conference in 1912:

This conference pledges itself to the elevation of the classes deemed untouchables by means of education and is of opinion that any scheme for the amelioration of the condition of these classes prominence should be given to the removal of social prejudice against them and that the members of the Social Reform Association should give a practical proof of the sympathy by making no distinction between the members of these classes and the other members of the Hindu community in point of social intercourse.¹⁸

However, at the Social Conference, it was mainly taken up politically than on humanitarian grounds. R.V. Mahajani while seconding the resolution emphasised that it was necessary to improve the status of depressed classes for ‘Atmaheet’ (self-interest):

We have to improve the state of Mahars, mangs and other untouchable classes. It is not merely warranted of the score of sympathy but of ‘Atmaheet’. Refuse to look at the large question from the altruistic pint of view and you will confirm and you will condemn a large portion of our populations as Non-Hindus. It is the duty of enlightened people to treat them as human beings, falling that they will espouse Christianity with the result that the Hindu society will not only be worse for the loss of a considerable fraction of its population but they will reach the gentlemen’s estate calling on you to meet them as your equals on a common platform and to shake hands with them. To avoid that contingency let us think

¹⁵ Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj: An Account of its Origins, Doctrines and Activities* (London: Longmans & Co., 1915), 227.

¹⁶ Indian National Social Conference, 1910, 37.

¹⁷ Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, 228.

¹⁸ The report of The Provincial Social Conference of Bombay (CP’s and Berar’s included), 1912 held at Bombay 6th April 1912, published by D.G Dalvi, Hon Asst secretary Indian National Social conference, 13.

betimes and hasten to solve this *all-important problem*. In these days of industrial awakening we are in want of workers. Why not draft them from the untouchable classes to co-operate with the educated people? In improving the conditions of these discarded people we shall be improving our own condition. Hence, I repeat this is a question whose solution stands not only on the pedestal of sympathy but of 'Atmaheet'.¹⁹

Following the Reforms of 1909, a series of articles were published in *The Indian Review* inviting attention towards the amelioration of the 'depressed classes.' A perusal of these articles reveals the anxiety of caste Hindus for lurking political danger to the Hindu community if upper-caste Hindus remained apathetic towards untouchables, thus echoing Mahajani's concern for 'atmaheet.' Ambika Charan Mazumdar lamented that the defect of the Hindu religion is 'its exclusiveness...It possesses manifold pretexts for ejecting many from its fold, but none to admit any within its charmed circle. By this process Hindu society is gradually thinning its rank.' Drawing upon the figures from successive censuses, he argued:

At the end of every decade that passes it has to count its losses, while other communities count their gains. The bulk of the Mahomedan population in Eastern Bengal, who have by their numerical strength completely thrown the Hindus overboard in regard to the reform scheme, who are they? They are neither Arabs nor Afghans, Moghuls nor Pathans. Full 75 per cent, of them are Hindus converted to the Islamic faith not more than a few generations back. Christianity also has absorbed a fair percentage of these submerged population. If you keep them out, they are bound to fall a prey to other communities which are more rational in their social organisation and present advantages which are so stubbornly denied to your system. It is the penalty of exclusiveness everywhere ordained by retributive justice. Thus the political aspect of the question is still more serious.²⁰

Delving into the political repercussions of such a scenario he argued,

We cannot apply to our protests and representations the heavy weight and momentum of the masses. The intimate connection between political agitation and national solidarity must be realized and the weight of a people's demand must be measured not simply by its invincible logic, but also by its irresistible volume and density...The nation do not live in the parks and squares of our greatest cities, but they are to be sought for in the remote villages and largely among the vast submerged population. How long. Oh how long! Are we to drift! Drifting and drifting we have nearly stranded the barque of our society and the fate of our nation is trembling in balance. In this supreme hour of national collapse we must summon our courage, screw up our energies, forget

¹⁹ Ibid.,15. Emphasis mine.

²⁰ Vats, *The Depressed Classes of India*, 20.

all sins of omission and commission, put afresh steam and join all hands to save the nation from a complete shipwreck.²¹

T.V. Seshagiri Aiyar noted that '[t]he work of foreign missionaries is waking up the educated classes of India. It has made them realise that they should be losing ground if they neglect to raise these depressed classes.' The educational work of missionaries had helped some untouchables to pursue vocation other than their ancestral. This was viewed by Aiyar as 'economic and labour disturbances...upon the wake of philanthropic efforts of non-Indian agencies to elevate this strata of society.' He warned that 'the work should be taken up by them [Hindus] if the amelioration is not to be marred by class hatred.'²² Further, on the political aspect of the question, he argued:

Comparing the figure of the last three censuses for the Madras Presidency...I feel no doubt that when the figures of the next census are announced, it will be found that the Christian and Mahomedan population will have considerably increased while the Hindu population will have decreased proportionately... Is it not time that we take stock of our influence and of the forces at work around us, and adopt a different attitude, if not in the name of humanity, at least in self-interest?...They [caste Hindus] should not fail to recognise that their short-sighted attitude well (sic) soon annihilate them, if betimes they do not devise means to check the depletion of the Hindu Society by its adherents for saking [sic] the faith of their ancestors...I exhort my brethren to bestow their attention upon this subject as patriots.²³

P. R. Sundara Aiyer argued that duty towards depressed classes 'is a matter of primary importance whether we regard it politically, or from the point of view of our social duties as fellow members of the same community.' He went on to say that '[n]ot merely are we inhuman, but such treatment is also a source of great political danger.' If Hindus were not prepared to uplift them 'it is quite possible that our acts would result in their being permanently estranged from us. If we are not prepared to elevate them, there are others who, being moved by feelings of humanity, are prepared to do the work.'²⁴

Besant, who was actively involved in her work of 'revival' of Hinduism²⁵ could not hold herself back at such a 'critical' juncture wrote her first article on the depressed castes entitled *Education of Depressed Classes* which was published in February 1909 issue of

²¹ Ibid., 20-21.

²² Ibid., 55.

²³ Ibid., 55-58

²⁴ P. R. Sundara Aiyer, Indian Review December 1910, in Vats, *The Depressed Classes of India*, 98.

²⁵ For a detailed discussion on Besant's educational ideas and activities during early period of her stay in India see, Chandra Lekha Singh, *Annie Besant: Educational ideas and activities (1893-1913)*, (Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation: Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2014).

The Indian Review. She asked caste Hindus to ‘sympathise’ with the depressed castes ‘as a part of their effort to improve,’ what she termed, ‘*National Karma*.’²⁶ She asserted that,

there is a law for nations as well as a law for individuals, and that the great judge of all the earth weighs in the scales of His justice the nation that oppresses as well as the individuals who sin, and so demands from every nation the payment of its own debts...Ishvara is now demanding from you, the Indian people, the payment of your debt, to the children of those whom your forefathers conquered and enslaved...it is the special duty upon you, the children of the conquerors, to make good by your own exertions the wrong which your forefathers inflicted.²⁷

So, the Caste Hindus should come forward and act as ‘saviour’ of the outcastes and accept their ‘duty’ towards the uplift of the latter otherwise it may prove ‘disastrous’ to the national interest, as per Besant’s *National Karma* theory. She exhorted, ‘I have often said that the pariahs are a danger to your religion, if the Christians help them, if the Musalmans help them, if the Hindus neglect them. What must be the inevitable result?’²⁸

Lajpat Rai argued that the ‘[s]ocial efficiency, needed to make us a nation, cannot be achieved without the co-operation of the classes known as the depressed classes.’ He emphasised that on the grounds of Humanity, justice and self-interest, it was essential to work towards the uplift of these classes:

Their fidelity is being put to a severe strain and unless we recognise it in time, no blame could attach to them if they were to separate themselves from us and join the ranks of those who are neither with us nor of us. Humanity, justice and self-interest, they are all ranged on the side of this urgent reform.²⁹

Rai considered that education was ‘most urgently needed for these classes...which will produce leaders and reformers amongst themselves and which will give them a status and position in the social organism.’ Moreover, he believed that the education of these classes would boost the economy of the nation:

It is in the best interests of the nation that the education of these classes should be taken in hand and pushed on with zeal and courage. The education of these classes will also materially conduce to the solution of our economic problems. Here is valuable material going to waste and rotting without giving full value to the country.³⁰

²⁶ Singh, “Annie Besant’s defence of Indian caste system,” 9.

²⁷ Annie Besant, *Wake Up India* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1913), 85-87, quoted in Singh, “Annie Besant’s defence of Indian caste system,” 9.

²⁸ Besant, *Wake up India*, 100 quoted in Singh, “Annie Besant’s defence of Indian caste system,” 11. For a detailed discussion of Besant’s ideas on Indian caste system and depressed castes see Singh, “Annie Besant’s defence of Indian caste system,” 2019.

²⁹ Vats, *The Depressed Classes of India*, 40.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

Gokhale shared similar sentiments at Dharwar Social Conference in 1903. He emphasised that adherence to caste system will only amount to impediment in the path of social progress and advised that,

If you want to stand where you were a thousand years ago, the system of castes need not be modified in any material degree. If, however, you want to emerge out of the slough in which you have long remained sunk, it will not do for you to insist on a rigid adherence to cast (sic). Modern civilisation has accepted greater equality for all as its watch word, as against privileges and exclusiveness, which were the root-ideas of the old world. And the larger humanity of these days requires that we should acknowledge its claim by seeking the amelioration of the helpless condition of our down-trodden countrymen.³¹

Apart from the viewpoint of justice and humanity, he also appealed on the grounds of the national interest.

[T]his is a question of National Self-interest. How can we possibly realise our national aspirations, how can our country ever hope to take her place among the nations of the world, if we allow large numbers of our countrymen to remain sunk in ignorance, barbarism and degradation? Unless these men are gradually raised to a higher level, morally and intellectually, how can they possibly understand our thoughts or our hopes or co-operate with us in our efforts? Can you not realize that so far as the work of national elevation is concerned, the energy with which these classes might be expected to represent is simply unavailable to us?...I think that there is not much hope for us as a nation unless the help of all classes, including those that are known as low castes, is forthcoming for the work that lie before us.³²

Hinting on the problem created by untouchability and hence the conversion of these castes to Christianity he argued:

Moreover, is it, I may ask, consistent with our own self-respect that these men should be kept out of our houses and shut down from all social intercourse as long as they remain within the pale of Hinduism, whereas the moment they put on a coat and a hat and a pair of trousers and call themselves Christians, we are prepared to shake hands with them and look upon them as quite respectable?

Gaekwad of Baroda exhorted caste Hindus to change their attitude towards untouchables because '[t]he same principles which impel us to ask for political justice for ourselves, should accentuate us to show social justice to each other.' Thanking the western education and thought for infusing broader ideals towards humankind he observed:

The fact that our higher classes who have so long treated numbers of their countrymen with injustice and inhumanity, should now be coming forward to

³¹ Speech delivered at Dharwar Social Conference held on April 27th 1903, in Vats, *The Depressed Classes of India*, 47-8.

³² *Ibid.*, 48.

raise them to that equality, which is by nature their right, is a sign that the wider ideals derived from our foreign education and contact with Western thought, have opened our eyes to shortcomings which have, owing to the conservative nature of our minds, so long remained unnoticed.³³

G. A. Natesan also eulogised the English education for infusing liberal spirit in them and exhorted Hindus to take up the causes of the depressed classes for national interest:

British rule and English education have roused in us new aims, new aspirations, and all who are actively engaged in the great task of uplifting Indians are deeply alive to the fact that there can be no true uplift for the Indian nation unless the so-called depressed classes rise with them...if the present state of things is to be continued, we are preparing the way for national suicide.³⁴

Thus, all those speaking on the question of ‘uplift’ of depressed classes saw the political danger to the Hindu community as the reason for taking up the cause. However, few like Gokhale, Lajpat Rai and Gaekwar of Baroda were moved by humanitarian cause as well. The Montagu Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 provided further momentum towards the cause of ‘uplift’ of the depressed castes.

3.2. Where to teach the ‘untouchables’?

One of the oppositions to Gokhale’s Bill was the danger of upper caste pollution if admitted in a common school and high expenditure if separate schools were opened for them. The question of the political economy not only led to the inclusion of issues of depressed classes in the public discourse but also the leaders became active in taking action towards the education of these classes. The biggest question which confronted them was ‘where’ should these untouchable children be taught? Together with caste children or in separate schools specially meant for them? Annie Besant, who was actively involved in the education of upper-caste Hindu youths, believed that the depressed class children should be taught in separate schools. Besant believed that it would take generations to enable a depressed class to sit side by side with upper castes:

Their [‘depressed class’ children] bodies, at present, are ill odorous and foul, with the liquor and strong smelling foods out of which for generations they have been built up; it will need some generations of purer food and living to make their bodies fit to sit in the close neighbourhood of a school room with children who have received bodies from an ancestry trained in habits of exquisite personal cleanliness, and fed on pure foodstuffs. We have to raise the

³³ Gaekwar of Baroda, “The Depressed Classes,” *The Indian Review* 10, no. 12 (Dec 1909), 881.

³⁴ G.A. Natesan, Editor of *The Indian Review*, spoke at the Second Depressed Classes Conference July 1911, in Vats, *The Depressed Classes of India*, 184.

depressed classes to a similar level of physical purity, not to drag down the clean to the level of the dirty, and until this is done the close association is undesirable.³⁵

In order to strengthen her argument, Besant exemplified the case of England:

Do you suppose in England, that is so very free, that the children of the slums go to Harrow and Eton that they go to the schools where gentlemen's sons go? Not a bit of it. There are special schools for them, schools where more refined children are never permitted to go.³⁶

She further elaborated:

Eton and Harrow are admittedly the schools for higher classes; Rugby and Winchester are also schools for gentlemen's sons, though somewhat less aristocratic. Then come a number of schools, frequented chiefly by sons of the provincial middle class. Then the Board Schools, where the sons of artisans and the general manual labour classes are taught; and below all these, for the waifs and strays, are the 'ragged schools'. The name of which indicates the type of their scholars, and the numerous charitable institutions.³⁷

It was not only the physical pollution of which Besant was concerned. She was also anxious for the 'moral' pollution of caste Hindu children:

children learn manner chiefly by imitation...if at the school they are to be made to associate with children not thus trained, they will quickly fall into the ways which they see around them....Ought the children of families in which good manners and courtesy are hereditary, to be robbed of their heritage, a robbery that enriches no one, but drags the whole nation down?³⁸

She considered the liberal-minded Hindus' stance of common schools as 'absurd' and 'merely violent reactions of cruel wrongs which has been inflicted on depressed classes, the outcry of an awakened conscience, which has not yet had time to call right reason to guide its emotions.'³⁹ Besant criticised the British Government for 'paying no attention to social differences' and blamed that 'they would not deal so with the sons of their own people, though they may be careless of the sons of Indians, and lump them all together, clean and dirty alike.'⁴⁰ She advised caste Hindus that 'it is to the interest of the Indians that they should send their sons where they are guarded from coarse influences as

³⁵ Besant, *for India's uplift*, 78, quoted in Singh, "Annie Besant's defence of Indian caste System," 14.

³⁶ Besant, *Wake up India*, 89, quoted in Singh, "Annie Besant's defence of Indian caste System," 14.

³⁷ Besant, *For India's uplift*, 79, quoted in Singh, "Annie Besant's defence of Indian caste System," 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 15

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Englishmen guard their own sons in England.⁴¹ V.M. Mahajani retired inspector in Berar while supporting common schools for depressed classes and upper-caste children criticised Besant: 'Mrs Besant alone would have special schools for them and would not allow them to study with the children of the higher classes.'⁴²

The admitted policy of the government was that the government schools were open to all castes. As early as 1858, the Court of Directors passed the order that '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.'⁴³ However, due to upper caste opposition, they were mostly inaccessible for depressed castes. The Indian Education Commission observed the apathy of upper caste towards depressed castes in the following terms:

The opposition was not generally due to religious sentiments alone, but in a large measure to the unclean habits and the unpolished manners and conversation of low-caste boys. They are also occasionally due to the desire of the upper castes to keep the low castes in a state of subjection and servility.⁴⁴

The Commission reiterated the policy of the government that government institutions were open to all castes. However, at the same time, it directed the inspectors and teachers that they should not urge the depressed castes to 'claim a right about which they are themselves indifferent.'⁴⁵ To overcome the problem of the opposition of admission of depressed caste in the same school as caste children, the Commission recommended the institution of separate schools for the depressed castes. However, the establishment of separate schools was expensive, and the officials tried to admit as far as possible the depressed caste children in ordinary schools. Nonetheless, this policy met severe opposition from upper castes. For instance, in Kaira district of Berar when officials tried to admit depressed caste children in the schools, it led to the closure of the schools for several years and 'huts and crops of the depressed people being burnt in one village.'⁴⁶ In the quinquennial review for 1897-1902, Nathan noted that the low castes (referring to untouchables) were 'far behind the main body of Hindus in the matter of education.' He observed that apart from poverty 'the attitude of the higher castes towards' lower castes were responsible for their backwardness as they did

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Vats, *The Depressed classes of India*, 107.

⁴³ Despatch No. 58, 28 April 1858, quoted in Vasant Moon (ed.), Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 2 (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1982), 419.

⁴⁴ Indian Education Commission (Hunter Commission), 1883, 514.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 517.

⁴⁶ J.S. Cotton, *Progress of Education in India 1892-97*, Third Quinquennial Review (London: Darling & Son Ltd, 189), 355.

not want these castes to study in public schools due to fear of ‘caste pollution and partly from the dislike of comparatively well-to-do that their children should mix with others who might often be of lower habits and morals.’⁴⁷ He noted that the government’s insistence on the principle that its educational institutions were intended for all classes, ‘schools were on some occasions closed, and disturbances were even excited, in consequence of the admission of low caste boys into State schools.’⁴⁸ In the same Review, the Census Superintendent recalled that in 1880 ‘the Chanda High School had to be broken up on account of the admission of a few Dher boys. The masters resigned, and, strange to say, the sweeper also resigned.’⁴⁹ Earlier in 1868, a similar incident triggered the closing down of Chanda High School. The Brahmins ‘refused outright to share a space in a government school with the lower-caste dher. The school had to be closed down in 1868.’⁵⁰ However, Nathan opined that the prejudice against lower caste was shedding in the sense that schools would not remain closed for days and years on account of lower caste children admission in State schools and disturbances were also few but, he noted, it was required that ‘children of castes regarded as impure must sit apart.’⁵¹

In Central Provinces, the census superintendent remarked, ‘[f]or the impure castes separate schools still exist in the Maratha Districts, and when low-caste boys attend the ordinary schools, they are made to sit in the verandah and are not touched.’ Regarding the admission of depressed castes in public schools, Richey observed that ‘children admitted in ordinary schools are segregated from other children and made to sit on separate benches.’ As an instance he gave the example of Multan division, ‘boys of low castes such as *chamars*, *musalis*, and *sansis* occasionally attend ordinary schools, but they are generally seated apart from the children of higher castes.’ He said such segregation had little advantage ‘except, possibly in prestige, gained by an Adi-Dravida child who on admission to school is seated outside the school building.’⁵²

⁴⁷ R. Nathan, *Progress of education in India 1897-1902*, Fourth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: office of the superintendent of government printing, 1904), 391.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 394.

⁵⁰ A.P Howell selection from educational record 1859-71, quoted in Joseph Bara, “Colonialism and Educational fragmentation in India,” in *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 125-170, (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1998), 154.

⁵¹ R. Nathan, *Progress of education in India 1897-1902*, Fourth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: office of the superintendent of government printing, 1904), 391

⁵² J.A. Richey, *Progress of education in India 1917-22*, Eighth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1923), 206.

On financial grounds, provision of separate schools for depressed castes would enhance educational expenditure. Not only this. There was also the problem of getting teachers for teaching in schools for depressed castes as upper caste teachers would not teach in such schools. In the review of 1917-22, Richey noted that separate schools were not efficient as there was a 'difficulty in obtaining teachers for them as high caste masters do not wish to serve in such schools and so far depressed classes have been able to produce few teachers.'⁵³ Thus, the situation was no better than in 1902 when the teachers in the schools for the depressed castes either belonged to depressed castes or were Muhammadans and untrained 'since it [was] not possible to procure teachers of high caste.'⁵⁴ Under such circumstances, the government retreated to its policy of common schools for children of all castes. The DPI of central Provinces noted:

The mere fact of such separation seemed to accentuate caste distinctions and to keep the lower castes lower. Our policy is now to encourage as much as possible the admission of the lower castes into our ordinary schools. Even though there is little intermingling of such castes, the mere fact of their admission into the schools seems to raise their social status.⁵⁵

In the Central provinces, a committee set up by the government in 1921 to consider the education of depressed classes, recommended 'equality of treatment for all castes admitted in the school.'⁵⁶ In the review of 1922 most of the provinces submitted that the prejudice against depressed castes had been shedding and that they were being admitted in ordinary schools. In the review of 1922, most of the provinces submitted that the prejudice against depressed castes had been shedding and that they were being admitted in ordinary schools. This is, however, questionable. Was it the shedding of prejudice, or was it government's attempt to curtail educational expenditure under this pretext? This needs further exploration.

In the Legislative Council of United Provinces, in 1920, an interesting debate ensued on special vs common schooling for depressed classes. C.Y. Chintamani moved the resolution to 'reduce by Rs 1,000 the estimate of expenditure under Civil Works-Provincial and to give that amount to a few district boards like those of Benares, Meerut and Jaunpur towards

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ R. Nathan, *Progress of education in India 1897-1902*, Fourth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: office of the superintendent of government printing, 1904), 393.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 394.

⁵⁶ J.A. Richey, *Progress of education in India 1917-22*, Eighth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1923), 206.

the measure for the education of the depressed classes.’⁵⁷ Grants were made to three district boards, Benares, Meerut and Jaunpur in 1919-20 for appointing special supervisors to schools for depressed classes so that stimulus and aid might be given to the education of these classes. Chintamani suggested to government,

similar grants might be made to a few other district boards in the course of the next financial year... whether district boards may ask for it or may not, I would still suggest that the local government of its own motion might address them and might invite them to take active steps for the diffusion of education amongst these classes.⁵⁸

With reference to the recommendation of the joint committee of Parliament regarding representation in the Legislative Councils he argued,

If the new system of Government is to be successful, if the fears of our critics in the Anglo-Indian press and Sydenhmites in England that they are only to substitute an educated oligarchy for the present bureaucracy in the name of constitutional reforms, education will have to be widely diffused among all classes of the population.⁵⁹

Blunt responded that ‘government is anxious to increase education among these classes and will certainly not refuse financial assistance if the boards ask for it.’⁶⁰ Similar resolution was moved by Saiyid Raza Ali in which he demanded that ‘Rs 90,000 out of the lump provision for telephone communication be diverted to the education of the depressed classes.’⁶¹ He argued that the amount of Rs 1000 proposed by Chintamani was too little to be distributed among 52 districts. In the course of the debate on his resolution, Ali argued that opening separate schools for the depressed classes was not a sound policy:

[H]igh class people do not care to mix with them in terms of equality or on decent terms. Because that is so, it is all the more necessary why we should insist on these boys getting free admission in schools. Fortunately for us things in these provinces are much better than what they are in the Madras Presidency. Here, so far as I know, not many people would object to a boy of this class being admitted to the general school... I hope that if this policy of having special schools and special classes for the children of these classes is abandoned it will stimulate education among them and will also have the direct result of taking away the distinctions that exist between high class people and low class people. As a matter of fact politically we are going ahead, and it will be very unfortunate if we lag behind in social matters.⁶²

⁵⁷ Proceedings of the Council of his Honour the Lieutenant Governor, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1920 (Allahabad: Superintendent, Government press, 1921), 315.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 319.

Pandit Gokaran Nath Misra refuted Ali's suggestion of common school for all children, depressed classes and otherwise. He asserted:

[T]he time has not yet arrived for this. In some places the prejudice is still there, and I think that in order to respect that prejudice and in order not to put obstacles in the way of the education of the depressed classes it is very necessary that some special classes should be opened for them.⁶³

Rejecting Misra's plea to respect the existing prejudice against depressed castes being admitted in ordinary schools, Ali retorted:

I do not see what right any man has, whether he belongs to a high caste or low, to object to another man being admitted to the same institution to which he belongs. If we respect blind unreasoned sentiments like that, we will be doing a great injury to the cause of the depressed classes.⁶⁴

In the Punjab Legislative Council, a resolution was moved by Kundan Lal Rallia Ram, representative of Indian Christian in the Council for setting apart a sum of ten lakh rupees for the uplift of depressed classes in the province and setting up of separate schools for the education of depressed classes. With reference to the apathy of people towards the plight of untouchables, he revealed that a well-educated member of the Council [he did not name the member], who had been to England and was supposed to be enlightened one opposed a scheme for opening at least one school for untouchables on the grounds that 'but when you are going to educate these men who will do the dirty work for us? You are going to spoil them.'⁶⁵ Most of the members opposed the resolution on the grounds that untouchables were not as badly treated in the Province compared to in other parts of British India, particularly the South. Opposing the resolution, Chaudhri Ali Akbar argued,

We have already a large number of schools and there is no reason why we should waste money in educating the depressed classes. The Zamindars are already suffering through the insolence of the Indian Christians belonging to the depressed classes...improvement in the status of the depressed classes will be harmful to the Zamindars. The resolution is a novel one of its kind. Equality of status is an impossibility.

Ganpat Rai, who wanted an expansion of primary education among the masses, as discussed in Chapter 2, was against any separate allocation of funds for the depressed classes. He observed:

⁶³ Ibid., 321.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 322.

⁶⁵ The Punjab Legislative Council, Official Report, Vol III, 1922, Resolution regarding depressed classes, (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1922), 31.

Children of the low and menial classes are admitted freely and they sit side by side with the children of the rural gentry and aristocracy without any objection on their behalf. I therefore think that there is no further need to provide separate funds for their education.⁶⁶

Refuting these claims, Rallia Ram argued that, 'not to speak of government schools, even in Mission school with which I have been connected for the last 15 years I have failed so far to admit a single boy of the untouchables for fear of public sentiment.'⁶⁷ He further added, 'I would like to see a sweeper joining the school meant for general classes.'⁶⁸ On getting assurance from the Minister of Education in this regard, Rallia Ram withdrew his resolution. In response to Rallia Ram's resolution, a circular letter was issued on the subject of the education of depressed classes by G. Anderson, Under Secretary to the Government of Punjab. The letter mentioned:

The Punjab government (Ministry of Education) is anxious that earnest efforts be made by all concerned for the education of these classes. Not only do the claims of justice and humanity plead in behalf of these people, but it is also essential to the best interests of the Province as a whole that no community, however, low in the social scale, should be denied the benefits of education... Equality of opportunity for all should be the watchword of a properly devised educational system.⁶⁹

The circular, however, did not refer to compulsory and free primary education for these classes. In Bengal Legislative Council, Jogendra Nath Moitra arguing for the uplift of depressed classes remarked:

We admit, Sir, that the depressed classes have been treated with great injustice by the so-called upper classes of the Hindus. But now the upper classes have realised their mistake and have come forward and removed their disabilities to a considerable extent. They have approached them with a heart full of love and brotherhood.

He considered that the 'proper way of raising their status is by throwing open the floodgate of education'⁷⁰ and hence argued that special provision should be made for the education of these classes. However, he believed that once the Bill for free and compulsory primary education was passed into Law, such special provision would not be needed. A.J. Dash, Secretary to the Government, Education Department, replying to Moitra's demand for special provision for the education of the depressed classes told the Council that

⁶⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁰ Bengal Legislative Council, Official Report, 1926 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1929), 528.

the depressed classes will have their problem solved. If this Rural Primary Education Bill is passed, there will be no special disability under which the depressed classes will suffer: they will be treated as other classes are, who at present cannot afford to pay for primary education.⁷¹

The discussion in chapter 2 has shown that the BRPE Act was an eyewash and served to further exploit the poor tenantry of lower and depressed castes by putting a heavy burden of cess on them.

In the Madras Presidency, the Labour department was created by the government to look after the work of amelioration of the condition of the depressed classes. Till 1922, the District Labour Officers were drafted from the cadre of deputy collectors. In 1922, the Legislative Council abolished these officers and Deputy Tahsildar, and Tahsildars were appointed as Labour officers. It was generally agreed that the deputy collectors appointed as Labour officers did very commendable work, but because they were costly, they were replaced by Deputy Tahsildars and Tahsildars. It was argued that Labour officers below the rank of deputy collectors 'fall into the hands of the caste Hindus and instead of looking to the advancement of the welfare of the depressed classes they generally suppress them.'⁷²

In 1928, Rao Sahib R. Srinivasan moved a resolution for reinstating deputy collectors as labour officers, but it was lost owing to the majority of the house against recruitment of deputy collectors as Labour officers. The PEA was not properly implemented as far as depressed castes were concerned. An instance of the flawed implementation of the PEA in Madras was that despite the provision in the act regarding the nomination of depressed caste person in the District Education Council, the Education Council of North Arcot did not have a single member of depressed caste nominated. C.J. Lucas was nominated as representative of depressed castes. When this was questioned in the Council, the government replied that he was nominated because 'he was capable of taking care of the interests of the depressed classes.'⁷³ However, they did not deliberate on the question of why instead of nominating a depressed caste a 'representative' of depressed caste was chosen. Then, there were several instances when depressed caste children were not allowed in ordinary schools, but when the questions were put in the Council, the Ministers concerned gave the usual reply: '[t]he government have no information.'⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid., 534.

⁷² Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras, 24 January 1928 (Madras: Government Press, 1928), 167.

⁷³ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras, 27 February 1928 (Madras: Government Press, 1928), 21.

⁷⁴ Ibid; Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras, Vol XXXIX, 24 January, 1928

The Hartog Committee observed that there were two courses available for the education of depressed castes. First, opening of more and more separate schools for the depressed castes and second, encouragement of admission of depressed class pupils in the common schools. The government preferred the latter course on financial grounds as well as for breaking caste prejudices. For depressed caste leaders, admission in common schools was a means to secure 'individual freedom and advancement and to their collective ability to secure equal rights.'⁷⁵ Ambedkar exhorted:

What the Untouchables want is not education, but the right to be admitted in common schools. They do not want medical aid, but the right to be admitted to general dispensary on equal terms. What they want is the right to draw water from a common well. They do not want their suffering to be relieved.⁷⁶

M. C. Rajah, submitted to the Hartog Committee that:

Separate schools for depressed classes should not be the rule but should only be started in places where boys of the depressed classes are not likely to be treated with that regard for their welfare which they have a right to expect at least from their teachers.⁷⁷

The Hartog Committee noted that though all the Provincial governments had passed the order in their respective provinces that all the depressed class pupils should receive equal opportunities of entering into, and equal treatment in, all publicly managed institutions, the enrolment of depressed castes in common schools remained low. For instance, in 'Madras out of a total of 28,000 depressed class pupils only 16,000 are reading in the ordinary schools.' Moreover, the Report of the Hartog committee revealed that in Madras 'over 70,000 pupils who do not belong to the depressed classes are reading in the special schools.' and observed that 'when it is to their convenience, the caste pupils overcome the existing prejudices.'⁷⁸ Discriminatory treatment with depressed classes, however, continued unabated. In a Nagpur village 'boys from the depressed classes were required to sit in the verandah of the primary school apart from their fellow pupil.' However, 'the community bitterly resented this and claimed equality of treatment. On meeting no response, although

(Madras: Government Press, 1928), 141.; The Punjab Legislative Council debates, Vol XI, 14 March 1928 (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1928), 707.

⁷⁵ Shailaja Paik, *Dalit Women's education in Modern India: Double discrimination* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 2.

⁷⁶ Dr Babasheb Ambedkar: Writings and speeches Vol.5, ed. Vasant Moon, 373, quoted in Paik, *Dalit Women's education*, 82.

⁷⁷ Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission: Review of growth of education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee appointed by the Commission (Hartog Committee Report), September 1929 (Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1929), 226.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

there was plenty of accommodation in the main school they opened a school of their own.⁷⁹ Another instance of the Punjab was noted in the Report of the Committee that 'in one district the children of depressed classes attending the public schools did not get water to drink.'⁸⁰ Despite these discriminatory treatments, noted by the Committee, they opined that the policy of the 'mixed school' was the right one because '[t]he system of segregate schools tends to unnecessarily to emphasise rather than to reduce the differences between the depressed classes and the other Hindu castes.'⁸¹ They outlined that:

the wisest policy for the future will be a determined insistence on the carrying out of the of the provincial Governments, instead of an extension of the system of separate provision. This system, in some cases, is liable- to be used, particularly by local bodies, merely as a means of evading the orders of Government.⁸²

They also argued that in places where a large number of pupils of depressed classes were available special schools for depressed classes may be opened, but they should not be treated as segregated institution. The DPI of United Provinces opined that, 'the single mixed primary school is the most economical and the most efficient type of primary institution.'⁸³ Wetherill Committee appointed to inquire into and report on the state of primary education of backward communities in the United Provinces insisted on the common school for depressed and caste pupils in order to remove the stigma attached to them:

It [the committee] recognises first and foremost that the elevation of the depressed classes and their conversion to literacy can only be accomplished by the removal of the stigma upon them and the stimulation of their aspirations. For the removal of this stigma it recommends wherever possible the establishment of ordinary board schools in areas occupied by members of these classes rather than the creation of ignominiously labelled 'depressed class schools'.⁸⁴

Hartog Committee also insisted on the recruitment of teachers belonging to depressed classes in ordinary schools and adequate representation of these classes on educational bodies, such as the District Education Council of Madras. Another reason put forth by the committee for mixed schools was that under the scheme of compulsory education provision

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 226-227.

⁸³ Ibid., 227.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

of separate schools for depressed classes, the cost of the scheme would ‘very largely and unnecessarily increased.’ This was contrary to the suggestion made in the Quinquennial review 1917-22. It noted:

The prejudice against the admission of low caste children into public schools is felt more strongly in towns than in rural areas. If compulsory education is to be introduced effectively in towns, it is clear that for some time to come municipal committees must be prepared to undertake the cost of providing separate schools for children belonging to the depressed classes.⁸⁵

However, Hartog Committee emphatically added that mere provision of common schools would not serve the purpose and ‘[i]t will be necessary to see that the regulations are carried out in the spirit as well as in the letter, and that the children are treated on equal terms in all respects with the children of other communities.’⁸⁶

3.3. What to teach depressed castes?

Another thorny question which was recurrent in the public discourse on the education of depressed classes was ‘What to teach?’ the depressed castes. What would constitute the ‘suitable’ curriculum for the untouchables? As seen in Chapter 1 and 2, there were anxieties among the upper caste elite that education might turn their heads away from menial occupation and through government offices. To avert this danger, first, the Elementary education Bill of Gokhale was opposed, which finally met failure. Secondly, when it was inevitable to keep them away from the pale of education, due to political reasons, the English educated intelligentsia devised a curriculum that would confine them within their ancestral occupation. That curriculum consisted of the teaching of 3Rs and more than anything else, the training in a manual occupation. In this section, debates on this question has been taken up.

Ambika Charan Mazumdar blamed the Namasudras of Bengal for their suicidal tendency of alienation from their occupation after getting some education. He exhorted:

To my deepest regret I have found those among them who have received some sort of education exhibiting a spirit of rebellion and thereby making the task of the reformer still more difficult. They want to retaliate by refusing to work for

⁸⁵ J.A. Richey, *Progress of education in India 1917-22*, Eighth Quinquennial Review, Vol. I (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1923), 208.

⁸⁶ Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission: Review of growth of education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee appointed by the Commission (Hartog Committee Report), September 1929 (Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1929), 228.

the other classes even for proper wages and to associate them even in such functions as are already permissible to them.⁸⁷

Annie Besant shared similar apprehensions. She argued that since these classes considered it “‘more respectable’ to write”⁸⁸ there was a danger of these classes joining ‘already overcrowded ranks of the underpaid clerks.’⁸⁹ To remedy this problem, Besant suggested that apart from teaching 3Rs ‘every school for the out-castes should have attached to it a simple technical school to teach them a trade’⁹⁰ and ‘open up avenues of employment’⁹¹ for them rather than ‘throw them out into the great whirlpool of competition around us.’⁹² The schools run by missionaries or the Depressed Classes Mission by liberal-minded reformers were night schools and day schools. All these institutions emphasised more on manual training of students such as carpentry, weaving, smithy, rattan work, coir weaving.⁹³ In Madras Legislative Council a resolution was moved by Rao Bahadur K.S. Venkatarama Ayyar for opening an agricultural school at Tanjore. While moving his resolution, Ayyar argued that ‘[t]he agricultural college at Coimbatore trains high class students for sending them out either as demonstrators or as agricultural inspectors and... into the service of the Agricultural Department.’⁹⁴ But for ‘agricultural labourers and other low class people’ in order that they ‘may have some knowledge of practical agriculture’ he suggested setting up of a rural school for every district imparting instructions in practical agriculture. He lamented that the low caste people were unable to send their children to such schools and instead were ‘compelled’ to send them to ordinary schools: ‘When I advised so many parents to send their boys to agricultural schools instead of educating them up to sixth or seventh form they said: where is the agricultural school to which I can send my boys?’ He requested government that ‘instead of allowing parents to send their students to the overstocked markets of literary men, Government would accept this resolution and open at least one school in the Tanjore District.’⁹⁵ In response to this resolution, Rai Bahadur K. Venkata Reddi Nayudu informed the house that one such school was getting

⁸⁷ Ambika Charan Mazumdar, in Vats, *The Depressed Classes of India*, 22.

⁸⁸ Besant, *Wake up India*, 101, quoted in Singh, “Annie Besant’s defence of caste system,” 15.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 15-16.

⁹¹ Ibid., 16.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council, Vol. XXXVI, 26 August 1927, Activities in Mission schools, Appendix II (Madras: Government Press, 1927), 327-329.

⁹⁴ Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council, First Session, Vol. I, 19 February 1921 (Madras: Government Press, 1921), 428.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

built at Taliparamba and four other areas were recommended by a committee of educational and agricultural experts. He specifically pointed out the communities in these areas for whom such agricultural schools were to be opened: Avanasi Taluk for Goundan community, in South Canara for tullu speaking people, in Telugu speaking area of Guntur and Vizagapattam and Tinnevely for Reddi and Naik communities.⁹⁶ This instance is an indication of casteist attitude of upper castes. Going by the logic that every caste should perform the occupation assigned to them by their caste, it was the lower and depressed caste agriculturists who were eligible for instruction in an agricultural college. But the upper caste, being in the powerful position: socially, economically, educationally as well as politically, took up the higher agricultural education for themselves and limited the lower caste agriculturists to the second-grade agricultural schools. Moreover, by insisting on such schools, they also ensured that the lower castes did not study beyond the rudiments of 3Rs and engage themselves, as soon as possible, into their hereditary pursuits.

Another trend that developed during the period under study was admission of more upper castes' students in special and technical schools for the depressed castes. Earlier, they were against any manual occupation as it was demeaning for their social status. However, with an increase in population and limited job in clerical and other literary sectors and growing industrialisation, they sought a compromise by seeking a job in the industrial sector. The logic behind such move, plausibly, was that in industries the work was not manual in the strict sense of the term as there one had to operate machines which was poles apart from the concept of traditional manual labour. It was the modern machines which one had to operate. This shift in attitude is clearly revealed during the debate on a resolution on opening of an industrial school in select districts in Madras Presidency. K.S. Venkatarama Ayyar moved this resolution in the Madras Legislative council. A. M. MacDougall was against this proposal because it would 'involve unnecessary expenditure of government money.'⁹⁷ He further argued that to have a successful industrial school one must have articles to work upon which would cause the 'government to enter into competition with private manufacturers in turning out the product of the school.'⁹⁸ The last argument which he put in support of his opposition was that it was not easy to train a mechanic as according to him:

⁹⁶ Ibid., 430.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 432.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

In this country a mechanic is born and not made...the class that we want for mechanics are those whose fathers and grandfathers were in the line and to that extent they would have, what I call, mechanical blood in their veins.’⁹⁹

In other words, he was arguing that the manual working lower castes were suitable for the job of a mechanic as it was their ancestral profession and not those upper castes who were seeking training in technical schools. He observed, ‘the feeling among the student population of the country is that they do not wish to soil their hands with labour but would prefer to drive a pen rather than steam engine.’ To this remark of MacDougall Rao Bahadur A. P. Patro retorted:

I am really surprised to hear the remarks from the previous speaker. I thought that stage in the development of industrial education in this country is long past when we could say that a member of any Indian family preferred to drive the quill to driving the steam engine.¹⁰⁰

He asserted that there was a cry

for technical schools, to make the students from higher elementary schools to secondary schools more useful to society to make them able to earn a living, themselves to turn their hands to work and to help in the material development of the country.¹⁰¹

Upper castes mostly occupied these classes of schools referred to by Patro. He gave two instances of good quality work turned out by students of National School of Masulipatam, who ‘belong[ed] to respectable families, families who yield to none in respectability and education, but they have gone in voluntarily to seek industrial education to that place.’ He added that contribution to such schools as National School of Masulipatam had been made by various classes of people and that ‘such industrial education is not limited to any section of the people, but all classes of people are beginning to realize that the kind of education that is now given, the mere training of the intellect, is not sufficient.’¹⁰² Patro further referred to ‘Sakchi Works Kharagpur’ where ‘[t]here are a number of persons all of very respectable families from Madras working as factors and foremen [...] you see a graduate putting on the blue apron and working in the smithy like an ordinary gang coolie.’ He asserted that:

The dignity of labour is being realised everywhere by Indians. Labour is not looked down upon as it was perhaps a century back or fifty years ago, when to get a Rs 10 clerk’s post was more honourable than turning the hand to plough

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 433.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

or to machine. These ideas are fast disappearing from our midst, and it is to our good and benefit that such ideas are fast disappearing.¹⁰³

Regarding the employment of people of ‘respectable families’ as foremen, MacDougall remarked,

My experience is they are absolutely useless as foremen in workshops. It needs a great deal more to be a foreman than to be able to tell the labourer how to do a thing. It also requires the ability of handling labour. And only way he can get through to a foreman’s position is by going through the ranks himself, learning what the work is, studying it himself and learning to handle the tools.¹⁰⁴

Patro argued that ‘the education that is already being given has been shown to be perfectly fruitless and useless and quite unsuited to the changed condition of the country.’ He urged the members of the house, ‘Zamindars and prosperous vakils’ to contribute to opening of industrial schools because ‘if the salvation of the country is to be achieved, it is by means of the training that we give to our young men and teaching them not to drive the quill but to drive the steam engines and the plough.’¹⁰⁵ T. M. Narasimhacharu observed, ‘if only the proper training is given to the Indians, they will be fit not only for mechanical, but for the other kind of work. It is the want of training that is now complained of.’¹⁰⁶ T. C. Tangavelu Pillai expressed similar sentiments during budget discussion in Madras Legislative Council:

As the budget stands, it does not allow that Government are taking any steps to give industrial education to the people. The present cry is that the education imparted to our boys is useless and some people are of the opinion that it produces salve mentality. It is high time that we started industrial schools; for that purpose the recommendations of the Saddler’s report should be given effect to. The school final examination should be encouraged and the pupils should be able to earn a living wage. Nowadays, a graduate is not able to get only a quill-driver’s post on Rs 30 or 35. There is no use wasting time in collegiate education. It is high time that the Government should take into consideration the fact that these are the people for whom they should devote their money and give them proper training.¹⁰⁷

A. Subbarayudu argued:

the expenditure on University education should be curtailed in favour of secondary, technical and industrial education. Most of the graduates turned out by the University seek the government service and as government service is not

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 432.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 434.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 435.

¹⁰⁷ Discussion on the Budget, Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council, First Session, Vol. I, 8 March 1921 (Madras: Government Press, 1921), 666.

wide enough to provide berths for all the applicants, ways and means have to be devised for increasing the number of posts in that service.¹⁰⁸

Above discussion, therefore, points to the fact that how the upper caste leaders shifted their position from one favouring literary occupation to that involving manual work in the industries due to the job crisis. In this profession also they tended to monopolise the system by pushing the depressed castes on the fringes. However, in case of rural primary schools or technical schools teaching agriculture, shoemaking, carpentry etc. where manual labour in the true sense of the term was required, the upper caste argued that such instruction was required for depressed castes. This argument is substantiated by the following discussion in the Legislative Council of Madras.

Swami A. S. Shahjanandam, the leader of depressed classes in Madras Presidency advocated for technical education in 'Adi-Dravida' schools. A resolution in his name moved by V. I. Muniswami Pillai read that 'in all Adi-Dravida schools only men able to teach technical subject should be appointed.' This was demanded in order to secure the livelihood of depressed caste children. This is revealed from the latter aspect of the resolution, which stated that:

[S]uch schools should be provided with wet and dry land to an extent of not less than two acres tax free, a pair of bulls and a well for irrigation, so that elementary modern agricultural instruction may be given; and that the remission of the provincial contribution or some other available funds be utilized for this purpose.¹⁰⁹

While moving the resolution, Pillai argued that Adi-Dravida leaders think that teachers in Adi-Dravida schools should be equipped with technical know-how because depressed classes students 'in after life will be able to live by other means instead of trying to seek employment in offices which at present are debarred for these people.'¹¹⁰ This may prompt us to think that recognising the handicap of untouchability Shahjanandam advocated for technical education of depressed castes. However, a perusal of the letter of the labour department to the Government of India reveals that officially, at least, 'the members of the depressed classes [were] not barred from entering the public service...provided they possess the requisite qualifications.'¹¹¹ This letter further noted: 'With a view to prevent

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 737

¹⁰⁹ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras, Vol XL, 27 February 1928 (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1928), 68.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Letter from Government of Madras to Department of EH & L, Dated 28 August 1928, EH & L, Education, No. 300, B, 2.

any single community monopolising the public service, this government have issued orders from time to time directing heads of offices under them that appointments should be made from all communities.¹¹² Thus, in Madras depressed classes were not officially barred from entering the public service, it may, however, would have been difficult to enter into such a service on account of their social position. Shahjanandam probably did not aspire for economic, social mobility of these classes otherwise he would have demanded more liberal education for these classes.

R. Nagan Gowda while seconding the resolution of Shahjanandam argued that training in agriculture and cottage industries such as 'shoe making, making of leather products and other things' should be given to children of depressed classes in elementary schools

for the reason that the members of these Adi-Dravida communities do not prosecute their studies in the secondary or high schools and therefore when they are in the elementary schools, opportunity should be taken to give them the knowledge of the industries in which they are likely to engage themselves in life after their school career.¹¹³

Another argument put forth by Gowda was that a large amount of money was going out due to the import of leather articles and shoes as the products made by 'classes engaged in these industries are not able to keep them abreast of the development of these industries and they do not produce the goods of the quality produced by other countries.' Therefore, it was essential, argued Gowda, that 'people ought to be taught these industries by giving a very good technical knowledge.'¹¹⁴ An amendment was moved by Zamindar of Gollapalli that such schools with facilities for technical education should not only be restricted to Adi-Dravida schools but should be provided in all elementary schools. He argued that primary education was a

unit itself. Many students do not go for higher studies but take up to their avocations as soon as they finish primary education. Agriculture must be taught in the primary standards to make the pupils realize the usefulness of modern agriculture.¹¹⁵

His amendment was opposed 'in the interest of depressed classes.'¹¹⁶ It is interesting to argue whether it was in the interest of depressed classes or the interest of upper castes that it was opposed. This is because if such ruling was introduced in all elementary schools,

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras, Vol XL, 27 February 1928 (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1928), 69.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

then the children of upper castes would have to undergo agricultural and technical education in shoemaking, weaving etc. which was derogatory for their caste status. While if it was restricted to the schools of depressed classes, then it was ensured that these classes having trained in the agricultural vocation to work as ‘agricultural labourer’ would not turn their heads towards government jobs. We have seen reference to such anxieties and apprehensions of upper castes in the earlier two chapters. This anxiety is further revealed in the argument of S Arpudaswami Udayar against the amendment of Zamindar of Gollapalli. He stated that elementary education had been a failure because for depressed classes ‘education in elementary schools does not bear any relation to life. It is not related to the actual needs and occupations of pupils.’¹¹⁷ He further argued,

[i]f, however, the schools could demonstrate by practical work that the education imparted will, when lands are assigned to them, enable them to derive the greatest benefit possible from those lands [...] It will be in the best interests of the depressed classes.¹¹⁸

For ‘other communities,’ he argued,

[E]ducation in this presidency has come to be regarded as a means to a decent, honourable living. Elementary education is, as it were, preparation to secondary education, just as the latter is regarded in turn as being preparation to University education. Therefore, so far as the depressed classes are concerned, the education which is really good to them is the education as outlined by the mover of the original resolution.¹¹⁹

It can be seen that discourse shifted from one of livelihood, suggested by Shahjanandam when moving his resolution to confinement within the particular vocation defined by their social status. The Finance Member T. E. Moir challenged this. He argued,

I can quite well understand the argument that education should be devoted as far as can be to making men efficient in the calling to which the vast majority of them must turn for a living. But does that argument apply only to the depressed classes?...I claim that elementary education which at present consists of a knowledge of the three Rs should be available to every child in this country irrespective of what pursuit or profession later on he is going to adopt; and until we have achieved that ideal-it is only on education of that type that you can superimpose technical or higher education- I regard with the greatest misgivings any policy aimed at the pursuit of what is called technical or agricultural education or other advanced studies which presupposes a sound elementary education, as a substitute for that education or to its detriment.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

There was a financial aspect to this opposition as well. Moir argued that, with limited resources, instead of providing agricultural education to a small section of the population, it was more important to provide elementary education to a comparatively larger section. He asserted,

Altogether a school which we are running at a cost of Rs 200 a year is going to cost us Rs 3000 to Rs 5000 capital expenditure and I do not know how much for manure, upkeep of cattle, skilled labour and other items.¹²¹

One can argue that the Government did not want to spend much on the education of depressed classes, so they opposed the proposal, and this fact cannot be denied. However, Moir's argument that knowledge of 3Rs should be available to every child irrespective of his vocation in the afterlife and therefore sound elementary education should not be superimposed with technical or agricultural education had democratic and liberal undertone as opposed to narrow and constricted vision of upper caste leaders.

3.4. Compulsion

In the compulsory Education scheme, the claim of the depressed castes should be of supreme importance as they were the one who was deprived of education altogether. However, this was not so. The caste-ridden social structure, which provided derogatory status to them, also kept them away from any benefit of education. The opposition to the compulsory education for the depressed castes has been dealt with in chapter 1. Here a brief analysis of consciousness of depressed castes regarding their education and free and compulsory education, in particular, has been taken up.

Due to missionary initiatives, the depressed castes began to realise the importance of education and started making a demand for their education by the beginning of the twentieth century. This consciousness among depressed castes varied. In the Bombay Presidency, they were very vocal in making such demand while in backward and feudal provinces such as U.P. the awareness and demand for compulsory education were very less. In Nagpur, Akhil Bhartiya Bahishkrut Parishad (All India Conference of the Excluded), was organised from 30 May 1920 to 1 June 1920. More than 10,000 men and women attended this conference. This conference passed the resolution 'To make primary education *saktichech* [compulsory] and free for boys and girls *shakya titkya lavkar* [as soon

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

as possible].¹²² S. N. Shivtarkar, observed at this Conference: ‘Brahmans owned the key of education and hence [Dalits] need[ed] compulsory education for progress. Primary education should be free and compulsory for boys and girls.’¹²³ He lamented:

while compulsory education had been legislated in Bombay Province in 1917; yet after three years, only two or three municipalities had made recommendations to the government. Even in Pune, referred to as *vidyache maaherghar* (home of knowledge), Puneri Brahmans rejected municipal compulsory education laws because they had already benefitted from education and wanted to enjoy their claim over it, protect their supremacy, and prevent lower castes from seeking education and potentially rising them.¹²⁴

Ambedkar was very critical of the Reforms of 1919 and argued that it threw the ‘backward Classes in the Bombay Presidency from purgatory to hell’¹²⁵ He considered the PEA a fraud because:

Instead of making education compulsory the act underlined its voluntary nature and fixed no time limit to fulfil the obligation...unlike earlier where the Provincial Government controlled and managed Primary Education, the Compulsory Primary Education Act was to be managed by District School Boards which had their own executive officers.¹²⁶

He further noted that ‘Local boards and Municipalities were full of ignorant, Brahmani people who believed in *varnashramadharma* and controlled these institutions’¹²⁷ Due to the casteist nature of Local boards, Ambedkar demanded that the compulsory primary education should be under the control of the provincial government instead of local boards. He observed:

The government is mainly responsible for compulsory primary education and for extending it to the masses. It seems by pushing on the burden of education to local boards and municipalities the government wants to be free of its duties. However, the Local Boards and Municipalities members...are not interested in the project of compulsory education...Because the spread of education in their castes and communities does not require any compulsion. So why would they want to destroy their own social supremacy by providing education to backward castes? Hence the compulsory education law has made no progress... First is mass education. Whatever happens, we should not postpone the question of education.¹²⁸

¹²² Mooknayak, 5 June 1920, quoted in Shailaja Paik, *Dalit Women's education*, 55.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ B. R. Ambedkar 1928, quoted in Paik, *Dalit Women's education*, 61.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 62.

¹²⁷ B. R. Ambedkar 1927, quoted in Paik, *Dalit Women's education*, 62.

¹²⁸ B. R. Ambedkar, Mumbai Ilakhyati prathamik shikshanachi praggati (progress of primary education in Mumbai Region), Bahishkrut Bharat, 31 May Quoted in quoted in Paik, *Dalit Women's education*, 62-63.

Ambedkar thus reiterated the views of leaders in the two Councils of the Punjab and Bengal, discussed in Chapter 2. The depressed castes' consciousness of the advantages of education and their demand for free and compulsory education during the period under study needs to be explored further in various provinces of British India to develop a complete picture of the debates pertaining to universal education and also for understanding the role played by depressed castes themselves in getting access to equitable education.

3.5. Concluding Remarks

The education of depressed castes, owing to their lowest position in the socio-economic strata, was in the most backward state. The political problems arising out of their conversion to Islam and Christianity led the Hindu leaders to take initiatives to 'uplift' them by educating them. Then, came up another problem of whether to teach them together with caste Hindu children or in a separate setting. A common school was economical, but there was the issue of pollution of caste Hindu children by the touch of untouchable children. Though the policy of the government was to admit children of all castes and class in government schools due to fierce opposition from the upper castes they established special schools for the depressed caste children. The government, in its various reports, emphasised that the prejudice against depressed castes was shading and that a higher number of children were being enrolled in common schools. However, in reality the vocal opposition to the depressed castes subsided, but their discriminatory treatment by upper-caste students and teachers continued unabated in these schools. The upper castes would not oppose the education of depressed castes in the ordinary schools but would segregate them within it. Reports from all the provinces as well as that of the Hartog Committee admit the segregation of depressed caste student within the school by means of separate sitting arrangement in the same room or many a times outside the classroom in Verandah.

From the financial perspectives, setting up of separate schools would incur more cost on the education of depressed caste compared to a common/mixed school. So the government insisted on common schools. The unjust treatment on account of their untouchability such as separate sitting arrangement, unavailability of resources of the school such as water (from well/ hand pump/ tap) of the school to the depressed caste child, name calling by peers and teachers had negative effect on the psychology of the child and it impacted their growth and development. Despite this, the depressed caste leaders, including Ambedkar,

wanted admission of depressed caste children in common schools because it was also the question of the dignity of depressed castes and their claim for equal rights.

What would constitute a 'suitable' curriculum for the education of depressed castes was another contested issue. The upper caste leaders favoured manual instruction in carpentry, agriculture, shoe making and other such vocations along with 3Rs so that they remain confined to their menial occupation.

Though government were boosting the cause of education of the depressed castes by providing scholarships, special hostels and schools for them, remission of fees and by promoting the policy of inclusion within the ordinary schools, however, the real boost would have been through compulsion which was quite easily shelved by the local bodies under the pretext of lack of resources and funds. Due to this, the PEAs remained futile as far as the education of depressed castes was concerned. The depressed caste leaders such as Ambedkar demanded direct control of compulsory education by the provincial government so that substantial progress could be achieved. However, the government insisted on their reliance on local bodies for the introduction of compulsion. The State and upper-caste nexus successfully evaded the claims of depressed castes for equitable access to free and compulsory education, which was their Human and Political Right.

Chapter 4

Girls' education within the compulsory education debate

Formal education of girls was a highly contested issue in nineteenth-century India. Girls were given informal education in household chores and religious duties within the home. Formal education in 3Rs was not considered suitable for girls. In Bengal, for instance, it was widely believed that 'a girl taught to read and write will soon after marriage become a widow.'¹ Missionaries, with their evangelical aim, were the pioneer in the field of formal education of girls. Apart from missionaries, the effort of social reformers paved the path of education for girls. Jotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule opened first girls' school in Pune. However, 'British government remained largely reluctant towards female education in the garb of the policy of non-interference in the social matters of the natives.'² Though the education despatch of 1854 and Hunter Commission of 1882 acknowledged the importance of girls' education, not much action was taken by the government in this regard until the beginning of the twentieth century. Private initiatives for girls' education under the scheme of grants-in-aid were mainly targeted at upper caste and upper-class girls. For lower and depressed caste girls, access to education was a distant dream. Though with the aid of missionaries and social reformers, a minuscule fraction of them was able to get access to elementary education, the majority of them were deprived of even the rudiments of education. Unlike their male counterparts, the lower and depressed caste girls faced double discrimination on account of their caste status and gender. Free and Compulsory elementary education was the only means for their education. However, being women, their turn came only after the compulsory education of their men. Gokhale believed that 'the education of girls is with us even a greater necessity than that of boys.'³ However, in his Elementary Education Bill, he did not demand compulsion for girls as a measure of safeguard in view of the 'special difficulties likely to be experienced in extending the principle of compulsion at once to girls.'⁴ Nonetheless, Clause 17 of the Bill empowered the Government to extend

¹ J. Long, *Adam's Report on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar (1835, 1836, 1838)* (Calcutta: Home Secretariat Press, 1868), 131.

² Chandra Lekha Singh, "Making "Ideal" Indian Women: Annie Besant's Engagement with the issue of Female Education in Early Twentieth-Century India," *Paedagogica Historica* 54 no.5 (2018): 610.

³ G.K. Gokhale, *The Elementary Education Bill* (Poona: Arya Bhushan Press, 1911), 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*

compulsion to girls at a later date. Interestingly, despite being permissive, Clause 17 of the Bill was one of the most contested Clauses of the Bill. The opposition to the compulsion for girls continued in most of the Provincial PEAs as well. However, the women's movement, which was upper caste English educated women's elite project, took cognisance of education of girls belonging to lowest socio-economic strata for want of literate electorate in the democratic nation of the future. This need is well summed up in the following argument of T.S. Rajagopal in her essay *Indian women in the new age or Women in young India*:

Universal Adult Suffrage is becoming the fashion of the day. When such being the case, of what avail is there in giving every citizen a vote if he or she does not know how to use its power. The more educated a democracy is the better is its government. Whenever a democracy undertakes the problem of self-government, it must also undertake the problem of universal education. In a democratic government women cannot afford to be illiterate and ignorant.⁵

In this chapter, I have attempted to explore the debates pertaining to compulsory primary education for girls with respect to Gokhale's Bill and Provincial Primary Education Acts. Additionally, the role of women's movement in ensuring compulsion for girls have been explored in the latter section of the chapter.

4.1. Clause 17 of Gokhale's Bill: the thorny question

Within the Imperial Legislative Council, the discussion during the introduction of the Bill attracted opposition to Clause 17 from the elite on the grounds of social custom. Dadabhoy considered clause 17 as 'altogether unsuited' and opined that 'compulsory education for girls, if ever practicable, should be left for future legislative treatment.' He argued:

In the majority of cases girls are married at a very tender age and become *pardanashin* from the date of marriage. To force them to attend public schools after that will be a serious departure from the administrative policy which the Government of India has so far followed with such eminent success.⁶

Like Dadabhoy, Maharaja of Burdwan also expressed his dissent for clause 17 of the Bill and opined that, 'the time has not yet come to extend this Bill to girls.'⁷ Syed Shams-ul-

⁵ T. S. Rajagopal, *Indian women in the new age or Women in young India* (Mysore: Jaya Stores, 1936), 198-99.

⁶ Gokhale, *The Elementary Education Bill*, 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

Huda argued: 'I am afraid, Sir, that for fifty years to come the masses of the Muhammadans will not consent to this part of our friend's [Gokhale's] Bill.'⁸

Outside the Council, most of those who approved the principle of the Bill because of its safeguards and permissive character was against Clause 17 of the Bill. They demanded the complete omission of this Clause on the ground that the time was not ripe for the application of compulsion to girls. Cuddapah District Board resolved by a majority that the Bill should be adopted but considered that it was premature to apply section 17 relating to the education of girls. Amraoti Town Municipal Committee approved the Bill except Clause 17. District Council Sagour, represented by land-holding class, in the informal meeting suggested that regarding compulsion for girls

more definite provision should be made to protect parents who were prevented by social or religious sentiments from sending their daughters to school; in particular, both Hindu and Muhammadans might sometimes object to sending married girls, even when they were of less than 10 years of age.⁹

Nawab Abdul Majid, who was a staunch opponent of Gokhale's Bill, observed:

The provision about application of the Act to girls is most objectionable. It will be a cause of creating bitterness among respectable Hindus and Muhammadans. The feeling about observance of *pardah* is very strong in India, and to break through an ancient custom by legislation is most dangerous.¹⁰

R. N. Mudholkar, M. V. Joshi, K. V. Brahma, G. R. Talwalker and Abdul Kadir from Amraoti Municipal Committee in their Note to Collector Amraoti maintained that the Amraoti Town Municipal Committee approves the Bill except Clause 17. They opined that

On account of the peculiar social customs obtaining in various parts of this country and also among various communities inhabiting the same parts, public opinion is not quite yet ripe for compulsion in the matter of the education of girls.¹¹

Similarly, Elichpur municipality opined that 'the law should not be enforced on female masses as the time does not call for it yet.'¹² Panvel Municipality demanded that 'section 17 must remain inoperative for at least quarter of century.'¹³ The Mamlatdar of Bijapur

⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁹ Letter from C. Brown, Chairman District Council to the Deputy commissioner Sagour, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 95.

¹⁰ Letter from Nawab Muhammad Abdul Majid, Barrister-at-Law, of Allahabad to the Under Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, Dated 11 September 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 45, 74.

¹¹ Note from R.N. Mudholkar, M.V. Joshi, K.V. Brahma, G.R. Talwalker, Abdul Kadir, Legislative, Legislative, No. 51, 97.

¹² Letter from the Vice-President Elichpur, Civil Station Municipality to the Deputy Commissioner Amraoti District, No. 51, 102.

¹³ Letter from Usul-Noor Mohammad, President (non-official), Panvel municipality, Legislative, Legislative,

opined that it would take quarter or half of a century to prepare the public mind for compulsory education of girls:

Special difficulties will be experienced in extending compulsion of girls. The mind of the people is not generally prepared for the change just now... experiment should be tried with boys to begin with and the experience of a quarter or half of a century will prepare the mind of the people and clear the way for the extension of the compulsion to girls also. It is quite true that the education of girls is a greater necessity than that of boys. But to introduce compulsion at once to the former will...be a little too early a step, considering the position which a Hindu woman at present occupies in the Hindu society. Infant and early marriages and Purdah system are still in full force and until and unless these are eradicated from the society, we cannot look forward to any other improvement taking place in the status of Hindu woman.¹⁴

In Broach, Bhasahen, Thakor of Kerwada argued 'we must wait for some time before we can make education compulsory for girls.'¹⁵ Vice President Dohad Municipality believed that 'time has not yet come to extend the provisions to girls.'¹⁶ R.B. Kittur, Mamlatdar of Bagalkot considered that 'clause in the Bill as regards girls is not now desirable as the time is [sic] not yet come to make education compulsory in their case.'¹⁷ A.R Gulwadi noted, section 17

is strongly opposed by even the higher classes of people...time has not yet come to extend the Bill to girls, and I have strong doubts that it will come soon. So, I propose the elimination of section 17 altogether from the Bill.¹⁸

Similarly, Payappa Appaji Desai, Vice President Haliyal Municipality, suggested that the Clause 17 should be omitted altogether:

For religious or social scruples or on other reasonable or unreasonable grounds, there may be found even this day around us many, who will object to sending girls to school. It would be too hasty to make a law enforcing an Act which is not yet universally acknowledged to be good or beneficial. I...suggest that the clause may altogether be dropped.¹⁹

Raja Chandrchur Sinha of Chandapur, Rae Bareli opined that 'it looks hard and before time. The education at school of the girls of the gentry should be left to the option of their parents

55, 120.

¹⁴ S.S. Ghali, Mamlatdar of Bijapur, 12 July 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 163.

¹⁵ Bhasahen, Thakor of Kerwada, Broach, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 121.

¹⁶ Vice President dohad municipality, to president dohad municipality, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 127.

¹⁷ R.B. Kittur, Mamlatdar of Bagalkot, 12 June, 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 162.

¹⁸ A.R. Gulwadi, Acting District Deputy Collector, Central Division to the Collector of Ratnagiri, 19/20 May 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 177.

¹⁹ Payappa Appaji Desai, Vice President Haliyal Municipality to the Assistant Collector Karwar Division, and President Haliyal Municipality, 12th May 1911, No. 55, 165.

and no restrictions placed on this.²⁰ V.B. Mardhekar, District Deputy Collector, Southern Division Kanara opposed the Clause 17 on grounds of early marriage of girls and unsuitability of married girls to attend schools:

For the present the question of extending Primary Education to females through compulsion may be dropped and the section deleted. Girls are still married very early in their life in India in many parts. To compel a parent or the father-in-law or other guardian of a married girl to send her to a school, would be resented in some parts, unless in each local area special girl schools are opened. It would be against public opinion and popular custom to enforce attendance of girls in boys' schools as is apparently contemplated in the Act.²¹

R. L. Gharat, Landholder from Kolaba suggested for omission of section 17 from the Bill and advised that

government and local bodies may employ other means to induce girls to attend schools. The District Local Board of Kolaba has been paying small monthly stipends to girls who join a school...and the stipend is increased when a girl studies under a higher standard. The time has certainly not yet come to make girls attend a school compulsorily.²²

Anjuman-i-Islam of Bombay asked government to remove the Clause 17. They suggested that a 'special Bill on the subject may be introduced and the public given a chance of pronouncing their opinion thereon.'²³ Madan Mohan Malaviya, who supported Gokhale's Bill and argued that though both boys and girls should receive education ended up in suggesting that 'in the case of girls there should of course be no compulsion for the present.'²⁴

Apart from social customs and the argument that the time was not ripe for compulsion for girls, another reason put forth against compulsion was the lack of women teachers in the school and lack of girls' school in the immediate vicinity. R. B. Ewbank, Assistant Collector of Panch Mahals noted:

Section 17 will be very obnoxious to such sections of Indian Society as I am familiar with. They do not like young masters and will not send their girls to

²⁰Letter from Raja Chandrachur Sinha, Chandapur, RaeBareli, Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 15, 2.

²¹V.B. Madhekar, District Deputy Collector, Southern Division, Kanara to the Collector of Kanara, 17th may 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, p. no. 167.

²²Letter from R.L. Gharat, Landholder, Kolaba district to Government of Bombay, 3rd February 1912, Legislative, Legislative, No. 26, 2.

²³Letter from Mirza Ali Mohammed Khan, Honorary Secretary, Anjuman-i-Islam to government of Bombay, 14 February 1912, Legislative, Legislative, No. 27, 1.

²⁴*The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 72.

them. It is practically impossible to have old masters or mistresses at all the schools.²⁵

Vice president Taluka Local Board and Municipality, Honavar noted 'it is hard to make it compulsory for girls to attend any school not solely intended for girls only; so the absence of a girl's [sic] school within the prescribed distance should be held to be a reasonable excuse for non-attendance with respect to girls.'²⁶

A very regressive remark came from J Rodgers, District Deputy Collector of Poona. He was against the education of girls not on account of customs or non-availability of women teachers, but because he did not consider it necessary to educate girls. He argued:

I do not consider it necessary to educate girls. If anybody wants to educate his girls, he may do it of his own accord. The education of girls is not a pressing claim; nor do I see any necessity to educate them.²⁷

Nawab Mirza Mehdi Hasan made a unique argument in opposition to Clause 17 from Lucknow. He likened the condition arising out of the application of compulsion to girls to the situation when government schemes for disinfection would be implemented. He noted, 'education of girls should not be enforced; otherwise much noise will be raised, just as was done when the rules relating to disinfection in plague cases were the result of great disturbance at one time.'²⁸

However, few welcomed the provision of Clause 17 in the Bill. Thakorram Kapilram, Chairman School committee of Surat City Municipality, who was against Gokhale's Bill due to excessive safeguards in the Bill, had a progressive view regarding compulsion for girls. He opined that 'if application of compulsion is justified it is in the case of female education.' He pointed out the parents out of sheer self-interest send their sons to schools but not girls; therefore, there was a strong case for applying compulsion to girls. Despite such an opinion, he maintained that '[y]et the bill to appease the susceptibilities of the people at large, makes an unpardonable concession in this matter.'²⁹ Mazharul Haque argued that it was 'one of its most welcome features. You cannot regenerate a country

²⁵ R.B. Ewbank, assistant Collector Panch Mahals to the Collector Panch Mahals, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 124.

²⁶ Vice President Taluka Local Board and Municipality, Honavar, 1st may 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, p. no. 169.

²⁷ J Rodgers, District Deputy Collector and President T.L. Boards Western Division, Poona to the collector of Poona, 8th may 1911, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 157.

²⁸ Letter Nawab Mirza Mehdi Hasan from Lucknow to Secretary to the Government of U.P., Legislative, Legislative, No. 27, 19.

²⁹ Letter from Thakorram Kapilram Surat city Municipality to the vice president, city Municipality Surat, Legislative, Legislative, No. 55, 115.

without raising the status of the women of that country. And what is the fear after all? The mistrust of little girls of from 6 to 10 years of age.³⁰ C. Ransford, headmaster Mercara high school, favoured compulsion but in separate schools for girls. He noted:

Education may be equally compulsory for girls, not under six or not over twelve. Only when there is private instruction, or where inclusion of girls will justify the establishment of schools, should there be mixed schools. In ordinary cases separate girls' schools, are feasible and desirable.³¹

A perusal of the debate on Clause 17 of Gokhale's Bill indicates that opponents of Clause 17 comprised of both factions- those who were in favour of the Bill as well as those against the Bill. In the latter case, opposition to girls' education can be understood, but the opposition of the former indicates their discriminatory treatment to girls. The opposition to Clause 17, was mainly on account of social customs of purdah, early marriage of girls and that the time was not mature for extension of compulsion to girls.

4.2. Provincial Primary Education Acts and compulsion for girls

The PEAs of United Provinces, Madras and Central Provinces made provision that in case of demand in any local area compulsion may be extended to girls at a later date, if funds permitted, after making compulsory arrangement for boys. The Primary Education Acts of Bengal, Bihar & Orissa and the Punjab did not make any such provision for extension of compulsion to girls and restricted it to boys only. Vithalbhai Patel, in his resolution, like Gokhale's resolution, did not include girls under compulsion. Ebrahim Haroon Jaffer, while supporting Patel's resolution in the Bombay legislative council in 1916, expressed his thankfulness to Patel for excluding girls from the ambit of compulsion. He remarked:

I am afraid, Sir, for some years to come at least the masses of the Mahomedans may not consent to the compulsory attendance of the girls. I am glad the honourable mover has now made it clear that the girls are excluded.³²

However, R. P. Paranjapey presciently remarked:

as soon as every boy is instructed in the 3Rs, we hope a demand for corresponding education for girls will automatically arise, and that women

³⁰ *The Education Bill*, Extracts from the proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India met on 18th and 19th March 1912, Legislative, Legislative, Appendix A8, 58.

³¹ Letter from C. Ransford, Head Master Central High School, Mercara to the commissioner of Coorg, Legislative, legislative, No. 46, 79.

³² Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay, 1916, Vol. LIV, (Bombay: Government central press, 1917), 638.

themselves will come forward and say “apply the principle of compulsion to our girls’ schools also”.³³

However, Patel’s Bill, unlike Gokhale’s Bill, made the compulsion for girls optional for local bodies to extend compulsion to girls or restrict it to boys only (Clause 3). The Clause read:

The Primary education of boys or of girls or of children of both sexes could be made compulsory in any Municipal district from a date to be mentioned in the notification by its local authority with the previous sanction of the Government.³⁴

No opposition came for this Clause. However, Clause 2(2) was objected by Khan Bahadur Pir Baksh. This Clause read: ‘The age of compulsory attendance of a child was not less than six and not more than eleven years.’³⁵ During the second reading of Patel’s Primary Education Bill, Baksh moved an amendment that ‘the word “child” to be deleted and substituted by words “a boy”’. This correction to be made throughout in the Bill.’³⁶ He opined that it was too early to introduce a bill making education for girls compulsory and considered that ‘compulsory education of male children is a real necessity and will not be found objectionable.’³⁷ Baksh further exhorted:

In general reference to the Presidency and in particular Sind Province, I may clearly say that the bulk of Muhammadan gentry views the sending of their girls to a public school after they have attained an age of 8 or 9 years, as against custom and propriety. In fact most educated Muhammadans believe in giving girls only religious education and arts like sewing and cooking are taught them at home. To make education for girls a compulsory provision will be looked upon by most *parda-nashin* families as a decided hardship, and will be found unworkable...some orthodox heads will even consider the scheme as intended to interfere with their privacy and to gradually discourage *parda* system- a thing so sacred and religious.³⁸

Apart from the cultural aspect, he suggested the amendment on the grounds of unavailability of sufficient girls’ schools and an adequate number of mistresses for teaching in girls’ schools. Raghunath Paranjpye opposed this amendment arguing that the Bill was quite permissive in the sense that if in any municipal area there were sentiments against the compulsion of girls it had the option to not come forward with a proposal to apply

³³ Ibid., 630.

³⁴ J. M. Sen, *Primary Education Acts* 31.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay, 1917, Vol. LV, (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1918), 1071.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

compulsion to girls. He further clarified that in case, a municipality came for compulsion of girls against the popular sentiment then there was the government 'to see further whether the application is really justified or not.'³⁹ He insisted on keeping the word 'child' in Clause 2(2) as he thought that 'there may be some municipalities in which the public opinion may be prepared to extend this clause to girls.'⁴⁰ Regarding the paucity of women teachers, Parajpye argued that before the extension of compulsory provision to girls in any municipality, this aspect would be enquired by the Government before permitting the concerned municipal area. Harchandrai Vishindas arguing in favour of compulsion for girls remarked: 'the recent movements all over the country have accentuated the feeling and if there was anything in education that is wanted, one thing more than the other, it is female education.'⁴¹ Sharing the views of Paranjpye, Vishindas argued that it was optional to the municipalities to make it compulsory for boys only or boys and girls both depending upon the popular demand of the area. Vishindas noted that if Baksh's amendment was accepted,

it would deprive the whole of the Presidency of the advantage of compulsory education for girls, in any part of it, when the whole of the municipality of any particular area is of the opinion that this clause of the bill should be extended not only to boys but to girls also.⁴²

Vishindas further refuted Baksh's remark regarding *Purdah* that, 'in spite of *purdah* among Mahomedan communities and other communities in Sind and other provinces you will find that even persons who observe *purdah* do send their girls to school.'⁴³ Pandurang Anant Desai opposed the amendment of Baksh for being of 'a reactionary character' which 'excludes the females of this Presidency from the benefits which would be obtained for them by this bill.'⁴⁴ Expressing his anxiety for the backward state of female education he asserted, 'female education in the Presidency is far from being satisfactory and every facility should be given for the extension of female education.'⁴⁵ The amendment of Baksh was even opposed by Ghulam Muhammad, coming from the same part of the country which Baksh belonged, viz. Sind. He questioned Baksh as to 'how many families in Sind can be taken to be example of what he says?'⁴⁶ He added that though he was 'accustomed to very strict *parda*,' but considered that

³⁹ Ibid., 1072.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1073.

⁴² Ibid., 1073-74.

⁴³ Ibid., 1073.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1074.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Education of girls is very important and even under the *parda* system, it is quite practicable; and if we are to improve the status of our women, we should pay as much attention to their education as we pay to the education of our boys.⁴⁷

However, being a staunch supporter of *pardah*, he expected that any municipality extending compulsion to girls would make appropriate arrangement for maintenance of *pardah* norms. Patel also opposed the amendment moved by Baksh on the grounds that ‘it is not right for this Council to push by legislative force the education of boys to a higher level and not to make any provision for girls.’⁴⁸ He was worried that ‘female education is already very backward and if we confine the provisions of compulsory education to boys only, I do not know where it would land us.’⁴⁹ The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

In Bengal, the Primary Education Bill of 1928 introduced by S. N. Roy kept the girls out of the ambit of compulsion. To this drawback of the Bill, S. P. Sinha argued that the people of Bengal ‘looked forward to the day when another bill would be introduced for bringing their girls within the purview of this Bill. Until that was done, they could not put themselves on the same footing as other civilised countries.’⁵⁰ K.C. Ray Chaudhuri in Bengal Legislative council argued

I feel equally strongly about the urgency of the spread of education among *pardah* women. I am indeed surprised that no funds are provided for this specific purpose of *pardah* education through the Industries Department, or the Public Health Department or other Nation-Building Departments. It is my firm conviction that without female education on right lines and without giving them training to earn their own living no nation worth the name can make any real and honest progress. Mere female suffrage or midwifery training will make very little difference to the real growth of Indian womanhood. Even if the Government cannot directly take a lead in the matter, let it come forward with open purse to help those struggling institutions striving hard for the uplift of Indian womanhood. It is my honest belief that grants made to *bona fide* institutions working for women welfare work will be a better investment than spending money for similar work through official departments.⁵¹

However, the 1929 Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill and later the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act 1930, was an improved version. This Act did not make any explicit reference to boys only or children of both sexes. Rather it used the word ‘child’ implicitly

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1075.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Quoted in *Modern Review* Vol. XXIII, no. 1 (1918): 115.

⁵¹ Official report Bengal Legislative Council, 1926 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat book depot, 1926), 113.

meaning that the Act would be applicable to girls as well as boys. Moreover, no opposition to the use of the word 'child' could be found in the Council debate.

Gopal Krishna Devadhar, senior member of Servants of India Society, in *A note on female education in India*, observed that '[t]he backwardness of the spread of education among women is proportionately much greater even in this country, and has really no parallel in the history of the world so far as the civilized countries are concerned.'⁵² To show the status of female literacy he used a very peculiar standard, apart from normal ratio that one in hundred women could read and write. That standard was: 'there are as many literate women in India to-day as there are men knowing English.'⁵³ To remedy this 'unparalleled backwardness' of female education he suggested:

First a determination on the part of the government of India to demand a cut and dry programme of progress to be achieved in the next ten years especially when the Government of India had frankly admitted in one of their resolutions on this subject that "the education of girls remains to be organised." But they must see that these programmes made by the local governments are strictly adhered to and secondly vote every year a substantial and adequate grants say 25 lacs of rupees for ten years to start with to provincial governments to enable them to pursue a policy of strenuous efforts to spread education among women much more rapidly than hitherto done and in a manner to satisfy the legitimate demand of the public. The local Government through their educational departments should liberally encourage private efforts especially the indigenous agencies patriotically working in this direction by a scale of more generous subventions if they are anxious to secure Government help and sympathy.⁵⁴

He opined that 'voluntary efforts supplemented by State aid are the essential of success in such matters.'⁵⁵ He further suggested that the control of village schools be handed over to the local bodies having a special educational Committee for educational matters relating to the district. The local bodies should try to associate people in every place, holding advanced views in this matter. There should be a girls' school in every important village with such a committee in the village to help it. Regarding separate schools for caste Hindu girls, Devadhar argued:

[T]here was no need for separate schools for caste girls; but provisions will have to be made by having separate schools for the education of the children of the untouchable classes wherever there are difficulties for their admission in

⁵² Gopal Krishna Devadhar, *A note on female education in India*, reprint from Dnyanprakash, (Bombay: 1916), 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

other schools, though fortunately the prejudices against them are slowly dying out.⁵⁶

Attaching importance to the English education of girls he suggested that it 'will also attract popular sympathy if a class to teach elementary English be added on to this [sic] primary schools for girls.'⁵⁷ Ramabai Tambe, the nominated member of the C.P. Legislative council, moved a bill in 1935 for the amendment of the 1920 PEA to provide for the education of the girls simultaneously with that of the boys. 36 to 26 votes defeated the bill. The debate during the Passage of PEA of Bombay and Bengal reveals that in Bombay there was not much opposition to the compulsion for girls and that the majority were in favour. In Bengal, however, there was initial apathy for compulsory primary education for girls but during the passage of the BRPE Bill in the Council no discussion took place on inclusion or exclusion of girls. There was neither explicit mention of application of compulsion to girls, nor was it explicitly debated.

4.3. Women's movement and compulsory education for girls

The women's movement in India began in the early twentieth century with the establishment of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) in 1917 by Margaret Cousins. Annie Besant was its first president. This was followed by the National Council of Women in India (NCWI) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1925 and 1927 respectively. How did these organisations set up by Women and for the women take up the cause of compulsory education for girls? What were the initiatives taken by them for universalisation of compulsory education? The answers to these questions have been attempted in the following paragraphs.

4.3.1. Efforts of AIWC

The first All India Women's Conference was held in January 1927 at Poona. It was initially christened All India Women's Conference on Educational Reform with education as the central area of its activities. Later on, in 1929, it was decided to widen its scope and also include social reform within its agenda because it was felt that educational reform could not be achieved without social reform. Hence, 1929 onwards 'educational reform' was dropped from its name, and it was rechristened All India Women's Conference. One of the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

objects of the Conference was to promote education in India of both sexes at all stages. Before the Conference formally adopted this object, Hansa Mehta objected to the use of words 'both sexes' as the objective of the Conference was to promote girls' education. She wrote to Kamladevi:

As regards Mrs Huidekpper's suggestion I cannot understand the clause (b). In the last conference it was repeatedly pointed out that we are concerned with the policy of girls' education only. In that case how can "the objects of the conference shall be to promote education in India of both sexes at all stages" be accepted. Boys' education can be treated incidentally as it affects the girls' education. Our prime object should be girls' education only.⁵⁸

The suggestion of Huidekpper was retained, and the Object remained promotion of education of both sexes at all stages. One of the resolutions of the Conference which was reiterated year after year was the compulsory education of girls:

This conference considers that Compulsory Primary education is essential for girls and urges upon Government and local bodies to make the necessary provision for this purpose and to make special grants for Muslim and other girls who suffer from the disability of the purdah.⁵⁹

At the third session of the Conference it was resolved that the government should 'withhold grant from any school which excludes any particular community from it in all cases where no other provision for that community already existed.'⁶⁰ The Conference sent a deputation to the Education Minister of Madras which asked the government to 'spend money equally on boys' and girls' education' and to 'encourage co-education as far as possible'⁶¹ in order to boost up the cause of girls' education. At the tenth session of the AIWC, Z. Lazarus, from Mysore, moved a resolution on removal of illiteracy. Speaking on her resolution she lamented that 'in Madras only boys are given compulsory education. Girls have been neglected, especially Muslim girls.'⁶² She emphatically argued that 'in the scheme of compulsory education girls also are included. Girls are one half of the population and the better half. Therefore, they should not be neglected.'⁶³ Further, she condemned the expenditure on University education as it produced discontented men and women. The

⁵⁸ Hansa Mehta to Kamladevi, 10 March 1927, AIWC paper, Reel 1. Huidekpper was a member of Standing committee from Indore. She had suggested the object of the conference shall be to promote education in India of both sexes and at all stages.

⁵⁹ Resolution, The second All India Women's Conference on Educational Reform, February 1928, AIWC paper Reel 1.

⁶⁰ Report AIWC, Third Session, 1929, AIWC Paper, File 4, Reel 1, 36.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Report AIWC, tenth session December 1935, 76.

⁶³ Ibid.

Indian Social Reformer lamented the exclusion of Muslim girls from the scheme of free and compulsory education in Bombay in the following terms.

It is regrettable that when Muslim girls in other countries have emerged from their stage of seclusion, in India even elementary education is denied them. The Bombay Corporation is the worst offender in this respect. Instead of taking a bold stand, our city fathers have shown a lamentable weakness in exempting the Muslim girls from the operation of the, compulsory scheme of education that is being tried in some parts of the city.⁶⁴

The Madras Women's Conference passed a resolution in favour of compulsory primary education for Muslim girls. Fakurunisa Begum Saheba of Nellore moved the following resolution:

This Conference is in favour of compulsory primary education being given to Muslim girls and requests the Corporation of Madras to extend its compulsory scheme to the Muslim girls with purdah facilities.⁶⁵

The resolution was carried unanimously. The tenth session of the AIWC, unanimously passed the resolution for including girls in all schemes of compulsory education. The resolution read:

This Conference is of opinion that girls should be included in all schemes of Compulsory Primary Education and particularly supports the resolution of the constituencies of the Madras Presidency that the new committee formed by the Madras Government to draft a scheme of compulsory elementary education should do so not only for all boys as are in the present terms of reference but for all girls and boys of elementary school-going age.⁶⁶

The Conference recommended that 'priority should be given to the claims of girls' education in every scheme of educational expansion' and it protested against 'the omission of girls from schemes of compulsory education.' It urged that 'compulsory education should be enforced wherever it has been established, and that public cooperation should be secured to ensure the regular attendance of pupils until their 12th year.' The conference noted that compulsion was essential for girls 'because it realises that educated mothers are a sure guarantee of the education of the coming generation and an essential factor in the advance of a nation.'⁶⁷ At the eleventh session, held in December 1936, the AIWC demanded that 'the new Constitution of India should guarantee to every child within the country, free instruction in reading and writing up to a prescribed minimum standard, as a

⁶⁴ Indian Social Reformer, Feb 18, 1928, 386.

⁶⁵ Indian Social Reformer, 1927, 231.

⁶⁶ Report AIWC, 1935, 85.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 159.

fundamental right of Indian citizenship.’⁶⁸ It is important here to note that the Conference demanded free and compulsory elementary education to be guaranteed as ‘fundamental right’ to every Indian citizen in the new constitution of India. However, in 1946, when it submitted the draft memorandum to Provincial and Central Government, just before the Constituent Assembly was formed, the question of free and compulsory education was not placed among the fundamental rights. Instead, it was placed under Educational facilities, as ‘the first duty on the State the introduction of Universal, free and compulsory basic education and progressively free nursery and higher education.’⁶⁹

At the eleventh session, the Conference reiterated the demand for compulsory primary education for girls as well as for boys and recommended that

all Local Governments and Local Bodies to take immediate steps to introduce compulsory education in urban, suburban and rural districts in such a way that at all district headquarters and towns the scheme shall be in full working order within five years and shall be universal within twenty years. This Conference is of opinion that this compulsory education should be made free in all schools provided by public authorities to all those unable to pay for it.⁷⁰

This session of the Conference also noted that some of its constituencies were ‘instrumental in getting District Boards to apply the compulsory primary Education in their respective areas’ and it was hoped that ‘similar agitation will be carried by other Constituencies and will meet with success.’⁷¹ However, the name of these constituencies was not mentioned. Government’s opposition of Tambe’s Bill for giving a compulsory primary education to girls only was lamented by Margaret E. Cousins in her Presidential address for the year 1936. On the question of expenditure on free and compulsory education for girls, Cousins regretted that ‘[e]ven within the meagre amount available for education here we women are not getting a fair deal. Fourteen times more money is spent on boy’s education than on girls’.⁷² She further suggested that ‘two-thirds of the large amount that is being given to each Province as a Birthday Gift to the New Constitution shall be immediately allocated for spreading elementary education as “the safest and most valuable investment for the future”’.⁷³

⁶⁸ Report AIWC, eleventh session December 1936, 137.

⁶⁹ Roshni, June 1 1946, Vol I, No. 5, 28.

⁷⁰ Report AIWC., December 1936, 137.

⁷¹ Ibid., 16.

⁷² Ibid., 27.

⁷³ Ibid., 28.

The twelfth session of the AIWC unanimously passed the resolution for ‘the universal introduction of free and compulsory Primary Education without further delay.’⁷⁴ While moving the resolution, Vijayalaxmi Pandit lamented the slow progress in the direction of free and compulsory education. She exhorted:

The Conference had been voicing the demand for a number of years but lack of funds had stood in the way of the realisation of the ideal. Primary education was the right of every child, and it was the duty of every Government to provide it, just as it was its duty to provide for the health of the child. So long as compulsory primary education had not been introduced, they could not hope for any real and lasting progress.⁷⁵

G. R. Billimoria, from Bombay, in seconding the resolution pointed out that India was a poor country as compared with countries in the West where people were able to look after the education of their children. It was therefore incumbent on the Government to find the requisite money to provide free and compulsory primary education. She was also of the opinion that more women teachers should be employed because women could teach much better than men as women had the motherly instinct and could handle children with love and tact.⁷⁶ S. N. Ray moved a resolution, ‘[t]o request the Government of each Province and State to make adequate provision for this item [compulsory primary education] in the budget for the next year.’⁷⁷ She urged:

Every Provincial Government whether it was Congress or otherwise, had given us election pledges and told us that they would bring in free and compulsory primary education at the first opportunity. We must now press upon it to find room in their budgets for the next year for proper provision for primary education. It is no good having the best of schemes but at the last moment being told by Government that it has not the money for it. In order that they may be able to find the money for this scheme of primary education afterwards, let us from now press this point on to them. There is not much to say on this matter, but we must, when we go back, each of us in our own constituencies, press our Provincial Governments and see that they do make this provision, because otherwise everything will be delayed.⁷⁸

Ferozuddin, from Punjab Central, seconding the resolution, argued:

One object of voicing our views in this Conference is that the Provincial Governments should know what we feel in this matter. Unless there should be free and compulsory primary education for all boys and girls, they will lapse into illiteracy and be engaged in factories, which is ruinous to their health in the future. We should therefore not look upon it as a mere resolution but as a

⁷⁴ Report AIWC, twelfth session December 1937, 45.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

real constructive work. It is the duty of every delegate to prepare the ground for compulsory primary education in her neighbourhood, so that when it comes into existence there should be no opposition from any quarter, and there is no excuse from Government that there was no money for compulsory primary education.⁷⁹

A questionnaire of nearly thirty questions asking for information about conditions of literacy education of children and adult and cost involved was sent to all Branches as well as the different Provincial Governments and Municipalities. Replies were received from the Director of Public Instruction Bengal, United Provinces, C. P. and Berar, N.-W. Frontier Province and Madras. Among the States, the Jammu and Kashmir, Patiala, Hyderabad (Deccan) States replied. Local Boards and Municipalities of Bangalore, Dharwar, Belgaum Quetta, Ahmednagar, Bandra, Surat, Rawalpindi responded to the questionnaire. Moradabad, Guzerat, Silchar, Phaltan, Hyderabad (Deccan), Madras, Calcutta, Baroda, Indore, Poona, Nagpur and South Bombay Branch of AIWC were the one who sent a reply to the questionnaire. Responses were also received from the Literacy Officer, Bombay, Assam, and the Educational Expansion Officer, Lucknow; the Lady Irwin College, and the Rural Reconstruction Association run by S. R. Bhagwat, President of the Bombay Provincial Committee on Adult education. From all these replies it was revealed that till 1941, education was compulsory only in very very few areas.⁸⁰

In addition to its constant demand for compulsory education for girls, the Conference also deliberated on the curricula for primary schools. Theobald moved a resolution in 1937 'to make provision for the re-orientation of such education [compulsory primary education] with special Stress laid on vocational training.'⁸¹ She emphasised the need for vocational training for widowed and other poor women to

make that neglected woman a more useful woman, a woman more fit to mix with other women, in the villages, a woman who will not be considered a burden, and a women who would be welcome in every home...If we introduce vocational training, we shall make not only the widow but every woman a most useful and happy woman, and I feel it is our duty to unite in providing for vocational training which is very essential for women and for bringing women forward in India.⁸²

Vinode in seconding the resolution pointed out the futility of the modern education from the economic point of view which produced more and more unemployed. Appreciating

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Report AIWC, 1941, 50.

⁸¹ Report AIWC, 1937, 53.

⁸² Ibid., 54.

Gandhi's Nai Talim, she argued that vocational training was crucial in compulsory primary education scheme because of two reasons. First, she argued, the children are

only taught to read and write, which is of no help in their occupations. And the second reason is that the village children begin to feel that it is below their dignity to do any manual work. If we give vocational training to the children of cobblers, potters, carpenters, and so on, we proceed from known to the unknown.⁸³

Hirlekar, while supporting the resolution, argued '[o]ur country is fast becoming industrialised, therefore, the educated classes of this country should be prepared for vocational education.'⁸⁴ Kanitkar from Maharashtra opposed the resolution because:

Vocational education in schools for children will mean ruin of their life from the very beginning. The most joyful period of life is the first ten years of childhood, and vocational training in that period will mean great strain on the part of the children and destruction of that joy of childhood. Therefore, they should be given only primary compulsory education and not vocational training in the first ten years, and I advocate vocational training to be given during the period of the secondary education.⁸⁵

Patwardhan from Maharashtra also opposed the resolution as she was against 'burden[ing] the young child with all this vocational training.' She argued that burdening the child 'with the already long school hours would mean taking away pleasures from the life of the child.'⁸⁶ An amendment was made in this resolution substituting the term 'vocational training' with 'training in handicrafts.'⁸⁷ The nationalist fervour in favour of Gandhi's scheme of education led to the passing of the amended resolution by 59 to 10 votes.

Addressing the issue of attendance in rural areas Mrs Sukthanker moved a resolution that 'where necessary, "seasonal" education be arranged for.'⁸⁸ In moving this resolution, Sukthanker argued,

If we want to give free compulsory education we will compel children to attend school. But we find in rural areas especially, that the children are doing something at different seasons and they are not able to come. So we have got to see that we give them this education at a time when they can come. That is, when they are free from their seasonal duties. That is why we urge that such seasonal education should be arranged for.⁸⁹

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56.

This resolution was carried unanimously. To overcome the issue of financial crunch, Sukthanker moved a resolution for 'shift system' so that more children could be taught with the same amount of money. Mrs Vinode opposed the resolution because it would be exhaustive for teachers. She argued:

After teaching a class of 40-50 boys in the morning, I do not think it will be possible for the same teacher to take another class of 40-50 boys in the afternoon. I feel that the shift system should be abolished altogether, and I oppose it most strongly.⁹⁰

Supporting Vinode's opposition, W. H. Theobald from Mysore argued 'we are economising where money is concerned but not economising where the health of our teachers is concerned.'⁹¹ This resolution was carried by majority.

Roshni,⁹² the quarterly journal of AIWC, was very critical of the Quinquennial Review of education for 1932-37 for poor progress in the direction of compulsory education for girls. It noted, 'As far as girls' education is concerned it makes the most depressing reading.' It expressed its dissatisfaction over expenditure on girls' education and lamented the 'disproportionately increased amounts that are still spent on boys' education.' It further commented,

The following statement is made without any sense of guilt or with any attempt to be apologetic: "Expenditures on girls' education increased from over Rs 2,39,000 in 1931-32 to Rs 2,69,000 in 1936-37; but more funds continue to be spent on boys." The report speaks rather cheerfully about the existence of 2016 schools for male adults with a total enrolment of 63,000 and the corresponding figures for females were 11 and 946 respectively.⁹³

It made the most outstanding demand that the time had come when it was necessary to force the government to make provision for compulsory education for girls even if such provision was not available for boys because girls were the future mothers:

Our active campaign for education should consist not only in forcing the governments, provincial and state, to spend the same amount on girls' education as on boys', but also to make education compulsory for girls even when the same provision is not available for boys. This might seem rather unfair, but then it is a fact that an educated mother provides a healthier social background and a stable foundation for the future of the country than educated boys. When paucity of funds seems a permanent obstacle to the progress of girls' education, and this has gone on without rousing any violent protests from even women, the only possible alternative would seem to be the diversion of

⁹⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² From 1940 onwards AIWC started publishing its quarterly journal, *Roshni* in which it covered women's issues such as education, health and most importantly international feminist movements.

⁹³ *Roshni*, June 1940 Vol II No. 1, 7

existing and available funds to rectify a grievous error, namely, the wide disparity in the literacy of the two sexes.⁹⁴

There was a section in the journal 'Do You Know?' which sought to create awareness among readers about the status of women's education, health and aspects of the feminist movement. In this section of the 1940 issue, it noted that

compulsory primary education for girls is almost non-existent. For example in the United Provinces there is compulsion for boys in 1617 areas (it exists for girls only in 5)... there are only 32000 primary schools for girls in the Province (for boys there are 165000) of these girls' primary schools 20000 or nearly 60 % are single teacher schools, (in the case of boys it is 46%).⁹⁵

The journal appreciated the initiative taken by the government of Madras that schools who would not enrol girls to the extent of at least 25 % of their total strength, would be refused recognition.⁹⁶ Begum Sultan Mir Amiruddin in her presidential address of 1941, regretted that even after 13 years of compulsory education in Madras city barely 40 per cent of school-age girls attended schools. She suggested that to improve this situation

[I]t is necessary, on the one hand, to concentrate on propaganda and on the other to urge upon the Corporation of Madras to open feeder schools with standards I to III in areas where the lack of accommodation in the existing schools is the cause of a large number of girls being precluded from the benefits of education.⁹⁷

Moreover, she urged the Corporation of Madras to 'remove the distinction that it makes now between Muslim girls and girls of other communities in regard to compulsory education and...also [to] provide facilities for conveyance of Muslim girls.'⁹⁸

In Assam, during the passage of Primary Education Bill in the Council, an amendment was moved by Maulana Ibrahim Chaluti to exempt Muslim girls over 11 years of age from attending recognised primary schools. The council accepted this recommendation. The Journal criticised this move of Assam government. It noted that such discrimination was not expected by a popular government and '[i]t is tragic when women are demanding equality of opportunity for education, the Maulana Saheb of Assam should propose and the Premier accept, an amendment which will only retard the progress, slow as it is, of women's education.'⁹⁹

⁹⁴Ibid., 8.

⁹⁵ *Roshni*, October 1940, Vol 2, No. 3, not paginated.

⁹⁶ *Roshni*, December 1941, Vol II No. 8, 2.

⁹⁷ *Roshni*, Dec 1941, Vol II No. 8, p. 43.

⁹⁸ *Roshni*, Dec 1941, Vol II No. 8, p. 44.

⁹⁹ *Roshni*, May 1947, Vol 2, No. 4, p. 3.

The constituencies of AIWC ensured the introduction of compulsion for girls in their area. Sind educational conference reiterated the opinion ‘that there should be compulsory education for girls in the larger towns of this province.’¹⁰⁰ Women’s Conference at Mangalore, opined ‘primary education be made free and compulsory for all boys and girls,’¹⁰¹ while the Delhi Women’s conference urged, ‘primary education for boys and girls be made, compulsory and free throughout India and especially the Municipality of Delhi is urged to take immediate steps to bring about this most important reform.’¹⁰² The Bangalore municipality expressed itself against compulsion and noted that ‘while women were for compulsion men were conservative.’¹⁰³ At All India Educational conference held at Bombay, Mrs Hansa Mehta spoke that the Women’s conference had demanded that if the state could not undertake free and compulsory education for all, it should at least undertake free and compulsory for girls.¹⁰⁴

4.3.2. Role of NCWI and WIA

Maharani Gaekwar of Baroda in her presidential address at the annual meeting of National Council for Women in India (NCWI) emphasised on compulsory education for girls because the passing of the Sarda Bill was not enough. She argued:

The point I wish to emphasise here is that the Sarda Bill gives us the opportunity for demanding anew [sic] education for Indian girls. Without education the moral and intellectual advantages of later marriages will be lost. It is not enough that the mother of the next generation should be 15 or 16 years old, they must also be woman educated both as citizens and mothers able to make their homes the fines environment for their children, and at the same time to preserve contact with the outer and larger world, for this reason I hope that the National Council will do all it can to assist the all [sic] India Women’s educational conference to obtain compulsory education for women.¹⁰⁵

As the control of primary education was in the hands of the local bodies the NCWI through its provincial councils attempted to recommend the government to nominate women members on Municipalities and district boards. The report of the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Council of Women noted in its report of 1929:

...As the control of Primary Education is entirely in the hands of the Municipalities and the District Boards and as no portion of the Education Grant

¹⁰⁰ *Indian Social Reformer*, 1927, 233.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁰³ *The Modern Review*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, 99.

¹⁰⁴ *Times Of India*, 30 december 1938, 11.

¹⁰⁵ NCWI, Report 1928-29, 21.

is earmarked for girls' primary education and as also these Local Bodies are composed only of men, Girls' Primary Education has been much neglected in the past. Therefore, an important resolution was moved by Miss Das at the Annual General Meeting regarding the recommendation to Government to nominate competent and able women as members on Municipalities and District Boards. This resolution was passed unanimously by the Council and a copy of it has been sent to Government by our committee, for favourable consideration.¹⁰⁶

The standing Sectional Committee on Labour of NCWI emphasised on the removal of illiteracy from the industrial population in the shortest possible time and urged that 'education is made free and compulsory in every large industrial area' and that 'part-time education be made compulsory for all half-timers up to the age of 15 years and where conditions make it desirable mill owners should co-operate with the Local authorities in the provision of such education.'¹⁰⁷ These suggestions, however, promoted the interest of mill owners more than that of working children as the Committee sought compulsory part-time education of half-timers. NCWI also recommended government and local bodies to impart vocational education in upper classes of primary schools. It suggested raising the Upper Primary standards to 4 years in the case of Boys and 3 years in the case of girls

so as to enable the pupils of these standards to finish the ordinary school course and at the same time to acquire sufficient knowledge and practice of some useful vocation which they will be able to follow after they leave the schools and by which they would be self-supporting.¹⁰⁸

The subjects suggested by the Council for boys included 'carpentry, tailoring, weaving, printing and book binding, sign-board, painting' and for girls 'sewing, tailoring, embroidery, toy making, laundry, weaving, printing on cloth, domestic science and cooking, home nursing etc.'¹⁰⁹ An important recommendation was made that 'wherever necessary and possible, knowledge of English should also be imparted in the Upper Primary Classes.'¹¹⁰ A Standing Sectional Committee on Labour was constituted by NCWI under the chairmanship of Mrs Premchand. This committee suggested that age limit higher than 10 for children in unregulated industries and in non-industrial employment was not possible because of following reasons:

public opinion has not made itself felt against the employment of children of tender age, [second], non-industrial employment includes a number of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰⁷ NCWI, 3rd Biennial report 1930-32, 44-45.

¹⁰⁸ NCWI 4th biennial report 1932-34, 20.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

occupations of light nature which are not necessarily unsuitable for young children so it would be difficult to enforce a higher minimum age.¹¹¹

Thirdly, the committee argued that in the absence of compulsion in most part of the country ‘there is no reason to suppose that any substantial number of children would be sent to school if they were not allowed to take employment.’ They further observed that ‘[t]hose employed as games chokras, are at any rate not worse off morally and physically than if they were loafing about at home.’ And fourthly, no school leaving age was fixed until that time in India. To remedy this situation the Committee opined that ‘Compulsory education alone will solve this problem’ and urged ‘each provincial council to see that arrangements could be made with the school authorities for practical steps towards compulsory education.’¹¹² In *Bulletin*, the mouthpiece of NCWI, L. Phadke lamented that ‘[n]early every province has made primary education compulsory, but the compulsion is not strictly enforced in several areas and it may be many years before literacy is advanced by any appreciable pace’ and urged ‘for a state-aided country-wide campaign...for no progress either political or social is possible without literacy.’¹¹³ The Conference of NCWI held in 1936 resolved that to advance the cause of women’s education,

women members of the Assemblies and Councils in India be approached to sponsor Bills enforcing Primary Education in all the Municipalities and District Boards of India and directing that the expenditure from the funds of these local bodies be not less than 10 % of their annual income.

This conference also demanded that ‘free compulsory primary education should be provided for all children between the ages of 6 and 12, throughout India.’¹¹⁴ In 1945, the NCWI urged all its Provincial councils and affiliated bodies to evolve schemes of literacy Drives throughout the country and called upon Provincial Governments to take steps to introduce compulsory education.¹¹⁵ Miss N.B. Shome, While urging the need for introducing compulsory education throughout the whole of India, ‘advocated strongly for adequate representation of women on all planning and preparing committees.’¹¹⁶ One of the objects of WIA was ‘To secure for every girl and boy the right of Education through schemes of Compulsory Primary Education, including the teaching of religion.’¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Bulletin*, Vol IV No. 2 August 1934, 1.

¹¹⁴ The NCWI 6th Biennial report 1936-37, 28.

¹¹⁵ NCWI 10th Biennial report 1945-47, 17.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Report WIA, 1930, 1.

Not much information on the activities of WIA could be gathered due to non-availability of the record. In its report of 1930, the Association claimed that inclusion of girls in the scheme of compulsory education ‘was the direct result of the canvassing of Municipal Commissioners by our Members.’¹¹⁸ The Deputation of the Association along with the secretary of the WIA waited on the Education minister of Madras ‘to urge the inclusion of girls in the Compulsory Primary Education schemes that are being operated in over sixty villages of their district.’¹¹⁹ The report also noted that Margaret Cousins, along with other members of the Association, made special surveys of girls’ education in towns of Madras to carry out agitation for educational reform. Headquarter of the WIA communicated with all Municipal Councils demanding that girls should have an equal share in the money and facilities connected with their compulsory schemes. The Association tried to persuade Governments to make the inclusion of girls a condition of receiving Government co-operation and Grants for compulsory education. The Association also ensured that Branches of the Association had their representatives on all School Attendance Committees and the District Educational Councils.¹²⁰

The above discussion leads us to the conclusion that the AIWC, NCWI and WIA and their sister organisations worked as pressure groups on the Provincial governments and local bodies to introduce free and compulsory education for girls. They lamented low expenditure on compulsory education for girls compared to that of boys and urged that if finances did not permit compulsory education for both the sexes, it should be the education of girls which should get preference because the education of girls would lead to the education of a family. These bodies also demanded the presence of women in local bodies and school boards to enforce compulsory education for girls. However, these bodies failed to take into account the special case of depressed caste women, facing double discrimination on account of their social position and gender. Anjanbai Deshbhratar, who attended the Nagpur Conference of the AIWC on 1 January 1938 described her experience at the Conference in following terms:

The Savarna sisters’ behaviour towards their *Asprushya bhagini* [Untouchable sisters] was unfriendly and abrupt and demonstrates their despicable mental attitude. During meals they asked Jaibai and other Untouchables delegates to

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

sit at a distance and thus insulted our community by regarding them as polluting.¹²¹

Not only did the Conference discriminate the depressed caste women but also, they did not take initiatives towards free and compulsory education of depressed caste girls, who needed the compulsion more than the caste Hindu girls. This is because in case of the latter it was the social custom that came in the way of their education, but in the case of the former their social status was the retarding force. Social custom could change, and it did change, thus opening the floodgate of education for the caste Hindu girls. However, the social status decided by the accident of birth is unchangeable.

4.4. Hartog Committee on compulsory education for girls

Hartog Committee observed that ‘owing to social and other causes, the compulsion of girls to attend school presents very special difficulties and in consequence only in five provinces have girls been included in the scope of compulsory legislation.’¹²² The committee further observed that

the spread of literacy amongst men only will do little to secure the atmosphere of an educated and enlightened home, and the existing disparity between the social outlook of the man and the woman will only be increased. National and social reasons all point to the necessity of adopting, wherever possible, the same policy for boys and for girls, and we are satisfied that in many places public opinion strongly favours the application of compulsion to girls.¹²³

While accepting that owing to social and economic conditions compulsion for girls must necessarily be of slower growth than that for boys, the Committee recommended that ‘in every general scheme of compulsion in areas which are favourable for the development of girls' education, an attempt should be made to include at any rate the majority of the girls of school-going age in the scheme.’¹²⁴ Due to the presence of Muthulakshmi Reddy on the Committee, the demand of women's movement, that there should be representation of women on local bodies, educational boards and attendance committees, was reiterated by the Hartog Committee. The Committee considered that the ‘[t]he absence of adequate representation of women on local bodies and other boards connected with the control of education is regrettable’ and further recommended:

¹²¹ Quoted in Paik, *Dalit Women's education*, 132.

¹²² Hartog Committee Report, 1929, 171.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

[I]n those provinces such as Madras, Bombay, Bengal and Burma where the higher education of girls is comparatively well advanced, a closer association of women with the control of girls' education is desirable. In those provinces in which there are already statutory boards in control of secondary or primary education it should at least be possible to increase the number of women representatives on the boards or to make provision for the representation of women where none exists at present.¹²⁵

The Committee lauded the presence of women, in Madras, on district boards and municipalities, on district educational councils, on secondary education boards and on managing bodies of publicly maintained colleges and schools.¹²⁶ The Bombay corporation had four elected women members.¹²⁷ Muthulakshmi Reddy and Philip Hartog in a joint note, deliberated that:

men's direct knowledge of girls' schools in India must necessarily be imperfect, since there are many which they cannot visit under existing conditions. It is, therefore, of importance, that the views of boards consisting largely of women on matters concerning women's education should not be suppressed.¹²⁸

Muthulakshmi Reddy attributed the custom of early marriage of girls 'among the higher class Hindus' to be the 'great hindrance to the educational enhancement of the Hindu girl.' She argued that this resulted in a drop out of more than 90 per cent of girls from school before completion of primary education and hence they relapse into illiteracy. She further regretted that 'following the example of the higher caste Hindus, even the other classes that do not practise early marriage withdraw their girls from the schools before they acquire the necessary knowledge for the due performance of their domestic duties' resulting in wastage of money spent on these girls. To avoid this waste, she concurred with Arthur Mayhew that, 'it would be easy, and far more profitable, for a Government to legislate against child marriage as to enforce the regular school attendance after puberty. And without such conditions such compulsion would be merely a dramatic and expensive gesture.'¹²⁹ She further considered that evils of caste distinctions, early marriage and purdah would continue 'to persist so long as the mothers of the nation are kept in darkness and ignorance of the rapidly changing world conditions.'¹³⁰ Here it is important to note that Reddy suggested

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹²⁸ P.J. Hartog and Muthulakshmi Reddy, Note on Boards and Committees on Women's Education, *Hartog Committee*, 1929, 368.

¹²⁹ Hartog Committee Report, 1929, 375.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 376.

legislation for child marriage, which was an upper caste problem (even Reddy agreed to this), to solve the problem of wastage in education, but failed to take note of the problem of education of lower and depressed caste girls. Reddy asserted that another cause of slow progress of education of Indian girls and women was government's apathy towards girls' education. Criticising the government, she lamented that:

If a liberal policy had been adopted and if more money had been made suitable for financing the new and revised schemes for the improvement and development of women's education a large number of girls and women could have been easily brought under instruction.¹³¹

She, further, rebuked that the extent of negligence of female education was such that 'at the time of financial stringency the first to disappear were the girls' schools.'¹³² Another cause of slow progress of girls' education, according to Reddy, was 'divorce of religion from education'¹³³ which had harmed the Hindu community to a great extent. In this regard, Muthulakshmi suggested that the

inclusion of religious literature, selected pieces from the Vedas, Gita, and Upanishads will make education popular among the Hindus, will attract more girls to our schools and colleges by creating an impression on the people's minds that modern education will not westernise their women, but will keep them to their ancient faith and tradition.¹³⁴

English educated independent woman, with several achievements to her credit, Muthulakshmi could not resist the peculiar upper-caste men anxiety of westernisation of educated girls and suggested the fetters of religious orthodoxy to keep them within the bounds of ancient faith and tradition.

4.5. CABE committee on Primary education for girls

The CABE committee to look into the primary education of girls made several observations regarding compulsory primary education of girls. The committee observed that there was a general opinion that the education of girls had a prior claim in all new schemes. However, the compulsion for girls would be followed by necessary preparations in terms of teachers and buildings. It observed that 'much of the waste was due to the incomplete school,'¹³⁵ It noted that except in Bengal, primary education for girls was practically free in the different

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 378.

¹³⁵ CABE *Report on primary education of girls*, 1936, 3.

provinces in the vernacular schools. The committee's findings reveal that in Bengal 'only the advanced communities got educated and they too in Anglo-vernacular schools; there was hardly any vernacular system of education for girls.'¹³⁶ Bombay was most advanced in primary education of girls, educating one girl to every three boys. Regarding compulsion, the Committee found that in some municipalities of Madras compulsion for girls was in existence for fifteen years, in Bombay five municipalities while only specific areas in United Provinces.

The Committee noted that though the compulsion led to an increase in the number of girls attending the school but 'reluctance to invoke the penal clauses and enforce regular attendance' reduced compulsion to 'mere name and of no practical use.'¹³⁷ The Committee further remarked that 'whole of the primary education for girls was in the hands of local bodies who administered or expended the grants made to them by Government... the Government being a mere paymaster and retaining little if any control.'¹³⁸ The Committee observed that this was one of the reasons for the neglect of girls' education. They argued that whatever expansion was achieved was achieved in the case of Boys only and that the 'increase in girls' enrolment in schools was due to an increase in their enrolment in boys' schools.'¹³⁹ It was revealed in the report of the Committee that much keenness for girls' education was felt in Punjab but want of funds restricted the pace of expansion. They lamented that in almost all the Provinces there was a

lack of enthusiasm by local bodies for girls' education and a refusal to prefer its claims to those of boys or even to give it a fair proportion... The local bodies wait upon Government for the funds and will neither deflect nor impose cesses or taxes for girls' education.¹⁴⁰

The committee observed that throughout India the position of primary education of girls was most unsatisfactory and believed that 'the proportion of girls under instruction in the primary stage should be increased considerably and unless girl's education in the rural areas is greatly improved all attempts to spread literacy will be made in vain.'¹⁴¹ They recommended, accordingly, that

until the relative positions are more even all further schemes for expanding boys' primary education should proceed *pari passe* with similar schemes for

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

increase in girls' primary education and that girl's primary education should have a prior claim on public funds where provision for both cannot be found.¹⁴²

It was pointed out that poverty was a significant obstacle in the successful working of the compulsion as 'there are a large number of children who cannot come to school because the small amount of money they earn makes all the difference between starvation and bare existence for their family.'¹⁴³ They recommended that the only way of getting such children to school would be 'to provide not only free meals and free clothing but allowances for their families.'¹⁴⁴ They further noted that there was no opposition to apply compulsion to girls in the areas where it was applied to boys but the 'argument was as to whether compulsion could reduce wastage' as the 'real difficulty was found to be irregular attendance'¹⁴⁵ of girls at school. They however, argued that 'If the school is made sufficiently attractive there will probably be no great need for compulsion' at the same time maintaining that 'until girls' education is numerically on a level with that of boys it is obvious that some degree of compulsion will be necessary.' They insisted that 'it should however be a system of compulsion where the emphasis will be laid not only on enrolment but on regular attendance.'¹⁴⁶ The committee emphasised that 'in any future scheme of compulsion girls should not be omitted and it was considered that getting the girls to school was infinitely more important than getting the boys to school.'¹⁴⁷ It was pointed out that in some provinces, notably Eastern Bengal there might be considerable objections but on the other hand schemes for compulsory education for girls had actually been introduced in town areas and municipalities of the United Provinces without arousing objection while schemes had been in operation in Madras and Bombay for some years. The Committee pointed out 'that one of the reasons why the literacy of girls was at so low a figure was that many of the girls' schools were incomplete schools and the girls never went on to full primary schools and so never had an opportunity of obtaining permanent literacy.'¹⁴⁸ They considered that insufficient contact between parents and teachers in rural areas was another reason for slow progress and that there was great 'necessity for teachers being active propagandists of education.'¹⁴⁹ Emphasising on the great need for girls' education the

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

Committee was of the opinion that ‘when further schemes for compulsion come up for consideration, no such scheme should in future be sanctioned which does not include compulsion,’¹⁵⁰ and where compulsion already existed for boys steps should be taken to make similar provision for girls. The committee argued that ‘expansion of girls’ education was not possible by diversion of funds from boys, but there were possibilities for readjustments for expenditure.’¹⁵¹ The committee recommended increasing fee and reliance on private benevolence for financing higher secondary education so that more funds could be diverted for expansion of primary education. They further considered that ‘primary education in girls’ schools in rural areas should be free.’¹⁵² Regarding the control by local bodies the Committee considered that ‘unless the machinery for the control of girls’ primary education is improved it was considered that money would continue to be wasted’¹⁵³ and that ‘Local bodies at present were not interested in improving girls’ education.’¹⁵⁴ In this connection it resolved that

committee consider that the control of local bodies over girls’ education in some provinces has not been satisfactory in respect of provision of funds, general interest and enthusiasm, and recommend that methods to improve this control should be investigated. Further, provincial Governments might consider the necessity of insisting that all local bodies should spend an adequate proportion of their educational funds on the primary education of girls.¹⁵⁵

They considered that women inspectress or supervisors of girls’ primary schools were an essential part of any scheme of girls’ primary education, and they must be provided in ever-increasing numbers. The following resolution was passed: ‘The Committee consider the women inspecting staff in most provinces to be insufficient, and they recommend the appointment of at least one inspectress per district.’¹⁵⁶ The Committee suggested co-education to address the issue of financial crisis and passed the following resolution:

[C]o-education at the primary stage should be the ultimate aim in all small rural areas but where the numbers are large separate schools are desirable. They further consider that co-education in backward areas can only be achieved by the appointment of women teachers in mixed schools.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

4.6. Concluding Remarks

Compulsory education for girls was one of the highly criticised aspects of Gokhale's Bill. The vocal oppositions to Clause 17, which provisioned that compulsion may be extended to girls at a later date, were mainly made on the grounds of social custom of purdah and child marriage. It was demanded that Clause 17 should be omitted altogether. This Clause was also opposed by those who supported the general principle of the Bill. Few oppositions were made on educational grounds such as shortage of women teachers and the absence of girls' school in the vicinity of girls' place of residence. During the enactment of PEA in Bombay, not many objections were raised. In Bengal, no explicit mention of girls was made in the Council deliberation on the Bill. However, it does not necessarily point that there were no objections to the compulsion for girls. The women's movement headed by AIWC, NCWI and WIA worked as pressure groups on provincial governments and local bodies. They demanded the presence of women members on local bodies and school boards to ensure compulsion for girls. Hartog committee reiterated the demand of women's movement and observed that social prejudice was responsible for slow progress in the direction of compulsory education for girls. Muthulakshmi Reddy, Hansa Mehta and the CAGE committee on primary education of girls emphasised that if due to lack of finances it was not possible to extend compulsion to both the sexes, girls should have a prior claim because an educated girl would make an educated family. The CAGE committee also pointed to the apathy of local bodies towards compulsion for girls. However, Women's movement, Muthulakshmi Reddy, Hartog Committee, and the CAGE Committee all of them overlooked the peculiar social disability associated with the depressed caste girls and therefore failed to engage with the question of free and compulsory education of this doubly discriminated section of the Hindu social order.

Chapter 5

Basic Education Scheme: a panacea for the ‘ills’ of mass education?

A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow-villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality. But he cannot write his own name. What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot? And even if you want to do that, he will not need such an education. Carried away by the flood of western thought, we came to the conclusion, without weighing pros and cons, that we should give this kind of education to the people.¹

The above quote from Hind Swaraj, in response to Gaekwad of Baroda’s free and compulsory education scheme, reflects Gandhi’s anxiety towards the education of masses. From the discussion in previous chapters, it is quite evident that one of the most contested issue that emerged with the question of free and compulsory education for the masses, which primarily comprised lower caste peasants, artisans and the depressed castes, was the anxiety among the upper caste and upper and middle class regarding alienation of these manual working castes from their ancestral occupation. I argue in this chapter that Gandhi’s scheme of Basic education was an attempt to pacify these anxieties by providing a ‘permanent’ solution to the ‘problem’ created by the education of the lower and depressed castes. The first section of this chapter deals with Gandhi’s views on education of masses as expressed through Hind Swaraj; this is then followed by the Basic Education scheme expounded by him. Next, I have attempted to undertake an analysis of the debates surrounding Gandhi’s scheme of education, which has hitherto remained overlooked.

¹M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (Madras: G.A. Natesan & co., 1908) 88.

5.1 Prelude to Basic Education Scheme

Gandhi expressed his views on education for the first time in *Hind Swaraj* in 1908. Though Gandhi considered Gokhale as his political guru, he was not in consonance with his educational ideas. Whereas Gokhale laboured for the free and compulsory elementary education, Gandhi was opposed to it as he believed that western education in the three Rs would alienate the peasant from his hereditary occupation. He opined that ‘it is not necessary to make this education compulsory. Our ancient school system is enough. Character-building has the first place in it, and that is primary education.’² He was against compulsion and favoured voluntary education because he believed that forcing compulsion against majority wishes would have a harmful effect:

All compulsion is hateful to me. I would no more have the nation become educated by compulsion than I would have it become sober by such questionable means. But just as I would discourage drink by refusing to open drink shops and close existing ones, so would I discourage illiteracy by removing obstacles in the path and opening free schools and making them responsive to people’s needs. But at the present moment we have not even tried on any large scale the experiment of free education. We have offered the parents no inducements. We have not even sufficiently or at all advertised the value of literacy. We have not the proper schoolmasters for the training. In my opinion therefore it is altogether too early to think of compulsion...if majority wants education, compulsion is wholly unnecessary. If it does not, compulsion would be most harmful. Only a despotic government passes laws in the teeth of the opposition of a majority. Has the government afforded full facilities for education to the children of the majority?³

Interestingly enough, these arguments of Gandhi echo those of British government’s during opposition to Gokhale’s Bill. The government had argued in opposition to Gokhale’s Bill that enforcing compulsion when there was no demand would be politically dangerous. The colonial government never wanted to enforce compulsion. These arguments of Gandhi came at a time when Indian leaders were themselves demanding compulsion, and the British government did not force it on Indians. In most of the provinces, Primary Education Bills were moved as Private Bill and were enacted under the leadership of Indian Ministers. Though, this demand for compulsion became vocal only after Gokhale’s Elementary Education Bill, as we have seen in chapter 1. On the contrary, Gandhi linked the idea of educational compulsion to political rule of the foreign government and considered

² *Ibid.*, 90.

³ *Young India*, 14 August 1924, quoted in *Towards New Education*, ed. Bharatan Kumarappa (Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 1963 (first edn 1953)), 81.

compulsion as another form of tyranny by the government. He argued, '[w]e have been compulsion-ridden for the past hundred years or more. The state rules our life in its manifold details without our previous sanction.' He favoured voluntary efforts to compulsion for he considered:

Nothing is detrimental to the true growth of society than for it to be habituated to the belief that no reform can be achieved by voluntary effort. A people so trained become wholly unfit for Swaraj...If we get Swaraj today I should resist compulsory education at least till every effort at voluntary primary education has been honestly made and failed.⁴

Further, he believed that illiteracy in India had increased in the past 50 years⁵ because parents were not willing to get their children educated under a foreign system:

the facilities they had before have disappeared under a system so foreign and unnatural for the country. It is not reasonable to assume that the majority of parents are so foolish or heartless as to neglect the education of their children even when it is brought to their doors free of charge.⁶

These arguments were, ostensibly, rooted in the rhetoric of political nationalism instead of reality. The parents were unwilling to send their children to schools because of their poverty, due to the requirement of their children in earning two square meals and because of the lack of awareness about the importance of education. The upper castes who knew the importance of education demanded English education instead of traditional education. Additionally, the social status of lower and depressed caste parents prohibited them from sending their children to school.

5.2. Basic Education scheme (Wardha Scheme / Nai Talim)

The scheme of education propounded by Gandhi at the Conference at Wardha was designated by the term Wardha Scheme of Education. The Zakir Husain Committee report referred to the scheme as Basic National Education. Gandhi considered that 'a more correct though much less attractive description would be Rural National Education through village handicrafts'⁷ because the scheme was primarily meant for villages. It was popularly known as the Basic Education Scheme or Nai Talim.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ On this issue there was a series of correspondence between Gandhi and Philip Hartog. See Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree* (Goa: Other India Press, 2000, first edn 1983.) for correspondence between Philip Hartog and Gandhi on this issue.

⁶ Young India, 14 August 1924, in Kumarappa, *Towards New Education*, 81.

⁷ Foreword by Gandhi, *Basic National Education: Report of the Zakir Husain Committee* (Wardha: Hind Talimi Sangh, 1939).

During the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921, apart from leading the National Education movement, Gandhi expressed his desire to 'reform' the existing system of education if he had the authority to do so. For instance, regarding the use of textbooks and English as a medium of instruction, he exhorted:

If I had my way, I would certainly destroy the majority of the present textbooks and cause to be written text-books which have a bearing on and correspondence with the home life...if I had the powers of a despot, I would today stop the tuition of our boys and girls through a foreign medium.⁸

Therefore, when the formation of the Congress government was within sight in six provinces, Gandhi could emphatically urge the ministries to adopt his ideal of education through manual training with least emphasis on books. Moreover, he linked it with the idea that this type of education would hasten the advent of independence 'if we could educate millions of our people through an intelligent exercise of their respective vocations like this and teach them that they live for the common good of all.'⁹ After writing about his scheme of education in a series of articles in *Harijan*, Gandhi formally presented his scheme at a Conference of educationists held at Wardha on October 22 and 23 1937. This conference was organised by the Marwari Education Society to commemorate its Silver Jubilee. Press representatives and any visitors were not allowed to attend the conference. Expressing his grievance on keeping the press away from the conference, the Editor of the *Times of India* remarked: 'This is particularly regrettable in a matter where the arguments involved must have an important bearing on public appreciation of the pros and cons.'¹⁰ Gandhi presided the conference and presented his scheme. In his inaugural address at the Conference, Gandhi spoke thus:

I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only wasteful but positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to the parents and to the occupation to which they were born. They pick up evil habits, affect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education.¹¹

Gandhi lamented that in the middle ages 'only handicrafts were taught to the students... for the sake of craft...without any attempt to develop the intellect as well'¹² while in the present age 'those born to certain professions had forgotten them, had taken to clerical careers and were lost to the countryside. As a result it is now impossible to find an efficient carpenter

⁸ *Young India*, 1 September 1921, in CWMG, Vol. 21, 38-40.

⁹ *Harijan* 8 May 1937, in CWMG Vol. 65, p. 74.

¹⁰ *Times of India*, Comment and Criticism, 20 October 1937, 16.

¹¹ The Educational Conference, *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 38 (October 30 1937): 323.

¹² C. J. Varkey, *The Wardha Scheme of Education* (Humphrey & Milford: OUP, 1939), 23-24.

or smith in an average village.’¹³ He therefore, found the remedy in ‘imparting the whole art and science of a craft through practical training and therethrough imparting education.’¹⁴ Gandhi suggested ‘handicraft of making cloth is the only one which can be taught throughout the country’ using Takli which was ‘very cheap.’¹⁵ Though he asked for other suggestions as well, he was convinced that ‘takli is the only practical solution of our problem.’ He emphasised that ‘the constructive programme of Khadi since 1920 has led to the formation of Congress Ministries in seven provinces, and their success also depends on the extent to which we carry it out.’¹⁶ On the pecuniary aspect of spinning Khadi by the children, he opined that

it will also be possible to earn quite enough through the takli because there will be sufficient demand for the cloth produced by the children. Even the parents of children will be sufficient to consume the products of their children.¹⁷

He had contemplated ‘seven years’ course which so far as takli is concerned would culminate in practical knowledge of weaving, including dyeing, designing etc.’¹⁸ The chief purpose of handicraft in the curriculum was to enable the child to pay for teachers’ salary by selling his labour, thus making its education self-supporting. Gandhi considered the self-supporting aspect of his scheme as the ‘test of its efficiency.’¹⁹ He believed that it would be ‘making children helpless by doling out education to them’ and his scheme would make them ‘self-confident and brave by making them pay for their own education with their own labour.’²⁰ Gandhi argued:

while the child will be encouraged to spin and help his parents with agricultural jobs, he will also be made to feel that he does not belong only to his parents but also to the village and to the country, and that he must make some return to them.²¹

He explained this feature of his scheme as follows.

Supposing a student works at a vocation for four hours a day, then taking the number of working days in a month to be 25 and the rate of remuneration two pice per hour, he or she would be earning Rs. 3-2-0 per month for the school. This does not mean that the child would begin to pay two pice per hour from

¹³ Ibid., 24.

¹⁴ The Educational Conference, *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 38 (October 30 1937): 323.

¹⁵ Varkey, *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, 24.

¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 26

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

the commencement. But he will pay during the whole period of seven years at the rate of two pice per hour.²²

Four resolutions were drafted at the Conference, of which three were unanimously accepted. The fourth dealing with the self-supporting aspect was dissented by K.T. Shah. These four resolutions were²³:

1. That in the opinion of this Conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.
2. That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue.
3. That the Conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work, and that all the other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.
4. That the conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

The last resolution, the self-supporting aspect, was criticised during the conference as well as after the resolutions were made public. Apart from this the scheme was attacked for promoting child labour, for being expensive and impractical. The debates pertaining to the scheme have been discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.2.1. Self-Supporting aspect: the bottleneck of the scheme

Self-supporting aspect required that the children should be able to pay teacher's salary by the sale of their products. It was the vital aspect of the scheme and was considered by him as 'the acid test of its reality.'²⁴ This was criticised by K.T. Shah and others at the conference. Shah's dissension was most critical, and he refused to approve this resolution. Before the conference, the Press had sounded a warning regarding the humble acceptance of Gandhi's proposals by the concerned authorities as 'in their eagerness to initiate a problematical experiment they should not merely fail to extend the education so necessary to the political and economic advancement of India but actually throw the country's

²² *Harijan* Vol 5, no. 35 (October 9 1937): 292.

²³ The Educational Conference, *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 38 (October 30 1937): 321.

²⁴ *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 34 (October 2 1937): 281.

educational progress back.’²⁵ With reference to Gandhi’s scheme of education, before it was presented at the Wardha Conference, the editor of the *Times of India* cautioned him:

It is very necessary that Mr Gandhi himself should not unwittingly use the influence of his own personality to convert experienced educationists and responsible ministers in direct touch with practical difficulties against their own better judgement.²⁶

These warning notes, however, turned out to be true. Despite criticism of the scheme even within the Congress and the fact that ‘Congress governments [did] not see an eye to eye with Mr Gandhi on this subject and [were] more than dubious of the self-supporting ideals he avow[ed],’²⁷ his scheme could not be rejected altogether because of the sacrosanct position Gandhi enjoyed within the congress party. As the editor of the *Times of India* put it:

His [Gandhi’s] word is law to the vast majority of Congressmen. If provincial autonomy in seven provinces today is Congress Raj, Congress Raj is equally truly Gandhi Raj. Nothing is done without consulting him. Not only does policy emanate from him, but Ministers are known to have made special trips to his village on the Central Provinces plateau to seek his advice and guidance even on matters of detail. Thus it is not altogether incorrect to say that what are known as Gandhian ideals, if not Mr. Gandhi himself, rule the seven provinces where the Congress Government are now functioning.²⁸

Hence, despite opposition to the self-supporting aspect of the scheme, except K.T. Shah, Zakir Husain and others voted in favour of the resolution.

The genesis of the idea of self-supporting education dates back to the non-cooperation movement when Gandhi called for a boycott of government schools and colleges. He argued:

In India, if we expect, as we must, every boy and girl of school-going age to attend public schools, we have not the means to finance education in accordance with the existing style, nor are millions of parents able to pay the fees that are at present imposed. Education to be universal must therefore be free. I fancy that even under an ideal system of government, we shall not be able to devote two thousand million rupees which we should require for finding education for all the children of school-going age. It follows, therefore, that our children must be made to pay in labour partly or wholly for all the education they receive.²⁹

²⁵ *Times of India*, Comment and Criticism, 20 October 1937, 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Young India*, 1 September 1921; CWMG, Vol. 21, 39.

Towards this end, he proposed that hand-spinning and hand-weaving were the only two labours which could be profitable as ‘there is no occupation other than the processes connected with cloth-production which can be introduced in our schools throughout India.’³⁰ Gandhi opined that the inclusion of labour work in school would serve the dual purpose of ‘pay[ing] for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in after-life, if they choose, for earning a living.’³¹ The idea was brought into practice by Gandhi in various National schools and colleges established during the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920s and at the Sewagram Ashram. In these ‘national institutions a minimum of one hour of spinning per day... was introduced’³² which was quite unpopular among upper caste parents who ‘withdrew their children after learning about the amount of work done in schools.’³³ From this preparatory stage set in 1921 and restricted to his Ashrams, Gandhi’s ideas entered next stage of experimentation at the State level with the onset of provincial autonomy. In July 1937, after Congress Ministries took office in the six provinces he suggested the newly formed congress ministries to ‘enforce immediate prohibition by making education self-supporting instead of paying for it from the liquor revenue.’³⁴ Prohibition was a political move suggested by Gandhi to use the Government of India Act 1935 for ‘for the purpose of thwarting the assumed intention of the framers of the Act.’³⁵ Gandhi’s call for making education self-supporting was criticised more than that for prohibition. K.T. Shah suggested that there were ways and means of raising funds for education if prohibition was to be progressively attained in five years. One such means which Shah suggested was the reduction of salaries of highly paid officials (Rs. 100 or more per month.) in the education department. He insisted that if non-Indian members in services do not agree to such a reduction

at least the Indian element of every rank should be made amenable to the desire of the country... I would not hesitate to make a direct appeal to the Services for a *voluntary surrender* of their excess of salaries and allowances above a prescribed maximum.³⁶

He estimated that it would account for a saving of about ‘quarter to a third of the aggregate amount now spent upon public instruction in this country.’³⁷ Another suggestion made by

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mark Thomson, *Gandhi and his Ashram* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1993), 162.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Congress Ministries, *Harijan* Vol. 5, no. 23 (17 July 1937): 180.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Harijan* Vol. 5, no. 25 (31 July 1937): 199.

³⁷ Ibid.

Shah was conscription for social services to meet the problem of the financial crunch arising out of prohibition. Citing the example of Europe where conscription was adopted for the 'destructive purpose of warfare' he urged that India should 'give the lead to the world outside Russia in adopting such a Social Service Conscription for regenerative purposes for a whole people.'³⁸ According to this scheme he suggested that 'every youth passing, say, the matriculation standard,' should 'devote, free of charge, one year to the task of spreading education within the Province in the villages particularly.'³⁹ Thirdly, Shah suggested additional taxation of the riches. He interpreted the self-supporting aspect of Gandhi's scheme in terms of repayment by the student to the community by doing some work after his education was over and thought that Social Service Conscription was the best way of attaining this objective. But for Gandhi self-supporting aspect was not the repayment of educational expenses after education was over, but it involved selling of children's labour in the form of some productive craft during their education itself. Gandhi though admired the idea of Social Service Conscription and admitted that there were 'ways and means of raising fresh taxation' and that '[r]iches have not yet been sufficiently taxed,' but he insisted on making education self-sufficient through children selling their labour because he considered that 'as a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfil our obligations to the nation in this respect in a given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend on money.'⁴⁰

As noted above, during the Conference Shah again opposed the concept of self-supporting education. Presumably, Shah's dissension was too injurious to Gandhi's scheme that it was neither published in *Harijan* along with conference proceedings nor was made public at any later date. This missing dissentious document was much sought after by those concerned with the analysis of the scheme. One such instance is that of a reader of the *Times of India*, Poptlal M. Shah, who wrote to the editor of the Newspaper in the following terms:

All those who know how the Wardha scheme was thrashed are aware that there was one solitary soul who differed from the rest in interpreting the scheme as it was discussed when Mr Gandhi opened the Conference. The report, according to the Chairman of the Sub-committee appointed to go into the details of the scheme, was unanimous excepting the same man, prof. K.T. Shah, who differed from the beginning... When the public demand for the publication of the dissenting minute was heard at Wardha, Mr Mahadeo Desai wrote a short para in the *Harijan* that the dissent would be published after Mahatmaji had talked with Mr Shah on this point. We wonder whether there was an interview

³⁸ Ibid., 200.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ criticism answered, *Harijan*, Vol 5, no. 25 (31/7/1937): 196.

between the Mahatma and the Professor all these months. In the general interest and the larger questions involved in the education policy of our country, it is high time, we knew what the Professor had to say.⁴¹

Since the press was not invited to the conference, the dissenting note of Shah and criticism of the scheme by others was not available to the public. However, Shah wrote a ‘critical analysis’ of the scheme in *The Times of India*. For Gandhi came up with this idea to tackle the financial crunch arising out of prohibition, Shah argued:

The motive spring of the All India Education Conference at Wardha seemed to lie in a desire to provide the indispensable minimum of education to the children of the country on a basis of self-sufficiency, so as to discount altogether the financial loss involved in the policy of absolute Prohibition. Gandhiji is nothing if not strictly logical, in this instance; and so, rather than continue a day longer than absolutely necessary the immoral income to the state from the degradation of the people, he would sacrifice revenue altogether, even though that sacrifice might involve in consequence the denial of the merest rudiments of education to the people.⁴²

Zakir Husain pointed to the danger of emphasising too much on ‘the commercial element, -the money motive, - of education centring round a “manual and productive” occupation.’⁴³

Shah anticipated that

Just as success in examinations is today is today the sole criterion for measuring the educational efficiency of a school; just as all grants from Government or private charity, all patronage by the public, all stimulus and encouragement, is derived from or dependent upon the percentage of passes, thereby falsifying or perverting the very idea of public education- so, under the new scheme, excellence in saleability of the products turned out by each school be the sole standard of success, the only measure of efficiency.⁴⁴

It was argued that the school managers

would think more of money profit than of the child’s development’ and the teachers in turn ‘would labour more for making the children, toil and sweat at a craft set to them, for which they may have no more liking than many a child nowadays has for the literary fare placed before it in our existing schools.’⁴⁵

Shah further questioned the basic ideal underlying the scheme and critiqued that ‘in the mind of the sponsor of the scheme and his supporters, this ideal of an all-round development of each child seems to focus round the urge to make the pupils’ work

⁴¹ India’s education drive, *Times of India*, 14 July 1938, 16.

⁴² K.T. Shah, Wardha Conference: Critical Analysis, *Times of India*, 4 Nov 1937, 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

productive in a *monetary* sense.’⁴⁶ Gandhi referred to Shah’s dissension as ‘quite natural, because he belongs to a different school of thought’⁴⁷ than his. Shah, in response, clarified that the difference between the author of the scheme and its critic was not only of the angle of vision but ‘[i]t is a difference in the fundamental conception and ultimate objective of public education.’⁴⁸ He opined that even if the scheme was practicable ‘it is not desirable to put into effect, at least with the objective it has in view’ viz. the stress on the exchange value of products:

The moment emphasis is laid on the money, or exchange, value of the products of such child labour, stress is inevitably levied on that feature of our modern commercial civilisation, which all social thinkers agree should be progressively eliminated or at least kept under rigid control. The all but universal substitution of production for exchange in place of production for use, and the immense emphasis nowadays laid by all individualist societies on the former, is considered to be the root of all international tension, and the fountain-spring of war and destruction on a colossal scale. Even if the hard facts of real life compel adult citizens, in the leading commercial nations of the world, to engage increasingly in such internecine competition, is that a reason why the child should be familiarised, from its tenderest and most impressionable years, with this ugly aspect of our modern civilisation, with its emphasis on exchange economy and money values only?⁴⁹

Zakir Husain also warned against too much emphasis on self-supporting aspect and apprehended that,

teacher might in consequence be slave-drivers and exploit the labour of poor boys. They might forget sanitation, hygiene and everything else and concentrate on exacting the most out of the boys. If it could be self-supporting, well and good but that should not be a test of its success.⁵⁰

Further, he suggested that emphasis on manual work to a certain extent was good ‘but it should not be forgotten that the present age was a machine age’ and therefore ‘only if there was a complete boycott of all foreign goods and an embargo against all machine-made articles,’ which ‘was an impossibility, that ideal state of things visualised under the proposal could be possible.’ Husain also raised concern regarding entering into ‘unequal competition with professional artisan.’⁵¹ Refuting the charge that self-supporting scheme was suggested by him to tackle the financial crunch arising out of prohibition, Gandhi

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Varkey, *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, 6.

⁴⁸ K.T. Shah, Wardha Conference: Critical Analysis, *Times of India*, 4 Nov 1937, 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The Educational Conference, *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 38 (October 30 1937): 324.

⁵¹ Ibid., 325.

clarified that though he had suggested the self-supporting aspect of his scheme in connection with prohibition even if there was to be no loss of revenue and the exchequer was to remain full 'this education would be a *sine qua non* if we did not want to urbanize our boys. We have to make them true representatives of our culture, our civilization, of the true genius of our nation.'⁵² He declared that self-supporting primary education was the only way of achieving this. Responding to the argument of the machine age, Gandhi remarked,

for those who wanted to live under the machine age his scheme would be useless... but it would be impossible to keep villagers alive by means of machines. When there were 300 million living machines, it was idle to think of bringing in new dead machinery.⁵³

On Husain's comment of slavery, he retorted 'if our own people acted on the scheme there would be no slaves but perfect artisans produced from these schools...labour taken from the children should certainly be worth two pice an hour.'⁵⁴ Mahadeo Desai observed that 'he was not afraid of slavery arising out of an overemphasis on manual training, but he had a wholesome dread of slavery resulting out of an emphasis on so-called intellectual training, which was neither intellectual nor training.'⁵⁵ Nana Bhai Bhatt, at Dakshinamurthy, Vidyarthi Bhawan, Bhavnagar, suggested that more 'emphasis should be laid on the instruction to be imparted through manual work and not on the proceeds of the work itself.'⁵⁶ Dr Subbarayan supported Gandhi 'to replace a system that specialised in producing clerks by a system that produced skilled and intelligent artisans' but he 'was in agreement with Prof. Shah about the rapid industrialisation of the land.'⁵⁷ Saudamini Mehta from Calcutta at the conference emphasised that 'the State should not grudge the expenditure on education, for it was the duty of the State to educate its children.' She further suggested that the State should also 'provide at least one meal for the children.'⁵⁸

In the editorial entitled 'Faint praise' the editor of the *Times of India* pointed out that even the Congress ministers 'avoided reference to Wardha's educational proposals' and were 'marking time in the hope... of the Committee producing a more practical scheme than the Conference, as directed by Mr. Gandhi, seemed to have in mind.'⁵⁹ He further cautioned

⁵² Varkey, *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, 27

⁵³ The Educational Conference, *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 38 (October 30 1937): 325.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 326.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 327.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 325.

⁵⁹ Faint praise, *Times of India*, 29 Nov 1937, 8.

that '[e]ducation is not and should not be made an economic issue' and that universal education, 'a democratic ideal,' should be 'an end in itself' for 'a full and free life' in a truly democratic society and '[i]f by force of circumstances education cannot for the majority be an end in itself, the ideal must be subordinated altogether.'⁶⁰ While acknowledging that 'the principle of acquisition of literacy and culture with practical pursuits' was widely gaining acceptance among the educationists he emphasised that 'vocations should not be seriously imposed before a certain age' and 'condemned the idea demanding of little children the fees (in labour) of their tutelage.'⁶¹ D.R. Meher Homji, a reader of the *Times of India*, in his letter to the editor wrote: 'The Wardha proposals in parts have much to commend themselves, but any policy aiming to relegate the adult or the adolescent, as you put it, "to the mental vacuum of a purely economic existence" must be proceeded with cautiously.'⁶² President of the All India Students' Conference, M.R. Masani criticised the scheme on two grounds. Firstly, he considered the attempt to make education self-supporting was a retrograde move and it was 'most intolerable that little children should be expected to buy a meagre education by their own labour.' Secondly, he opined that the sort of vocational training proposed was 'an anachronism' as the 'future was bound up with machines and, if they stopped working, most men would perish.'⁶³

Presiding over the Bombay Provincial Liberal Conference, V.N. Chandavarkar attacked the policy of remuneration of teachers' salary through the sale of products made by pupils and declared it as 'absurd and reactionary feature of the entire scheme' which 'lets the government escape from what is accepted in all civilized countries as the first charge on the revenues of the State.'⁶⁴ Blaming the 'policy of complete prohibition in three years' for the birth of this scheme he retorted:

we are sure of this, that the absurd scheme sought to be foisted upon the country without any corresponding responsibility on the Ministry to foot the bills, is an effort to cover the deficit incurred in implementing that policy and yet to be able to say to the world that the Congress has done so much for the expansion of free primary education.⁶⁵

The Council of the National Liberal Federation of India presided over by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, 'disapproved of the Wardha Education Scheme as detrimental to the progress of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Letter to Editor, *Times of India*, 3 Jan, 1938, 4.

⁶³ Wardha plan attacked: *Times of India*, 3 January 1938, 4.

⁶⁴ *Times of India*, May 2 1938, 9.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

education and insistence on craft education harmful to children.⁶⁶ T.J. Kedar, Vice Chairman of the Nagpur University, criticised the Wardha scheme for overemphasis of economic aspect in an educational scheme:

[T]he idea of weaving the primary course around the nucleus of a basic craft was no doubt excellent, but the danger was that owing to the spiritualisation of khadi the basic craft, according to the Wardha scheme, would in all probability be the spinning and weaving. To spend three hours every day in its use and practice was a sheer waste of valuable time. One of the protagonists of the scheme had stressed its economic aspect, but the commercial element must not loom large in an educational project.⁶⁷

R. P. Paranjpye scathingly criticised the Wardha scheme for making the education of seven-eight years to be self-supporting: 'I for one will not bow my head to the Wardha gospel for the change in education. The changes are possible and practicable if the experiments of changes are introduced by stages but not by scrapping all that is old.'⁶⁸ Another scathing criticism of self-supporting aspect came from Professor C. Narayan Menon.⁶⁹ He wrote against the self-supporting education as follows:

Let us not delude ourselves into believing that self-supporting workshop schools manufacturing and marketing goods will impart education. In actual practice it will be nothing but legalised child labour. If, for example, spinning is chosen by one school, the rotating of the wheel will become an automatic action. I cannot agree with the editor of the *Harijan* that mathematics can be studied by calculating how much yarn would be needed for a piece, and science and geography by observing the growth and improvement of strains of cotton. These things will stimulate the mind if done only once or twice, but when repeated daily for years they will benumb the mind and make it run in grooves...the training of eye, ear and hand are absolutely necessary, and manual labour must be made compulsory in all schools... if a school aims at education it must give up all the ideas of producing standardised goods for sale...it must give a variety of raw material to children to experiment with and spoil...a school or college should be a place where young minds live in a world of values rather than of prices; if at the impressionable period, manufacture, marketing and money-making be placed as the ideal, growth will be arrested and we shall have an accentuation of the process, as a result of which the world suffers poverty in midst of plenty today...Let us not demand that schools should produce not only men but also goods. To sum up, it is bad economy to adopt a short-sighted policy which will make the schools solvent and the nation bankrupt.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Times of India*, June 20 1938, 10.

⁶⁷ *Times of India*, October 29 1938, 12.

⁶⁸ *Times of India*, 3 November 1938, 12.

⁶⁹ This was published in the *Harijan* under the pseudonym 'A Professor' as Gandhi did not want to reveal the identity of the critic who had signed the letter as 'A professor.' This was revealed later by Menon in his article in *Roshni* Vol II, no. 3, October 1940, 103.

⁷⁰ Self-supporting Schools, *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 32 (18 September 1937): 264-65.

Another dimension from which Menon criticised the scheme was the wastage of a large amount of raw material. Taking the example of spinning, he illustrated his point. He argued that if training of the hand and eye was the object 'it will suffice if a child spins for only one hour in a week and there will be no harm if the same yarn is untwisted and given to another child for being spun again.' He lamented,

but Gandhiji wants the yarn to be made into cloth for sale. He wants the economic measurement of an educational activity. Imagine the economic effects of universal compulsory education on such lines. There will be wastage of cotton at each stage.'⁷¹

He further observed that 'the cotton which will suffice to clothe ten persons will suffice for only two if school children do the work' which would increase the area under cotton cultivation. He thought that the area under cotton cultivation ought to be confined, and other necessities of life should be grown but regretted that 'the Mahatma wants every school to have a cotton garden too. This is the way to sterilize land. When 64 million children begin to spin, manufacture toys, and cultivate the fields, India's raw resources will be frittered away.'⁷² Moreover, he argued, '[t]o entrust children with the basic industries is like ordering that major operations in hospitals should be performed by newly admitted students. It will result in the unemployment of adults and the misemployment of the young.'⁷³

J.G. Gilson, the secretary of the Christian High and Technical School, Balasore and director of Industrial Arts and Vocational Education for A.B.B.O Mission, appreciated the idea of craft centred education but did not agree with the self-supporting aspect of the scheme. He argued that children had been made to pay profits by the

exploiters of children in every country in the world. The way they do it is by keeping the children on repetitive work requiring little skill. If children are kept at such work for 4 hours per day under competent supervision, they can no doubt pay for their keep and perhaps for the supervision as well. But such work has no educational value. It may even become as dulling to the intellect as pouring over textbooks and listening to lectures.'⁷⁴

He further argued that he saw no reason why schools should be self-supporting as 'education of children and continued education of adults is a responsibility of the

⁷¹ C.N. Menon, "Basic education and planned economy," *Roshni* Vol II, no. 3 (October 1940): 103.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Harijan* Vol. 5, No. 36 (October 16 1937): 301.

community... in the present condition of India it should be the first and largest claim upon the public funds.⁷⁵ While approving Gandhi's self-supporting scheme, N. R. Malkani went further than the production of sellable goods to service provided by the children in schools. He suggested thus:

Why cannot the emphasis be laid as much on the 'service' performed by pupils rather than on the articles 'produced' by him and sold in the market? I would wish every school to become self-sufficient- to spin and weave its own cloth, to tailor it, to make its own furniture, to grind its own flour, to press its own oil, to grow its own vegetables, to bind its own books, to make soap for its use- to develop and supply the home market. The children can even bring raw materials from home and make useful articles for their relatives at concession rates. It would be an object lessons for parents in the worth of the new education. The school can convert itself into a labour corps for work on public utilities like digging pits, sinking wells, making roads, building drains- and the services performed credited to the school account at market rates. Self-help and social service are virtues which may be inculcated in Indian children even at the possible cost of sacrificing some general and specific instruction.⁷⁶

While Malkani wanted labour corps in schools, K.T. Shah opposed the scheme for promotion of child labour and for creating an atmosphere of competition between skilled artisans and the product of child-labour in addition to the factory-made products:

The pupils in such schools, numbering perhaps three crores all over India, would be working regularly on specific articles of a commercial value. They would be provided free workshop, free skilled instruction free supervision, free marketing of their products- generally in a sheltered market- and, of course, free finance. Even if the strictest accounts are kept of all such elements of the cost of production, the resultant wares must depress the market against the ordinary professional worker. The latter has no alternative outlet in large-scale mechanised industry, which is unwelcome in the eye of many a supporter of such ideas. The fact that the competing artisan would be, in most cases, be the parents of the children thus being trained through some productive occupation will afford no mitigation of the fundamental wrong to the adult artisan by adding to the competition of machine-made goods, this further item of child labour products. Even agriculture will not suffice, in all its branches, to insure against this competition from Child Labour in productive handicrafts. How, then, can we welcome such a scheme to be put into force at once on a nation-wide scale?⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid., 301-02.

⁷⁶ N.R. Malkani, "Self-supporting education," *Harijan* Vol. V, No. 39 (November 13 1937): 333.

⁷⁷ K.T. Shah, Wardha Conference: Critical Analysis, *Times of India*, 4 Nov 1937, 4.

5.2.2. Education through productive craft

The craft-centred aspect of the scheme was approved as long as it was serving the educative purpose. It was criticised from three perspectives, first, for its over-emphasis on the production of goods as discussed in section 5.2.1.; second for being expensive and third for being unrealistic due to the unavailability of trained teachers.

Commenting on the draft resolution of Gandhi, that ‘vocations should serve a double purpose- to enable a pupil to pay for his labour, and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school’ Shah regretted that though ‘the Conference’s deliberations have modified this idea in minor details; but have in no way questioned its essence, either on the score of practicability or of advisability.’⁷⁸

The lack of adequately trained teachers to make this idea effective was the first criticism against the scheme. Shah noted that ‘It is not a matter of mere numbers; we command numbers in plenty, and to spare. It is a matter of *quality* of the teachers needed to carry out this scheme of education on a nation-wide scale.’⁷⁹ To this problem, Shah suggested the ‘method of Social Service Conscription.’⁸⁰ Gandhi endorsed this idea. However, Shah was aware of the practical difficulty to be met under the scheme despite the social service conscription of teachers:

But the task before the teacher in the new scheme is no merely that of the preceptor, or even of mere demonstrator. He must combine in him the skill of a master craftsman, the learning of a Doctor of Philosophy, and the instructing ability of a *Brihaspati*. If the skilled weaver of cotton goods is to instruct his pupils, as required under this scheme, in the mystery of spinning, so as to develop the full man or woman implicit in each child before him, he must know, and be able to impart his knowledge in, geography and history, science and mathematics, not to mention language and literature. It must be confessed such teachers are not available, even in dozens, to serve the need of 30 million children of school-going age, all over India. Hence, if we embark on the venture without necessary complement of skilled technicians, may not our whole craft be stranded even before we set sail?⁸¹

Ahmedabad Students’ Conference criticised the scheme and protested against it for being ‘full of defects’ and ‘unsuited to modern conditions.’ Kapil Khandwala presiding over the conference said:

Mr Gandhi sought to develop a man or woman by combining vocational training with primary education. This only tied down the child to a specific

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

vocation which would cramp his development. All that a child needed to know, were the processes and tools of education which would enable him to choose a vocation at a later stage.⁸²

On the too much emphasis on spinning, Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru opined that ‘in the name of education they could not support the cardinal feature of the scheme.’⁸³ P. S. Sivaswami Iyer condemned the Wardha Scheme as ‘absolutely unworkable and will only be generally operated if the Congress ministries impose their will on India in the form of dictatorships.’⁸⁴ He doubted ‘whether it was always possible to correlate and co-ordinate all character-forming and mental developing studies to a basic craft.’ Another problem with the scheme, according to Iyer was ‘that this plan demanded greater intellectual attainments than it was right to expect of teachers.’ Moreover, training in a particular basic craft was another defect of the scheme for if the boy gets disinclined or unsuited to practice that vocation then it would be difficult for him to earn a living. Concluding, his observations he said: ‘The whole flaw in Mr Gandhi’s gospel lies in the fact that he blissfully assumes that all men will be as altruistic and austere as himself.’⁸⁵

Tagore also criticised the self-supporting aspect of the scheme. At the All India Educational Conference, held in Calcutta, he rebuked the scheme in following terms:

As the scheme stands on paper, it seems to assume that material utility rather than development of personality, is the end of education; that while education in true sense of the word may still be available for a chosen few who can afford to pay for it, the utmost the masses can have is to be trained to view the world they live in, in the perspective of the particular craft they are to employ for their livelihood. It is true that as the things are, even that is much more than what the masses are actually getting, but it is nevertheless unfortunate that, even in our ideal scheme, education should be doled out in insufficient rations to the poor, while the feast remains reserved for the rich. I cannot congratulate a society or a nation that calmly excludes play from the curriculum of the majority of its children’s population and gives in its stead a vested interest to the teachers in the market value of the pupils’ labour.⁸⁶

Prof C Narayan Menon at the 15th session of All India Educational Conference held at Lucknow argued that ‘as an educational experiment he would welcome the basic method, but the attempt to make all children do productive work for more than three hours a day

⁸² Wardha scheme criticised: Ahmedabad students’ conference, *Times of India*, January 20 1938, 8.

⁸³ Instruction in English, *Times of India*, August 5 1938, 5.

⁸⁴ Wardha education scheme condemned: Sir PSS Iyer’s view, *Times of India*, 15 July 1938, 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Report, All India Educational Conference Calcutta (Calcutta: Office of the reception committee, 1937), 63-64.

was likely to make the experiment needlessly wasteful.' Speaking from the child's perspective he emphasised that '[t]he child should enjoy opportunities to make a thing, but every time he must do it in a new way lest the mind of the child should become stunted.' Moreover, he denounced the idea that Basic education would bring social justice and considered it as an 'illusion' as the scheme would 'make higher education the monopoly of the rich and intensify the present evil.'⁸⁷

J.G. Gilson suggested that for children's work to have educational value

they must be given a variety of work to do, and as soon as they have learned one operation well they must be allowed to go on to something new. They must have a chance to experiment with their own ideas and to make new designs. If they are allowed to work in this way under a supervisor who knows how, by discrete questioning and encouragement, to keep them alert, they will develop many good habits and abilities.⁸⁸

Prof S. V. Puntambekar, while agreeing with the concept of manual training in school did not favour self-supporting aspect. However, his opposition was from perspective of quality of finished products and their saleability:

they (children made products) will not be saleable in a country where free trade and advanced fashions prevail and when the product themselves will not be durable or finished ones. If the State were to purchase them or take them I return for the service or aid rendered, what will it do with them? It would be better for the State to spend money directly on the education of children than to adopt this process.⁸⁹

He further observed that in an emerging democratic Nation such ideas of education would be outdated:

I admit here that education was largely self-supporting in medieval times, and could be made so in a general way if our social, economic and political organisation and outlook were to remain medieval, that is, addicted to the old and narrow values of class and caste economy, society and polity. But today in a democratic, national and socialistic conception of life which has pervaded us, it cannot become so. The only organized power of the community with sanctions and resources behind it is the *State*. Hence it has to undertake this work. The old power groups-caste, class, guild, college, Church- have lost their power, sanction and resources, and do not exist in that larger sense of the old times. People also have no faith in them. All social power has shifted to the political group which is also the economic and social force even in India. Therefore, two ideologies, one medieval and one modern, one pluralistic and functional, and the other unitary and territorial, cannot work together. There

⁸⁷ Wardha education plan criticised, *Times of India*, December 29 1939, 5.

⁸⁸ *Harijan* Vol. 5, No. 36 (October 16 1937): 301.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 302.

was no universal education in the past, no democratic unitary State, no national equalitarian outlook.⁹⁰

Supporters of the scheme eulogised the emphasis on productive craft as it would keep the manual working castes within the bounds of their occupation. Comments of N. R. Malkani is a testimony to this argument:

Manual work satisfies the innate desire of a child for 'doing' in preference to 'thinking' or 'learning.' It helps to ruralize the character of a rural school; it helps to discover the aptitude of a child for the kind of work he likes, and thus incidentally makes the boy more 'peaceful' and assiduous being productive work it relates the boy's activity to his environment and the society in which he lives; and lastly, by imparting instruction through some serious craft not only the boy's practical intelligence is trained but he gets the conception of labour as a moral force.⁹¹

5.2.3. Duration of Basic Education

The compulsory period for elementary education prior to Gandhi's scheme was four or five years. In Gandhi's scheme, it was kept at seven years. Gandhi noted:

Primary education, extending over a period of seven years or longer, and covering all the subjects up to the matriculation standard except English, plus a vocation used as a vehicle for drawing out the minds of the boys and girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes today under the name of primary, middle and High School education.⁹²

Gandhi opined that it was the learning of English which took most of the time during secondary education, thus extending child's education to eleven years. If English was removed, it would facilitate the learning and the entire education from primary to secondary could be completed in seven years' time:

I should combine into one what you call now primary education and secondary or high school education. It is my conviction that our children get nothing more in the high schools than a half-baked knowledge of English, besides a superficial knowledge of mathematics and history and geography, some of which they had learnt in their own language in the primary classes. If you cut English from the curriculum altogether, without cutting out the subjects you teach, you can make the children go through the whole course in seven years, instead of eleven, besides giving them manual work whereby they can make a fair return to the State.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid., 303.

⁹¹ N.R. Malkani, "Self-supporting education," *Harijan* Vol. V, No. 39 (November 13 1937): 332.

⁹² *Harijan* Vol. 5, No. 34 (October 2 1937,): 281.

⁹³ *Harijan* Vol. 5, No. 31 (11 september 1937): 246.

Exclusion of English and merger of secondary with primary met with sharp criticism.

Opposing the consolidation of primary with the secondary education Prof Menon argued:

That we can force the pace and make the boy learn in two years what he now learns in seven is a curious illusion. A boy's mind is not an empty jar waiting to be filled. A child cannot and should not, try to learn at eight what he can learn only at 16.⁹⁴

Regarding the exclusion of English, he noted:

The foreign language is not the cause of delay, nor are we giving as much extra time to it as people imagine. The writings of the essay is a training of the mind and the emotions, and such training must be necessary slow.⁹⁵

Pandit H.N. Kunjru stressed on the 'adequate provision... for instruction in English' as 'English was learnt in many independent countries like Italy, Germany and the USA not because of any partiality to it, but because of its utility.'⁹⁶ Admitting the importance of the vernacular as the medium of instruction, R. P. Paranjpye asserted that the 'importance of English should not be belittled' as 'India's present progress had largely depended on the spread of English education western ideas of progress.'⁹⁷ On the question of exclusion of English from the curriculum and education through the medium of mother tongue only, K.

Natarajan wrote a scathing critic of Gandhi in Indian Social Reformer:

Mahatma Gandhi draws upon his own personal experiences to enforce his condemnation of our education. Personal experiences to be value should be interpreted in the light of the heredity and environment of the persons concerned. The mind sees what it brings with it the means of seeing. Reading of English books, learning algebra and geometry, astronomy and biology, might be a weariness to the flesh for a boy brought up in the household of the Dewan of an Indian State. To a boy reared in the austere routine of a Brahman family conforming to its ancient ideal of not having too much of the world's goods, the same education might open up vistas of freedom and opportunity undreamt of by his forbears. It is idle to speculate on what might have been if Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Srinivasa Sastry had been educated wholly in and through their respective mother-tongues. But it is safe to say that neither of them would be what he is today. We are rather surprised to see Mahatma Gandhi stressing the foreignness of English language.⁹⁸

He argued that the exclusion of English was a political move rather than educational:

All civilization arose out of the assimilation of foreign elements. Stewing in their own juice, no people achieved greatness. English was a foreign language

⁹⁴ Self-supporting Schools, *Harijan* Vol. V, No. 32 (18 September 1937): 265.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Instruction in English, *Times of India*, August 5 1938, 5.

⁹⁷ *Times of India*, 3 November 1938,12.

⁹⁸ Indian Social Reformer, July 16 1938, 125.

in India a hundred years ago. Today it is the language in which the foremost Indian leaders, including the Mahatma and Mr Sastry, think and speak when they have to apply their mind to serious questions...Gandhiji thinks that English education has been the bane of India and that he will be failing in his duty to the people if he did not proclaim his view and make use of the opportunity which the ballot box has given him, to overhaul the educational system in the congress province. Others feel equally strong that in the circumstances of India no indigenous system could have done so much to vivify Indian life and link it to the life of the world without. Reforms must come but they must come after the deliberations by the best minds of the country which are not often found in any single political tabernacle; and they must be in the nature of growth from within.⁹⁹

The editor of the *Times of India* responded to this contention of Gandhi in the following terms: 'on that score it can be argued that the nationalist movement in India has been led by such "strangers" who are therefore in no way representative of their country.'¹⁰⁰

5.2.4. Connections with Progressive Education Movement

Gandhi's scheme was inspired, in part, by the Progressive Education Movement (PEM). However, he never acknowledged it.¹⁰¹ He announced that the scheme was 'original'¹⁰² and 'essentially Indian'¹⁰³ born at shegaon (Sevagram Ashram at Wardha). In 1931, Gandhi met Montessori and praising her method said: 'Friends in India ask me to imitate you. I say to them: no, I should not imitate you, but should assimilate you and the fundamental truth underlying your method.'¹⁰⁴ Indian leaders and educationists also drew parallels between the scheme and Activity centred learning and in fact, much praise was accorded to the scheme for its connection with the same. For Instance, Nehru lauded the scheme for being an 'abundantly modest attempt on modern educational lines to develop a child, integrating his activities of mind and hand.'¹⁰⁵ Zakir Husain welcomed Gandhi's scheme (apart from self-supporting aspect) as 'sound educational proposition, no matter if one believed in urban civilization or rural, violence or non-violence.'¹⁰⁶ He compared it to project method

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ A word to Wardha, *Times of India*, October 11 1937, 8.

¹⁰¹ For more details see Holtzwarth, *Gandhi and Nai Talim*.

¹⁰² Reply to critics: reform of primary education, *Times of India*, 20 October 1937, 16.

¹⁰³ Mr Gandhi opens Vidya Mandir, *Times of India*, 22 April 1938, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Holtzwarth, *Gandhi and Nai Talim*, 59.

¹⁰⁵ Nehru's address to students, *Times of India*, 4 January 1939, 14.

¹⁰⁶ The Educational Conference, *Harijan* Vol. V, no. 38 (October 30 1937): 324

in America and ‘complex method’ in Russia and attracted the attention towards the failure of such methods due to the scarcity of teachers.

New Education Fellowship delegation visited Wardha and also attended the conference.¹⁰⁷ Dr Salter Davies, director of Education Kent and member of New Education Fellowship International, admired Gandhi’s education scheme so far as it was based upon craft and in this regard, he found the scheme ‘was entirely in accordance with the principles of teaching of the New Education Fellowship.’¹⁰⁸ He saw three dangers in this scheme. First danger was that education was sought to be ‘confined to one craft, which would be narrow in its effect and which would limit the children to that one craft.’ Second was the problem of trained primary teachers as ‘[p]rimary teachers in this country were half educated and they could not be expected to teach all the subjects required to be taught to children.’¹⁰⁹ Thirdly, he disapproved the idea that ‘the products of child labour... should pay the salaries of teachers.’ He considered it as ‘a wrong principle because the economic object eclipsed the educational aim.’¹¹⁰ H.A. Popley of the London Mission Community Training School Erode linked Wardha scheme with the Project Method or the Activity method in education due to its craft-centredness. However, he insisted that the same craft should not be taken up in all terms of a class or that ‘it would go on with them into the higher classes. Children desired variety in their activities and freedom in their choices.’ Apart from this, he remarked that the Wardha scheme differs from the Project method for its emphasis on the economic aspect while the latter has an educative purpose in view:

Thus we part company with the Wardha Scheme in its insistence upon carrying forward a complete training in one basic craft through all the school years, having in mind an economic purpose. We believe that economic values will come out of activity programme such as the projects I have been speaking of, but these are subsidiary and not central. To use the centre of things is the child itself, with its own interests, and not the interests of adults, however great and noble they may be.¹¹¹

Though Gandhi’s ideas of education of ‘heart, head and hand’ finds resonance with the concepts of Montessori, Froebel, Dewey and others from the ‘Progressive Education Movement,’ there was an essential difference in terms of goals they wanted to achieve. While for Montessori and others of PEM, the child was the focus and overall development

¹⁰⁷ footnote in CWMG Vol. 65, 272.

¹⁰⁸ Indian illiteracy: plea for educated democracy, *Times of India*, January 19 1938, 15.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ The Project method: Activity schools, *Times of India*, 6 June 1938, 16.

of the child was of prime concern. For Gandhi, it was the maintenance of rural social order that was at the core of his ideas. There was an anxiety that modern education would disturb the rural social order by alienating the manual working castes from their occupation. Gandhi, like landed elites and political leaders preceding him, shared the anxiety that the education of masses would make them alienated from their ancestral profession. Hence, he came out with his scheme wherein the masses would be ‘taught’ their occupations so that they develop the ‘dignity for labour’ instead of looking down upon it.

5.3. Zakir Husain Committee report

The Wardha conference after passing the resolution appointed a committee to frame a syllabus for working out the Wardha scheme of education. The committee consisted of Dr Zakir Husain (as chairman), K.G. Saiyidain, Vinoba Bhave, Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Kishorlal Mashruwala, Asha Devi, Krishnadas Jajuju, K.T. Shah, J.C. Kumarappa and E.W. Aryanayakam. Except Vinoba Bhave all the members of the Committee were beneficiaries of English education and five out of them had foreign degrees.¹¹² Ironically, these beneficiaries of English education set sail on the mission of depriving millions of children of the benefits of English education.

The committee submitted its report in December 1937. Curiously enough, the report was not signed by K.T. Shah, who was one of the members of the committee. Instead, Prof Shah had written a minute of dissent. The entire report of the committee was published in the *Harijan* (11 December 1937 issue) except this minute of dissent as Gandhi had ‘some difficulties in publishing the minute and he wanted to discuss them with Prof. Shah.’¹¹³ The next issue of *Harijan* noted that publication of the minute was postponed ‘until such time as Gandhiji can have a full discussion with prof. Shah.’¹¹⁴ The dissenting note, however, was never published.

The committee framed a timetable of five hours and thirty minutes for seven years of basic education.

The Basic Craft	3hours 30 minutes
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Music, drawing and arithmetic	40 minutes
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¹¹² Zakir Husain: PhD (Berlin University), K.G. Sayidain: M.Ed (Leeds University), K.T. Shah: B.Sc (London University), J.C. Kumarappa: M.A. (Columbia), E.W. Aryanayakam: B.Ed (Edinburgh), Diploma in Education (University of Cambridge) and FRSA.

¹¹³ *Harijan* Vol. V No. 44 (18 Dec 1937): 381.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The mother tongue	40 minutes
Social studies and general science	30 minutes
Physical training	10 minutes
Recess	10 minutes
Total	5 hours and 30 minutes

The report prepared by Zakir Husain Committee outlined a detailed ‘grade placements of the subjects for the seven classes of the basic school.’ It aimed to illustrate that with spinning and weaving (also agriculture and woodwork) as the basic craft

it is possible to include the essential subject-matter in language, mathematics, social studies, general science, and drawing, within the time available for the purpose and to co-ordinate it with craft work to a considerable extent.¹¹⁵

The committee pointed out that while devising the syllabus, they have ensured that ‘no really significant units of cultural curriculum have been omitted.’¹¹⁶ The syllabus for Agriculture and woodwork were prepared by ‘experts outside... [the] Committee’ as the committee thought that they did not have the ‘necessary knowledge and experience.’¹¹⁷ The report further aimed to answer the criticism that the scheme was not child-centred and argued in its defence:

We fail to understand how this scheme, based on activity, and the study of the child’s physical and social environment, can be less child-centric than the present education which is entirely book-centred!¹¹⁸

It stressed that teaching of subjects such as social studies ‘should not only be closely co-ordinated [with the basic craft], but it should spring from actual situations- the child’s home, his village, its occupations and craft.’¹¹⁹ The report differentiated the child’s environment into physical and social and emphatically stressed more on the necessity of correlation between the craft and the social environment of the child than on the physical environment. This is illustrated in the following statement:

The teaching of geography and nature study in the lower classes should, for example, be gathered round the different seasons which provide a starting point for observing natural phenomena, and the intelligent teacher will take care that the children make their early acquaintance with all these phenomena through active personal observations, excursions, gardening, tending of pets and survey of the locality. *But it is necessary, throughout the course, to ensure that the*

¹¹⁵ *Basic national Education: Report of the Zakir Husain Committee* (Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh), 48.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

*child acquires his knowledge actively and utilizes it for the understanding and better control of his social environment.*¹²⁰

The report was criticised for providing no linkage of the scheme with higher education. To this criticism, the committee asserted that it was not in their terms of reference, so they did not elaborate on it and not because they wanted 'to limit the facilities for higher education.'¹²¹ Keeping in mind the seven years' of primary education as envisaged by Gandhi, the committee chose the age range to be 7- 14. Regarding the education of the child below the age of seven, the report clarified that though they recognized the great importance of pre-school education but could 'not felt justified in including it as a part of our compulsory scheme' and insisted on its introduction 'on a voluntary basis.'¹²² For keeping the child at school until fourteen years of age, the committee reasoned that the child would

1. receive the essential modicum of social and civic training which, for psychological reasons, is not possible earlier.
2. He will become a better citizen.
3. His literary training will be thorough enough to make a lapse into illiteracy impossible and
4. He will acquire sufficient skill in his basic craft to practise it successfully if he adopts it as his vocation.¹²³

Narhari Parikh of the Harijan Ashram, Sabarmati also suggested the age range to be seven to fourteen. He opined that education of children below seven should be taken care of by parents as at that stage they would not be able to 'make any net return during the first two years of their schooling. Parents who are anxious to send their children below the age of seven to school, should make their own arrangements to have special Montessori schools for them.'¹²⁴ He also observed that for the children below the age of 10 it was not 'practicable to train them to any handicraft sufficiently to enable a net saving to be made by marketing at current prices the work that might be turned out by them' and relied on the teacher 'if they can avoid any dead loss.' However, he maintained that manual training could be started below the age of 10 'so that when the children have attained the proper age they might thereafter be able substantially to contribute to their school budget out of their earnings.'¹²⁵ Thus, Parikh's analysis of the age for the basic education scheme was based

¹²⁰ Ibid., 53-54, Emphasis mine.

¹²¹ Ibid., 57.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 58.

¹²⁴ Narhari parikh, Self Supporting education, *Harijan* Vol. 5, No. 30 (4 September, 1937): 244.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 242.

on self-supporting aspect of the scheme, instead of from the perspectives of the child development.

The self-supporting aspect of the scheme, which was the real test of its efficiency for Gandhi, was diluted to some extent by the committee but not scrapped altogether. They maintained that the ‘we do not contemplate any direct connection between teachers’ salary and the proceeds from the sale of the children’s products’¹²⁶ and suggested that the teachers’ salary were to be ‘paid directly from the State treasury.’ However, they recommended that the ‘fluctuating income’ obtained from the sale of school products would be deposited in State Treasury. Moreover, the committee did not deliberate specifically on the sale of children’s products as it thought that they were ‘primarily concerned with the drafting of an educational scheme and not with its political and administrative implications’ and also because Gandhi had noted in his speech at the Wardha Conference that the ‘State will be responsible for their purchase at a fair price.’¹²⁷

Deviating from Gandhi’s ideal of de-industrialised society the committee noted that giving importance to manual labour should not be taken as an opposition to industrialisation, rather this would be better preparation for industrial training in the later stage. In response to the criticism that the scheme was against industrialisation, the committee clarified:

We have recommended the approach to education through crafts and productive work because that is a psychologically sound method of education, but we fail to see why co-ordinated training in the use of the hand and the eye, training in practical skill and observation and manual work, should be a worse preparation for later industrial training than the present education which is notoriously bookish and academic, and definitely prejudices our students against all kinds of practical and industrial work.¹²⁸

The committee estimated that compulsory and free universal education would be attained in 20-25 years throughout the country and accordingly suggested the ‘drawing up of a twenty years’ plan to provide basic education and to liquidate illiteracy’¹²⁹ supplemented with adult education programmes.

The timetable of the report was criticised for devoting too much time for craft. The editorial in the *Times of India* noted that integration of children’s education with practical instruction does not mean ‘that vocational bias should dominate, particularly in the primary stages.’ He criticised the committee’s suggestion that a “‘basic craft” should occupy seventy-five

¹²⁶ *Basic national Education: Report of the Zakir Husain Committee*, 59.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 60

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

percent of a seven-year primary course' for it would lead to equally unfortunate results as the overemphasis on "'literacy" extravagance' has produced in the past. He attributed this over-emphasis on basic craft to the committee's 'anxiety to justify the postulate of self-support on estimated figures of a child's annual production.'¹³⁰ He considered the ideal of "'pay as you learn"' as 'fundamentally unsound, and, to be frank, unmoral.'¹³¹ Ramananda Chatterjee, the editor of *Modern Review*, observed:

It seems to us that they have given too little time for the teaching of subjects which are to increase the Pupils' knowledge, develop their intellect, broaden their outlook, and briefly, give them a liberal education fit to make them cultured citizens and members of society.¹³²

He further lamented the scheme for its over-emphasis on the pecuniary benefit of crafts as it would involve mechanical repetition of the same activity without any educative or intellectual value. He disapproved the scheme for making children between 7 and 14 years of age to 'pay for their own education by their own labour and skill... while young men and women need not pay for their education in that way.'¹³³ The Indian Social Reformer criticised the over-emphasis on manual training in a basic craft by quoting an American educationist:

The manual training exercises for the several years have been arranged with such variety as to insure [sic] sustained interest and to prevent irksome repetition of automatic unthinking reproduction. It seems to be intended that any process shall be discontinued as soon as it ceases to compel the students to think, that is as soon as it becomes merely mechanical.¹³⁴

V.N. Chandavarkar presiding over the Bombay Provincial Liberal Conference rebuked:

there are 3 hours and a half set aside daily for what is styled as vocational education, which in practice, as we find it envisaged in the syllabus, will reduce itself to spinning on the *takli* and weaving on the "charkha" with a variation, here and there, of printing, tailoring, carpentry and very few other things. In the rest of the period- and the schools have 5-1/2 hours total time of attendance- there is to be provision for music, physical exercise and religion. Imagine the condition of the boy and girl compulsorily sent to such a school, in health of body and mind, after the day-to-day taxing on the *charka* and *takli* and other lessons to follow it.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Congress and Education *Times of India*, 28 December 1937, 8.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² The Wardha scheme of education, *The Modern Review* Vol. LXIII, no. 1, 1937, 117.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Indian Social Reformer*, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Times of India*, May 2 1938, 9.

Another major flaw which was found in the Wardha scheme, and which was not rectified in the Zakir Husain Committee's report, was 'detachment from the natural upward course of education to which, for progress, a growing number must aspire.' He opined that

Primary education is not and must not become a compartment so self-contained as almost to put a premium on its finality. Not only is it necessary to provide a natural passage to secondary and still higher learning, literary or vocational, but the adolescent and the adult, whether unsuited or unable for further schooling, must not be relegated to the mental vacuum of a purely economic existence.¹³⁶

Another criticism of the Report was the neglect of agriculture as a productive craft in the scheme. S. V. Kamat argued despite India being an agricultural country the Report gave preference to weaving over agriculture because

[t]he Committee wants to make the students Congress-minded through weaving and not broad-minded through real education. I can very well aver that the scheme is entirely political and not educational in the least. A politically trained scheme will scarcely have any educational value. It will have its use so long as the party in power lasts; after that the scheme is bound to collapse and will cease to work. I can emphatically say that the Wardha scheme will not really benefit the country. It may produce weaving machines and not full-bloomed citizens.¹³⁷

Jamnadas Mehta, in Bombay Legislative Assembly, opposed the introduction of Wardha Scheme in the schools of the Presidency as he thought that out of five and a half our per day, over three hours 'were to be devoted to basic crafts which had nothing to do with literacy or with the mental development of children' and of the remaining time 'barely one hour would be devoted to what was now called education.' He therefore emphatically asserted that 'no experiments should be made at the expense of education or at the cost of the children of the province.'¹³⁸ T.N. Ghose expressed his concern on the danger of politicisation of education:

When statesmen undertake to steer the bark of education, it is only just and fair that it should be politics-ridden. Our only grievance is that the little of liberty that is still left in the domain of thought as nourished by education, disorganised and undeveloped as it may be, should be snatched away. Politics does not give us liberty... Education, rightly conceived may redeem certain fields where statesmen will not consider it worth their while to lord it over, but where men, otherwise smarting with mortification, might discover much to their relief sources of enjoyment born of the free spirit of man.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Congress and education *Times of India*, 28 Deember 1937, 8.

¹³⁷ *Indian Social Reformer*, January 1 1938, 282.

¹³⁸ *Times of India*, April 22 1938, 14.

¹³⁹ *The Modern Review*, June 1938, Vol XLIII, No. 6, 692.

5.4. Response of Congress Ministries

An important feature of the implementation of Gandhi's Wardha scheme in the Congress ruled provinces was instead of wholesale implementation of the Scheme these Provinces were 'giving close expert study to the whole problem from individual provincial points of view.' In the United Provinces, for instance, Sampurnanand, the Minister of Education, appointed committees to reorganise the existing educational system. However, unlike Gandhi, he emphasised the necessity of books and recommended to the Committees to 'exercise a balanced judgement.' He declared that 'we want "more of it and I am sure we can impart more in a given number of years than we are doing today' and this should be kept in mind while 'giv[ing] full consideration to the essential need for a vocational bias and to the various conferences and reports on that subject, notably the Abbott-Wood findings and, of course, the Wardha Scheme.'¹⁴⁰ He was against isolated experiments and sought 'to put a completely new scheme into operation simultaneously throughout the whole of the United Provinces.'¹⁴¹ Similarly in Madras, opinion 'solicited from educational bodies tend[ed] to be strongly critical of the time-table worked out by the Hussain Committee'¹⁴² and several representations were made to the government questioning the value of experimentation with the Wardha Scheme as such. Bihar Government '[w]hile leaving the examination of the question of the extent to which the Wardha Education Scheme can be adopted to the requirements of the province,'¹⁴³ in the meantime, decided to introduce the Wardha scheme on a small scale as an experimental measure by starting one school of this type in each district by the year 1939. A scheme was drawn up to train the first batch of 60 teachers, at a cost of Rs 5000 non-recurring. This development was noted with satisfaction in the Press:

But it is reasonably reassuring that the responsible provincial authorities faced with practical application are not carelessly accepting the ingenious findings of the Wardha Committee, and while recommending due consideration wisely clothe the basic idea in more realistic and comprehensive garb... With funds by no means profuse Provincial Ministers can scarcely afford dubious experiments. In the judicious introduction of vocational bias, it would be as well to avoid the dissipation of energy, not to speak of resources in an indefinite process of trial and error.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Provincial plans, *Times of India*, April 27 1938, 6.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Bihar plans, *Times of India*, June 29 1938, 6.

¹⁴⁴ Provincial plans, *Times of India*, April 27 1938, 6.

In the United Provinces, a training college was opened, at Allahabad for training 30 teachers 'as a first step to giving practical shape to the Wardha education scheme.' The college admitted only graduates and a stipend of Rs 15 per month for eight months was given. It was clarified at the outset that 'no government posts are guaranteed' but 'efforts will be made to absorb the trained teachers.'¹⁴⁵ A college for training only 30 teachers with no job guarantee even for such a publicised and budding scheme of education is indicative of governments' lack of interest in the scheme. While inaugurating the training College, Sampurnanand declared emphatically, 'we have no intention of trying to make education self-supporting... education will have to be financed as heretofore.'¹⁴⁶ He further clarified that vocational aspect of the basic crafts would be subsidiary and teaching their connection with the life of the people would be of prime importance. Regarding little emphasis on books in the Wardha scheme, he reiterated his stance that 'in relieving present-day education of its "bookishness" there was certainly no thought of impairing the content or quality of knowledge imparted.' He also rejected possibilities of 'any whole-sale change in the personnel of the teaching staff.'¹⁴⁷ In the light of these statements of the education minister of the United Provinces, the editorial in the *Times of India* remarked that the education minister 'carried the embellishment of the Wardha scheme to a stage where it is scarcely discernible from its first design.'¹⁴⁸ The editorial expressed satisfaction that '[t]he Wardha Scheme had at least compelled a critical examination of educational methods in vogue, and the project and activity methods were prominently thrust on public attention.'¹⁴⁹ The minister referred to the Basic College as an 'experiment' because 'it would be unwise to plunge the Province into revolutionary changes without adequate preparation.'¹⁵⁰

In the Central Provinces, Vidya Mandir Scheme in collaboration with the Wardha scheme was introduced. The scheme was proposed by Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla, the education minister of C.P., at the same Wardha education conference at which Gandhi presented his plan. However, the conference passed the resolution in favour of Gandhi's scheme. Nonetheless, Shukla's scheme was alive in Central Provinces where it was proposed to open 166 Vidya Mandirs, two in each tahsil, at the Government's expense. A committee consisting of nine members, with Dr Zakir Husain as Chairman, was appointed to prepare

¹⁴⁵ UP and Wardha scheme: Training college plan, *Times of India*, 25 July 1938, 14.

¹⁴⁶ *Times of India*, 31 August 1938, 23.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

a syllabus for the use of primary schools and *vidya mandirs*. A training school for teachers was opened at Wardha on 21 April 1938. The teachers thus trained at the school were to be employed in 166 Vidya Mandirs of the Central Provinces. More than 5,000 applications were received for the post of 166 teachers in primary schools. 'The applicants include ten law graduates, an M.A. (oxford) and 240 matriculates.'¹⁵¹ To this huge turnout of applications, Gandhi attributed the 'serious unemployment amongst the educated, who are unable to secure even *dal-bat*, some with noble motives, others again seeking some work for bread.'¹⁵²

The foundation stone of the school, 'the brick and mud building,' was laid by Gandhi, and Pandit Shukla 'read the pledge of service which was repeated by the students.' Students, the prospective teachers, took the pledge that they were 'promising service for 25 years on Rs 15 per month.'¹⁵³ Gandhi in his speech cautioned the students that they had taken a solemn pledge difficult to fulfil and '[i]f you prove true to the pledge, you will set a noble example before the world. If unsuccessful, I and the Hon. Mr. Shukla will be condemned. So the weaklings better withdraw now.'¹⁵⁴ He further urged the teachers to 'Cast off Western ideas and identify yourselves with villagers and live their lives. The Westerners are giving destructive instructions; we constructive through non-violence.' Referring to Hitler in Germany, he remarked: 'Herr Hitler is achieving his goal through the sword, I through the soul.'¹⁵⁵

5.5. Wardha Scheme and the Muslims

Shafaat Ahmad Khan of the Allahabad University who was a delegate to the All-India Muslim Educational Conference criticised the Wardha scheme of education for being 'financially impossible, educationally unsound, politically undesirable and psychologically impracticable.'¹⁵⁶ He opined that 'to make the scheme self-supporting is to commercialise education and to exploit the most precious years and most impressionable period of boyhood.' He reasoned that in all the civilised countries of the world it was the duty of the

¹⁵¹ C.P. Vidya mandir scheme, 5000 application, *Times of India*, 13 March 1938, 12.

¹⁵² Mr Gandhi opens Vidya Mandir, *Times of India*, 22 April 1938, 14.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Mr Gandhi opens Vidya Mandir, TOI, 22 April 1938, 14

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan's criticism, Oct 12 1938, p. 17

state to ‘invest a very large portion of its revenues in the growth and development of the mind and body of its future citizens’ but in the Wardha scheme ‘we are literally putting the clock backward and making our youngsters mere machines in the ruthless process of profiteering.’ Replying to the argument that free primary education could be made possible only by making it self-supporting he suggested that

it is possible to develop and proceed gradually in accordance with the five year plan and maintain the quality of education and a fairly good standard for boys than make them mere cogs in the wheels of a State industry.¹⁵⁷

He emphasised on development of all the faculties of ‘boys’ and not ‘merely automations who are expert only in spinning and weaving.’¹⁵⁸

Syed Mohamed Yusuf from Bhopal in his letter to the editor of the Times of India wrote that except the so-called nationalist Muslims, the Wardha scheme was unanimously condemned by all sections of Mussalmans for being detrimental to their religion, culture and language. He enumerated three main objections to the scheme. First, non-recognition of Muslim culture in the scheme, second, the superimposition of the philosophy of ahimsa on Muslim boys and thirdly the Urdu-Hindi controversy. A.K. Fazlul Haq, Prime Minister of Bengal and chairman of the reception committee, All India Muslim Educational Conference, said that

absence of religious teaching and basing the entire education on Gandhian teachings was but a clever device to de-islamize Muslim boys and girls in the formative period of their intellectual lives. Muslims will never barter their cultural autonomy, educational freedom and religious independence to any system of free education which is calculated to undermine the foundations of their nationality.¹⁵⁹

Muslim League also opposed the scheme for the similar reasons noted above.

5.6. Concluding Remarks

Gandhi propounded his scheme of Education when Congress Ministries were formed in various provinces during Provincial Autonomy in conjunction with his scheme of Prohibition. He wanted to make the education self-supporting by making children pay for

¹⁵⁷ Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan’s criticism, *Times of India*, October 12 1938, 17.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Cultural autonomy of Muslims: Mr Haq denounces Wardha scheme, *Times of India*, December 30 1939, 5.

their labour through productive craft such as spinning and weaving. The self-sufficiency aspect was the most controversial aspect of his scheme. It was criticised for propagating child labour and school becoming factories. It was also argued that it would lead to wastage of raw materials and that it would instigate competition with professional artisans. The scheme was also opposed for being costly and unpractical because the type of efficient teachers required for the success of the scheme was not available. Moreover, it also met criticism from Muslim league because it made no provision for the religious education of Muslim children. As far as the educational value of the scheme is concerned, the scheme would have been of high value if it had focussed on a variety of crafts instead of only spinning. This made the task monotonous. Moreover, the authority of the teacher rendered the scheme teacher-centred instead of child-centred.

When seen in the context of the debates on free and compulsory education in preceding decades it is quite evident that his scheme was an answer to the anxiety of caste Hindus and Gandhi's himself on the issue of alienation of lower and depressed castes from their ancestral occupation. Gandhi wanted, through this scheme, to maintain the caste-based social structure of the society (with respect to lower and depressed castes, as higher castes were free to choose whatever vocation they liked).

Chapter 6

Constitution of India: Making of the Article 45

The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.¹

This directive to the State under Article 45 of the Indian constitution, adopted in 1950, raises some pertinent questions? First, why the founding fathers of the constitution did not give free and compulsory education the status of a fundamental right? Particularly so, when compulsory education Acts passed by all the provinces of British India, failed to ensure elementary education for all the children of the country. Indian National Congress in its resolutions, over the years, reiterated its demand for compulsory education. Further, the Karachi Session of the INC in its resolution listed it among one of the several Fundamental Rights of Citizens. The preamble of the resolution stated:

to enable the masses to appreciate what Swaraj, as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, declared, that in order to end the exploitation of masses any constitution agreed to on behalf of the Congress should provide, among other things, for free and compulsory primary education.²

Second, why this Article did not specify the lower age limit for compulsion? Third, why basic education scheme of Gandhi, which was the latest and the most publicised scheme, could not find a place in this Article? As can be inferred from previous chapters, the legislative provision for universal education acquired the attention of intelligentsia and the political leaders of the time after Gokhale's Bill of 1911. Subsequently, the Primary education Acts were passed in various provinces. It was recognised as the first duty of a civilised and democratic state to provide for free and compulsory education to its children. So why founding fathers fell short of delivering to the citizens of the independent Nation their fundamental right to education. This chapter attempts to find the answer to these questions by examining various reports of CABE and constituent assembly debates. The portion dealing with age range and absence of

¹ Article 45, Constitution of India.

² K.T. Shah (ed.), *National Planning Committee Series: General Education and Technical Education & Developmental Research*, (Bombay: Vora & Co. Publishers Ltd. 1948), 18.

‘Basic education’ has its root in two Kher Committees, Sargent plan and the Kher committee of 1947. Therefore, these have been discussed first. In the next section of the chapter, the constituent assembly debates have been taken up.

The Central Advisory Board of Education appointed in January 1938, a Committee to examine the Wardha Scheme (Zakir Husain Committee report on Basic education) in the light of Wood-Abbott Report on general and vocational education and other relevant documents. The Committee headed by B.G. Kher, the premier of Bombay, met in Shimla from the 28-30 June 1938. After considering the report of the Kher Committee, the second Committee was appointed by the C.A.B.E in December 1938 under the chairmanship of B.G. Kher to consider the ‘co-ordination of ‘basic’ system with higher education [and] the ways and means of financing it.’³ This is popularly known as the second Kher Committee which submitted its report in 1939. C.A.B.E appointed another committee in 1944, to consider the question of post-war educational development in India. This report of this committee, popularly known as the Sargent Plan, dealt with all stages of education from primary to university level. The recommendations of the Sargent plan for primary or elementary stage (primary plus middle) of education was mainly based on the report of the two Kher Committees. Another committee was set up by C.A.B.E in 1947 to consider the recommendations of the Sargent plan, which was again headed by B.G. Kher. The recommendations of the Sargent Committee and the Kher Committee of 1947 made way into Article 45 of the constitution of India. Following paragraphs examine the recommendations of these committees with respect to themes: age range for compulsion, pre-basic (or pre-primary) education, stages of education, self-supporting aspect and language.

Before we proceed further, it is important to mention another committee formed in 1938 for framing a National Policy of Education. This Committee was the National Planning Committee. National Planning Committee was constituted in 1938 by the Indian National Congress under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Eight sub-committees were formed to look into various aspects of national development. ‘Education’ was one such sub-committee consisting of two sub-sub-committees viz. ‘General Education’ and ‘Technical Education’. The sub-committee on ‘General Education’ was headed by Dr S. Radhakrishnan and E.W.

³ Report of the Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education appointed to consider the Wardha Education Scheme (Delhi: Manager of publications, 1939)

Aryanayakam⁴ was the Secretary. The General Education Sub-committee further formed two sub-committees- Pre-Basic Education and the Basic Education Subcommittee. Based on the recommendation of the sub-committee on general education, the NPC passed a resolution on education. Recommendations of the NPC related to pre-basic education and basic education were similar to those of the two Kher Committees except the age range for compulsion. Therefore, NPC has not been dealt with separately, and the difference regarding the age range has been included in section 6.1. The resolution on General Education was passed in 1940 but owing to political upheaval the report was published in 1948.

6.1 Age range for compulsion

The majority of members of the first Kher Committee preferred that ‘the age range for compulsory education should be six years to fourteen years, though children of five years age should not be excluded from school.’⁵ This was in view of the fact that the age of admission in schools in advanced countries was 5 or 6 years and also because the extant age of admission in schools in India was six years. The maximum upper age limit for compulsion under the Provincial Primary Education Acts was 11. The Kher Committee, in consonance with the Zakir Husain Committee, increased the upper age limit to fourteen years. The Zakir Husain Committee insisted that the age range for compulsion should be reckoned downwards from 14 instead of upwards from seven. Thus, compulsion from 9 to 13 years was preferable to that from 6 to 11 years. This was because they thought that

in the present circumstances education in the early years is of little worth, causes wastage and stagnation and is therefore a waste of money and that the years of adolescence offer greater educative possibilities than the age of childhood. By retaining the higher age limit, civic and social responsibilities, permanent literacy and craft skill and interest can be better developed.⁶⁷

Thus, the Kher committee suggested the age range for compulsory education to be 6 to 14 years, i.e. eight years of compulsory education instead of 7 years suggested by Gandhi. They, however, recommended the transfer to Anglo-vernacular and other schools may be permitted after the completion of the fifth class or about the age of 11+.⁸ The second committee advised

⁴ Aryanayakam was also the secretary at Hindustani Talimi Sangh. He was one of the most dedicated person to work towards the cause of Basic education.

⁵ Report of the Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education appointed to consider the Wardha Education Scheme (Delhi: Manager of publications, 1939), 5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

that “basic” education should comprise a correlated course of eight years from the age of 6 to the age of 14.

The NPC resolution recommended the age range for compulsion from seven to fourteen instead of six to fourteen. It stated: ‘Basic Education shall be free, compulsory and universal for every child between the ages of seven and fourteen.’⁹ On the issue of universal compulsory education Sargent plan noted,

If there is to be anything like equality of opportunity, it is impossible to justify providing facilities for some of the nation's children and not for others. In the first place, therefore, a national system can hardly be other than universal. Secondly it must also be compulsory, if the grave wastage which exists today under a voluntary system is not to be perpetuated and even aggravated. And thirdly, if education is to be universal and compulsory, equity requires that it should be free and common-sense demands that it should last long enough to secure its fundamental objective.¹⁰

The plan observed that ‘a compulsory school life of eight years may be taken as the basis upon which plans for immediate post-war development should be made.’¹¹ The Inter-university board suggested the lower age limit to be five. The committee thought that 13 would be ‘too early an age for 80 percent of the future citizens finish their full-time education’¹² and increasing the period to 9 years with an upper age limit at 14 would add Rs 20 crores to the ultimate cost. So, they retained the suggestion of the two Kher committees for eight years of schooling from 6 to 14 years of age.

The Sargent plan was against proposals for compulsion only up to the end of the junior basic stage on economic grounds and observed:

Basic education from 6-14 is an organic whole and will lose much of its value, if not so treated; in any case an education, which lasts only five years and ends about the age of eleven, cannot be regarded as an adequate preparation either for life or livelihood.¹³

It noted that if it was necessary to progress for a universal compulsory system of basic education by stages, ‘the progression should clearly be from area to area and not from age to age.’¹⁴ Thus, it recommended that ‘a system of universal, compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of six and fourteen should be introduced as speedily as

⁹ Shah, *National Planning Committee*, 83.

¹⁰ Central Advisory Board of Education, *Post-War Educational Development in India*, (New Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1944 (Third Edn)), 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

possible.¹⁵ The report set a time limit of forty years to achieve this goal of universal free and compulsory education on grounds of ‘practical difficulty of recruiting the requisite supply of trained teachers.’¹⁶

6.2. Stage of education

The second Kher Committee suggested that for the sake of convenience, the eight years of basic schooling should be divided into two stages – ‘the first stage covering a period of five years and the second stage 3 years. The first stage should be called “junior” and the second stage “senior”’¹⁷ The committee opined that after junior basic stage arrangements should be made for ‘senior’ basic schools for those who wanted to continue the basic education and other types of post-primary schools preparing the child for University or technical education. In both the type of school, the committee observed, the curriculum ‘should develop logically from ‘junior basic’ schools.’¹⁸ The Committee suggested further that aptitude of the child displayed at the junior basic stage should be the deciding criteria for transfer to senior basic or other post-primary schools:

[S]ubject to the over-riding right of the parent to make the final decision, the school to which a child should go at the conclusion of the ‘junior basic’ stage should be determined primarily by the special aptitudes he has displayed during this stage.’¹⁹

It was necessary that in both type of schools, viz. ‘senior’ basic and other post-primary, ‘in any area where compulsory education up to 14 [was] in force, a child will remain under obligation to attend school to that age.’²⁰ The Junior and senior basic stage of second Kher committee was suggested by Sargent committee as well; however, they gave the liberty of using terms primary and middle instead of junior and senior basic provided ‘they accept the essential unity of the two stages and the necessity of so planning the Primary course that it leads up naturally to the middle.’²¹ Regarding the transfer from junior basic to senior basic and other post-primary schools, the committee endorsed the recommendation of the second Kher committee. On completion of senior basic school, the committee observed, ‘the pupil should be prepared to

¹⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Report of the Second Wardha Education Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education, 1939 (New Delhi: Government of India press, 1940), 4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *Post-War Educational Development in India*, 8-9.

take his place in the community as a worker and as a future citizen'²² They however, suggested that the 'Senior Basic school should afford the widest possible opportunities for those corporate activities, including physical training and organised games, which are essential to supplement the instruction given in the class-room.'²³

6.3. Learning through activity and Self-Supporting aspect/financing

The first Kher committee recommended that the scheme should 'first be introduced in rural areas and should not be extended to urban areas without necessary *modifications* though the principle of education through activity as true for urban as for rural schools.'²⁴ The committee further recommended that the term 'productive' craft be replaced by 'creative' as the word 'productive' implied that the 'economic production outweighs educative development.'²⁵ However, the Committee approved the production of saleable material in higher classes and suggested that the income from such material might be used for the upkeep of the school. Thus, with a slight modification of terminology and a gradual shift to production, the Committee did not entirely do away with the Wardha scheme.

A commendable recommendation of the committee was that it did not approve that any single Basic craft should be imposed on children of lowest classes of the Basic school as '[a]ctivities in these schools arise from the child's interests and desire and should not be forced on him by the adult.'²⁶ The committee recommended that

in the lower classes (to the age of about 10 plus) there should be no single basic craft but that the various forms of activity should serve as a preparation for, and develop into, a productive basic craft in the higher classes.²⁷

For higher classes the Committee recommended:

[A]ll aspects of the "cultural" subjects cannot so be treated not even by stretching correlation beyond its legitimate limits. Formal instruction will therefore be necessary to teach certain elements of cultural subjects, which cannot naturally be co-ordinated with the basic craft.'²⁸

²² Ibid., 9.

²³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴ Report of the Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education appointed to consider the Wardha Education Scheme (Delhi: Manager of publications, 1939), 4.

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

The second Kher Committee accepted that 'no school 'basic' or otherwise, which devotes itself to its proper function is likely to be an entirely self-supporting unit.'²⁹ However, at the same time, they maintained that the marketable articles produced by children might be sold to add to the school's treasury for maintenance of the school. For efficient disposal of the 'marketable articles thereby produced,'³⁰ the second Kher Committee suggested the formation of a central agency in each province. They further added that after this and other available sources were fully explored public funds should meet the balance and noted:

The provision of such education as is necessary for its own stability and the well-being of its citizens is a fundamental responsibility of the democratic State- a responsibility which should be equitably distributed among those authorities which are concerned with educational administration.³¹

The committee after having convinced that the cost of financing Basic education was beyond the financial capacity of any provincial government or local body recommended that 'the Central government should contribute not less than half the approved net expenditure of a Provincial government on this particular service.'³² For capital expenditure on buildings, equipment, etc., the committee suggested a loan system. The Sargent scheme endorsed the principle of 'learning through activity' and observed that

At the lower stages the activity will take many forms leading gradually up to a basic craft or crafts suited to local conditions. So far as possible the whole of the curriculum will be harmonised with this general conception. The three R's by themselves can no longer be regarded as an adequate equipment for efficient citizenship.³³

However, regarding the self-supporting aspect of the Wardha scheme, it rejected the idea that 'education at any stage and particularly in the lowest stages can or should be expected to pay for itself through the sale of articles produced by the pupils.'³⁴

6.4. Language

The first Kher Committee concurred to Husain Committee on the medium of instruction to be mother tongue. The Committee, like Husain Committee, made the teaching of Hindustani compulsory in basic schools but gave 'full option...to children to choose the script [Hindi and

²⁹ *Report of the Second Wardha Education Committee*, 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Post-War Educational Development in India*, 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Urdu] and that provision should be made for teaching in that script.’³⁵ Regarding the teaching of English in Basic schools, there was a difference of opinion among the members of the committee. Some members opined that:

English should have no place in these schools which are meant for rural areas. The study of English in such schools is educationally unsound. The time taken in its study is out of all proportion to the advantage gained and tends to prevent the formation of a firm foundation of education.³⁶

other members of the Committee favoured teaching of English in Basic Schools ‘so long as English remains the medium of instruction in colleges and retains its importance in all phases of Indian life.’³⁷ The committee sought a compromise that ‘English should not be included in the curriculum of “basic” Wardha Schools’ but the demand for English would be met by ‘the possibility of transfer after the 5th class or about the age of 11+ to schools where English is taught.’³⁸ While the first Kher committee suggested transfer to Anglo-vernacular school at 11+ or class 5 for those who wanted to pursue the study of English, the second Kher committee opined that since English would not be a part of basic schools ‘[s]pecial arrangements must be made so that such children may receive special tuition in those subjects e.g. English which do not form part of the curriculum of the ‘senior basic’ school.’³⁹ The Sargent plan opined that at the junior basic stage English should not be taught under any circumstances. For senior basic stage also they did not consider it desirable to introduce English in the curriculum, but in case of ‘strong public demand for it in certain areas’ they left the ‘final decision in the hands of the Provincial Education department.’⁴⁰ Thus, the recommendation of the first committee was modified.

6.5. Pre-primary education

The second Kher Committee recognized the importance of pre-basic education and considered it ‘highly desirable’ but did not recommend lowering down of lower age limit for compulsion below 6 years, as they opined, ‘to do so would add substantially to the serious financial problems already involved by the ‘basic education’ scheme and would also assume an adequate supply of properly trained women teachers...such a supply is practically non-existent in India

³⁵ Report of the Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education appointed to consider the Wardha Education Scheme, 6.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Report of the Second Wardha Education Committee, 5.

⁴⁰ *Post-War Educational Development in India*, 9.

at the represent time.⁴¹ Due to these issues, the committee suggested that the ‘pre-basic’ education, ‘when provided by the State, should be free but not compulsory.’⁴² J. C. Powell-Price dissented from the committee’s observation regarding pre-basic education. In his minute of dissent, he noted:

I am unable to subscribe to the theory that Pre-basic education should not be the concern of Government. In India there is only one agency which can be entrusted with elementary education and that is government. The infants class is an integral part of primary education and in no case be separated. The nursery school is a totally different proposition and it only leads to confusion to class infant and Nursery classes together.⁴³

The Sargent plan gave due emphasis on pre-primary education of children below six years of age not only from children’s perspective but also from the perspective of working mother. Referring to Second Kher Committee’s view that pre-primary education was ‘highly desirable’ they observed that the term ‘highly desirable is an under-statement’ and that ‘[t]he provision of an adequate number of Nursery schools and classes is essential.’⁴⁴ They, however, endorsed the view of the Second Kher Committee that this should be free but not compulsory. In view of the difficulty of establishing pre-primary schools within a radius of one and a half mile, the distance within which small children could commute and the problem of conveyance in rural areas, they suggested the addition of a Nursery class to ordinary Junior Basic (Primary) School in rural areas. For urban areas, they suggested setting up of regular nursery schools at the same site as Junior Basic (Primary) School or as a separate department of these schools.

6.6. Compulsion for girls

The second Kher Committee noted with regard to girls that compulsion till the age of 14 would apply for the girls ‘if and when introduced.’⁴⁵ However, the syllabus ought to be modified in accordance with the ‘aptitudes and requirements of older girls and should include such subjects as cookery, laundry work, needlework, homecrafts, the care of children, first aid etc.’ and ‘the rest of the instruction being correlated with these practical activities in accordance with the general principles of the ‘basic education’ scheme.’⁴⁶

⁴¹ Report of the Second Wardha Education Committee, 2.

⁴² Ibid., 3.

⁴³ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁴ *Post-War Educational Development in India*, 15.

⁴⁵ Report of the Second Wardha Education Committee, 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Regarding recommendation No. 6 (courses for girls) the government of Bombay noted that provision of the subjects recommended by the committee would be very costly: 'Nowhere in the committee's report has the question of cost been considered. It may be possible to have a course of this type in some well-endowed schools, but I fail to understand how it can be made possible to have such schools on a country-wide basis.'⁴⁷

The Sargent Plan did not make any explicit recommendation regarding female education and education of depressed castes. Regarding the education of girls, it noted,

it is certainly not due to any failure to recognise the magnitude of this issue; in fact quite the opposite...in any modern community it is even more important for the mothers to be educated than the fathers and that consequently all educational facilities *mutandis mutandis*...should be equally available for both sexes. It is therefore, assumed in the following pages that whatever is needed for boys and men, not less will be required for girls and women.⁴⁸

To facilitate the education of girls, the first Kher Committee suggested that the teachers should not be paid less than Rs 20 per month. It emphasised on more and more recruitment of women teachers and 'to persuade girls of good education to take up teaching' and advised that 'the basic schools should be started only when suitable women teachers are available.'⁴⁹

6.7. Constitutional provision for universal education

The Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights was formed on 27 February 1947 and J. B. Kriplani was elected as its Chairman. The members of this sub-committee were: M. R. Masani, K. T. Shah, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, K. M. Munshi, Sardar Harnam Singh, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, B. R. Ambedkar, and Jairamdas Daulatram. A Note on Fundamental Rights was submitted by Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar to the Committee on March 14, 1947.⁵⁰ K.M. Munshi and Harnam Singh submitted draft Articles on Fundamental Rights on March 17 and 18 1947, respectively. Even before the Fundamental Rights sub-committee was formed K.T. Shah submitted a note on Fundamental Rights to the president of the Constituent Assembly on 23 December 1946. Of All the draft on Fundamental Rights, K.M. Munshi's was the most comprehensive. However, all the three contained provision for free

⁴⁷ Proceedings of the sixth meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education in India, 1941, Appendix I(b), Delhi: Manager of publications, 1941, 18.

⁴⁸ *Post-War Educational Development in India*, 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁰ B. Shiva Rao, A Note on Fundamental Rights by Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar March 14, 1947 *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 67.

primary education. K.T. Shah's draft included 59 Clauses under *Fundamental Rights of Citizens and Human Beings*. The Clause 41 included free education as Fundamental Right of citizens:

Every citizen has and is hereby guaranteed the right to free education up to a standard prescribed as the irreducible minimum by the Union Legislature, or the Legislature of any component part thereof.⁵¹

Harnam Singh's Draft stated in Clause 20: 'Elementary education is obligatory and free in the primary schools. Instruction in their own mother tongue is guaranteed to children of religious minorities'⁵² Article VIII of Munshi's draft dealt with *Right to Education*. It stated:

1. Every citizen is entitled to have free primary education and it shall be legally incumbent on every unit of the Union to introduce free and compulsory primary education up to the age of 14 years and in the case of adults up to the standard of literacy.
2. The duration, limits, and method of primary education shall be fixed by law.
3. Every citizen is entitled to have facilities provided for learning the national language in the variant and script of his choice.
4. The opportunities of education must be open to all citizens upon equal terms in accordance with their natural capacities and their desire to take advantage of the facilities available.⁵³

Thus, While K.T. Shah's Article guaranteed free education, it did not ensure compulsion. Harnam Singh's Article added the language dimension to free and compulsory education. It was Munshi's draft article which morphed into Article 45. On March 27 1947, there was a discussion on Article VIII of Munshi's draft clauses. After discussion, the clauses were put under justiciable Fundamental Rights viz. Article 24, 25 and 26. During the debate, there was 'some difference of opinion as to whether the right to primary education is a justiciable fundamental right.' Details about the discussion are not available. However, 'it was agreed by a majority that it should be included among justiciable Rights.'⁵⁴ The time limit within which the State was required to provide primary education to all children below 14 was put to 10 years and 'legally' was dropped. The Clauses 1 and 2 after merger became Article 24, under the Justiciable Fundamental Right of the Draft Report of the Subcommittee and read as follows:

Every citizen is entitled as of right to free primary education, and it shall be incumbent on every unit of the Union to provide within a period of 10 years from

⁵¹ Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution*, 53.

⁵² B. Shiva Rao, Harnam Singh's draft on Fundamental Rights, March 18 1947. *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II*, (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 82.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ B. Shiva Rao, Minutes of the meetings of the sub-committee, March 27 1947, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II*, (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 125.

the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory primary education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.⁵⁵

Without citing any reason or explanation, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur wrote to B.N. Rau to replace the Article 24 by the following:

Every citizen is entitled as of right to free primary education and it shall be the duty of the State to provide this within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.⁵⁶

In this modified version of Amrit Kaur, the term ‘compulsory’ was dropped. Quite surprisingly, the women’s movement, of which Amrit Kaur was a prominent leader, reiterated time and again to British authorities to introduce free and compulsory primary education but when it came to define the terms for universal education within the constitution, she suggested the contrary.

Sub-clause (3) of Article VIII was accepted by a majority with modification that Devanagari and Persian script were specified explicitly. This Sub-Clause became Article 25, under the Justiciable Fundamental Right of the Draft Report of the Sub-Committee: ‘Every citizen is entitled, as part of his right to free primary education, to have facilities provided for learning the national language either in the Devanagari or the Persian script at his option.’⁵⁷ M. R. Masani dissented with respect to the inclusion of Devanagari and Persian script in Clause 25. He noted: ‘I regret that my colleagues on the sub-committee did not find it possible to agree to the option being extended to the use of the Roman script as a further alternative.’ He opined that those

particularly in the South, who are not familiar at the same time with the Nagari or Persian script would find it easier to learn the national language and use it if they were able to do so through the medium of the Roman script. These considerations apply with special force to members of small minorities like the Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Jews who know the Roman script alone.⁵⁸

The Sub- Clause (4) of Article VIII of Munshi's draft was modified and adopted as Article 26 under the Justiciable Fundamental Right of the Draft Report: ‘Equal opportunities of education

⁵⁵ B. Shiva Rao, Draft report of the sub-committee April 3, 1947, Annexure, Fundamental rights Chapter I: Justiciable rights, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II*, (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 141.

⁵⁶ B. Shiva Rao, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's letter to B. N. Rau March 31, 1947, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II*, (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 147

⁵⁷ B. Shiva Rao, Draft report of the sub-committee April 3, 1947, Annexure, Fundamental rights Chapter I: Justiciable rights, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 141.

⁵⁸ B. Shiva Rao., minutes of dissent to the draft report April 14, 1947, M.R. Masani, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 161.

shall be open to all citizens: Provided that nothing herein contained shall preclude any unit from providing special facilities for educationally backward sections of the population.⁵⁹ With respect to this Clause Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar argued that he had no objection to this in principle but he was not in favour of including it in the list of justiciable fundamental rights.⁶⁰ On 15 April 1947 at the meeting of the Sub-Committee, the draft report was considered clause by clause. The Clauses 24, 25 and 26 were accepted at the meeting and it was decided that they should come under a chapter entitled 'Rights to Education.'⁶¹ J. B. Kriplani, the chairman of Fundamental Rights Committee submitted the Report of the Sub-committee on Fundamental Rights to Sardar Patel, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Minorities, Fundamental Rights etc on 16 April 1947. This report of the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee included Clauses 23, 24 and 25 under the Chapter *Rights to Education*. In this Report the beginning sentence of Clause 23 was slightly modified in accordance with the wordings of Amrit Kaur's suggestion mentioned above. However, the chief suggestion of Amrit Kaur that the term 'compulsory' be dropped was not given effect to. The Clause 24 thus read:

Every citizen is entitled as of right to free primary education and it shall be the duty of the State to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory primary education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.⁶²

Clause 24 was dissented by M.R. Masani, Hansa Mehta and Sardar K.M. Panikkar. Masani's note was similar to the one he had submitted before the discussion of the draft report. However, this time it was also signed by Hansa Mehta. Panikkar's note of dissent was based on the contention that the option of teaching the National language in Devanagari or the Persian script would incur massive expenditure in non-Hindi areas. Moreover, it would be hugely resisted in such areas. He noted:

With the first part I am entirely in agreement, but the second part would involve grave conflicts between the Centre and the units in large areas involving millions of people. Such an attempt would be resisted by people of many provinces on sentimental grounds of attachment to their languages. Considered from the administrative point of view it is also impracticable. The cost involved will be so high that the whole educational policy in non-Hindi areas may possibly be wrecked on it. To provide in every primary school at the option of the student for the study

⁵⁹ B. Shiva Rao, Minutes of the meetings of the sub-committee, March 27 1947, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 126

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁶¹ B. Shiva Rao, Minutes of the meetings of the sub-committee, April 15 1947, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 166.

⁶² B. Shiva Rao, Report of the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights April 16 1947, Annexure, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 174.

of the national language in Devanagari or the Persian script in areas where these languages are foreign will involve the appointment of so many teachers that the cost of primary education will become enormous. If education was voluntary this might not have been so difficult but when it is made compulsory to ask boys to be instructed in this language also is to my mind impracticable. The agitation which followed the attempt to introduce Hindi in Madras by Shri Rajagopalachari will at least indicate how strongly people feel on this matter.⁶³

The Fundamental Rights sub-committee was of the view that the Fundamental Rights set out by the Committee should be 'binding on all authorities, whether of the Union or the units.'⁶⁴ Panikkar dissented from this view and noted that this would 'nullify the very idea of the autonomy of the unit or the Province'⁶⁵ and

enforcement of such rights...may bring the State into conflict with the units which could not be resolved by any other method than federal execution, i.e., the use of the armed forces of the Union to compel a unit to abide by the decision of the Supreme Court.⁶⁶

He submitted a list of Articles which he thought should be 'enforceable by the machinery of the units and not by the Supreme Court.'⁶⁷ This list of Articles contained Article 23 and 25. The argument of Juneja that due to weak centre-autonomous units proposed by Cabinet Mission plan, the Clause 23 was dropped from the list of enforceable fundamental Rights⁶⁸ does not provides answer to the question that why the Clause 23 was dropped from the list of Fundamental Rights. This is because these Rights were not just binding on Union only but 'on all authorities, whether of the Union or the units.'⁶⁹ In fact Sardar Panikkar had dissented from this view and wanted to put Article 23 in to the list which was to be 'enforceable by the machinery of the units and not by the Supreme Court.'⁷⁰ In the case of weak Centre politically and fiscally autonomous units could have provided for it. Juneja's assertion in the same article

⁶³ B. Shiva Rao, Minutes of dissent to the report April 17-27, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 188

⁶⁴ B. Shiva Rao, Report of the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights April 16 1947, Paragraph 5, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 170

⁶⁵ B. Shiva Rao, Minutes of dissent to the report April 17-27, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 189.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 190

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Correcting a Historical injustice, *The Hindu*, May 14 2014, retrieved from

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/correcting-a-historical-injustice/article6005953.ece>

⁶⁹ B. Shiva Rao, Report of the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights April 16 1947, Paragraph 5, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 170.

⁷⁰ B. Shiva Rao, Minutes of dissent to the report April 17-27, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 190.

that M. Ruthnaswamy had dissented from the Sargent plan for its recommendation for free and compulsory education within a period of 40 years, is not right. He had not dissented specifically with respect to the provision of free and compulsory education. Under the Sargent plan the Centre was given the responsibility to provide finance after all other sources had been tapped. What Ruthnaswamy was arguing was that under such a condition of central authority care should be taken that the autonomy of the provinces was not harmed:

The financing of the scheme and the consequent control by the Government of India may raise doubts and fears in the minds of those that are concerned with the constitutional progress of the country. Education is a field primarily requiring experiment, and the provincial variations will add to the richness of Indian education. If there is to be subvention by a wealthy Central Government, which can afford to finance education, besides essential central services like defence and foreign affairs, it can be done only with regard to Provincial autonomy, which may become in the future even more extensive than it is now.⁷¹

K.T. Shah dissented from the very idea of having justiciable and non-justiciable Rights. He argued:

While appreciating the distinction between justiciable and non-justiciable rights, I hold that, owing to the very fact of such a distinction being drawn, the latter category of rights would remain no more than so many pious wishes. Given this differentiation, the Union and the unit Governments will be encouraged to stress or invent excuses why any one of these non-justiciable rights should not be given effect to. By keeping them on the Statute Book without making them imperative obligations of the State towards the citizen, we would be perpetrating a needless fraud, since it would provide an excellent window-dressing without any stock behind that dressing.⁷²

He tried to clarify his point by giving an example of obligation of the State regarding provision of free and compulsory education within ten years. At this stage, however, the Article 23 was part of justiciable Fundamental Rights.

There are, moreover, many rights in this category, which it may not be practicable all at once to give effect to. We have ourselves provided an illustration of this in laying it down as a fundamental right (justiciable) of the citizen to a given standard of education, free of cost to the recipient, his parent or guardian. Admittedly, such a policy may not be feasible all at once for reasons of finance and personnel. To meet this difficulty, we have made this right enforceable within a period of not more than ten years. Once an unambiguous declaration of such a right is made, those responsible for giving effect to it would have to bestir themselves to find ways and means to give effect to it. If they had no such responsibility placed upon

⁷¹ Note by M Ruthnaswamy, *Post-War Educational Development in India*, 105.

⁷² B. Shiva Rao, Minutes of dissent to the report April 17-27, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 191-92.

them, they might be inclined to avail themselves of every excuse to justify their own inactivity in the matter, indifference, or worse.⁷³

The Advisory Committee met on April 21, 1947 and clause by clause discussion ensued. The Clause 23, 24 and 25 were taken up on April 22, 1947. It is quite surprising that the Clause 23 which was kept under justiciable Right in the Report of the Sub-committee was transferred to non-justiciable Fundamental Rights at the meeting of the Advisory Committee without any deliberation on the issue. Following is an account of how the Clause was taken up.

Secretary: 23. Every citizen is entitled as of right to free primary education and it shall be the duty of the State to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory primary education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.

M. Ruthnaswamy : Is this a justiciable right? Supposing the government have no money?

Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar : I want the deletion of this clause.

Govind Ballabh Pant: I suggest that this clause be transferred to Part 2. It cannot be justiciable. No court can possibly adjudicate.

Chairman : Clause 24.⁷⁴

Thus, without any further discussion or dissent, Clause 23 was dropped from the list of justiciable Fundamental Rights. It is quite ironical and surprising that the issue which was so alive when a foreign government was in power, was relegated to the background when the country got freedom and the foundation of a future independent sovereign nation was being laid. No concern was shown for Shah's argument against any provision of non-justiciable Rights as these were just 'pious wishes.' When K.T. Shah expressed his dissent for provision of non-justiciable Fundamental Rights, at that time, Article 23 was justiciable. Instead of taking any action in the direction of removal of Non-Justiciable Rights, the Advisory committee shifted the State's obligation for free and compulsory education to the latter. The two women members of the Committee viz. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Hansa Mehta, who were leading the Women's movement, one of the chief objects of which was the provision of free and compulsory education to all children of the nation, remained silent when this regressive step was being suggested and approved. A similar fate was met by Article 24 and 25.

⁷³ Ibid., 192.

⁷⁴ B. Shiva Rao, Advisory Committee Proceedings, April 21-22, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 272.

Thus, from Rights to Education Clause 23 was shifted to the Fundamental Principles of Governance under Clause 8. It read:

Every citizen is entitled to free primary education, and it shall be the duty of the State to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory primary education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.⁷⁵

The supplementary report of the Advisory Committee was presented to the constituent Assembly on August 30 1947. Here again, no discussion on this clause took place, let alone dissent. Only one reference was made by one member Vishwambhar Dayal Tripathi from United Province. He appreciated such a provision being made without questioning its unfeasibility by virtue of its placement:

I want to invite the attention of the members of the Assembly particularly to Section 8. It has been said therein that within ten years our *Swaraj* Government will fully extend primary education to every poor man in every village. What it means is this that within ten or twelve or fifteen years, though every old and young man may not be educated, yet the Government will try to make full arrangements for the education of the children at least, and there shall not be any child in our country who shall not get an opportunity of education. I specially [sic] welcome this clause.⁷⁶

Clause 8 in the Supplementary Report became Article 36 in the Draft Constitution, under the Directive Principles of State Policy. During the motion for consideration of the draft constitution two members, Krishna Chandra Sharma and Damodar Swarup Seth touched upon the issue that placement of primary education in Directive Principles would serve no real purpose and that it should be placed in the Fundamental Rights. Krishna Chandra Sharma, from United Provinces, suggested to make a provision in the constitution that any law that goes against the provisions of the Directive Principles shall stand void:

The State endeavours to give primary education and to find work and employment. The State does not take the responsibility to make the people work, on the principle that he who does not work, neither shall he eat. This is an important question. We should have provision for enforcement of work for able-bodies citizens. So Sir, in the directive principle which a learned friend of mine has criticised, there is no legal obligation imposed on the State to fulfil the rights given in the Constitution. I suggest that we make a provision that any law made in contravention of these principles shall to that extent be void. This will not affect the present position. It will give jurisdiction to a court of law, though only a negative right to the people to move a court that any law which goes against the interests of the people, against

⁷⁵ B. Shiva Rao, Supplementary Report of Advisory Committee on the subject of Fundamental Rights, 25 August 1947, Appendix: Fundamental principles of Governance. *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. II* (New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), 306.

⁷⁶ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, August 30 1947.

providing primary education for the children and against providing work and employment to the people should be declared void. The court will have jurisdiction to declare that such and such a law is void, because it contravenes the general principles laid down in Chapter IV.⁷⁷

Damodar Swarup Seth argued that right to education and right to work should be placed in the Fundamental Rights:

What a havoc is poverty causing in our country! What hunger and nakedness are they not suffering from! Was it not then necessary that the right to work and right to employment were included in the Fundamental Rights declared by this Constitution and the people of this land were freed from the worry about their daily food and clothing? Every man shall have a right to receive education; all these things should have been included in the Fundamental Rights.⁷⁸

Z.H. Lari opined:

The next necessity of the individual is the right to have elementary education. That is singularly absent in the Fundamental Rights. In the Directive Principles of State Policy it is contained that it shall be the endeavour of the State to provide elementary education. My submission would be that that is absolutely insufficient. What is necessary is that it should be the duty of the State to provide elementary education and such a provision should exist in the Constitution among the Fundamental articles.⁷⁹

Responding to the criticisms that ‘that the common man is ignored and there is no socialistic flavour about the Constitution’ Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar argued,

In this connection, the various Articles which are directive principles of social policy are not without significance and importance. While from the very nature they cannot be justiciable or enforceable legal rights in a court of law, they are none the less, in the language of Article 29, fundamental in the governance of the country and it is the duty of the State to apply the principles in making laws. It is idle to suggest that any responsible government or any legislature elected on the basis of universal suffrage can or will ignore these principles⁸⁰

M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, defended the provision of directive principles in response to an amendment moved by Kazi Syed Karimuddin for deletion of the term ‘Directive.’ With respect to primary education in Directive Principles instead of in fundamental rights, he argued:

In Article 26 [sic] it is said that the State should within a period of ten years introduce free compulsory education. Take this as an instance. Let us assume that the State does not do so, then can any court of law enforce it? Against whom? In case a decree is granted by a court of law, who will carry it out? If the Government does not carry it out, can the High Court or the Supreme Court enforce it? Is it open

⁷⁷ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, November 5 1948.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, November 8 1948.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

to the Supreme Court to change such a government? With its authority, can it by an officer of the Court, an Amin or a Sheriff, imprison all the Ministers, and bring into existence a new set of ministers? In the nature of things, these are only directives and cannot be justiciable rights at all. So there is no purpose in removing the word directive. These are principles which the Government must keep in mind, whatever government may be in power, and they must be carried out. We have incorporated them in the Constitution itself because we attach importance to them. But to classify them as Fundamental Rights as in Part III would be to take away the difference between the one set and the other, and making all the rights justiciable, which, in the nature of things, is impossible. There is no use being carried away by sentiments. We must be practical. We cannot go on introducing various provisions here which any Government, if it is indifferent to public opinion, can ignore. It is not a court that can enforce these provisions or rights. It is the public opinion and the strength of public opinion that is behind a demand that can enforce these provisions. Once in four years elections will take place, and then it is open to the electorate not to send the very same persons who are in different to public opinion. That is the real sanction, and not the sanction of any court of law.⁸¹

Naziruddin Ahmad, while supporting Karimuddin's amendment observed:

It is not only the heading but the entire chapter which is misconceived [...] I submit that if you introduce pious principles without making them justiciable, it will be something like resolutions made on New Year's day which are broken on the 2nd of January. I submit that these pious wishes are so obvious that they need not be enunciated at all. If you state them you might also say that people should get up from their bed early and be kind to their neighbours, and so forth. Sir, I submit these are not proper things to be embodied in the Constitution and the amendment of Syed Karimuddin should be accepted.⁸²

K.T. Shah, who was against any provision for non-justiciable right in the constitution as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, moved an amendment to substitute the Article 29, defining the Directive Principles, by the following:

The provisions contained in this Part shall be treated as the obligations of the State towards the citizens, shall be enforceable in such manner and by such authority as may be deemed appropriate in or under the respective law relating to each such obligation. It shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making the necessary and appropriate laws.⁸³

Speaking on his amendment Shah reprimanded the inclusion of the phrase 'that no court shall be entitled to give effect to our hopes and aspirations' and opined that it was provision which would encourage the 'Court and also the Executive not to worry about whatever is said in the Constitution, but to act only at their own convenience and on their practicability, and go on with it.' He further argued:

⁸¹ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, November 19 1948.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, November 19 1948.

It seems to me that unless my amendment is accepted, this Chapter would be nothing else, as it stands, but a mere expression of some vague desire on the part of the framers that, if and when circumstances permit, conditions allow, we may do this or that or the third thing.⁸⁴

Further speaking on his amendment K.T. Shah repudiated the provision of elementary education in Directive Principles in most scathing terms:

The elementary right to education which every civilised Government is now undertaking to provide for the children of the nation. Even this right to compulsory primary education has been provided for in such a clumsy, half-hearted and hesitating manner that one wonders whether the framers of this Draft were at all anxious that the curse of ignorance that has rested upon us all these years should be removed at all. The provision made here just permits the State, even within the period of ten years, only to “endeavour” to give effect to this aspiration. Even there it is not compulsory, even such an elementary right as the right to primary education for every child in the nation is not mandatory. As such I feel Sir, that unless some change is made, unless you make these pre-emptory obligations mandatory duties of the State, the State or the constituent parts of it may not at all attend to these duties of the State. These are most elementary duties in my opinion, duties which are most primary duties, if I may say so, most sacred that no one should try to insult this House by suggesting these are not practicable... it rests with you whether or not you are resolved that no longer shall the courses that have rested upon us so far will continue, for a moment longer than we can afford or than we can possibly help. It is no use putting down these mere pious hopes and aspirations or general directives that may be enforced if and when circumstances permit. It is possible that circumstances will never permit until you compel them to permit you. That is why from the very start I would lay down that these shall be mandatory, compulsory obligations of the State, which every citizen will have the right to demand should be fulfilled, and if today you think of no sanction, if today you can devise no means by which they can be enforced except perhaps by the periodic general elections when Ministries may be turned out for not fulfilling these duties, then it is up to you to devise something. Where there is a will - to repeat the trite old saying - there will always be a way. It is either bankruptcy of intelligence if you say that you cannot find a way; or it is really a genuine lack of desire to make good what we have been hoping and striving for.⁸⁵

Citing the case of Gokhale’s Bill, Shah argued that the Bill was failed on account of lack of funds by the British officials while crores of rupees were spent in subsequent years during the war and exhorted:

That was the case when we were powerless, when we were helpless in our own country. That position, however, is changed today, and I hope the Ministers of the new Government of India, the Ministers of the Government of free India, the legislators of the Republican India, will not now rest content with merely expressing these pious wishes. If there are difficulties in the way, they are only

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, November 19 1948.

meant to be overcome. These difficulties should not be allowed to stop our progress at any cost. Hence it is that I would like to invite the House to agree with me that the provisions contained in this Chapter must be regarded as the Obligations of the State towards every citizen and vice versa. Every citizen should have the right to compel the State to enforce these obligations by whatever means may be found practicable and effective, and conversely the State also should have the right to see that every citizen fulfils his obligations to the State.⁸⁶

Objecting to Shah's criticism Shibhan Lal Saksena argued:

[T]he very fact that this chapter forms part of the Constitution, gives such a guarantee and it will surely be open to every legislature to point out when an Act is brought before the Assembly that it is in conflict with the principles laid down in this Chapter. So, the mere fact that they are being included in the Constitution shows that every legislature will be found to respect these directive principles in the Constitution and therefore, any act which offends the directive principles shall be *ultra vires*.⁸⁷

Shah's amendment was 'negatived' by the house and therefore was lost. When the Article 36 came up for consideration some amendments were suggested and approved, which further took the life from the Article. Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra moved an amendment to remove the word 'entitled' from the Article 36. He moved, that in article 36, the words 'Every citizen is entitled to free primary education and'⁸⁸ be deleted. The Article after amendment read as,

The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.⁸⁹

He reasoned that:

Part IV deals with directive principles of State policy, and the provisions in it indicate, the policy that is to be pursued by the future governments of the country. Unfortunately, in article 36, this directive principle of State policy is coupled with a sort of a fundamental right, i.e. "that every citizen is entitled.....etc." This cannot fit in with the others. Here a directive principle is combined with a fundamental right.⁹⁰

Naziruddin Ahmad moved an amendment for Article 36 to make it more specific for provision of primary education: 'That in article 36, for the word 'education', the words 'primary education' be substituted.' He argued,

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, November 23 1948.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Constituent Assembly of India Debates, November 23 1948.

I believe from the context and from other internal evidence that what was intended was compulsory 'primary' education. The State cannot undertake to give compulsory education of a secondary character.⁹¹

Ambedkar accepted Maitra's amendment, which was finally adopted by the House, but rejected that of Ahmad as he clarified that the objective of the rest of the clause in article 36 was not restricted to free primary education:

The clause as it stands after the amendment is that every child shall be kept in an educational institution under training until the child is of 14 years. If my honourable Friend, Mr. Naziruddin Ahmad had referred to article 18, which forms part of the fundamental rights, he would have noticed that a provision is made in article 18 to forbid any child being employed below the age of 14. Obviously, if the child is not to be employed below the age of 14, the child must be kept occupied in some educational institution. That is the object of article 36.⁹²

Thus, the struggle initiated by Gokhale culminated in the constitution of free India, as a directive to the State instead of as Fundamental Rights of the children of the free Nation.

6.8. Concluding Remarks

The above discussion highlights that the upper age limit of fourteen was included in the constitution from the Sargent Plan, which was based on the Report of the two Kher committees. The two Kher Committees suggested the compulsory education of eight years instead of seven, recommended by Wardha education scheme and Zakir Husain Committee Report. The age range of six to fourteen years was suggested by the two Kher Committees which was subsequently taken up by Sargent Plan. No evidence is found in records regarding the reasons for the absence of a lower age limit for compulsion. Plausibly, it was because the Sargent plan and the second Kher committee recognised the importance of pre-primary education in the life of a child. The two committees had advocated free but not compulsory pre-primary education. J.P. Naik is of the opinion that '[t]his was done purposely to avoid controversies regarding...age of admission to elementary schools or making pre-primary education also compulsory.'⁹³ The Sargent plan had suggested 40 years for introducing compulsory education. The Kher Committee of 1947, appointed to suggest on the Sargent scheme, reduced the period for introducing compulsion from 40 to 10 years.

The issue of free and compulsory elementary education, which was initiated with Gokhale's Bill and was one of the highly contested issues during the period from 1910-1947 was relegated

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Naik, *Elementary education in India: The unfinished business*, 3.

to the background by the creation of Article 45 under the Directive Principles of State Policy. No vocal dissension, opposition or discussion took place when the Right of the children of the Nation for free and compulsory education was being snatched. The absence of noise is indicative of the fact that the opposition to the education of low and depressed caste children was consistently present throughout, but it was now no more vocal and had become more and more subtle. All the clamour for compulsory education during the colonial rule was just empty political rhetoric. One can argue that the newly born independent Nation was devoid of resources. However, it is equally important that what is our priority. When resources are limited, we allocate funds to the most important item first. For the leaders of the newly born Nation higher education, for selected few, was more important than the education of masses. Therefore, under the pretext of limited resources, the Right of children (of downtrodden masses) to free and compulsory elementary education was shelved indefinitely.

Conclusion

The demand for Universal free and compulsory elementary education in India began with the Elementary Education Bill of Gopal Krishna Gokhale at the Imperial Legislative Council in 1911. It was the first vocal attempt which initiated a lively debate towards legislative action for free and compulsory education. The Bill, though failed to pass into an Act, proved to be a benchmark in the history of elementary education in India. Gokhale had made the Bill highly permissive by introducing several safeguards so that 'at least a beginning was made.' In fact, the safeguards in the Bill were the main reason for the support it could garner. The age limit for compulsion was kept between 6 to 10; it was to be free for children of parents whose income limit was below Rs 10 per month. Compulsion was not to be applicable to girls immediately but on demand in an area could be extended at a later date. Most importantly, it was not to be applied to the whole of India at once. It was at the discretion of local bodies, where more than 33 per cent of children were attending school, asking the provincial government to sanction the compulsion in its area. Majority of those who supported the Bill appreciated the safeguards in it. However, despite these safeguards, the Bill could not succeed. It is widely conceived notion that the Bill failed due to British official indifference towards the education of masses and their reluctance to fund such a costly scheme. It cannot be denied that finance was one of the reasons for the failure of the Bill. However, there were other causes which rendered the Bill its failure.

Through a critical analysis of archival data, this study has brought to the fore the other underlying causes for Bill's failure. The data reveals that the caste-ridden social structure of Indian society played an increasingly prominent role in the denial of compulsory education to the masses, which chiefly comprised of lower and depressed castes. There was anxiety among the upper caste of Indian society that these manual working castes would alienate from their hereditary occupation after getting educated and would aim for a more lucrative career as *babu*. This was an oft-quoted reason by the upper caste and landed elites who exercised a considerable degree of influence among British officials. Apart from this, objections were raised on account of untouchability of the depressed castes. It was argued that since untouchables could not be educated together with the upper caste children, separate schools would be required. This, in turn, would further increase the expenses. The government considered the Bill to be a source of the instability to their rule in India. They argued that compulsion would make the lower castes, who were indifferent towards the education of their children, rebel against the government as they would consider that this

was a tyranny by the government. This fear of government was further reinforced by Indian elites who were opposed to the Bill. Thirdly, lack of funds, the oft-quoted reason, in the existing literature was another reason for the failure of the Bill. The non-availability of trained teachers, particularly female teacher and lack of proper school buildings found less attention of the critiques of the Bill. However, the chief factor that was recurrent through the Bill was heterogeneous social structure of Indian society.

The passage of primary education acts in the provinces was mainly guided by the introduction of dyarchy, which was a step towards self-governance and democracy. Importance of literate electorate for 'intelligent' exercise of their votes was recognised. However, this does not mean that the Acts were passed with due consent of upper-caste and landed elite. They just changed their mode of action. Instead of vocal opposition, they chose more subtle means of the inclusion of such clauses in Acts which rendered them useless. This has been revealed in the discussion on Bombay and Bengal (Rural) primary education Bill. In Bombay, an industrial centre the opponents of Bill, the mill owners, succeeded in getting clause 11 of the Bill on the banishment of child labour amended in their interest. The child labour was cheap, and they did want to lose it. In Case of Bengal, even more subtle strategy was employed. This was a levy of enhanced cess ratio of 3 ½ pice of rupee on tenants and 1 ½ pice on landlords. This Bill was passed with the support of British officials as the Hindu landed elites were opposed to the 1 ½ pice cess they had to pay. In this opposition, not a single Hindu member of the council spoke from the perspective of tenants. Passage of such flawed Acts rendered the Bill ineffective. Moreover, in all the Acts the onus was put on local bodies to introduce compulsion. These bodies, in turn, were governed and influenced by upper-caste and landed gentry; thus, implementation of these Acts was generally hampered. These Acts, therefore, gave rise to 'voluntary compulsion.'

The question of compulsory education of depressed classes was a vital question due to the disability of untouchability attached to them. The compulsion was, in reality, more needed for this section of the population. However, when the question of compulsion came up, the first to be excluded were these downtrodden sections of the population. This study has brought to the fore that attempts were made by the upper caste and landed elites for the exclusion of the depressed castes from the scheme of compulsion, using the exemption Clause of Gokhale's Bill. Similarly, in his original Bill Patel did not include this clause but the Select Committee added this clause. This was intentionally done to exclude the lower and depressed castes from the compulsory scheme. Then, there were issues of where and

what to teach the untouchables? Theoretically, the policy of the government was of no distinction in the matter of admission in government schools on account of caste and class. However, since the close association of depressed castes with upper caste was out of the question, there was severe opposition by the latter when the children of the former were admitted into the common school. Evidence highlight that upper caste would desert such schools and huts and crops of the depressed castes were burnt. Therefore, the special school were opened by the government for the depressed caste children. However, the maintenance of separate schools was costly. This was one of the reasons for opposition to Gokhale's Bill. Moreover, the depressed caste leaders also opposed separate schools because it was not only the question of access to schools but much more than that. It was the issue of equal rights, dignity, empowerment, self-help, emancipation and community uplift. Separate schools perpetuated the practice of segregation in the larger society.

The government of Bombay and Madras passed orders that no discriminatory treatment should be practised in government schools by teachers or students to facilitate the admission of depressed class children in common schools. More strictly, it was also ordered that the financial aid would be stopped to schools practising discrimination. Despite all this, the discrimination continued. The depressed caste students had to sit outside the classroom or the verandah of schools. The experience of Ambedkar and other Dalit autobiographies are a testimony to this fact. The Dalit radicals and depressed classes organisation reiterated the demand for free and compulsory education in common schools. However, the Acts largely remained unimplemented due to reliance on local bodies. Ambedkar considered these Acts as a fraud. He demanded that compulsory education should be the charge of the provincial government. The depressed castes in Bombay made most vocal demand for free and compulsory education. In other provinces, for instance, in UP, the demand was not too vocal; nonetheless, it has been found that few depressed caste organisations took up the issue.

Upper caste and landed elites opposed the extension of compulsory education to girls also. Debate on Gokhale's Bill reveals that there were several demands for removal of Clause 17 of the Bill on compulsion for girls at a later date. For instance, Madan Mohan Malaviya, who supported Gokhale's Bill and argued that both boys and girls should receive education ended up in suggesting that the time was not ripe for compulsion for girls. The provinces of Bihar & Orissa, U.P., Bengal and the Punjab made no provision in their PEAs, for compulsory education of girls. The opposition to the compulsion for girls was severe as late as 1935 when in the C.P. Legislative Council Ramabai Tambe's Bill, for the

amendment of the 1920 Primary Education Act to provide for the education of the girls simultaneously with that of the boys, was defeated by 36 to 26 votes. The study has also attempted to understand the role of women's movement in the issue of compulsion for girls. The women's movement was an upper-caste women's bourgeois project mainly targeted at upper caste and middle-class women. Nonetheless, they acted as a pressure group on the colonial government to extend the compulsion to girls. The presence of Muthulakshmi Reddy on the Hartog Committee led to the recommendation that there should be a representation of women in local bodies, educational boards and attendance committees, which was a time-honoured demand of women's movement. The Women's movement, however, failed to recognise the specific disability of depressed caste women and girls and thus remained indifferent towards their education and empowerment. Like upper-caste men, these upper-caste women also alienated the depressed caste women from the feminist project.

The Basic Education scheme of Gandhi was a highly publicised educational project during the period under the study, which has hitherto remained under the cover. There were several critics of the scheme within the Congress itself. Despite this, it was undertaken by congress ministries, albeit half-heartedly, because of the influence Gandhi wielded on Congress, and also because Congress relied heavily on Gandhi in the struggle for independence from the British rule. The nationalist project eulogised the scheme and considered it as the best educational scheme ever proposed. An analysis of the debates shows that it was severely criticised for its self-supporting aspect, propagation of Child labour, Language issue viz., exclusion of English from the curriculum and the imposition of Hindustani. The Zakir Husain Committee and the later Committees of the CABE under the chairmanship of B.G. Kher, retained the craft centred part of the scheme and removed the most controversial self-supporting aspect. The scheme, when seen in isolation, creates an impression that it could have been the best educational scheme ever formulated. The nationalist project projects the scheme out of the historical context and also it overlooks the complexities of the caste system, which attributes a deprived position to lower and depressed castes. But when seen in the context of the compulsory education debates, from the time of Gokhale's Bill, it is clearly revealed that it was an answer to the anxiety of upper-caste elites and also of Gandhi's that once educated the lower caste would alienate from their hereditary profession assigned to them by their position in the caste hierarchy. Moreover, a very important limitation of the scheme was that Gandhi failed to view from the perspective of a child.

Gandhi and later on Zakir Husain committee insisted that the scheme was child-centred, but the lack of freedom for child's creativity in the scheme renders it teacher centred rather than child-centred. Authority of the teacher remained at the core. The agency of the child was altogether neglected.

The issue of free and compulsory education which gained momentum with the Gokhale's Bill culminated in Article 45 of the Constitution of free India. During the making of the constitution of an independent nation, the founding fathers kept the scheme under the Directive Principles. The documents reveal that it was first placed under the Justiciable Fundamental rights, under Article 23. Nonetheless, at the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, it was very silently dropped down, without any noise, without any discussion and without any dissension. It is quite ironical and surprising that the issue which was so alive when a foreign government was in power was relegated to the background when the country was about to get freedom and the foundation of a future sovereign nation was being laid. The two women members of the Committee viz. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Hansa Mehta, who were leading the Women's movement, one of the chief objects of which was the provision of free and compulsory education to all children of the nation, remained silent when this regressive step was being suggested and approved. Further, during the debate on Article 36, the term 'entitled' was removed because of ambiguity that a directive principle was also talking of a right. Thus, spineless Article 45, as a Directive to the State, was formulated.

The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that all the noise for free and compulsory education was a part of empty political rhetoric to target the colonial government. The real commitment for the education of masses was missing, except in case of few liberal reformers as Gokhale. The denial of elementary education to the masses was not just due to financial constraint or due to the indifference of colonial government, but this study argues that it was predominantly due to the complex social structure of Indian society dominated by the caste system.

Limitations of the Study

Due to time constraints, the present research could not take up the debates in the Legislative Council of provinces other than Bombay, Bengal and the Punjab. Regarding the education of depressed castes, further exploration is needed, particularly with reference to the depressed caste girls. Vernacular sources need to be tapped to understand the problems and challenges associated with

these castes. The United Provinces has remained underexplored area with respect to depressed castes in general and depressed castes' education in particular. This study, due to the vast period and its pan India nature could not explore more in-depth into this aspect. Nonetheless, the shreds of evidence from this research may prove to be a beginning for further investigation. Moreover, this study could not take up an analysis of broader public opinion when the free and compulsory education was pushed into the Directive Principles of State policy. This needs to be explored further.

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Appendix I
Elementary education Bill 1911

187

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,
LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT.

A
BILL
TO

Make better provision for the extension
of elementary education.

(*Mr. G. K. Gokhale.*)

APPENDIX A.

A
BILL

TO

Make better provision for the extension of elementary education.

WHEREAS it is expedient to make better provision for the extension of elementary education ; It is hereby enacted as follows :—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Elementary Education Act, 1911.
Short title, commencement and extent.

(2) It shall come into force on [], but it shall not be operative except in the local areas to which it may be applied by a notification issued under section 3.

(3) It extends to the whole of British India.

2. In this Act, unless (Elementary Education Act (England and Wales), 1870, sec. 3.) there is anything repugnant in the subject or context, —

“ Parent ” includes the guardian and every person who is liable to maintain or has the actual custody of any child :

“ Department of Public Instruction ” means the Department in charge of public instruction under the Local Government of the province in which the Municipality or District Board concerned is situated :

“ recognised school ” means a school recognised by the Department of Public Instruction :

“ elementary education ” means the courses in reading, writing and arithmetic and other subjects, if any, prescribed from time to time by the Department of Public Instruction for elementary schools :

“ District Board ” includes a “ District Local Board ” and a “ District Council ” :

“ Magistrate ” does not include a “ village Magistrate. ”

3. Every Municipality or District Board may from time to time, with the previous sanction of the Local Government, and subject to such rules as the Governor General in Council may make in this behalf, by notification declare that this Act shall apply to the whole or any specified part of the area within the local limits of its authority and the provisions of this Act shall apply to such area or part accordingly.

4. In every area, to which this Act applies, it shall be the duty of the parent of every boy, not under six and not over ten (Irish Education Act, 1892, sec. 1 (1).)

Duty of parent to send child to school. years of age, residing within such area, to cause such boy to attend a recognised school for elementary education for so many days in the year and for such time on each day of attendance as may be prescribed by the Department of Public Instruction, unless there is a reasonable excuse for the non-attendance of the boy.

5. Any of the following circumstances is a reasonable excuse for non-attendance when (Irish Education Act, 1892, sec. 1 (3).)

(a) that there is no recognised school within a distance of one mile, measured along the nearest road, from the residence of the boy, which the boy can attend, and to which the parent has no objection, on religious grounds, to send the boy ;

- (b) that the child is prevented from attending school by reason of sickness, infirmity, domestic necessity, the seasonal needs of agriculture, or other sufficient cause ;
- (c) that the child is receiving instruction in some other satisfactory manner.

[Irish Education Act, 1892, sec. 2 (1); Elementary Education Act (England and Wales), 1876, sec. 5.]

6. No person shall take into his employment any boy who ought to be at school under this Act.

7. For every area to which this Act applies, the Municipality or District Board shall provide such school accommodation as the Department of Public Instruction considers necessary and sufficient.

8. In any such area as aforesaid, the Municipality or District Board may, with the previous sanction of the Local Government, levy a special education rate, the proceeds of which shall be devoted exclusively to the provision of elementary education for the boys residing in the area.

9. (1) No fee shall be charged in respect of the instruction of a boy required to attend school under section 4 if the monthly income of the parent does not exceed Rs. 10.

(2) In every other case, the Municipality or District Board may, on the ground of poverty, or for other sufficient reason, remit the whole or any part of the fee payable by a parent on account of his boy required to attend school under section 4.

10. (1) For every area to which this Act applies, the Municipality or District Board shall appoint a school attendance committee, to be constituted in such manner as may be prescribed by bye-laws framed in that behalf.

[Irish Education Act, 1892, sec. 8 (1).]

(2) It shall be the duty of the school attendance committee, subject to bye-laws framed in that behalf, to secure the attendance of every boy within its area that ought to be at school.

[Irish Education Act, 1892, sec. 4 (1).]

11. (1) Whenever the school attendance committee is satisfied that a boy in its area that ought to attend school does not do so, it may, after due warning, make a complaint against the parent of the boy before a magistrate.

(2) The magistrate shall, if satisfied of the truth of the complaint, issue an order directing the parent to cause the boy to attend school before a certain date.

[Irish Education Act, 1892, sec. 4 (2).]

12. (1) If such order is not complied with and the school attendance committee does not see any satisfactory cause for the non-compliance, it may prosecute the defaulting parent before a magistrate.

(2) The parent shall be liable, on conviction, to a fine not exceeding rupees two.

13. In cases of repeated non-compliance, the parent shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding rupees ten.

[Irish Education Act, 1892, secs. 5 and 6.]

14. (1) The school attendance committee may, after due warning, prosecute any employer who violates the provisions of section 6.

(2) Unless such employer is able to satisfy the magistrate that there is no recognised school within a distance of one mile, measured along the nearest road, from the residence of the boy, or

that the time and nature of the boy's employment are such that he is not prevented from receiving elementary education at school, or

that the boy is receiving instruction in some other satisfactory manner, or

that the boy was employed under false representations as to age, residence and other conditions, or

without his knowledge and consent by an agent or workman under him for whose prosecution he is willing to afford the necessary facilities,

he shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding rupees twenty.

15. When the act of taking a boy into employment in contravention of this Act is in fact committed by an agent or workman of the employer, that agent or workman shall be liable to the same penalty, in the same manner, and subject to the same conditions as if he were the employer. [Irish Education Act, 1892, sec. 6 (1).]

16. The Local Government may exempt particular classes or communities from the operation of this Act.

17. In any area in respect of which a notification has been issued under section 3, the Municipality or District Board may, with the previous sanction of the Local Government and subject to such rules as the Governor-General in Council may make in this behalf, by notification declare that the foregoing provisions relating to boys, shall, from a date to be specified in the notification, apply also in the case of girls residing within such area, and the said provisions shall apply in the case of girls accordingly.

18. (1) The Governor-General in Council may make rules for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for—

(a) the fixing of the percentage of boys, or of girls that should be at school in an area before a notification in respect thereof may be issued under section 3 or section 17, as the case may be; and

(b) the prescribing of the proportions in which the cost of providing elementary education under this Act should be divided between the Municipality or District Board and the Local Government, as the case may be.

(3) The power to make rules under this section shall be subject to the condition of the rules being made after previous publication.

19. A Municipality or District Board may, with the previous sanction of the Local Government, make bye-laws prescribing—

(a) the manner in which the school attendance committee should be constituted, the number of its members, their duties and their mode of transacting business.

(b) the steps which the school attendance committee may take to secure the attendance of children at school.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS.

THE object of this Bill is to provide for the gradual introduction of the principle of compulsion into the elementary education system of the country. The experience of other countries has established beyond dispute the fact that the only effective way to ensure a wide diffusion of elementary education among the mass of the people is by a resort to compulsion in some form or other. And the time has come when a beginning at least should be made in this direction in India. The Bill is of a purely permissive character and its provisions will apply only to areas notified by Municipalities or District Boards, which will have to bear such proportion of the increased expenditure, which will be necessitated, as may be laid down by the Government of India by rule. Moreover no area can be notified without the previous sanction of the Local Government, and further it must fulfil the test which the Government of India may, by rule, lay down, as regards the percentage of children already at school within its limits. Finally the provisions are intended to apply in the first instance only to boys, though later on a Local Body may extend them to girls; and the age limits proposed are only six and ten years. It is hoped that these are sufficient safeguards against any rash or injudicious action on the part of Local Bodies. The measure is essentially a cautious one—indeed, to some, it may appear to err too much on the side of caution.

The provisions of the Bill are based largely on the Irish Education Act of 1892 and the English Education Acts of 1870 and 1876.

Clauses 1 and 2 call for no remark.

Clause 3 provides for the application of the provisions of the Bill to notified areas.

Clause 4 imposes on the parent or guardian of a boy in a notified area, between the ages of six and ten, the obligation to cause him to attend a recognised elementary school in the absence of a reasonable excuse, and clause 5 lays down what circumstances may constitute a reasonable excuse.

Clause 6 prohibits the employment by employers of labour of a boy who should be at school under the provisions of the Bill.

Clause 7 requires Municipalities and District Boards to provide sufficient school accommodation in a notified area, and clause 8 empowers them, subject to the previous sanction of the Local Governments, to levy a special education rate.

Clause 9 provides for the exemption of poor parents and guardians from the payment of school fees for their boys.

Clause 10 provides for the appointment of school attendance committees in notified areas.

Clauses 11 to 15 provide penalties and the proceedings to be taken for their enforcement in the case of parents and guardians, failing without reasonable excuse to cause their boys to attend school, as required by the Bill, and of employers and their agents or workmen, acting in contravention of the provisions of the Bill.

Clause 16 enables the Local Government to exempt particular classes or communities from the operation of the Bill.

Clause 17 provides for the extension of the provisions of the Bill to girls between the ages of six and ten.

Clauses 18 and 19 provide for the making of rules by the Government of India and of bye-laws by Local Bodies.

G. K. GOKHALE.

The 28th February 1911.

Appendix II
Division of vote on Gokhale's Bill

what is the practical programme before us? Do we expect to cover the whole of this field in a reasonable time, or do we want to leave it to the future indefinitely? In one case another century will have to elapse before the whole problem is solved; in the other case, proceeding on the lines on which most of the civilised countries have proceeded, we shall be able to solve this problem in about twenty years or so. I therefore urge that the question of compulsion must be taken in hand at once; and taking into consideration the fact that there is this increased awakening in the country both on the side of the people and of the Government for primary education, and considering that the State is more willing now to find the money, I for one feel that we are not so far from compulsion after all, as some people seem to imagine. Sir, I ask that this motion should be put to the vote."

The Council divided :

Ayes—13.

The Hon'ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Hon'ble Raja of Dighapatia, the Hon'ble Babu Bhupendranath Basu, the Hon'ble Mr. Sinha, the Hon'ble Mr. Haque, the Hon'ble Nawab Saiyid Muhammad, the Hon'ble Mr. Subba Rao, the Hon'ble Raja of Kurupam, the Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale, the Hon'ble Mr. Mudholkar, the Hon'ble Mr. Jinnah, the Hon'ble Mr. Bhurgri, and the Hon'ble Sir Vithaldas D. Thackersey.

Noes—38.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the Hon'ble Sir Robert Carlyle, the Hon'ble Sir Harcourt Butler, the Hon'ble Mr. Syed Ali Imam, the Hon'ble Mr. Clark, the Hon'ble Sir Reginald Craddock, the Hon'ble Major General Sir M. H. S. Grover, the Hon'ble Mr. Maclagan, the Hon'ble Mr. Porter, the Hon'ble Mr. Sharp, the Hon'ble Mr. Enthoven, the Hon'ble Mr. Wheeler, the Hon'ble Mr. Brunyate, the Hon'ble Sir A. H. McMahon, the Hon'ble Nawab Abdul Majid, the Hon'ble Raja of Paratagarh, the Hon'ble Mr. Lyon, the Hon'ble Mr. Saunders, the Hon'ble Sir James Meston, the Hon'ble Mr. Gordon, the Hon'ble Surgeon General Sir C. P. Lukis, the Hon'ble Mr. Fremantle, the Hon'ble Mr. Vincent, the Hon'ble Mr. Carr, the Hon'ble Mr. Arthur, the Hon'ble Sir Gangadhar Rao Chitnavis, the Hon'ble Mr. Phillips, the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoy, the Hon'ble Mr. Meredith, the Hon'ble Mr. Shafi, the Hon'ble Malik Umar Hyat Khan, the Hon'ble Maung Mye, the Hon'ble Mr. Gates, the Hon'ble Mr. Slacke, the Hon'ble Sir Charles Stewart-Wilson, the Hon'ble Mr. Dempster, the Hon'ble Mr. Kenrick, and the Hon'ble Mr. Kesteven.

So the motion was negatived.

Appendix III
Bengal (Rural) primary Education Act, 1930



Government of Bengal

Legislative Department

Bengal Act VII of 1930

The Bengal (Rural)

Primary Education Act

1930

(As modified up to the 30th August 1940)

**Superintendent, Government Printing
Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal**

1940

Bengal Act VII of 1930.

THE BENGAL (RURAL) PRIMARY EDUCATION ACT, 1930.¹

(As modified up to the 30th August, 1940.)

[22nd January 1931.]

*An Act to provide for the extension of primary education
in rural areas in Bengal.*

WHEREAS it is expedient to make better provision for the progressive expansion and for the management and control of primary education in rural areas in Bengal, so as to make it available to all children and with a view to make it compulsory within ten years;

AND WHEREAS the previous sanction of the Governor General under sub-section (3) of section 80A of the Government of India Act has been obtained to the passing of this Act;

5 & 6 Geo.
V. c. 61; 6
& 7 Geo. V.
c. 37; 9 &
10 Geo. V.
c. 101.

It is hereby enacted as follows:—

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary.

1. (1) This Act may be called the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930.

Short title, local
extent and
commencement.

Ben. Act
III of 1884.

(2) It extends to the whole of Bengal, except the town of Calcutta and any area which has been or may hereafter be constituted a municipality under the provisions of the Bengal Municipal Act, 1884.²

(3) It shall come into force, in whole or in part, in such districts or parts of districts on such dates as the ³[Provincial Government] may, by notification, direct and for this purpose different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act and for different districts, or parts of districts.

¹For Statement of Objects and Reasons, see *Calcutta Gazette*, 1930, Part IV, page 90; and for proceedings in Council, see the Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council, Volume XXXV, pages 206, 286, 759 and 847.

²Bengal Act III of 1884 has been repealed and re-enacted by the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932 (Ben. Act XV of 1932).

³These words were substituted for the words "Local Government" by paragraph 4 (1) of the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

10 *The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930.*

[Ben. Act VII

(Chapter I.—Preliminary.—Section 2.)

Explanation.—The words “the town of Calcutta” mean, subject to the inclusion of any local area by notification under section 543 of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1923, and subject to the provisions of section 147 of the Calcutta Improvement Act, 1911, the area described in Schedule I to the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1923:

Ben. Act
III of 1923.

Ben. Act V
of 1911.

Provided that this Act shall not come into force in any cantonment * * * * *

Definitions.

2. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,—

- (1) “attendance” at a school means presence for instruction at a primary school for so many and on such days in the year and at such time or times on each day of attendance as may be required by the prescribed educational authority after consulting the Attendance Committee;
- (2) “Board” means a District School Board constituted under this Act;
- (3) “child” means a child who is not less than six and not more than eleven years of age or other prescribed age;
- (4) “Committee” means the Central Primary Education Committee constituted under this Act;
- (5) “Director of Public Instruction” means the officer designated by this name by the ²[Provincial Government] for the purposes of this Act;
- (6) “district” has the same meaning as in section 4 of the Cess Act, 1880;
- (7) “District Board” means a District Board constituted under the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885;
- (8) “District Inspector of Schools” means the local executive educational officer in charge of primary education in each district responsible to the Director of Public Instruction;
- (9) “financial year” means a year beginning on the first day of April;

Ben. Act
IX of 1880.

Ben. Act
III of 1885.

¹The words “without the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council” were omitted by Schedule IV to the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

²See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

of 1930.]

(Chapter I.—Preliminary.—Chapter II.—The Central Primary Education Committee.—Section 3.)

Ben. Act
VI of 1870.

- (10) “guardian” means any person to whom the care, nurture or custody of any child falls by law or by natural right or recognised usage, or who has accepted or assumed the care, nurture or custody of any child or to whom the care or custody of any child has been entrusted by any lawful authority;
- (11) “notification” means a notification published in the ¹[*Official Gazette*];
- (12) “Panchayat” means a Panchayat appointed under the Village Chaukidari Act, 1870;
- (13) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (14) “primary education” means education in such subjects and up to such standards as may be prescribed;
- (15) “primary school” means a school or department of a school giving instruction in primary education either managed by the Board or recognised as a primary school under section 54;
- (16) “public management” in relation to a primary school means management by the Government, or by a District School Board either directly or through its power of delegation to a Union Board, a Union Committee or a Panchayat; all other management shall be deemed to be “private management”;
- (17) “subdivision” has the same meaning as in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898;
- (18) “Union Board” means a Union Board constituted under the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919;
- (19) “Union Committee” means a Union Committee constituted under the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885.

Act V of
1898.

Ben. Act V
of 1919.

Ben. Act
III of 1885.

CHAPTER II.

The Central Primary Education Committee.

3. A Committee, to be called the Central Primary Education Committee, shall be constituted in the manner hereinafter provided, for the purpose of advising

Establishment of
the Central
Primary
Education
Committee.

¹These words were substituted for the words “*Calcutta Gazette*” by paragraph 4 (1) of the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

(Chapter II.—*The Central Primary Education Committee.*—Chapter III.—*The District School Board.*
Sections 4—6.)

the ¹[Provincial Government] on all matters which may be or are to be referred to it under this Act.

Constitution of the Committee.

4. (1) The Committee shall be constituted for five years at a time and shall consist of the following members, namely:—

- (a) the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, *ex officio*;
- (b) ten members of whom two shall be elected in the prescribed manner from each of the five divisions of the province by the members of the District School Boards of each division, one to be a Muhammadan and the other a Hindu;
- (c) five members to be appointed by the ¹[Provincial Government], of whom two shall be representatives of the depressed classes.

(2) If by such date as the ¹[Provincial Government] may fix, any of the electoral bodies referred to in clause (b) of sub-section (1) fails to elect a person to be a member of the Committee, the ¹[Provincial Government] shall appoint a suitable person in his place and any person so appointed shall be deemed to be a member as if he had been duly elected by such body.

Functions of the Committee.

5. The ¹[Provincial Government] may refer any matter to the Committee for its opinion, and shall consult the Committee before making an order under section 21, section 22, or section 51, or a notification under section 56, or a rule under section 66.

CHAPTER III.

The District School Board.

Constitution of the Board.

6. When this section comes into force in any district the ¹[Provincial Government] shall establish for such district a District School Board consisting of the following members, namely:—

- (a) the District Magistrate, *ex officio*:
Provided that, on the expiration of two terms of four years mentioned in sub-section (2) of section 10 after the first establishment of the Board, the District Magistrate shall cease to be an *ex officio* member of the Board;

¹ See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

of 1930.]

(Chapter III.—The District School Board.—Section 7.)

- (b) the Subdivisional Magistrates, *ex officio*;
- (c) the District Inspector of Schools, *ex officio*;
- (d) the Chairmen of the Local Boards, *ex officio*;
- (e) the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the District Board, *ex officio*;
- (f) as many members as there are subdivisions in the district to be elected in the prescribed manner by the members of the District Board:
Provided that the number shall in no case be less than two;
- (g) one member for each subdivision to be elected in the prescribed manner by the members of the Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats within the subdivision:
Provided that the number shall in no case be less than two;
- (h) as many members as there are subdivisions in the district to be appointed by the ¹[Provincial Government]:
Provided that the number shall in no case be less than two; and
- (i) one teacher of a primary school to be appointed by the ¹[Provincial Government] for the first term of four years referred to in sub-section (2) of section 10 and thereafter to be elected in the prescribed manner by the teachers of primary schools.

7. If, by such date as may be fixed by the ¹[Provincial Government]—

Procedure in default of election of members.

- (i) the members of the District Board do not elect the members referred to in clause (f) of section 6,
- (ii) the members of Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats do not elect the members referred to in clause (g) of section 6,
- (iii) the teachers of primary schools do not elect the member referred to in clause (i) of section 6, after the expiration of first term of four years mentioned in sub-section (2) of section 10 after the first establishment of the Board,

the ¹[Provincial Government] shall appoint suitable persons to be such members, and any persons so appointed

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

(Chapter III.—*The District School Board.*—Sections 8—11.)

shall be deemed to be members as if they had been duly elected by the members of the District Board or of Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats, or by the teachers of primary schools, as the case may be.

President and Vice-President.

8. (1) There shall be a President of the Board, who shall, until the expiration of two terms of four years mentioned in sub-section (2) of section 10 after the first establishment of the Board, be a member of the Board appointed in that behalf by the ¹[Provincial Government], and shall thereafter be a member of the Board elected in that behalf by the Board in the prescribed manner and approved by the ¹[Provincial Government].

(2) The Board may from time to time elect, for such period as it thinks fit, one of its members to be Vice-President.

Elections and appointments to be notified in Official Gazette.

9. The names of the President, the Vice-President and of the appointed and elected members of the Board or, where the President has been appointed *ex officio* or a member is an *ex officio* member, the office by virtue of which he has been appointed President or is a member, shall be published by the ¹[Provincial Government] in the ²[*Official Gazette*].

Term of office.

10. (1) The Vice-President and any other appointed or elected member may resign his office by giving notice in writing to the President, and, on such resignation being accepted by the President, shall be deemed to have vacated his office.

(2) Subject to the provisions of this Chapter, the appointed or elected members shall hold office for a term of four years, and may, on the expiration of such term, be re-appointed or re-elected.

(3) Notwithstanding the expiration of the term of four years mentioned in sub-section (2) an appointed or elected member shall continue to hold office until the vacancy caused by the expiration of the said term has been filled.

Removal of members.

11. (1) The ¹[Provincial Government] may, by notification, remove a President, Vice-President, or member of the Board if he—

- (a) refuses to act or becomes incapable of acting as a member of the Board;
- (b) is declared insolvent;

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

²See foot-note 1 on page 11, *ante*.

of 1930.]

(Chapter III.—The District School Board.—Sections 12—14.)

(c) has been or is convicted of any such offence or has been or is subjected by a criminal court to any such order as in the opinion of the ¹[Provincial Government] implies a defect of character which unfits him to become or to continue to be a President, Vice-President or member of the Board; or

(d) without excuse sufficient in the opinion of the ¹[Provincial Government], is absent without the consent of the Board from more than six consecutive meetings of the Board.

(2) The ¹[Provincial Government] may fix a period during which any person so removed shall not be eligible for re-appointment or re-election.

12. When the place of an appointed or elected member of the Board becomes vacant by his removal, resignation or death, a new member shall be appointed or elected in the manner provided in section 6, and shall hold office so long as the member whose place he fills would have been entitled to hold office if such vacancy had not occurred: Casual vacancies.

Provided that no act of the Board, or of its officers, shall be deemed to be invalid by reason only that the number of members of the Board at the time of the performance of such act was less than the number provided by section 6.

13. Members (other than *ex officio* members who are ²[servants of the Crown]) and the establishment of a Board shall be entitled to travelling allowance of the prescribed amount to be paid in the prescribed manner from the District Primary Education Fund for expenses incurred by them in attending meetings of the Board or in performing any duty assigned to them by the Board for the purposes of this Act. Travelling allowance.

14. Every Board shall be a body corporate by the name of "the District School Board of (name of district)," shall have perpetual succession and a common seal, and shall by the said name sue and be sued, with power to acquire and hold property, both movable and immovable, and, subject to the prescribed conditions, to transfer any property held by it and to contract and do all other things necessary for the purposes of this Act. Board to be a body corporate.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

²These words were substituted for the words "Government officers" by Schedule IV to the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

(Chapter III.—*The District School Board.—Sections 15—19.*)

President at meetings.

15. (1) The President, or, in his absence, the Vice-President, shall preside at every meeting of the Board, and shall have a second or casting vote in all cases of equality of votes.

(2) In the absence of both the President and Vice-President, the members present at any meeting shall elect one of their number to preside, who shall have a second or casting vote in all cases of equality of votes.

Meetings of Board to be public.

16. All meetings of the Board shall be open to the public :

Provided that the person presiding may in any particular case, for reasons to be recorded in writing, direct that the public generally or any particular person shall withdraw.

Interested members not to vote.

17. No member of the Board shall vote on any question coming before the Board for consideration in which (otherwise than in its general application to all persons and properties within the district) he has a pecuniary interest.

Duties of President and Vice-President.

18. (1) All orders of the Board shall be carried into effect by the President in whom the entire executive power of the Board shall be vested and who shall be responsible for giving effect to such orders.

(2) The President shall not exercise any power which by this Act is expressly declared to be exercisable by the Board.

(3) The President may authorise the Vice-President by an order in writing to exercise any of the powers conferred or to perform any of the duties imposed on the President by this Act and thereupon the responsibility of the President in respect of such powers and duties shall devolve upon the Vice-President during the continuance of such order.

(4) When the office of President is vacant the Vice-President shall exercise the functions of the President until a new President is appointed.

Power of Board to make regulations

19. (1) Every Board may make regulations in regard to the following matters, namely:—

- (i) the time and place of its meetings;
- (ii) the manner in which notice of meetings shall be given;
- (iii) the conduct of proceedings at meetings;

of 1930.]

(Chapter III.—The District School Board.—Sections 20, 21.)

- (iv) the division of duties among the members of the Board;
- (v) the appointment, duties and procedure of special committees consisting wholly of members of the Board or partly of such members and partly of residents within the local jurisdiction of the Board;
- (vi) the persons by whom receipts may be granted for money paid to the Board;
- (vii) the inspection by members of the Board of primary schools situated within its jurisdiction and the inspection of accounts, books, registers, returns, reports and other documents, appertaining to such schools; and
- (viii) the carrying out of the purposes of this Act.

(2) Any regulation made under sub-section (1) which is repugnant to the provisions of any rule made under section 66 shall, to the extent of such repugnancy, but not otherwise, be void.

20. The Commissioner of the Division may, by order in writing, suspend the execution of any resolution or order of a Board situate within his jurisdiction and prohibit the doing or completion of any act which is about to be done, or is being done within such jurisdiction in pursuance of or under cover of this Act, if, in his opinion, the resolution, order or act is in excess of the powers conferred by law. Control by
Commissioner.

21. (1) If at any time it appears to the ¹[Provincial Government] that a Board or its President has made default in performing any duty imposed by or under this Act, the ¹[Provincial Government] may, by an order in writing, fix a period for the performance of such duty. Control by
Provincial
Government.

(2) If the duty is not performed within the period so fixed, the ¹[Provincial Government] may appoint a person to perform it, and may direct that the expense of performing it shall be paid, within such time as it may fix, to such person by the Board.

(3) If the expense is not so paid, the ¹[Provincial Government] may make an order directing the person having the custody of the District Primary Education Fund to pay to the person appointed under sub-section (2) such expense in priority to any other charges

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

18 *The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930.*

[**Ben. Act VII**

(*Chapter III.—The District School Board.—Sections 22, 23.*)

against such fund, and he shall, so far as the funds to the credit of the Board admit, comply with the order of the ¹[Provincial Government].

Supersession of Board.

22. (1) If at any time it appears to the ¹[Provincial Government] that a Board is not competent to perform or persistently makes default in the performance of, the duties imposed upon it by or under this or any other Act, or exceeds or abuses its powers, the ¹[Provincial Government] may, by an order in writing, specifying the reasons for so doing, remove all appointed and elected members of such Board and direct that the vacancies shall thereupon be filled by election in respect of elected members and by appointment in respect of appointed members or that all the vacancies shall be filled by appointment.

(2) From the date of an order under sub-section (1) until the vacancies are filled—

(a) all powers and duties of the Board shall be exercised and performed by, and

(b) all property vested in the Board shall vest in,

such person, in such manner, as the ¹[Provincial Government] may direct.

Duties of Boards.

23. (1) It shall be the duty of every Board—

(a) to prepare and maintain a register showing all primary schools within the district, together with the teachers thereof and their qualifications and the accommodation available therein;

(b) to tabulate such further information and to prepare such plans or maps as may be necessary to enable the Board to frame an estimate of the existing provision for primary education and of the further provision necessary to place primary education within the reach of all children;

(c) to prepare in the prescribed manner schemes for the extension of primary education within the area under the authority of each Board, Union Committee or Panchayat;

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

of 1930.]

(Chapter III.—*The District School Board.*—Section 23.)

- (d) to arrange, in the prescribed manner, for the opening of additional primary schools and the expansion of existing primary schools with a view to giving effect as funds permit to such schemes;
- (e) to maintain all primary schools under public management in the district, except primary schools maintained by Union Boards under the control of the Board;
- (f) to construct, repair and manage, either directly or through its powers of delegation to Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats, all primary schools under public management in the district;
- (g) subject to the prescribed conditions, to appoint and fix and pay the salaries of teachers in primary schools;
- (h) to grant recognition to schools in accordance with the provisions of section 54 or to withdraw recognition therefrom;
- (i) to make grants in the prescribed manner for scholarships and stipends for primary schools;
- (j) to consider and pass orders on all applications under section 55 for grants to primary schools under private management;
- (k) to make grants to primary schools under private management;
- (l) to prepare and transmit to the Director of Public Instruction proposals for increasing the supply of trained and certificated teachers;
- (m) to advise upon all matters relating to primary education referred to the Board by the Director of Public Instruction;
- (n) subject to the prescribed conditions,—
 - (i) to grant pensions and gratuities to,
 - (ii) to form and manage a provident or annuity fund for,
 - (iii) to compel contributions to such fund from, and
 - (iv) to supplement the contributions to such fund of,

the establishment of the Board and teachers in primary schools.

(Chapter III.—*The District School Board.*—Sections 24—27.)

(2) The register referred to in clause (a) of sub-section (1) shall be maintained and the information referred to in clause (b) thereof shall be tabulated separately for each area under the authority of a Union Board, Union Committee or Panchayat.

Reports to be made by Board.

24. Every Board shall in each financial year—

(i) frame and transmit to the Director of Public Instruction, by such date and in such form as he may direct, a statement showing for its district—

(a) the names of primary schools under private management for which grants have been sanctioned for that year; and

(b) the amount of the grant which has been sanctioned for each such school;

(ii) furnish a report to the Director of Public Instruction by such date and in such form as he may direct, exhibiting the grants which it has distributed to schools within the district.

Board to furnish other prescribed reports.

25. Every Board shall prepare and transmit to the Director of Public Instruction such further reports and statements as may be prescribed.

Power of Board to appoint, punish and dismiss its officers and servants.

26. (1) Subject to the prescribed conditions, a Board may appoint such staff of officers and servants other than inspectors as it may consider necessary to carry out its duties under this Act, and may fix and pay salaries to such staff.

(2) Subject to the prescribed conditions, a Board may punish or dismiss members of its staff.

Compulsory acquisition of land for the purposes of this Act.

27. The ¹[Provincial Government] may, at the request of the President of the Board, acquire, under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, any land I of 1894. required for the purposes of this Act.

“Land” in this section has the same meaning as in clause (a) of section 2 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, ante.

of 1930.]

(Chapter III.—The District School Board.—Chapter IV.
—Cess and Tax for Primary Education.—Sections
28—30.)

28. All buildings or other property, movable or immovable in a district vested in or held by or under the control of a District Board at the date of the commencement of this Act for the purposes of primary education shall for the purposes of this Act, vest in or be held by or be under the control of the District School Board in that district:

Existing buildings, etc., for primary education to vest in District School Boards.

Provided that in the event of a dispute arising whether any building or other property is so vested in or held by or under the control of a District Board at the date of the commencement of this Act, the question shall be referred to the ¹[Provincial Government] whose decision thereon shall be final.

CHAPTER IV.

Cess and Tax for Primary Education.

29. (1) In any district or part of a district in which the provisions of this Chapter are in force, all immovable property on which the road and public works cesses are assessed according to the provisions of the Cess Act, 1880, shall be liable to the payment of a primary education cess.

Levy of primary education cess.

Ben. Act
IX of 1880.

(2) The primary education cess shall be levied at the rate of three and a half pice on each rupee of annual net profits from mines and quarries and at the rate of five pice on each rupee of annual value of land and of annual net profits from tramways, railways and other immovable property as determined under the Cess Act, 1880.

30. (1) Except as otherwise provided in this Act the primary education cess shall be paid to the same persons in the same manner and at the same time as the road cess and public works cess are paid under the Cess Act, 1880.

Payment of cess.

(2) Every holder of an estate shall yearly pay to the Collector the entire amount of the primary education cess calculated on the annual value of the lands comprised in such estate at the rate provided in sub-section (2) of section 29 less a deduction to be calculated at one and a half pice for every rupee of the revenue entered in the valuation roll of such estate as payable in respect thereof.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, ante.

(Chapter IV.—*Cess and Tax for Primary Education.*—
Sections 31—34.)

(3) Every holder of a tenure shall yearly pay to the holder of the estate or tenure within which the land held by him is included the entire amount of the primary education cess calculated on the annual value of the land comprised in his tenure at the rate provided in sub-section (2) of section 29 less a deduction to be calculated at one and a half pice for every rupee of the rent payable by him for such tenure.

(4) Every cultivating raiyat shall pay to the person to whom his rent is payable seven-tenths of the said primary education cess calculated at the rate provided in sub-section (2) of section 29 upon the rent payable by him or upon the annual value, as ascertained under the provisions of the Cess Act, 1880, of the land held by him.

Ben. Act
IX of
1880.

First imposition
of primary
education cess.

31. When the primary education cess is for the first time imposed in any district or part of a district the Collector of the district shall cause a notification to be published and a proclamation to be made in the manner provided by section 40 of the Cess Act, 1880, announcing such imposition, and shall cause to be served on the holder of every estate within the district or part of the district concerned, a notice showing the amount of primary education cess payable in respect of his estate, and specifying the date from which such primary education cess will take effect :

Provided that no defect in the service of such notice shall affect the liability of any person or property to the payment of the primary education cess.

Provisions of
Cess Act, 1880,
to apply to
assessments, etc.,
of education
cess.

32. Subject to the provisions of this Chapter, the provisions of the Cess Act, 1880, shall apply as far as possible to the assessment, levy, payment and recovery of the primary education cess.

Proceeds of cess
to be paid into
District Primary
Education Fund.

33. The proceeds of the primary education cess in each district shall be paid by the Collector into the District Primary Education Fund of such district.

Tax on trade,
business or
profession.

34. (1) The District Magistrate or one of his subordinate officers shall from time to time examine the assessment list prepared under section 16 of the Village Chaukidari Act, 1870, and shall consider the assessment made under section 38 of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, and after such inquiry as he considers necessary, shall prepare a list of all persons assessed to pay the chaukidari rate or the union rate,

Ben. Act
VI of 1870.
Ben. Act
V of 1919.

of 1930.]

(Chapter IV.—Cess and Tax for Primary Education.—
Chapter V.—Contribution from Provincial Revenues.
—Sections 35, 36.)

as the case may be, who, in his opinion, have been so assessed wholly or in part in respect of their trade, business or profession.

(2) The District Magistrate shall assess a tax on each of such persons not exceeding one hundred rupees per annum.

(3) The amount of tax so assessed shall be communicated to the Union Board or Panchayat concerned, and the Union Board or Panchayat shall collect the tax as if it were the union rate or the chaukidari rate.

(4) Any arrears of the said tax may be recovered by any process enforceable for the recovery of an arrear of union rate or chaukidari rate.

(5) The Union Board or Panchayat shall remit the amount of tax realised under this section to the District Magistrate after deducting ten per cent. thereof to defray the cost of collection.

(6) The proceeds of the said tax in each district shall be paid by the District Magistrate into the District Primary Education Fund of such district.

35. For the purposes of this Chapter, the expressions “annual value of land”, “cultivating *raiyat*”, “estate”, “holder of an estate or tenure”, “land” and “tenure” have the same meaning as in section 4 of the Cess Act, 1880. Definitions.

Ben. Act
IX of 1880.

CHAPTER V.

Contribution from Provincial Revenues.

36. In addition to the sums which may be appropriated from the provincial revenues in any year for the purposes of primary education, the [Provincial Government] shall every year provide a sum of twenty-three lakhs and fifty thousand rupees for expenditure on primary education in rural areas. Contribution
from Provincial
Revenues.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

(Chapter VI.—*District Primary Education Fund.*—
Section 37.)

CHAPTER VI.

District Primary Education Fund.

District Primary
Education Fund.

37. (1) There shall be formed for each district in which the provisions of this Chapter are in force, a fund to which shall be credited—

- (i) all sums granted by the ¹[Provincial Government] for the payment of grants to primary education;
- (ii) all sums granted by the ¹[Provincial Government] for the institution and maintenance of primary schools and for the payment of teachers in primary schools;
- (iii) all sums granted by the ¹[Provincial Government] for scholarships for children in primary schools;
- (iv) the proceeds of the primary education cess levied in the district;
- (v) the proceeds of the tax imposed under section 34;
- (vi) all income derived from any endowments or other property owned or managed by the Board for the purposes of this Act;
- (vii) the amount of all fines and penalties imposed under this Act ²[other than fines and penalties levied by Magistrates];
- (viii) all sums received by the Board under section 49;
- (ix) all school fees, if any, collected in primary schools maintained by the Board; and
- (x) all other sums of money which may be received by the Board under or for the purposes of this Act;

(2) The District Primary Education Fund shall become vested in the Board, be under its control and shall be held by it in trust for the purposes of this Act.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

²These words were inserted by Schedule IV to the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

of 1930.]

(Chapter VI.—District Primary Education Fund.—
Sections 38, 39.)

38. Except as otherwise provided in this Act, the District Primary Education Fund shall be applicable to the following objects in the following order:—

Expenditure
from District
Primary
Education Fund.

Firstly—the payment of any sums which the Board may be liable to pay as interest upon loans raised by it for the purposes of this Act and the formation of a sinking fund when required;

Secondly—the payment of the prescribed percentage of the cost of establishments entertained and expenses incurred by the Collector under section 91 of the Cess Act, 1880;

Thirdly—the indemnification of the Collector with the sanction of the Commissioner of the Division from any of the costs, charges and expenses incurred by him under Chapter IV;

Fourthly—the payment of the cost or the prescribed percentage of the cost of audit;

Fifthly—the payment of salaries of the establishment of the Board and of teachers in primary schools and, subject to the prescribed conditions, of pensions, gratuities and grants made for supplementing contributions to the provident fund of the establishment of the Board and of teachers in primary schools;

Sixthly—the payment of travelling allowance to members of the Board and its establishment as provided in section 13;

Seventhly—the payment of expenses incurred by the Board in the construction, equipment and maintenance of primary schools; and

Eighthly—generally, the carrying out of the purposes of this Act.

39. (1) All moneys payable to the credit of the District Primary Education Fund shall forthwith be paid into the prescribed bank or Government treasury.

Administration
of District
Primary
Education
Fund.

(2) All orders or cheques upon the said Fund shall be signed by the President or by such person as he may authorise in writing in this behalf.

(Chapter VI.—District Primary Education Fund.—
Chapter VII.—Audit.—Sections 40—43.)

- (3) No money shall be spent from this Fund—
- (a) except for the purposes of this Act, and
 - (b) unless its expenditure is provided for—
 - (i) in the budget of the Board as approved by the ¹[Provincial Government] under sub-section (2) of section 40, or
 - (ii) by reappropriation in the prescribed manner.

Budget.

40. (1) Every Board shall each year, prepare in the prescribed form a budget of income and expenditure of the Board for the ensuing financial year, and shall submit it to the ¹[Provincial Government] through the Director of Public Instruction on or before the thirtieth day of November.

(2) The ¹[Provincial Government] may either approve of the budget as it stands, or approve of it after making such alterations (if any) as it may think fit or may cause it to be returned to the Board for such modifications as the ¹[Provincial Government] may think necessary, and, when such modifications have been made, the budget shall be re-submitted for approval to the ¹[Provincial Government.]

CHAPTER VII.

Audit.

Keeping of accounts.

41. Accounts of receipts and expenditure of every Board shall be kept in the prescribed manner and form up to the prescribed day in each year.

Accounts to be audited annually.

42. The accounts of every Board shall be audited and examined at least once in every year by such auditor as may be appointed by the ¹[Provincial Government].

Accounts to be open to inspection.

43. A copy of the accounts of every Board, duly made up and balanced, shall be deposited in the office of the Board and be open at the prescribed hours to the inspection of all interested persons for fourteen clear days before the audit; and all such persons may take copies or extracts from the same without fee.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

of 1930.]

(Chapter VII.—Audit.—Sections 44—48.)

44. (1) Before each audit the Board shall, after being informed by the auditor of the proposed date of audit, give at least fourteen days' notice of the time and place at which the audit will be made and of the deposit of its accounts as provided by section 43. Notice of audit to be given.

(2) Such notice shall be given by posting outside the office of the Board and in such other way as may be prescribed.

45. (1) For the purpose of any audit the auditor may by order in writing require the production before him of all books, deeds, contracts, accounts, vouchers, receipts and other documents and papers which he may deem necessary and may require any person accountable for or having the custody or control of the same to appear before him at such audit and to make and sign a declaration as to their correctness or to answer any question or prepare and submit any statement relative thereto. Documents to be produced before auditor.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Board to comply with any requisition made by the auditor and to give all reasonable facilities to the auditor to inspect and audit the accounts of the Board.

46. Any person interested in the District Primary Education Fund may make an objection in writing to the accounts before the auditor. Power of persons interested to make objection at audit.

47. (1) The auditor shall disallow any item of expenditure which is contrary to law and shall give a written certificate that the sum so disallowed is due from the person making or authorising the illegal payment. Powers of auditor to certify sums due.

(2) If any person entrusted with the duty of accounting for the Board fails to bring any sum into account which ought to have been brought into account and by such default any deficiency or loss is caused to the Board the auditor shall give a written certificate that the amount of such deficiency or loss is due from the person so defaulting.

48. (1) (a) Any person who has made an objection under section 46, if such objection has been overruled by the auditor, and Appeal from orders of auditor.

(b) any person from whom any sum has been certified by the auditor to be due under section 47

may appeal to the Commissioner of the Division against the decision of the auditor within thirty days, and the Commissioner may in appeal give any decision which might have been given by the auditor, and such decision shall be final.

(Chapter VII.—Audit.—Chapter VIII.—Powers and duties of Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats.—Sections 49—51.)

(2) The Commissioner may, in his discretion, order that sums certified to be due under section 47 or sub-section (1) of this section shall not be realised under section 49, and such order shall be final.

Recovery of sums certified due.

49. (1) Every sum credited to be due from any person by an auditor under section 47 or by the Commissioner of the Division under section 48 shall be paid by such person to the District Primary Education Fund, within fourteen days after the making of the certificate unless, in the case of a certificate by an auditor, an appeal under section 48 is pending.

(2) If payment is not made in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (1)—

(a) in the case of default by a ¹[servant of the Crown] or member of the establishment of the Board the sum payable shall be recovered, subject to the prescribed conditions, by deduction from his salary bill, and

(b) in the case of default by any other person the auditor shall forward to the Collector a certificate under his signature specifying the sum payable, and the Collector, on receipt of such certificate, shall proceed to recover the sum as if it were a public demand under the Public Demands Recovery Act, 1913.

Ben. Act III of 1913.

Report of auditor to whom to be submitted.

50. Within fourteen days after the completion of the audit the auditor shall report on the accounts audited and examined and shall forward such report to the ²[Provincial Government] through the Director of Public Instruction and shall forward a copy of such report to the President of the Board concerned, who shall lay it before the Board.

CHAPTER VIII.

Powers and duties of Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats.

Delegation of Board's powers to Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats.

51. Subject to the prescribed conditions, the Board may and shall, if so required by an order of the ²[Provincial Government], delegate all or any of its powers

¹These words were substituted for the words "Government servant" by Schedule IV to the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

²See foot-note 3 on page 9, ante.

of 1930.]

(Chapter VIII.—Powers and duties of Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats.—Chapter IX.—Recognition of and grants to Primary Schools.—Sections 52—54.)

Ben. Act
V of 1919.

of construction, repair, supervision and management of primary schools to Union Boards in areas in which the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, is in force, and elsewhere to Union Committees or Panchayats, and thereupon such Union Boards, Union Committees, or Panchayats, shall, subject to its control, exercise such powers within the area under their authority.

Ben. Act
III of
1885.
Ben Act
VI of 1870.

52. For the purposes of this Act every Union Committee constituted under the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885, and every Panchayat appointed under the Village Chaukidari Act, 1870, shall be a body corporate by the name of "the Union Committee of (name of Union)" or, "the Panchayat of (name of village)" as the case may be, and shall have perpetual succession and a common seal, and shall by the said name sue and be sued, with power to acquire and hold property, both movable and immovable, and subject to the prescribed conditions, to transfer any property held by it and to contract and to do all other things necessary for the purposes of this Act.

Union
Committees and
Panchayats to be
bodies corporate
for purposes of
Act.

53. Notwithstanding anything contained in section 18 of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, the power of every Union Board to transfer property or to contract shall, for the purposes of this Act, be subject to the prescribed conditions.

Power of Union
Board to transfer
property and
contract.

CHAPTER IX.

Recognition of and grants to Primary Schools.

54. (1) If the managing authority of any school desires that such school shall be recognised as a primary school under this Act, it shall submit an application in the prescribed form to the Board.

Recognition.

(2) The Board may, subject to the prescribed conditions, by an order in writing, grant such application, conditionally or unconditionally, or refuse or defer the grant of recognition and may also similarly withdraw recognition so granted.

(Chapter IX.—Recognition of and grants to Primary Schools.—Chapter X.—Compulsory Education.—Sections 55—57.)

(3) An appeal shall lie in respect of any order passed under sub-section (2) to the Director of Public Instruction or to any officer subordinate to him, being above the rank of District Inspector of Schools, to whom he may delegate his powers in this behalf in writing.

(4) The Board may subject to the prescribed conditions, recognise any school in the district as a primary school although no application for recognition has been made by the managing authority of such school under sub-section (1).

Grants.

55. (1) If the managing authority of any primary school under private management desires that such school shall be granted aid, it shall submit an application in the prescribed form to the Board.

(2) The Board may, subject to the prescribed conditions, by an order in writing, grant such application, conditionally or unconditionally, or refuse or defer the grant of aid.

(3) An appeal shall lie in respect of any order passed under sub-section (2) to the Director of Public Instruction or to any officer subordinate to him, being above the rank of District Inspector of Schools, to whom he may delegate his powers in this behalf in writing.

CHAPTER X.

Compulsory Education.

**Notification by
Provincial
Government.**

56. If the ¹[Provincial Government], after consulting the Board concerned, is satisfied that there is adequate provision for primary education in any area for which a Union Board, Union Committee or Panchayat, has been constituted, it may, by notification, declare that primary education shall be compulsory within such area.

**No fees to be
charged.**

57. No fee shall be charged by any primary school under public management in any area in which primary education has been declared compulsory under section 56 and also from the time the provisions of this Act have been extended and cess imposed in any area, even before primary education be declared compulsory.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

of 1930.]

(Chapter X.—Compulsory Education.—Sections 58—61.)

58. At the instance of the Board the ¹[Provincial Government] may, by notification, exempt from the operation of section 59, section 62 and section 63 any person or class of persons in any area in which primary education has been declared compulsory under section 56. Exemptions.

59. In any area in which primary education has been declared compulsory under section 56 the guardian of every child resident in such area shall, subject to the exceptions specified in section 60, cause such child to attend a primary school. Responsibility of guardians.

60. Attendance at a primary school shall not be compulsory on a child if— Conditions exempting from attendance.

- (1) there is no primary school within two miles or such less distance as may be specified by general or special order of the Board in this behalf from the residence of the child;
- (2) the child is under eight years of age and there is no primary school within one mile from the residence of the child;
- (3) the child is prevented from attending the school by sickness, infirmity or other cause declared by a resolution of the Union Board, Union Committee or Panchayat concerned to be a reasonable excuse for non-attendance;
- (4) the child is receiving instruction in some other manner approved by the prescribed officer;
- (5) the child has already received instruction in a primary school or otherwise to the satisfaction of the Board; or
- (6) the Board has declared that, owing to agricultural operations, children residing in the area under the authority of any Union Board, Union Committee or Panchayat within the jurisdiction of the Board shall be exempt from attendance at a primary school for a period to be specified in the declaration.

61. The Union Board, Union Committee or Panchayat concerned shall be responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of section 59, section 62 and section 63 and, subject to the prescribed conditions, shall appoint one or more Attendance Committees for this purpose. Attendance Committees.

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

(Chapter X.—Compulsory Education.—Chapter XI.—
Religious Instruction.—Chapter XII.—Indemnity.
—Sections 62—65.)

Default by
guardian.

62. (1) If an Attendance Committee is satisfied that a guardian has, without reasonable excuse and after receiving a written caution from the Attendance Committee, failed to comply with the provisions of section 59, it shall send a written complaint against the guardian to a Magistrate having jurisdiction.

(2) The Magistrate, if satisfied that the complaint is well-founded, shall direct the guardian to cause the child in respect of whom the complaint was preferred to attend a primary school regularly from a date to be specified in such direction.

Penalty for
default.

63. (1) If an Attendance Committee is satisfied that a guardian has without reasonable excuse failed to comply with a direction issued to him under sub-section (2) of section 62, it shall sanction his prosecution, and on conviction by a Magistrate such guardian shall be liable to a fine which may extend to five rupees.

(2) Any person who has on two or more previous occasions been convicted of an offence under this section shall, on further conviction for such offence, be liable to a fine which may extend to fifty rupees.

CHAPTER XI.

Religious Instruction.

Religious
instruction.

64. Subject to the prescribed conditions, provision shall, so far as possible, be made in every primary school for the religious instruction at least once in every week during school hours of every child attending the school in the religion of the guardian of such child:

Provided that, at the request in writing of the guardian of any child, such child shall be exempted from such religious instruction.

CHAPTER XII.

Indemnity.

• Indemnity.

65. No suit, prosecution or legal proceeding whatever shall lie against any person in respect of anything which is in good faith, done or intended to be done under this Act.

of 1930.]

(Chapter XIII.—Rules.—Section 66.)

CHAPTER XIII.

Rules.

66. (1) The ¹[Provincial Government] may, after previous publication, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act. Power of Provincial Government to make rules.

(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:—

- (a) the educational authority referred to in clause (1) of section 2;
- (b) the age limit referred to in clause (3) of section 2;
- (c) the subjects and standards referred to in clause (14) of section 2, and the circumstances in which such subjects may vary in different schools;
- (d) the resignation of members, the circumstances in which and the authority by which any member of the Committee may be removed;
- (e) the filling of any vacancy in the Committee whether temporary or otherwise;
- (f) the regulation of travelling allowances of members of the Committee and of their remuneration, if any;
- (g) the appointment of the staff of officers and servants of the Committee and the Board and the pay and allowances of such staff;
- (h) the appointment of a President of the Committee and the method of conducting the business of the Committee;
- (i) the manner of election of members of the Committee under section 4 and the manner of election of members of the Board under clauses (f), (g) and (i) of section 6;
- (j) the manner of election of the President of the Board under sub-section (1) of section 8;
- (k) the amount and manner of payment of travelling allowances under section 13;
- (l) the conditions subject to which the Board under section 14, the Union Committee and the Panchayat under section 52 and the Union Board under section 53 may transfer property held by them and may contract;

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, ante.

(Chapter XIII.—Rules.—Section 66.)

- (m) the number of meetings to be held by the Committee and the Board, the number of members who constitute a quorum thereat, the keeping of minutes of the proceedings thereof, the submission of copies of such proceedings of the Committee to the ¹[Provincial Government] and of the Board to the Commissioner of the Division, and the preparation and custody of registers and records by such Committee or Board;
- (n) the manner of preparing schemes under clause (c) of sub-section (1) of section 23;
- (o) the manner of opening additional primary schools and of the expansion of existing primary schools referred to in clause (d) of sub-section (1) of section 23;
- (p) the conditions referred to in clause (g) of sub-section (1) of section 23;
- (q) the manner of making grants under clause (i) of sub-section (1) of section 23;
- (r) the conditions relating to pensions, gratuities and provident or annuity funds referred to in clause (n) of sub-section (1) of section 23 and in clause *Fifthly* of section 38;
- (s) the reports and statements referred to in section 25;
- (t) the conditions of appointment, punishment or dismissal of the staff of the Board under section 26;
- (u) the percentage of cost of establishments referred to in clause *Secondly* of section 38;
- (v) the percentage of cost of audit referred to in clause *Fourthly* of section 38;
- (w) the bank or Government treasury referred to in sub-section (1) of section 39;
- (x) the manner of reappropriation referred to in sub-clause (ii) of clause (b) of sub-section (3) of section 39;
- (y) the form of budget prepared by the Board under section 40;
- (z) the manner and form of accounting and the day up to which accounts shall be kept under section 41;
- (z1) the hours for inspection of accounts referred to in section 43;

¹See foot-note 3 on page 9, *ante*.

of 1930.]

(Chapter XIII.—Rules.—Chapter XIV.—Repeals and Amendments.—Section 67.)

- (z2) the procedure of auditors and all matters incidental and ancillary to the audit of accounts;
- (z3) the manner of giving notice under sub-section (2) of section 44;
- (z4) the conditions of recovery of sums under clause (a) of sub-section (2) of section 49;
- (z5) the conditions of the delegation of powers by the Board to Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats under section 51;
- (z6) the form of application for, and the conditions of grant of, and withdrawal of, recognition under section 54;
- (z7) the form of application for, and the conditions of grant of, aid under section 55;
- (z8) the officer referred to in clause (4) of section 60;
- (z9) the conditions of appointment of an Attendance Committee under section 61; and
- (z10) the conditions of provision for religious instruction under section 64.

CHAPTER XIV.

Repeals and Amendments.

67. The enactments specified in the Schedule shall be repealed or amended to the extent and in the manner mentioned in the fourth column thereof.

Repeals and amendments of certain enactments.

36 *The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930.*

[Ben. Act VII of 1930.]

(*The Schedule.—Enactments repealed or amended.*)

THE SCHEDULE.

Enactments repealed or amended.

(See Section 67.)

Year.	No.	Short Title.	Extent of repeal or amendment.
1	2	3	4
1885	III	The Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In section 62 the words "primary and" shall be omitted. 2. In clause (a) of section 63 after the words "class of schools" the words "except primary schools recognised under section 54 of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930," shall be inserted. 3. In clause (a) of section 65 after the words "class of schools" the words "except primary schools recognised under section 54 of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930," shall be inserted. 4. Section 112 shall be repealed. 5. In clause (g) of section 138 the words "primary schools and" shall be omitted, and for the words and figures "sections 112 and 113" the word and figures "section 113" shall be substituted.
1919	IV	The Bengal Primary Education Act, 1919.	The proviso to sub-section (2) of section 1 shall be repealed.
1919	V	The Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In section 32 the words "primary school or" and "primary schools or" where they occur shall be omitted. 2. After section 32 the following shall be inserted, namely:— "32A. Subject to the provisions of the Bengal (Rural) Establishment Primary Education and management Act, 1930, of primary and to the control of the District School Board constituted under that Act, the Union Board may establish primary schools or assume charge of existing primary schools and shall repair, maintain and manage any primary school under its charge." 3. In clause (j) of sub-section (2) of section 101 the words "schools and" shall be omitted.