CHAPTER V
INSTRUMENTS OF DEMOCRACY

The Social backwardness of the Hindu Society reflected in the development of Local Self Governing institutions and in the fairness of elections to these primary instruments of democracy. The want of proper education of the masses, the formation of a national character and a solution to the social limitations were problems which perpetually slashed their natural evolution. The country sadly missed unity which was vital for her freedom. More flagrant was the fact that there was no proper lead given by the educated classes to prepare the society to reach its ultimate goal. If ever they had been trustworthy, as champions of nationalist aspirations, Morley would not have said in 1907 that if Indians were granted Swaraj, they could not rule on behalf of the country even for a week\(^1\). They were mainly concerned with securing positions for them in the different fields of human activity\(^2\). Consequently, to begin with, training to the poor and ignorant villagers was thought of, in the Local Self governing institutions.

Local self governing institutions

Unfortunately, when no community was representative of the other, either in the working of the Local Self Government institutions or in the Legislature, nomination of members from respective communities was the only practical means, till such time when elected members could take their proper place in

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\(^1\) *Andhra Kesari*, 2 Aug. 1907 Madras Newspaper Reports, p. 349.

\(^2\) *Kistna Patrika*, 12 Jul. 1907, Madras Newspaper Reports, p. 290.
them. Government did not favour open elections. In 1911, the Hon. Mr. P. Kesava Pillai\textsuperscript{3} moved two resolutions, one that the village officers should be prohibited from standing for elections to the District Boards and two the Government officials might be prohibited to stand for election to the District Boards. The government opposed both of them and said that village officers and their help to the working of these institutions was a paramount necessity. Both the resolutions of Kesava Pillai were defeated\textsuperscript{4}.

**The Royal Commission**

The Royal Commission on Decentralisation in 1911 wanted village Panchayats to be given a fair trial\textsuperscript{5}. No doubt there was a demand for Panchayats in India, but when social prejudices in the when areas were so great, it was not difficult to imagine its hold on the villagers living under the Panchayat jurisdiction. With untouchability so rampant, it was impossible to think of a democratic set up in the Panchayat administration. No one need blame the Government if the trial was only half hearted.

**The Local Boards and Municipalities**

In 1912 there had been a cry for elected representatives in the Local Boards and Municipalities\textsuperscript{6}. But election always reminded an instrument of aristocracy and selection or nomination was democratic; this might appear a paradox but a fact in Indian constitutional history. And in 1912, Local Self


\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{5} The Hindu, 24 May 1911, Madras Newspaper Reports, P. 768.

\textsuperscript{6} The Swadesamitran, 18 Sept. 1912, Madras Newspaper Reports, p. 1363.
Government in India was considered a failure only because of the narrowness of outlook of elected representative who were mostly from educated class, the type of men that managed to get into the councils.

The demand of Muslims

In regard to representation in the Local Boards and Municipalities, a deputation under AghaKhan asked to increase the number of representation for the Muhammadans. It was promised by the Viceroy. This was in consonance with the warning of the Decentralisation Commission against the vesting of Local authority in any particular community.

The most vehement critic of the educated classes, who were riding rough shod over all other communities, was Lala Lajpat Rai who stood as a candidate for the Lahore Municipal Council in the elections in 1911. He pointed out, that the educated community wanted the Government to introduce popular rights; but he admitted that these rights would be useless till the Hindu society purged itself of its corruptions. A staunch nationalist, Lala Lajpat Rai did not fail to indict his countrymen for their selfishness. The story of the Municipal progress in India is a standing stigma on the capacity of the educated Indians for local self Government.

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7 Opinions on Reform Proposals recorded in the letter No.222 (Pub) Fort St. George Gazette, 13 March, 1912.
8 Ibid.,
10 The Swadesamitran, 10 Jul. 1911, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 1039.
11 The Indian Patriot, 14 Jul. 1913, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 1110.
There is a contrast between the growth of Local self governing institutions in England and in India. The English Municipal Government is a story full of practical lessons and a high sense of civic responsibility. But the great clamour of communal representation and safeguards for caste interests in the Municipal affairs alone absorbed the major times of Indians. Their sole aspirations in getting into the Municipal institutions was to support their candidates in the elections to the Legislative Councils. Municipalities naturally suffered their fate. No doubt Government did not place much confidence on the Municipalities which had not grown above social prejudices and which neglected its primary functions. But it had cautiously helped the growth of a Municipal administration from the time of Ripon, to make it representative of all communities and interests so that, it might in the first place become really representative in character of the people, and secondly, the interests of no community suffered in municipal affairs. In 1916, in U. P. the Government in their new Act provided representation for the Muhammadans. It was evident that, there was insurmountable material and moral obstacles to a fair election in India. The obstacles were nowhere more serious than in the field of Municipal Politics.

The contrast of Indian and European Municipalities institutions

In 1918, the conference of Local Self Governing Institutions was held. In the Secretariat note, it was pointed out that many of the Municipalities wanted to have a share from the Revenues of the Railways. But the question was asked,

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why the Municipalities in India could not take initiative in running transports, like busses, trams and other public conveyances. It was also asked why they could not develop housing construction by acquiring vast areas in anticipation of the growing population as done in Germany and other advanced countries of the world. In fact, Indian Municipalities, except a few of them never had a plan whatever to run profitable concerns of public utility.

In February, 1911, Mr. Raghava Rao\(^{16}\) introduced a Resolution in regard to empowering some of the Taluk Boards in the Presidency to elect their own Presidents. The most uncompromising opposition came not from the much criticised English bureaucracy, but from the Indian member of the Executive Council, Mr. Krishnaswamy Ayyangar, who was in charge of Local Self Government. His opposition was based on the recommendation of the District officers. He remarked that no single District Officer had recommended such a measure. For this stand, he was criticised by the Brahmin Press as one who had not understood his functions, to work as an intermediately between the representatives of the people and Government. However, the Indian Press felt thankful that the Government at last accepted the Resolution in an amended form. Government was in favour of avoiding open competition. This was regretted by the educated classes as injurious to themselves\(^ {17}\).

In 1917, Rajagopalachariar\(^{18}\) the Member of the Executive Council refused to the election of Presidents of the District Boards. He rightly said taking


\(^{17}\) Ibid.,

into consideration of the position of the general social condition of that time was not yet ripe and they had to wait. Muslims regretted that separate electorate was not given to them in Madras Corporation. The Muslim regretfully said a resolution favouring separate electorate was rejected by the kindness of Hindu friends.  

For the first time, in the wake of Reforms in 1919, the Government of Bombay proposed to introduce compulsory education in Municipalities. However, Municipalities came to prominence by 1924 when Patel became President of the Bombay Corporation and Das in Calcutta with S. C. Bose as the Executive Officer, Allahabad, Rajamundry and Guntur councils had a congress majority. In Madras most of them were controlled by the Justice Party. This was the first time one could find the beginning of popular interest. The justice party also nominated a large number of members in the various self governing institutions. In 1925, the Justice Party opposed to vest the corporation with the power to appoint its own commissioner. Satyamurthy criticised the right of nomination, which could not be removed by Government in the interest of the untouchables.

The defence of democracy

In 1934, many candidates were returned unopposed to the Local Self governing institutions. It was remarked that Democracy was rapidly disappearing.

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19 Ibid.,  
20 All India Congress Committee Papers Rule, G.62 of 1379.  
21 The Hindu, 5 July 1924, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 41.  
from local self government. It was even said that Democracy was foreign to the character of India, neither desired by the masses nor even the bulk of the middle class, who composed the greater part of the electorate\textsuperscript{23}. No doubt, the masses were still far behind in the general concept of democracy, but it was the only solution for their advancement. The primary need was to educate the masses than to decry them. However, it was a poignant spectacle that communal differences retarded the healthy development of local self governing institutions was seen from the administrative report of the local bodies in more than one province\textsuperscript{24}.

**The abolition of Taluk Boards**

In 1933, the Raja of Bobbili favoured the abolism of Taluk Boards, which were rampant with election dispute, party quarrels and caste prejudices and to increase the number of village panchayats\textsuperscript{25}. However, it was defended that the abolition of taluk Boards should not be taken as an index to the capacity of the people of Madras to manage Democratic institutions. In spite of the short comings, the local self governing institutions in India, proved to be the basic and primary instrument in the development of Democracy in India. No doubt the facilities for training the people were limited by her own social drawbacks.

The want of a civic sense among the people reflected in the general sanitation and in the working of municipal institutions. Undoubtedly the blame is distributed among all classes of people. A sense of National or social sanitation

\textsuperscript{23} *The Madras Mail*, 17 Sept. 1934, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 470.

\textsuperscript{24} *The Hindu*, 26 Sept. 1934, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 470.

\textsuperscript{25} Public Dept., 1934, Miscellaneous G.O.No.52, 3 Apr. 1934.
was, and is, not a virtue among the various communities in India\textsuperscript{26}. In 1911, the Government sanctioned a portion of the Excise revenue to be distributed to the Municipalities and District Boards as grants in aid for sanitation, improvement of village sites and communications\textsuperscript{27}. But a community which could not take care of itself could not improve with all assistance from outside. The Report of the Sanitary Commission of 1912 bore testimony to the fact that there was no sanitation throughout the Presidency. From thereon, Sanitary Supervisors were appointed\textsuperscript{28}.

**Political Parties**

**The Congress**

It was obviously impossible for the growth of any political party in India on strict democratic lines. The history of the congress was no exception. It was started as an irregular assembly of the highest class, which combined in itself social privileges and education. It failed to look into the social problems that beast the country. But it persistently collided with the government which was not without an adverse effect to the cause of the country and to its own demands. But with the working of the Reforms, manifold changes came in its outlook. With the political emancipation of the Non-Brahmins and the Depressed Classes in Madras, Congress was forced to accommodate and to provide for these powerful forces of democracy into its fold, without which the organisation would have looked very odd with its democratic professions. It was also evident, for its


\textsuperscript{27} The Madras Standard, 24Feb., 1911 Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 296.

survival, it became inevitable to cashew violence and extremism and to remain moderate.

The social outlook of the Congress had not been really reformist. The Muslims, the Christians, the Sikhs, the Non-Brahmins and the Depressed Classes demanded separate representation and got them, congress was claiming that it was not for communal representation. Then who were the people left behind who did not want a communal representation. It was the educated classes. Did they not represent the highest classes?. Of all the communal organisations, Congress in spite of its claim was the most communal and hence the many failures in its history. But, at every stage of the new reforms more especially with the Act of 1935, it had to invite even the lowest classes who were liberated under the impact of the new Reforms.

**The Extremists and the moderates**

But for the part played by Gokhale and the Moderates, it would have been difficult to carry India through the successive stages for the evolution of a democratic set up. It might appear, it was the extremists who placed the nationalist demands before the government and moderates only benefited by it. But whenever, the extremists betrayed their countrymen more especially the backward classes, at the cost of when Swaraj was demanded, the moderates had come to their reasons and carried the ignorant and the suppressed along with them. It was the extremists who estranged the Muslims and the Government by creating suspicion and mistrust. In fact, men like Gokhale among the Moderate were not moderate. They were moderate in politics but extremists in social
reforms. They realised that reforms in society could not be brought about without change in the outlook of the people. Wherever it was necessary, they criticised the government but not hesitated to cooperate with the government.

**The Liberals**

Whatever might have been the official or monastic character of the Liberals in India, they had only helped India’s cause, they worked the Reforms with their belief in the fairness of British Justice, that finally the democratic aspirations of India would be fulfilled. The criticism that there was a craze for office, among the Liberals was as true of any other party in India. They only helped in the working of the Reforms which ultimately gave India democracy and independence.

It was remarked in 1922 that the Reform scheme was a more bone without any flesh and the Moderates and Liberals might bits it as much as they could, but nothing could be gained by it.\(^{29}\) But this had proved a miscalculation of politics and it was the Reform Act 1919 which had given political status to the Non-Brahmin and training to the Depressed Classes in the Legislative councils and the local self governing institutions.

**The Swarajists**

In 1922, to the proposals of the Non-co-operators to enter the Councils, there were two schools of thoughts. The first school said that entering the Councils would be seeking the bondage of the country. But C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru welcomed it. But it was significant that Mr. Lloyd George said that the

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\(^{29}\) *Tamilnadu* 10 Sept. 1922, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 1082.
non-cooperators need not enter the Legislative Councils\textsuperscript{30}. In 1923, Mr. Peol in his Despatch concluded even if those reasons for patience were less cogent, any proposal for the amendment of the Act would not command itself to Parliament on the score of the insufficiency of the period of trial\textsuperscript{31}.

The work of the Swarajist party neither helped the Congress nor the Country. It wrecked the reform in two provinces, and as the Raja of Panagal pointed out, the Swarajists were instrumental for the imposition of bureaucratic administration in those provinces. In 1923, Viceroy at the Chelmsford Club affirmed, that the Government could not be in any way more sympathetic towards Indian aspiration than what it had been\textsuperscript{32}.

In 1923, the Swarajists were humbled in Madras, for conditions in Madras, differed from most other provinces. They were unable to pass even a single resolution in the Legislative council. The madras Presidency Association which sympathised with the Swarajists stood spoof from the Justice Party\textsuperscript{33}. In Madras, it was evident that the Swarajist’s plan to break the council and of non-cooperation from within proved a failure. No doubt diarchy was criticised by all parties including the Justice Party, but no one was prepared to wreck it\textsuperscript{34}. In January 1924, the General Council of the Swarajists decided at first, that in Madras and in the Punjab they should keep their seats practically vacant.

\textsuperscript{30} Despatch from Lloyd George to the Government of India of Reform Proposals, Oct, 1922, No.2, (Home Dept.,)

\textsuperscript{31} Swarajya, 24 Jan. 1923, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 105.

\textsuperscript{32} Justice, 28 Nov. 1923, Madras Newspaper Reports, p. 1469.

\textsuperscript{33} Fortnightly Report, First Half of November, 1923.

\textsuperscript{34} Alladivaideshi, Freedom Movement in India, 1858-1947, Madras, 1977, pp. 162-165.
attending only on occasions when in combination with other parties, they could effectively obstruct the policy of the government or overturn it. The Madras branch of the party publicly protested against this and as a result some alterations were made at the meeting of leaders at Allahabad permitting the party to work in coalition with the opposition with a view embarrass the government. This had been accepted by the Madras Swarajists and their activities in the Council were supposed to be governed by the policy laid down at Cocanada and amended at Allahabad. But the conduct of the Madras Swarajists were neither in keeping with the policies of the Congress nor of the declared principles of the Swarajists party. For in 1926, when the Justice Party was defeated, the Swarajists refused office, but supported the minority government of Dr. Subbaroyan only to see that Justice Party did not come to power. They had not wrecked the Justice party either, for they came out successful in 1929 and continued till the advent of Provincial Autonomy.

The formation of the Swarajist Party\(^{35}\) conjured visions of a disrupted Congress, of a Gandhi disowned by his countrymen and swift break up of the nationalist movement. However, in 1924 Gandhiji was in voluntary exile with his programme to organise the Charka and the Swarajists to perform political work. Gandhiji’s greatness lies in his conciliation with the Swarajists. He characterised his position at Ahamadabad as defeated and humbled\(^{36}\). The Congress had created the maximum difficulties in the evolution of Democracy in India, but it was doubtful whether it learned from experience and its failures.

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The Justice Party

The Justice Party only filled the gap of any nationalist party in the history of Madras in spite of its championing the cause of Non-Brahmins. It worked the reforms. Wrecking it would have meant the extension of the period of trial and thus the Justice Party had only helped to expedite fresh reforms. Within its fold, as any other party in India, it nourished communal factions.

In 1926, Lord Irwin assessing the nature of the Indian Political parties wanted that communal factions should cease and that political parties should come into being. Following him Lord Coachen, the Governor of Madras stated that communal factions ought to disappear. In the elections in 1926, the political party in Bengal, Bombay or Central Provinces, had the requisite majority. The fate of Madras was also the same.

It should be admitted that 1926 was too early for India for the formation of political parties as in the more advanced countries like England, as there was separate representation and reservation of seats for the different classes of people. But there was no communal question in England and in India it was the main question. One characteristic feature of English politics was that while one party assumed power, the second party helped to make the administration popular by its opposition. But in India the opposition was too intolerant and too irresponsible and as such communal as the party in power. The great clamour for representation by the various seats to the Legislative Council could be seen as in 1926 by the 136 applications representing a similar number of communities to 29

37 Samadaraini, 30 Nov. 1926, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 1564.
seats in Madras\textsuperscript{38}. There could never be that coherence so necessary for any political party.

**Community Party**

In 1935, the Community Party\textsuperscript{39} was declared an unlawful assembly. According to the judgement in the Meerut Conspiracy case by the Allahabad High Court, it was held that the Communists had in their minds the violent overthrow of the present order of society and bring about independence of India by means of an armed revolution which was not a distant object of the Party. The Communist Party proposed to organise strikes, a combination of strike and demonstrations, and finally the general strike conjointly with armed insurrection against the power of the Bourgeoisie.

Thus, the Party had abandoned all peaceful, constitutional and democratic means and restored to armed rebellion. The aimed\textsuperscript{40} at the confiscation and nationalisation of factories, banks, railways, transports, plantation and the abolition of Indian states. It wanted to form a Federal workers and peasant Soviet Republic. It also, in its draft platforms, declared the confiscation without compensation of all lands, forests and other properties of landlords and cancellation of labour agreement; to develop such spontaneous peasant movements for non-payments of debts and taxes with the final object of an agrarian revolution and a nation wide movement for independence. According to

\textsuperscript{38} Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1925, Government of India, 1926.
\textsuperscript{39} Public (General) Dept. 1935, G.O. No. 621, Miscellaneous, 17.04.1935.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.,
the Fish Committee in the U.S.A. appointed by the House Representatives, it was assessed that,

1. The Communists had hatred of God and all forms of religion,

2. Destruction of private property and inheritance, absolutes racial and social equality, promotion of class hatred, revolutionary propaganda through the Communist International, stirring up Communist activities in foreign countries in order to cause strikes, riots, sabotage, bloodshed and civil war.

3. Destruction of all forms of representative or democratic government, including civil liberties such as freedom of speech of the Press, of Assembly and trial of Jury. The final object was a world revolution to establish and dictatorship of the so called proletariat into one World Union of Soviet Socialist Republic with the capital at Moscow. Thus the Party was a direct threat to peace, Law and Order, security to person and property and finally a threat to the legally constituted authority of the people based on consent. No doubt government came with swift action. In Calcutta, 13 labour organisations were declared unlawful assemblies, Madras was considered to be a virgin soil where the seeds of Communism was supposed to sprout with rapidity and vigour\(^41\). However, the calculation of the Communist never came true. Their economic programme, their violence, their atheistic doctrine calling Lenin the God of the Godless were an affront to the peaceful ad religious sentiments of the people. In India, they had not made any advance as it was the case in

most part of the British Empire. Wherever Britain had ruled, there had been no great threat of communism, for she had already liberated her subjects from other worst forms of tyranny and exploitation and had provided a powerful machinery to implement the general will of the people. The democratic set up that Britain had adumbrated throughout the British Empire is an invisible fortress of strength against Communal. This is one of the greatest achievements of the British Empire which had laid the foundation of over lasting freedom and rights of man. The secret of the success lies, that at Home there is the Mother Parliament, the Great Congregation of Britain, wiser than the wisest Dictator.

One significant point in the platform of the party was the abolition of rank, caste and communal privileges. In the Indian context, the idea of wresting away communal privileges, in the early stages of the evolution of a democratic society, would be fatal to the very existence of the party.

Eventhough, the party had been declared as unlawful assembly, government did not disregard organised Labour Unions like the Indian National Trade Union Congress and to give representation in the Legislatures. Under the 1919 Act, Labour Representatives were nominated in the Legislatures. In 1924, the Indian National Trade Union Congress wanted representation in the Provincial legislatures by statutory provisions. Government of India in their Reform proposals wanted to provide for labour and according to the Act of 1935, separate seats were allotted for Labour. It is significant the V.V. Giri who was the

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42 In Law (Legislative) Department, 1926, Ordinary Series, G.O. No. 85, 02.03.1926.
President of the Indian National Trade Union Congress became a member of the Cabinet under 1935 Act. However, Government did not recognise revolutionary labour organisations.

Native Associations

The character of the social structure reflected in the general thinking of the society also. It was impossible to think of a mass movement, for, social intermingling in conference and committees were conditioned by social restrictions. This reflected in the provincial and District Conferences. For a long time, they remained the debating societies of the higher classes and confined to the expression of pious sentiments and adopting resolutions. They worked as accelerates of the Congress, and in 1907 the Provincial Conference in Madras supported Swadesi Movement, boycott of foreign goods and the proposition of Swaraj. But there were only the expression of lip sympathy, for their desire was mostly for a fair share in the administration of the province.

As educational centres for higher classes

The Provincial Conferences served as educational centres for the higher classes. They helped the non-official members to be appraised of the views expressed in the Provincial Conferences. As political education had not spread among the masses, there was only a faint feeling of patriotism. The result was the Provincial Conference was not assertive and there was no fervour. They had no mass support and their only concern was to get more appointments. At the Guntur

44 *Wednesday Review*, 5 August, 1908, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 531.
Provincial Conference, Er. M. Raghava Rao, M.L.C. stated “that the times required that more practical work should be done in the Council Chambers as well as in the Congress, which could be achieved only an amount of ground work and training which was centred in a feud”\(^46\). Successive conferences failed to attract large number of men from different part of the Presidency. The Provincial Conferences had no politics than personal needs\(^47\). There was stagnation in political life and except some young men, there was no enthusiasm elsewhere. In fact, the Provincial Conferences lost their significance, when the Councils were reformed under the Morley Minto reforms, with representation to a wider section of the community. In 1911, to the deputation of the Provincial Conference, Arthur Lawley, the Governor of Madras rightly pointed out the need for independent political organisation without social bias\(^48\).

**Separate Conferences by Non-Brahmins**

The Provincial and District Conferences were not meant for social reform but only, “to keep alive the feeble activity which they maintained in politics”\(^49\). There was no party spirit, but what was maintained, only a communal spirit. After the Reform Act of 1919, the Non-Brahmins began to hold separate conferences as they were neglected from the Provincial Conferences earlier. As the educated classes were sent upon monopolising administrative and political power, it was logical that they should exclude other classes of people. But the Minto Morley Reforms gave a political awakening to the Non-Brahmins. In

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\(^46\) *Ibid.*, 
\(^47\) *The Hindu*, 8 May 1911, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 684. 
\(^48\) *The Madras Standard*, 17 May 1911, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 727. 
\(^49\) *The West Coast Reformer*, 11 June 1911, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 866.
November 1911, the Kammas held a separate conference,\(^{50}\) wanted Panchayat system of administration, primary education, wanted the abolition of third marriage and improvement of agriculture. There had been a vast difference between the prayers of the Provincial conferences and the Brahmin Sabhas, and the demands that emanated from Non-Brahmin Conferences. While the higher classes were only for offices, they never cared for the education of the lower classes, improvement of agriculture not to speak of the social reforms so urgent among them. Naturally the Non-Brahmins were forced to find a different way for their salvation.

The Provincial Conferences were only an occasional festive gathering of a few. Not that there was no work for the conferences, but they were not prepared for it. Associations and Societies could be established easily. It was not their number and their meetings that counted, but honest work for the uplift of the society. Selfishness and sectarian attitude polluted public life and demoralised public endeavours\(^{51}\).

Most of the conferences were thinly attended. In 1913, Mr. Ramachandra Rao\(^{52}\) rightly pointed out that except a few in the Madras city and a few others from other parts of the Presidency mostly from East Coast Districts who belonged to the same section of the Brahmin community, no one else attended them and the Provincial Conferences had no representative character. “It was only an aggregate gathering for achieving benefits for a particular community. It

\(^{50}\) *Krishna Patrika*, 10 Nov. 1911, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 1735.

\(^{51}\) *The Indian Patriot*, 17 Jun. 1911, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 599.

\(^{52}\) Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, 1913, p. 4.
could never claim to speak on behalf of the whole province\textsuperscript{53}. For the very creation of a public spirit it was absolutely necessary to make the conference more broad based. But there was no vision and hence the limitation for the conferences. The public criticism of these conferences as in regard to the Congress was that they indulged in an annual field day of three days duration discussing subjects of momentous importance at railroad speech, without giving an opportunity to ‘delegates’ to discuss these subjects in all their hearing. The delegates returned and never looked back for another year, whatever might happen to the nation\textsuperscript{54} in the meantime.

**The Indian Press and Public Opinion**

The Indian Press and Public opinion reflected the popularities of the social structure. The Press which voiced the opinion of the more advanced classes whipped up emotional sentiments, talked of sedition, bomb throwing, spared no criticism of government, bent upon attacking the moderates\textsuperscript{55}. This was the position till 1909. It was very unfortunate that except a few, no newspaper touched the fringe of the Indian Social problem and wherever the government had made an advance, they made an earnest attempt to decry it. In 1907, the Brahmin Press condemned the Manifesto of some leading men of Punjab expressing their fidelity to the British Crown\textsuperscript{56}. The seditious papers were prosecuted and the seditious meetings act was also passed\textsuperscript{57} and in 1908 the Newspaper Offences Act came into force.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{54} The West Coast Spectator, 10 May 1913, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 769.

\textsuperscript{55} The Indian Patriot, 19 Aug. 1909, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 557.

\textsuperscript{56} The Swadesamitran, 17 Jun. 1907, Madras Newspaper Reports. p. 239.

\textsuperscript{57} Fortnightly Report, First Half of November, 1908.
The granting of a constitution by the Shah of Peraia and the Sultan of Turkey to their people was considered as the dawn of Democracy in Oriental countries which was even described as synchronising with the struggle for supremacy between east and west\(^58\). But the truth was under the impact of the west and Oriental society had begun its struggle to adopt many occidental institutions but at the same time hesitated to adjust to the new circumstances. In fact Western Statesman helped rather than hindered in the evolution of the society and its advancement forward\(^59\).

**An unbridled press**

In 1910, assessing sedation, Col. F.W. Friedeaux wrote in London Times, ascribing anarchy in India to be organised license of a unbridles press and culpable weakness of the administration. Whatever, the Press Act of 1910 curbed largely the trouble created by the Press in India. Muslim Newspapers, however did not give much credit to the agitation in Bengal. They realised that it was impossible for a handful of people, who wanted to attain Swaraj at the expense of India. The character of the seditionist was well revealed in the Lahore Sedition Case\(^60\). The paper found on the pocket of an accused betrayed the fancy of individuals in Nationalist struggles. It stated that after deriving the English out of India a portion of that side of attack should be given to the Amir, another side for Nepal and then to constitute a house of Lords and House of Commons at Delhi. The object means to be to give away Indian Territory for nothing which the


\(^{60}\) Ibid.,
privileged classes were prepared. There was no guarantee that they could rule with internal peace in the absence of an organised society and without a plan for an elected representative body or bodies.

The prejudices

The working of the Indian Legislative Council were characterised by the Press as dry, as if the opinion of the members were not taken into account. They described the councils as debasing influences. But these criticisms of Legislatures were born out of prejudice, as the privileged classes were slowly losing political power and new classes and interests were coming into prominence.

Home Rule and the conservation of the people

The Irish Home Rule question was discussed in extent by the Press. In 1912, the revolution in China, the New Constitution in Russia were pointed out by the extremists and the Home Rulers as examples for India to emulate. But what was the Indian social condition? When Lord Pentland gave a party in February 1913, at the Government House, the members and officials of the Corporation without observing caste formalities, he was for the first time praised as fit to be the President of the Hindu Social Reform Association. This was a surprising Party in which all caste people participated, and complimented ‘the growing cosmopolitanism of the stomach’ Indians were slowly learning to dine with fellow beings as inter-dining was prohibited in the Hindu Society. The Society at large was conservative and with untouchability the idea of cosmopolitanism among the same society itself was still far off.

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61 *The Indian Patriot*, 2 Dec. 1910, Madras Newspaper Reports, p. 1531.
But there was a reasonable section in the Indian Press which understood the great changes that were taking place in India and in England. Under the head Democracy in Malabar, the West Coast Spectator wrote in 1913 that the Malayali was not a servile, lifeless being on he was a couple of decades ago. The paper admitted that English politics had made a deep impression on the Malayali mind. The speeches of Lloyd George then an unearned increment, the land problem, the sledge pension etc. made a heavy impact. The middle class availed themselves of the democratic ideals and this awakening was looked upon as the beginning of the assertion of the rights which inevitably the landowners had to recognise.\textsuperscript{63}

**The tone of the Press after the advent of the justice party**

In the context of the Non-cooperation Movement after the 1919 Act, the tempo of criticism of the Press increased. The working of diarchy in Madras by the Justice Party, eventhough was criticised, the Press was always cautious. This was a sign of reconciliation to the inevitable changes that were taking place in government and in society.

In 1930, there was a growing revolutionary sentiment and the Indian Press only accentuated\textsuperscript{64} it. The communist with their revolutionary idea of overthrowing the government were also benefited by the criticism in the Press. However, the revolutionary sentiments were confined to individuals and associations and the general mass of the people had no linking of revolution. Thus the Press lost its sympathy of Government nor had it properly educated the masses. The vision was blurred. But there were powerful political forces which

\textsuperscript{63} *The West Coast Spectator*, 12 March 1913, Madras Newspaper Reports, p. 435.

\textsuperscript{64} *The Swadesamitran*, 25 Dec. 1930, Madras Newspaper Reports, p. 205
did not fall to generate an enthusiasm into the hearts of the downtrodden whose welfare became their sole concern. Above all there was the determination of the Government to wither away the passing wave of unrest but to see that the lowest class was also lifted up to constitution inevitable part of a democratic society. Prof. Laaki drawing ‘parallel between the Irish agitation and the Indian struggle in 1930 said, “Of the ultimate issue of the present struggle there can be no doubt, but he wanted to settle the Indian question without leaving any bitterness behind”⁶⁵. There was no evidence of any bitterness that Britain left behind, for the struggle in India was not a struggle against Britain but against India herself. No doubt, there was every evidence of an unending struggle of the Brahmin power to assert supremacy but always defeated in view of the civilising forces that were unleashed in India. The History of Madras had proved different from 1909 to 1935 as the Non-Brahmins made greater struggle to achieve their rights and liberties which the great democratic experiments had brought in the wake of the Reform proposals. No one was supreme but freedom and democracy reigned supreme. In every age of Indian Empire, aspiring Brahmins had usurped and awaked the Imperial sceptre, but in Madras after 1861 to 1935 his fight became hopeless, he lost the sympathy of the people and lost the power in the wake of democracy. The history of democratic experiment in Madras is a lasting testimony of democratic rights distributed in a democratic way to the common people of the motherland.