A Baptist Missionary, William Ward, who was working in India from 1799 to 1823, once wrote, ¹ "The institution of caste, so far from having contributed to the happiness of the society, has been one of its greatest scourges. It is the formation of the artificial orders, independently of merit or demerit, dooming nine-tenths of the people, even before birth, to a state of mental and bodily degradation, in which they are for ever shut out from all the learning and honours of the country."
The caste system commences with an act of the most consummate injustice that was ever perpetrated. It debarred the lower castes from all access to a higher state, whatever their merits may be. The caste system had put a lock upon the whole intellect of three of the four orders. It branded their very birth with infamy. The inequalities of the caste system and the basic fact that a man's place in the social sphere is unalterably fixed by the accident of birth are justified to the people of India by their belief in transmigration of souls combined with the doctrine of Karma, which asserts that each rebirth is the direct result of a man's actions in the previous existence. There is an endless series of rebirths. And a man's caste consequently depends on his actions in a previous life. The inequalities of caste are explained on the basis of one's life in a previous existence. Consequently whether one is born to honour or dishonour in a caste is determined by his actions in the previous birth.

Romila Thaper, well known historian makes an observation that as the exponents of Hindu social laws, the Brahmins who are on the highest rung of the social ladder, expounded their innate superiority and a system of social hierarchies in which socio-economic and legal rights and privileges decreased with each descending step and that
while rights and privileges\textsuperscript{4} were mostly confined to the upper castes, the burden of society fell most heavily on the Sudras and the Untouchables who could claim hardly any rights.\textsuperscript{5} It is enjoined in the Hindu scriptures that a man should do his duty in that state of life which his caste determines for him and those who do so are buoyed up by the hope that they may at a future rebirth be members of a higher caste.\textsuperscript{6}

While the caste system had disastrous effects on the pre-British Indian society, they were perhaps the greatest on education. Education or learning process itself was a semi-religious duty which only the Brahmins could be permitted to do. Hence the Agraharas, the Brahmin settlements, which were considered to be `great centres of learning' did not have any real learning process. There was practically no place for innovation or creative thinking what was done in these centres was only a process of learning by heart or rot. There existed great caste discrimination with regard to the extension\textsuperscript{7} of education to other communities. Not even the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas could enjoy this privilege.

In several areas of India, the situation underwent tremendous changes with the coming of Western education, missionary activities
and also due to the new opportunities available under the new dispensation. Several castes including the lower castes had new opportunities to get educated, which was denied to them for centuries. Among the various castes and communities, it was the Brahmins, the champions of traditional education who got the maximum facilities to send their children for English education, in order to make them trained for government jobs.

The most popular terminology for the changes brought about in the colonized countries by contact either direct or indirect with the colonial powers, is 'westernization' or 'modernization'. Daniel Learner who prefers, the term modernization to westernization, defines it as a "disquieting positive spirit, touching public institutions as well as private aspirations". Julian Steward has explained it as the socio-cultural transformation that results from factors and processes that are distinctive of the contemporary industrial world.

During the beginning of the 20th century, the political arena of South India underwent a remarkable change. There was a mushroom growth of community organizations in all the important community towns and cities. These caste and community organizations acted as pressure groups and tried to extract concessions and privileges from
the government. The situation was same in the British territories as well as in the Princely states. With the introduction of the Minto-Morley reforms the British Government began to play the role of a patron of castes and communities which resulted in the expansion of their political activities. Besides, the other interest groups such as landlords, zamindars, traders, factory workers and others also got themselves organized into associations. Simultaneously the non-Hindus such as the Muslims and the Christians also formed their own caste and community organizations.

As a result of the mushroom growth of caste associations, the provincial politics of South India became crowded with the activities of divergent caste – community organizations.\textsuperscript{12} This development, according to D.A. Washbrook had deeply coloured the South Indian political history'.\textsuperscript{13}

Princely Mysore

In Princely Mysore also a similar pattern could be noticed. The newly educated came mainly from among the Brahmins, because they had greater opportunities and access to governmental jobs and education.\textsuperscript{14} To begin with, the Brahmins were divided into three main categories, i.e., the 'Smarthas', the 'Madhvas' and the 'Srivaishnavas'.

Each of these major groups had innumerable sub-divisions. One of the greatest important points to remember is that the Brahmins were generally an urbanized, educated section of the population. Majority of the Brahmins from the rural areas had migrated to cities and towns right from the second half of the 19th century. Initially it was on account of economic deprivation in the rural side, but from the last decades of the 19th century, we come across increasing migration of the Brahmins to Bangalore, Mysore and other towns of Karnataka. This helped the Brahmins, as if it was a blessing in disguise to mobilize the fellow communities in the most successful manner. Right from the days of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, a group of outside Brahmins, mainly the Mahratta Brahmins had worked as bureaucrats and revenue officials in the administration. The most important person was Dewan Purnaiah who worked with both Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan in the 18th century. Subsequently during the days of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, the Maharaja, the entire administration, civil and military fell into the hands of the Mahratta Brahmins, who dominated every aspect of public life. The influence of this group was so glaring that men belonging to other categories could never function successfully in any section of the bureaucracy.
According to Lelah Dushkin, who worked on the Non-Brahmin Movement, at least half of the total Brahmin population lived in the towns by 1921. Among the Brahmins, occupationally 21% were listed as cultivators, 20% were professionals and 19% were in the state service. The Brahmins constituted only 3.6% of the population, but they held 70% of the higher administrative jobs. This fact explains why the Brahmins were regarded as the most powerful caste. They did not hold considerable landed property to be termed as a landed gentry in the 20th century. But they were the first to benefit from the new vistas opened up by the British rule, direct or indirect in the Princely Mysore State. The strength of the Brahmin caste depended on their control over the bureaucracy which was perhaps a direct result of western education.

In the traditional Amildari service the Brahmins had a great domination for several decades.
Appointments of Amildars

1925 to 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingayats</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vokkaligas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunchattiga Vokkaligas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adi-Karnataka</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weavers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naidus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoovadigas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudaliars</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaisyas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ref. Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly Oct-Nov 1928 p. 363)
Some of the members in the Representative Assembly had severely criticized the domination of one caste in higher administration.

Among the gazetted posts, there was again a Brahmin domination. 3.6 percent of the Brahmin population had 45 posts, whereas, the Vokkaligas who had a population of 14 lakhs had only 10 gazetted posts. Similarly the other communities were represented far below their numerical strength.

The Arasu (Urs) caste was considered to be Kshatriyas (warrior) of Mysore. The word Urs literally means the ruler. It was to this caste, the Maharaja had belonged and the Wodeyar dynasty came from. During the days of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, they had temporarily lost their influence over the administration. And many of them had returned to agriculture. However, the royal family continued to survive even under Haidar and Tipu. Much later in the late 19th century when the transfer of power to the native rulers took place, the Brahmin elite had already seated themselves in a powerful enviable position. No member of the Maharaja's caste could become a Dewan (Prime Minister) until 1918. Because of their resentment against the Brahmin domination, many Arasus supported the non-Brahmin movement later.
The three most important castes among the Hindus were the Vokkaligas, the Lingayats and the Kurubas. The term Vokkaliga literally meant a peasant and the Vokkaligas were generally land lords. They were generally dominant peasants in the southern districts of the Mysore State. They were the largest community in the state and accounted for a fifth of the population. The second largest community accounting for one eighth of the population, were the Lingayats, which actually is a religious sect than a caste. While the Lingayats were the dominant caste in northern districts and hence along with the Vokkaligas, were the principal contenders for political, economic and social supremacy and power. The Lingayats were more urbanized than the Vokkaligas, because a large number of them were also working as traders in small and bigger towns across the state.

In terms of organizational strength, the Lingayats were ahead of the Vokkaligas. The Lingayats were also having monastic centres or Mutts like the Brahmins which helped them to have local power centers which could act as channels of organization. The other dominant group, namely the Kurubas were shepherds and wool weavers by caste profession but they also held land, though not substantial. The Kurubas constituted 7% of the state population, but one third of them
lived in Mysore district itself and they were not evenly distributed all over the state.\textsuperscript{35} Compared with the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats, the Kurubas held an inferior socio-economic position. And because of lack of opportunities, the Kurubas could not take advantage of modern education to the extent of the Lingayats or the Vokkaligas. And hence they could not take any great advantage of the non-Brahmin movement or the Miller Committee recommendations.

Among the religious minorities, the most important groups were the Muslims and Christians. The Muslims were in fact a displaced elite. They had earlier enjoyed a powerful position under Haidar and Tipu. This historical position kept them one step ahead of the other non-Brahmin castes as far as education and other aspects were concerned. The Muslims also felt that they were pushed away from their dominant position by the Brahmin service elite. And hence, the Muslims became the natural supporters of the non-Brahmin movement. The Muslims also provided leadership to the movement in the early phase.\textsuperscript{36}

The Christians who included, the locals as well as the Anglo-Indians, of course were dependent on the British Government and the Maharaja for the support. Numerically, the Christians\textsuperscript{37} were
insignificant, but due to their high literacy in English, they, along with the Muslims and the Lingayats were able to share the administrative and professional jobs not taken by the Brahmins.

**Literacy data – 1921**

- Brahmins: 44%
- Christians: 26%
- Lingayats: 7%
- Muslims: 6%
- Vokkaligas: 3%

(Source: Mysore Annual Reports, 1921)

The Holeyas and the Madigas who constituted the so-called "untouchable castes" or the fifth Varna amounted to 16% of the states population. In Princely Mysore, they were numerically a force to reckon with. But despite this, they had practically no position of significance neither in socio-economic life, or in politics. It was due to the fact that they were destined to be on the lower rung of the social ladder and they also had no resources at their command. They were primarily agricultural labourers and very few of them had education in
the early 20th century. And those who had received education got it from the missionaries.

Once Swamy Vivekananda wrote to the Maharaja Chamaraja Wodeyar that “The only service to be done for our lower classes, is to give them education to develop their lost individuality. That is the great task between our people and princes. This is what is to be done in India”. From 1894 to 1900, there was a striking increase in the number of schools for the Panchamas. (Fifth Varna) It rose from 3 to 65.

Then on the number of schools for the Panchamas went on increasing till 1915 when the first step towards bringing the Panchamas to the main stream was taken up. The step came in the form of a unique order in that year to the Head Master of the Public School in the highly orthodox Sringeri Jahgir to admit certain Panchama boys into the school. The order raised a storm of protest, which came to be known as the Sringeri order. Very surprisingly, not only the upper caste Hindus, but the Muslims also agitated and withdrew their children from the school and opened ironically what is popularly known as the "National Schools".
Sri. C.R. Reddy who was the Inspector General of Education, however emphatically ruled that the Panchamas had a right to study in the schools along with others.\textsuperscript{43} In 1919, because of insistence from powerful people of the royal household and social activists, the government of Mysore had declared that “it could no longer uphold the view that any one shall be excluded from the public schools on the ground of caste, as schools maintained from public revenues are intended for the benefit of all classes of people in the state, in the same way as hospitals, courts of all ..........” \textsuperscript{44}

The depressed classes, as they were ignorant and backward in all respects did not have any organizational ability or leadership capabilities. They generally remained passive and too loyal to the government. Several attempts were made to organize them, more by people belonging to other caste groups.\textsuperscript{45} As far as the non Brahmin movement was concerned, there was nothing much to gain from it, as far as the depressed classes were concerned. Infact the Vokkaligas and Lingayats within the non-Brahmin group were not favourably disposed towards the depressed classes.\textsuperscript{46}

In tune with the spirit of the times a number of community organizations came into existence in Mysore state. In the year 1906,
some of the leading public spirited men of the community with the aim of ameliorating the conditions of the cultivating classes, who constituted the backbone of the agriculture and industry of the state organized the "Vokkaligara Sangha". The then Dewan V.P. Madhav Rao encouraged the Sangha (association) in furtherance of the cause of education and for improving agriculture in the state. The Government was prepared to give assistance to get the boys of the community to school and bring home to the cultivators such improved methods of agriculture as may result from the labours of scientists from other areas. At the opening of the second conference of the Sangha, Sri Krishnaraja Wodeyar said, "the aims of the Sangha are entitled to all encouragement. The cultivators of the country are its main stay in times of prosperity and in times of misfortune. It is on them that the burden falls most heavily. Any movement that tends to their welfare must command my warmest support".

The Vokkaligara Sangha tried to promote the material, intellectual and moral interests of the Vokkaliga population.

Following the lead given by the Vokkaligara Sangha, other communities also began to organize themselves. The most important among these organizations were :-

35
(a) Central Muhammadan Association

(b) The Mysore Lingayat Education Fund Association (1920)

(c) The Adi Dravida Abhivrudhi Sangha

(d) Arya Vyasya Mahasabha (1915)

(e) The Indian Christian Association (1920)

(f) The Jaina Education Fund Association (1919) and

(g) The Kurubara Sangha (1927).

All these associations were striving hard to secure the betterment of their respective communities in matters of administration, public services, social and economic fields. The question of equitable distribution in the public services and in the educational and other institutions had been the main topic of interest of their resolutions and representations. Even the most backward groups, the Panchamas, as they were officially called then, began to put-forth their claim for social and economic upliftment. The Adi-Dravida Abhivrudhi Sangha, for example, represented to the Government:

"We are an ancient community with a civilization, philosophy and history of what we reasonably feel proud. We are confident also that our present unfavourable conditions are the outcome of the economic
degradation. We are confident that our social condition will automatically improve with improvement of our economic condition. Our foremost need is education, more education and universal education. We are thankful to the government for throwing open all government and aided institutions to our boys and girls."

The Dewan greatly appreciated the broad outlook of the Sangha, commended the moderate tone of the address of the representatives by saying, "this augurs exceedingly well for their future".

According to Leilah Dushkin, from 1906 onwards, the caste associations began to emerge. From 1906 to 1920-22, the average increase was between 3 to 8 for annual registration. However, during 1923-25, there was an increase to 18 for registration. This increase was a direct result of the impact of the emerging non-Brahmin movement.
Community Associations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Registration</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923-25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-28</td>
<td>09</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929-31</td>
<td>05</td>
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<td>1932-34</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-37</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-40</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-43</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-46</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Bjorn Hettne, two major cleavages, which were cross-cutting between the Brahmins and the non-brahmins and between the Hindus and the non-Hindus. They were cross cutting, because the non-Brahmin category included Muslims and Christians also. Similarly, the Hindu Category included the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins.⁵⁸
The social history of Mysore in the twenties and the thirties was determined in terms of these cleavages. As long as the non-Brahmin – Brahmin cleavage was wider, it strengthened the non-Brahmin movement. When the Hindu – non-Hindu cleavage widened, as it was noticed during the communal conflicts, the non-Brahmin movement began to lose its strong base.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. To every untouchable this was the message, “you proceeded from the feet of Brahma; you were created for servitude”.


4. Romila Thapar, op. cit.

5. Ibid.


9. as quoted by P. Rajaraman, op.cit.


13. Ibid.


15. Ibid

16. Ibid.


18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Amildar was in charge of a district. He was the head of the army, police, magistrate and the revenue collection.


28. Ibid.


30. Ibid

31. Hettne, op.cit.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Mysore Annual Report, 1921. K.S.A.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Vivekananda to Chamaraja Wodeyar, 23 June 1894, K.S.A.

41. S. Chandrashekar, op. cit. p. 87.

42. B. Kuppuswamy, Backward Class Movement in Karnataka, Bangalore 1978. p.48

43. Ibid. See also, S. Chandrashekar op.cit.


45. Ibid.

46. See, S. Chandrashekar, op.cit. p. 90 -91.

47. K.S.Mune Gowda, Development of Karnataka Legislature, Mysore, 1988, p.98.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.
50. Speeches of Krishnaraja Wodeyar dt. 17-10 -1907  p.67.  K.S.A.


53. Ibid.


55. Ibid.

56. Lelah Dushkin,  ‘The Non-Brahmin Movement in Princely Mysore’


57. Ibid.

58. Hettne, op.cit.  p. 139.