CHAPTER IV

FROM BACKWARD CLASS MOVEMENT TO COMMUNAL CLEAVAGE

The anti-Brahmanical ideas and movements are not primarily modern. Infact, reaction against Brahmanical domination has been a part of Indian history, right from the days of Buddha. The 12th century social revolution of Basava was another major example of anti-Brahmanical, reformist movement in Karnataka. However in modern times a new kind of anti-Brahmanical movements arose with a clear-cut anti-Brahmin or non-Brahmin ideology. Before we go into a survey of these movements, it is necessary to understand the basic roots of the
non-Brahmin ideology. In order to search for the roots of the non-
Brahmin ideology, one should first of all focus on the cruelties of the
caste system.

A well known authority on the Indian caste system, J. H. Hutton\(^1\) in
his magnum opus, *Caste in India*, enumerates the various
restrictions which the high caste\(^2\) Hindus had imposed on the
untouchables .

1. They should not wear any jewel either of gold or silver.

2. The males of this community should not be allowed to wear their
clothes below their knees or above their hips.

3. They should not trim their hair.

4. They were permitted to use only earthen ware vessels.

5. The women among this community should not cover the upper
portion of their bodies with jackets or clothes. They were not
allowed to use flowers or saffron paste.

6. They were not allowed to wear sandals or use umbrellas.

7. Worst of all was that, they should not read or get educated.\(^3\)
The untouchables were not permitted to even approach the upper castes. In certain regions of India, even their shadows were supposed to pollute the higher castes. The ideological justification for the extreme form of caste - tyranny came from the *Manusmriti*, which insisted on the *Varnashramadharma*. The basic spirit behind the *Varnashramadharma* was to block the professional mobility. Brahmins were supposed to be the priestly class who had the exclusive privilege of reading, writing and learning. The Brahmin was not supposed to touch the plough. Similarly those who were born as *Kshatriyas* were destined to be the militia class. They were not supposed to violate the caste rules by becoming carpenter or a priest. The *Vaisya* was expected to perform trade, moneylending etc., Similarly the *Sudra* was the tiller of the land, who could never aspire to get his children educated or change his profession. The so called untouchables were kept outside the Four Fold Varna system. In the early 20th century expressions like untouchables, unapproachables, depressed classes, Adi Dravidas, Panchamas, scheduled castes etc., could be noticed in the official records. Harijans is a glorified term coined by Gandhi in 1933 for describing the total body of depressed classes. The term Scheduled Castes is the expression, standardised in the constitution of
the Republic of India, though this name was first invented by the Simon Commission.

The reaction against the caste hegemony of the Brahmins and their control over the civil services was however a phenomenon of the 20th century. The concept of non-Brahmanism which the Justice Party profounded was not only the result of westernization, but also the resultant politicization of the communities other than the Brahmins. However, before the emergence of the non-Brahmin movement, 'non-Brahmin' was not a relevant social, cultural or political category. According to Barnett, "the very idea of non-Brahmin movement represents a significant re-orientation of the perceptions about castes and communities."

The non-Brahmin movement had sprang up in different parts of south India and Maharashtra. It was Jotirao Phule who first raised the banner of revolt against caste tyranny and oppression. He founded the Satya Shodhak Samaj (society for the Pursuit of Truth). This society, which was founded in 1873 in Maharashtra, aimed at liberating the lower castes from the upper caste tyranny. Naturally it had an anti-Brahmin orientation. Phule attacked Brahminism very vehemently so he
thought that the caste system, which was a creation of the Brahmins was meant for exploiting the lower classes.

**Anti - Brahmin, not anti-Brahmanical**

The non-Brahmin movement which took place in Mysore did not have a clear-cut anti-Brahmanical ideology. The non-Brahmin leaders of Mysore did not express themselves on the basis of culture, locality or religion. While the movements in Tamilnadu and Maharashtra expressed themselves in terms of culture, religion etc. The Karnataka movement remained primarily on the periphery, fighting for governmental jobs. Eugene Irschick takes the position that despite the bread and butter agenda, the Tamil Nadu movement certainly had cultural and ideological overtones because the people had to be mobilised on these lines only. According to Irschick, the nativist movements primarily expressed themselves in terms of language and culture. And hence, the Dravidian ideology was essential to struggle against the Brahmanical influences.

Dushkin says, "But the question is to what extent was it (non-Brahmin movement in Mysore) really non-Brahmanical. To the best of my knowledge, I must say that it was very much a political and economic movement rather than the one against Brahmanism as a set
of ideas of Hinduism, except the fact that in speeches some people used to flare up against Brahmanism. But certainly they did not take any clear, coherent well thought out, ideological position or such. It was focused on political and economic aspects". 

On the question of the spread of Dravidian ideology, Lelah Dushkin is of the view that there was practically no influence of the Dravidians ideology in princely Mysore area. On the other hand, in the Tamil Nadu region the leaders had gone to the extent of expressing themselves in terms of racial identity.

In a meeting of the non-Brahmin leaders of the Southern Tamil districts, one of the speakers, the Zamindar of Singampatti states that, the voiceless backward millions should help themselves towards attaining equality with their 'Aryan brothers'. He also proposed the idea of a 'Dravidian Amelioration Fund' by voluntary contributions from all Dravidians, high or low. greater emphasis on the Dravidian identity against the Aryan identity could be found in several writings and speeches of the non-Brahmin leaders of the Madras Presidency. Hence, to them, the Brahmin non-Brahmin conflict was not just on bread and butter alone. It was clearly expressed in terms of race, ethnicity and language so that the movement could go deeper into the
psyche of the people. The history of the non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu region from the days of the Justice Party to the Dravida Kazhagam or D.M.K. has this common ideological thread. Perhaps it was this ideological base which helped the movement to sustain itself for a longer period. This fact is very clear from the well-known study of P. Rajaraman on the Justice Party.\(^\text{13}\)

On the other hand, the absence of clear ideological meanings in the backward class movement of Princely Mysore was perhaps a reason for its decline and fall during the thirties of the present century. The internal cohesion within the non-Brahmin category, i.e., between the Lingayets, Muslims and the Vokkaligas was a difficult task. The poor and the illiterate among the non-Brahmins had nothing common in them to unite themselves against the Brahmins. The educated, urban middle class among the non-Brahmins, on the other hand, had only a common desire for a greater share in the civil services. And they could not keep their ranks together in the absence of any fundamental bonds of unity, beyond the transient desire for offices in the government.

In fact, the leaders of these non-Brahmin communities were cautious in keeping their ranks together until 1926. This could be seen not only in their activities outside, but also inside the Legislative
Council on many occasions when resolutions were moved. One such issue was the introduction of a resolution working for the extension of the services of the officials. The non-Brahmin members realised the danger ingrained in the resolution, which, if passed would have blocked the opportunities of hundreds of backward class youngmen from entering the office. Therefore, the leaders unanimously ensured the defeat of the said resolution. The unity expressed on the eve of the resolution in the legislative council was something unusual.

The backward classes who constituted about 90% of the total population of the state, by and large, remained uneducated and did not have proper representation in the legislative bodies or in the government service. There were signs of awakening among them in the early 20th century and they started organizing themselves for their own upliftment. As in the neighbouring Madras presidency and Maharashtra, some leaders among the backward castes became too vociferous in expressing their grievances. According to C.R. Reddy, one of the leaders of the movement, entry into civil service was crucial to the progress of the non-Brahmins. He stated, “office is a social lever of the highest importance and or such we must see that we get our
it was felt that these offices were distributed fairly as between the different classes of people.

On November 18, 1917 the first meeting of the backward classes was held in Bangalore.16

The meeting which was presided over by Sri Annaswami Mudaliar, was attended by more than 3000 people, representing thirty communities of princely Mysore. The meeting was a massive show of non-Brahmin mobilization. The meeting among others, was addressed by M. Basavaiah a member of the Mysore Legislative council. According to M. Basavaiah, "there was disproportion of the development of a section of lakhs of people compared with the different sections composed of a population of over twenty eight times as large, from the statistics in the different grades of education and the representation of various communal interests in the representative assembly, local boards, municipalities and the legislative council. Hence, the political voice of the ninety percent of the people was almost nothing compared with the development of one community which had monopolized it. Such a difference was seen in all the stages of administration18 from the village to the highest council."
Hence, Basavaiah called upon the backward classes to speak out boldly and bring them to the notice of the ruler. It was he who first emphasized that the backward classes needed a common platform for all people where they may be equally treated.

In the public meeting in Bangalore, the speakers spoke against the monopolistic control of the press, civil service and the self governing bodies by the Brahmin minority. They lamented that even in the areas of business, and manufacturing, there was Brahmin domination. Basavaiah went to the extent of declaring that the backward classes wanted the state to be ruled by the sovereign and his people but not by an oligarchy.

We cannot and will not accept the monopolistic leadership in social and political matters. The backward class leaders were of the view that community representation as absolutely necessary to protect the interests of the non Brahmins.19

One of the earliest steps taken was regarding the local bodies. M. Subbaiah urged the government about the imperative necessity enabling all communities to equally participate in the benefits of the scheme by re modelling the legislative and the local bodies and by the
introduction of the principle of communal representation, so to make
them really democratic well balanced and truly popular.\textsuperscript{20}

In the month of November 1917, a meeting of the backward
classes was held in Mysore. The meeting was held at the
D.Banumaiah School under the presidency of Rao Saheb H.
Channaiah. The meeting demanded representation to all the
communities in the legislative and executive bodies of the government.
The leaders\textsuperscript{21} of the backward classes felt the need for an
organization of their own to represent their grievances. Hence, at a
meeting held on Dec. 6, 1917, they founded the Praja Mitra Mandali,
the first political organization in princely Mysore.\textsuperscript{22}

**The Praja Mitra Mandali Activities**

In order to represent their grievances, the leaders of the
backward classes founded the Praja Mitra Mandali on Dec 6, 1917.
The leaders who organized the *Mandali* were messrs. Rao Saheb H.
Channaiah, M. Basavaiah, Mohammed Abdul Kalami, D. Banumaiah,
Mohammad Abbaskhan, M. Subbaiah and Others. They constituted
the committee with Rao Saheb Channaiah as the president and
Basavaiah its organsing secretary.\textsuperscript{23}
The first meeting of the executive committee of the Praja Mitra Mandali met in Bangalore under the presidency of Channaiah and was attended by representatives from different parts of the state. They decided to submit a memorial to the Maharaja. Thus, a deputation consisting of the representatives of the non-Brahmin communities had an audience with the Maharaja of Mysore on 24 June 1918 and submitted a memorandum, pleading that the rural people have not been given the same chances as the population of the town, due to the existing defects in the educational organizations and also pleaded for giving preferences for the non-Brahmins in the services of the government. The memorandum stated among other things to safeguard the interests of all communities in the state that "all governing councils from legislative council downwards to be modelled so as to secure the principles of communal representation, that government offices be apportioned between different communities so as to secure a just balance of all interests and preside each community with the only effective motive for education under the circumstances, that to secure the above principles as a temporary measure, and until education is better and more evenly spread in the state and sufficient number of candidates are available, no outsiders possessing necessary qualifications be brought into to break the existing
monopoly; that the results of the government survey into the representation of the different communities in public services be published together with a statement of policy by the government on the subject...

The memorandum urged the state government to have the statistics updated annually. They also insisted that the qualifications for the officers be revised so as to abolish the present monopoly by a single class.\textsuperscript{27}

The Maharaja, in his reply stated, "My government is using its utmost endeavour to encourage backward classes in the state and you may rest assured that this policy of affording special facilities and encouragement to all communities who are being left behind in the race of progress will be steadily pursued in the future even more than it has been in the past".\textsuperscript{28} As was premised by Sri Krishnarajendra Wodeyar the Maharaja of Mysore, the Government became sympathetic to the aspirations of the backward section of the people and was trying to promote their educational and economic interests by way of reserving seats in the schools and providing scholarships and hostel facilities to the backward and depressed communities.\textsuperscript{29}
During the period of Sir, M. Visveswaraya himself, a number of schools and educational institutions were started to provide better educational facilities to backward classes of people.

In the case of representation in the public service, certain measures were imitated. One step was to relax the qualifications for the post of Amildars and Sheikdars. In 1916 itself, the government ordered that members of the communities which were backward in education should be more largely represented in the public service and directed that 25% of the appointments made in a year in a department or district would be given to the qualified members of these communities. Further, the government observed that there was a large preponderance of Brahmins in the public service and steps were initiated to ensure that all other communities in the state were also adequately represented in the services of the state.

Another important measure taken by the government to ameliorate the conditions of the backward classes and the depressed classes was the acceptance of Memorandum on education submitted by Dr. C. R. Reddy, the Memorandum had several positive points to mention.
Firstly, it proposed the gradual conversion of aided village primary schools to government intuitions. The development of the vernacular middle schools to aided village schools of a uniform type, the combination of practicals with literary instructions, the establishment of a large number of industrial schools, provision of special facilities for the education of the scheduled castes and finally the proposal for the revision of scales of pay in the tutorial and inspectorate.  

Implications of the Miller Committee

In August 1918, a committee was appointed with Leslie C. Miller as the Chairman C. Srikanteswara Iyer, M. Muthanna, M. C. Ranga Iyengar, H. Chennaiah, Gulam Ahmed Kalami and M. Basavaiah were the members of this committee. The terms of reference of the committee were as follows:

1. Changes, if any, needed in the existing rules of recruitment to the public service.

2. Special facilities to encourage higher and professional education among members of the backward classes.
3. Any other special measures which may be taken to increase
the representation of the backward communities in the public
service without materially affecting efficiency.\textsuperscript{34}

The committee submitting its report in July 1919 and the
government obtained the opinions of heads of departments. The civil
servants opposed the report and for almost two years it was gathering
dust. The commissions had suggested that within seven years the non-
Brahmins should hold at least 50 percent of the higher appointments
and 2/3 of the lower appointments, but this was modified in the
government order of 1921. The official name of the committee was
"The committee appointed to consider steps necessary for the
Adequate Representation of Backward communities in the public
service."

As Dushkin points out\textsuperscript{35} it is highly significant that literacy in
English was the criterion by which "forward" castes were distinguished
from "backward" castes. This left only the Brahmins and of course
those whose mother tongue was English, in the forward category. The
committee made no efforts to distinguish between different backward
communities. The committee states:\textsuperscript{36}
"It is not necessary at the present stage to complicate the problem by taking each separate community into consideration and trying to adjust its claims, nor could we do so satisfactorily with the information at our disposal. For the present, as can be seen from what is happening in south India, inspite of the numerical and communal disparities of the different communities, still from the point of common interests to be achieved, these communities fall roughly into three groups, 1) Brahmins 2) other caste Hindus, Mohammedans and Indian Christians 3) depressed classes. These may be taken as unitary groups for the purpose of our report, as they are for other purposes" 

The third of three categories, the depressed classes had no representation in the Miller committee.

Although the government order on adequate representation in the services was passed in May 1921, this controversial issue was not discussed in the Representative Assembly. The reason was a boycott by the Brahmins and therefore, the Dewan in his address,37 criticized the behaviour of the Brahmin members.

"I would be failing in my duty, if I did not point out to you that such action although confined to members numbering only about 35% of the total membership is exceedingly ill-advised and bound to reflect
on the reputation for good sense and sobriety which the assembly has all along maintained. If this attitude on the part of a handful of members should be persisted in, it may, I feel constrained to observe, become necessary to consider measures where by the object of representative institutions may not be defeated and the interests of the people as a whole may be safeguarded. I however, venture to hope that this is but a passing phase and that when we meet again in October, wiser counsels will prevail.”

In the October session, the issue was discussed in detail. The Dewan Kantharaj Urs explained that the govt order has been received with satisfaction by the great majority of the people and tried to allay “the needless fears entertained in some quarters that it is likely to operate towards the total exclusion of members of the Brahmin community during the next 7 years. Also, it was further pointed out that the policy of creating a proper balance in the services was by no means a new one, that the objective was not to prescribe scales of qualifications for different communities and that the order was applicable solely to initial appointments. The Dewan also pointed out that most non-Brahmin communities were so backward in respect of
higher education, that a sufficient number of candidates were not likely to be available from among them for some time to come.\textsuperscript{39}

In order to dispel the apprehensions in the minds of the Brahmins, the Dewan further stated,\textsuperscript{40}

"What the recent orders of the government seek to bring about is to gradually raise the representation of the non-Brahmin communities from 30 to 50 percent in the course of the next seven years. These orders constitute no more than measure of justice due to the bulk of His Highness' subjects and it is indeed unfortunate that they should have provoked a bitter controversy in the public press and on the platform during the past few months".\textsuperscript{41}

The Dewan, who understood the Brahmin reaction to the new measure, squarely asked, "Is it too much to ask the leaders of the Brahmin community not to view this matter from the mere stand point of communal interests, but to look at it from the point of view of the well-being of the whole body politic?".\textsuperscript{42}

According to Bjorn Hettne, the Brahmin leaders were not satisfied with the explanation. Infact, they vociferously attacked the government orders based on the Leslie Miller recommendations.\textsuperscript{43}
K.T. Seshaiyah, one of the members stated, “I do not ask for a living for the Brahmins. That is quite a different question. My point is, we must have efficiency in public service. Public service is not a representative institution to which recruitment should be made on a communal basis. According to Sukra Niti and according to the practice prevailing in all the western countries, whoever is qualified, will be entitled so serve under government. Whether a candidate for office is a Jew, Christian, Protestant or Jacobite, his qualification alone counts. In no country and at no time in the annals of the world, was government service held to be a representative institution to be recruited on a communal basis.”

R.Gopalaswamy Iyer, another important Brahmin member stated that those who have studied Political Economy are aware of the law of supply and demand. 'There was the demand, and we the Brahmins furnished the supply'. H.Krishna Sastry another member relied on the age-old division of labour based on the caste system to substantiate his objections to the Miller Committee recommendations.

"If all the classes of people take up the same avocation, the country will not prosper. Professions must be distributed among them. And in all countries, people consist of three or four classes. The first
class take up the government service and the learned professions, the second are engaged in trade and industry, and in the lower grade of service, the third in agriculture and the last class will be unskilled workers engaged in factories but sometimes also depend upon others for livelihood.  

The crux of the non-Brahmin argument inside the assembly was that it was only when a definite percentage of appointments are reserved for the non-Brahmins that they would have a powerful incentive to education. Both the Vokkaligara Sangha and the Lingayat Education Fund Association thanked the government profusely for the reforms announced by the govt. Both the Miller committee report and the Education Memorandum were considered to be the landmarks of a great progressive policy and they hoped that the reforms would be carried out in the liberal spirit in which they had been conceived.  

The Decline of the movement  

The unity and the mobilization of the non-Brahmin communities could be noticed until the announcement of the Miller committee recommendations on an upward swing. But once the reforms were introduced, it led to certain internal differences within the movement. While the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats were highly enthusiastic about
the prospects of their respective communities through the reforms, the Muslims, Christians and the depressed classes believed that they would be benefited more by maintaining their separate identities than by setting bracketed within the artificial "non Brahmin" category. This is evident from the statements of the caste associations in 1921 and subsequently.⁴⁹

According to Hettne, the prophecy made by the Brahmin critics of the Miller Report, that the next phase would be a split among the non-Brahmins for their quota of appointments proved to be correct.⁵⁰

The Brahmins were becoming greatly dissatisfied particularly after the appointment of Mirza Ismail as the Dewan. In fact Ismail was selected mainly to end the Brahmin non-Brahmin conflict. But the Brahmin leaders were unhappy that the Dewanship, which was a monopoly of their community from 1881 to 1918, until the resignation of Visvesvaraya was changed into the hands of others like M.Kantha Raj Urs, (1918-1922) Sir Albion Banerji (1922-1926) and Sir Mirza Ismail (1926-1941).

The Miller committee report was considered a disqualification to Brahmins to enter the civil service. The demand to throw open Sanskrit colleges for admission to all or to stop state grant was also
considered an assault. Another important issue of their worry was the proposal for a legislation, which would threaten the position of about 600 Brahmin shan-bogues. (Village officials). The Brahmin dominated press had become extremely critical about the non-Brahmin movement as well as the state policy.

As long as Kantharaj Urs and Sir Albion Banerjee were Dewans, the Brahmin leadership could not do anything with the administration. But with the appointment of Mirza, they tried to influence the administration. This was done by way of bringing some amendments to the Miller committee orders by deluting some of the provisions. N.S.Nanjundaiah moved a resolution in Dec. 1926, seeking a withdrawal of the Miller committee orders as far as the selection of teachers was concerned, in order to provide the “best available teachers to the pupils attending schools and colleges”. Similarly, M.Venkata Krishnaiah moved resolution in the representative Assembly seeking the selection of candidates only through competitive examinations and through promotions.

The non-Brahmin leaders in the Assembly attributed motives to the Brahmins and said that the resolution had been brought with a view to introduce the thin end of the wedge and to feel the pulse of the
government as regards their attitude towards the orders on the Miller report. On the pretext that certain practical difficulties will have to be removed which were in the way of recruitment rules. The Government revised the order and decided to give three out of four jobs to backward class candidates in departments where representation of them had reached fifty percent and two out of three where they had already reached the stipulated fifty percent.

There was serious criticism that the modification of the order had diluted the spirit of the Miller committee’s recommendations. Infact the original order had not specified any fixed quota and it was a general policy towards the recruitment of the non-Brahmins. The new order was certainly to the advantage of the Brahmin community because more qualified candidates were available only in that community.

While the backward class leaders were disappointed, the Brahmins were far from satisfied. Out of the 4,238 posts filled, the Brahmins secured 1415 posts and this was between June 1921 and Nov. 1926. The non-Brahmin minor castes were also not happy because the beneficiaries of the 1921 order were the Lingayats, Muslims and to a certain extent Vokkaligas. These communities covered 1485 leaving only 1338 posts to all other communities. The
Kurubas and other minor groups were generally unhappy about the way in which the benefits were cornered by the dominant among the non-Brahmins.

Thus, the internal divisions among the non-Brahmin group was a major problem for all those who were concerned about the future of the non-Brahmin movement. In fact one of the members of the Miller committee had given a vote of dissent about the “lumping together of all non-Brahmins” under one category.

Under Sir Mirza Ismail, the relative representation of the Muslims in the state service had increased. This naturally gave way for the emergence of a cleavage between the Muslim - non-Muslim members of the non-Brahmin category. The Brahmin leadership, which understood the potentialities of this cleavage, decided to widen it.

In October 1927, the Maharaja invited the Dewan to ride behind him in the howdah during the great Dasara procession through the states of Mysore city. No Dewan had ever been granted this privilege and it signified the Raja’s deep personal attachment of Mirza Ismail. This shocked many Hindus, especially Brahmins. The procession was seen as the culmination of the nine-day religious festival in which the Maharaja was viewed as the chief priest and Vicar
of god. During the procession shoes were hurled at the howdah and the mahout nearly lost control of the elephant.\textsuperscript{58} This was a well-planned attack to divide the people on communal lines. In the months, which followed, there were further conspiracies.
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44. Proceedings of the Representative Assembly, Oct 1921. p. 75. K.S.A.

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55. See *Proceedings of the Representative Assembly*, 1922 - 1926.

56. See Political Dept. No. 4683 – 1B Dtd. 21 Nov. 1919.


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