



Scheduled Caste Education in Colonial Bihar: A Reassessment

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Introduction

Education forms the basis of social, cultural and economic development of any community. For the all-around development of Indian society, the significance of the educational progress of the general masses is a well-established fact universally accepted. It is self-evident that education is the key to social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of goals. It determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people. Proper education can lead and direct a community towards positive transformation while providing an increased ability to process and utilize information, knowledge and experience in a more scientific manner. With the realization of the pivotal role of education in human progress (especially SCs & STs), intense thoughts have always been devoted towards the development of education. Time and again, the tradition of education is diagnosed and suggestions are given for change as per the need of society. Therefore, education has a special significance, particularly for the weaker sections (SCs & STs) of the society for whom education is an input not only for their economic development but also to empower them which would open up new vistas to manage existing and upcoming challenges. Education development in colonial Bihar was initially guided by religious sentiment. In this system, there was hardly any scope for the scheduled caste to get educated.

The caste system, brimming with inherent social inequality, has impacted almost every sphere of social life. Despite caste system's orthodox approach, it is still not redundant and has appropriated itself with the passage of time. During colonial period, educational reforms were witnessed which, to an extent, defied the traditional education system of India which preferred upper castes. With the establishment of British rule, new forms of education were introduced with the help of Christian missionaries, private societies and individuals. The British rule which took root in Bihar after the Battle of Buxar in the late eighteenth century turned out to be a milestone in the history of education and politics in Bihar. With the establishment of the East India Company and British imperialism in power, English education came to India. English education got introduced first to serve the company and then to the British Empire. It became a tool for legitimising colonial domination and serving imperial needs. However, major educational reform during the colonial period "unleashed three major movements namely secularization, democratization and modernisation."¹ These reforms brought a change in society which was detrimental to the people belonging to the depressed class at the margins. Unlike Maharashtra and South India, where Christian missionaries and English education inspired people like Mahatma Phule to experiment with education in spite of many odds, Bihar seems to be lacking behind. It was also because the

¹Naik, J. P. (1978), Educational Reform in India: A Historical Review, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, p.6.

caste rigidities in the society were dominant. These lower castes were considered good only for the menial job. Moreover, religious sanction was followed strictly which hampered their progress whether social, political or educational. In Bihar Christian missionaries had a dual role to fulfil i.e., proselytization and expansion of religion. The socio-religious reform movements of the 19th and 20th centuries also played an important role in bringing change in the educational field but for people belonging to the scheduled caste at the margins, there was little change. These movements were against the backdrop of Christian missionary work and a fear of losing the scheduled caste from the Hindu fold. This paper endeavours to discuss the initiatives and interventions made by the colonial government in bringing change in the lives of the scheduled caste through educational reform. Why was there a need for change in the education system? How far have those reforms proved beneficial for the scheduled caste in the long run? Was it a colonial government compulsion or is it a politics of change? How far colonial education system brought a different socio-religious set-up in understanding society? Why Bihar was lacking in gaining an English educational system compared to other regions?

Background

There were many writings on the colonial education system. However, the study on scheduled caste education was limited in particular to the regions of Bihar. There were many government reports like the Census of India, Report on Education etc. but scheduled caste as a category during the colonial period became problematic. The 1911 census, remained oblivious of depressed classes that adopted religious disabilities some of the castes were suffering later on and designated as depressed classes. These religious disabilities were divided into ten religious standards such as: "1. denied the supremacy of the Brahmans, 2. did not receive the mantra from a Brahman or other recognized Hindu guru, 3. Denied the authority of Vedas, 4. Did not worship the great Hindu gods, 5. Were not served by good Brahmans as family priests, 6. Had no Brahman priest at all, 7. Were denied access to the interior of ordinary Hindu temples, 8. Caused pollution by touch or within a certain distance, 9. Buried their dead 10. ate beef and did not reverence the cow."² This was purely a religious method to ascertain the identity of a depressed class. As a result, it was difficult to ascertain the identity of scheduled castes initially. It was only when 1931 census was tabled that the depressed class was enumerated based on certain conditions for determining the scheduled caste. At the time of the 1931 Census, the Census Commissioner of India had issued the following instructions to the Superintendents of Census Operations indicating who constituted the Depressed Classes: "I have explained depressed castes as castes, contact with whom entails purification on the part of high caste Hindus. It is not intended that the term ' should have any reference to occupation as such but to those castes which because of their traditional position in Hindu society are denied access to temples, for instance, or have to use separate wells or are not allowed to sit inside a school house but have to remain outside or which suffer similar social disabilities. These disabilities vary in different parts of India being much more severe in the south of India than elsewhere. At the same time, the castes which belong to this class are generally known and can in most parts of India be listed for a definite area though perhaps the lists for India as a whole will not coincide."³ These criteria had taken all types of discrimination into consideration. In this criteria, denial of education was also one of them. At such an important juncture, education in whatever manner was prevalent became a criterion of reform for the colonial government. In 1932-33, for the first time, the members of the untouchable or depressed classes were called Hindus other castes and their total number included the 31 following castes: 1, Bauri, 2. Bhogta, 3.

² Lacey, W.G. (1933), Census of India, 1931, Vol. VII- Bihar and Orissa Part-I, Superintendent, Government Printing, Patna, p. 286.

³ Nambiar, P.K. (1964), Census of India 1961, Vol. IX, Part V (A) I, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Superintendent of Census Operation, Madras, p.5.

Bhuiya, 4. Bhumij, 5. Chamar, 6. Chaupal, 7. Dhobi, 8. Dom, 9. Dusadh, 10. Ghasi, 11. Ghosuria, 12. Godra, 13. Gokha, 14. Halalkhor, including Bhangi and Mehtar, 15. Hari, 16. Irika, 17. Kandra, 18. Kela, 19. Kanjar, 20. Kurariar, 21. Lalbegi, 22. Mahuria, 23. Mangan, 24. Mochi, 25. Musahar, 26. Nat, 27. Pan, 28. Pasi, 29. Rajwar, 30. Siyal and 31. Turi. In the absence of any specific categorisation, they were left with their miseries and mercies. It was clear that religious criteria were prevalent which was hindering their prospect and prosperity in the society. While before 1931-32, castes that were included in the category of the untouchable or depressed classes in Bihar were only 6 in number and their total population was only 287723.

Jata Shankar Jha elaborated on two types of educational institutions in Bihar when British rule was inaugurated: one on an advanced character and the other on a purely elementary nature. The first category comprised “tols and madrasas devoted respectively to Sanskrit and Arabic-Persian learning. The elementary institution was called Pathsala in the case of Hindus and Maktab in that of Muhammadans.”⁴ The first category was institutions of higher learning exclusively for Brahmin Pandits and Muslim Maulvis and the second one belonged to elementary education. Classical languages like Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian were the medium in which the curriculum was designed in tols and madrasas. Mithila and Benaras were flourishing grounds for tols and; Patna and Delhi were favourable for Madrasas. The motive behind imparting education in these schools was purely religious. As a result, the people belonging to a scheduled caste were unable to avail any kind of education. The elementary system was intended for the masses. The primary schools were scattered in villages named Pathsalas and a teacher called Guru Mahashaya. There were no fixed buildings but run-in thatched houses with the cooperation of the villagers or by the enterprise of their Gurus. In the beginning, the colonial government avoided interventions in education. There was much opposition to any change in the established norms by the caste Hindu. However, the colonial officials realised that without intervening in education and bringing change, they cannot rule for a longer time. Moreover, for the expansion of administration, they realised to infuse Western education among the inhabitants. With the conquest and arrival of the British, they developed new outlook/centres of learning through missionaries. The arrival of missionaries and the strengthening of the colonial power set the foundation for the demolition of the native education system, and the consequent spread of English in education and public affairs. Through the establishment of schools, missionaries sought to accomplish their project of proselytizing Indians, particularly the lower classes of Indian society, prior to 1813. They expanded formal schools “teaching Western science, literature, and mathematics throughout British presidencies in the first half of the 19th Century.”⁵ Modern education stirred the foundation of traditional education which vied for religious and morality quotient in its approach. The new education system would help in erecting a class of natives who would be “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste in opinions, in morals and in intellect,”⁶ to act as interpreters between the colonial power and the Indians with diverse culture. Furthermore, caste’s air tight compartments were a complex issue. In such a scenario, educating the masses brought about an unprecedented rise in consciousness among masses potent enough to change the world. However, colonial education despite its liberating spree, focussed more on creating a class of educated subordinates.

The intention of introducing reform in education by the British government would be an interesting perspective. What were the motives behind making changes in education for the colonial subject? Why they took so long to initiate such changes? Were there any economic and administrative factors which drove them to bring reform? Aparna Basu remarked that “the

⁴ Jha, Jata Shankar, Education in Bihar in Datta, Kali Kinkar, & Jha, Jata Shankar (ed.), (1976), Comprehensive History of Bihar, Vol.III, Part II, Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, p.358.

⁵ Naik and Nurullah, 1974, pp. 38-57.

⁶ Minute by T. B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835.

educational system is of crucial importance in studying any society and at the same time it has to be examined within the context of the society in which it has developed.”⁷In the context of this, arguably, the British government clearly understood the logic of introducing modern education through debates, dialogues and discussions by bringing in different reports, charters, acts etc. which can suit their needs. On the other hand, the subject people in the age of reason and rationality need to cope with the changing time. With this underlining feature and assumptions in mind, the colonial government wanted to show a structure which looks more inclusive but with a difference. They have to prove that they are on a civilising mission of colonial people which was highlighted and written by many imperialist historians. In the beginning, the colonial administrator was not enthralled in the education system of the country because of social and religious considerations. With the changing time, observing the rich Indian traditional knowledge system, they started taking an interest in it. In order to fulfil their self-interest, they started intervening in indigenous issues including education. This intervention in the field of education started in phase wise manner. J.P. Naik divided “the modern (colonial) period of Indian education into two periods-1. 1800-1900- the revolutionary change in the traditional system of education by colonial system 2. 1900-1947- towards a national system of education.”⁸ These two phases decided the fate of education not only for the upper caste but also for the depressed classes. The inter-relationship between the indigenous education system and the colonial education system paved the way for many socio-political and economic considerations. In the beginning, the British administration was looking to settle down and concentrate more oneconomic and administrative reforms. In the words of Surendra Gopal, “The administration was now gathering information relating to crafts, agriculture, social stratification, religious and social rituals and practices, so as to formulate policies which would bring maximum revenue, preserve social and political peace and prevent opposition to their rule.”⁹With such intentions and motives, they wanted to know and understand people and indigenous institutions prevalent in society. The progress of education under the rule of East India Company led by the British government started with the formulation of the Charter Act of 1813, which directed through Section 43 that “a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.”¹⁰ This measure perpetuated an awareness of education mostly among the already educated upper caste in the indigenous system of education. The depressed class at this point in time were a neglected lot in every sense. They hardly had the opportunity and awareness which could bring them to the path of progress. The situation was grim but initiatives like this brought hope in the minds of the depressed class. In order to understand the ground situation of education in the province of Bengal Lord William Bentick ordered a special enquiry into indigenous education under the supervision of William Adam. Out of the three reports submitted by William Adam (1835-38), the third report was related to statistics of five districts in Bengal and Bihar out of a total of nineteen. It was passed in the Governor General Council on 22nd January 1835 to conduct a survey in Bihar and William Adam was communicated on 7th March 1835. He proceeded to enquire into native education in Gaya district in South Bihar and Tirhoot in North Bihar. William Adam noted that education was imparted among all castes and communities. Evidently, schools were open to both

⁷Basu, Aparna, History of Education: A Trend Report, p.56

https://osre.ncert.gov.in/images/survey/Third_Survey/ch3_s.pdf

⁸ Naik, J, P. (1978), Educational Reform in India: A Historical Review, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, p.1.

⁹Gopal, Surendra, (2018), Mapping Bihar: From Medieval to Modern times, Manohar, New Delhi, p. 269.

¹⁰ Sharp H. (1920). Selections from educational records. Part I (1781-1839). Calcutta, India: Superintendent Government Printing, p. 22

Hindu and Muslim population. The rampant caste demarcations still had to wait for around eight to nine years to seep into the education system which, meanwhile, allowed upper castes, lower castes and Muslims to receive education. Student records were well documented by William Adam. For instance, in a district of South Bihar, there were “Hindu teachers belonging to Kayastha, Magadha, Gandhabanik, Teli, Koiri and Sonar castes and one Muslim teacher.”¹¹ It was evident that vernacular instructions were wholly in the hands of the Kayastha or Writer caste. There was no Brahman teacher. There were two thousand nine hundred and eighteen Hindu students and one hundred and seventy-two Muslim students. The Hindu students were found to be belonging to “forty-eight caste groups including Dosadh, Pasi, Musahar, Dhobi, Tanti, Kalawar, Beldar, Goala, Napit, Kahar, Koiri, Kurmi, Brahman, Kayasth, etc.”¹² In Tirhut or North Bihar, “16 thanas of the district contain all 80 Hindi schools, one village contains three, six villages contain two each and sixty-five villages contain one each. The number of teachers was 80 and all of them were Hindus comprising- Kayastha-77, Gandhabanik-2, Brahman-1.”¹³ During the first phase, through legislations such as the decision of William Bentick (1835) to use English as the medium of instruction, the decision of Hardinge (1844) to employ educated people under government, Wood’s despatch of 1854 to establish universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and the Indian Education Commission (1882) was brought upon to introduce changes in education. In this region, efforts of the government started late as compared to Bengal, Bombay and Madras. The resources allotted for the purpose were meagre and cater to their needs. At the beginning “scheduled caste”¹⁴ had to struggle a lot. Their admission in school was avoided for fear that caste-Hindu students would boycott the school. This resulted in the spread of missionary-led education, especially among lower castes. The proselytizing mission led reformers to introduce educational reform within the Indian condition. As a result, there was a need to include such castes who were deprived of education for various reasons. Further, the legislation brought by British administrators ensured that no admission would be denied to them. As a result, their presence in the institution was accepted, although grudgingly.

The earliest initiative during British rule for “enforcing compulsory primary education was undertaken by William Adam in 1838”¹⁵, a Christian missionary who enquired into the state of vernacular education in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. He found that the “children of Dusadh, Pasis, Dhobis and Musahars reading Hindi books and learning agricultural and commercial accounts along with children of upper and intermediate castes in the north and south Bihar.”¹⁶ This does not mean that the situation was the same everywhere. In the third Report, Adam made recommendations and brought about improvements in vernacular education. It appeared difficult to initiate compulsory education owing to various reasons. He emphasised in his report that “the next

¹¹ Long J (ed.), (1868), Adam’s Report on Vernacular Education, Bengal and Bihar, 1838, Calcutta, P.171. Among the Hindu teachers, the following number of teachers were listed- Kayastha-278, Magadha-2, Gandhabanik-1, Teli-1, Koiri-1, Sonar-1.

¹² Long J (ed.), (1868), Adam’s Report on Vernacular Education, Bengal and Bihar, 1838, Calcutta, P.171. The nine thanas of this district contain in all 235 Hindi schools of which two villages contain seven each, two contain four each, two contain three each, two contain two each, and two hundred and thirty-three contains one each.

¹³ Long J (ed.), (1868), Adam’s Report on Vernacular Education, Bengal and Bihar, 1838, Calcutta, P.174.

¹⁴ In the official record the term used for disadvantaged groups in India was known as “Special Class “or” Depressed Classes” which at that time included untouchables and a few other groups. In the 1931 Census of India, the government made a special effort to draw up a “schedule” of castes which were entitled to benefit from certain special arrangements. The Government of India Act, of 1935 used the complete term “Scheduled Castes” for the first time. They form part of the “backward classes” mentioned in the 1950 Constitution, the others being Scheduled Tribes, Denotified Tribes, Nomadic Tribes and other Backward Classes.

¹⁵ Mondal, A., Free and Compulsory Primary Education in India Under the British Raj: A Tale of an Unfulfilled Dream, SAGE Open July-September 2017, p.2.

¹⁶ Gopal, Surendra, (2018), Mapping Bihar: From Medieval to Modern times, Manohar, New Delhi, p. 167.

form in which Government influence may be conceived to be employed for the promotion of education is by making it compulsory and enacting that every village should have a school. I hope the time will come when every village shall have a school, but the period has not yet arrived when this obligation can be enforced.”¹⁷ It was considered to view that education was given at the doorstep to facilitate the people to get educated. In caste-ridden societies like Bihar, education away from dwelling places becomes problematic because of different social restrictions for the depressed class. Moreover, due to the lack of basic facilities at home and in the locality, it becomes difficult to move from one place to another. In rural areas, caste rigidities were deeper as compared to urban areas. Hence, the suggestions given by William Adam took more time to be implemented fully with hesitation and resistance by the upper caste. Reports of Francis Buchanan of four districts of Bihar namely Bhagalpur (1810-11), Purnea (1810-11), Patna (1811-12), and Shahabad (1812-13) reveal a good state of indigenous education in Bihar prior to 1835. According to his report, “there were 643 elementary schools and 110 Sanskrit schools in Purnea; 27 Sanskrit schools and 291 Persian and Arabic schools in south Bihar; and 80 Hindi schools, 56 Sanskrit schools, and 238 Persian and Arabic schools in Tirhut District.”¹⁸ William Adam also pointed out that “Hindu society on a large scale may be divided into three grades: first, Brahmanas who are prohibited by laws of religion from engaging in worldly employment for which vernacular instruction is deemed the fit and indispensable preparation; second, those castes who though inferior to Brahmanas, are deemed worthy of association with them, or to whom the worldly employments requiring vernacular instruction are expressly assigned; and third, those castes who are so inferior as to be deemed unworthy both of association with Brahmanas and of those worldly employments for which vernacular instruction is the preparation.”¹⁹ The purpose of this survey was to know the prevailing situation of education and other types of information in these districts. He divided the educational institutions of Bihar into five categories namely “indigenous elementary schools, elementary schools supported by missionaries and planters, traditional schools of learning, native female schools and English schools and colleges.”²⁰ Moreover, the colonial government wanted to continue with the present condition without disturbing the social and cultural milieu of the Indians. In this indigenous education system, marginalized communities were nowhere. Education had a religious content and theological causation was supreme. Education remained under the monopoly of the dominant castes of Bihar such as Brahmins, Kayasthas, Bhumihars and Rajputs. The rest of society remained aloof from every kind of education. The issue of education of marginalized communities got addressed in new education policies of the colonial rule. The colonial rule became a boon for the people at the margins but national movement and caste hierarchy became a hindrance in the progress of education for such communities. In colonial India, as in other social formations, education may be viewed as a social process which maintains homeostasis in so far as education serves as an instrument of ideologization and of transmitting and controlling knowledge in a manner consistent with the maintenance and preservation of the socio-political order. During this period, the contestation occurred around “two focal points on the one hand the asymmetry of colonial-metropolitan relationship (in particular in its aspects of cultural hegemony and cognitive authority of the rulers over the ruled), and on the other hand, the subordinate -superordinate, hegemonized relationship within Indian society (in particular at the interface between caste and class and gender inequalities

¹⁷ Mondal, A., Free and Compulsory Primary Education in India Under the British Raj: A Tale of an Unfulfilled Dream, SAGE Open July-September 2017, p.2.

¹⁸ Pande, Shreedhar Narayan, (1975), Education and social changes in Bihar, 1900-1921, Motilal Banarsidas p.1.

¹⁹ Long J (ed.), (1868), Adam’s Report on Vernacular Education, Bengal and Bihar, 1838, Calcutta, P.177.

²⁰ Patel, Hitendra, (2011), *Communalism and the Intelligentsia in Bihar, 1870-1930*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, p. 32.

with the discourse of educational).²¹The dominance of colonial rule on one hand and native caste hierarchy on the other, collectively,initially,resisted any chance for the depressed class to get educated. However, education also brought consciousness among the educated elite to bring various kinds of reforms.

The spread and extent of modern Western education in Bihar only started after the promulgation of 'The Charter Act of 1833' and 'Macaulay's Minute' of 1835, both of these were professed to provide education in English medium in order to suit their demand. Thomas Babington Macaulay's thinking and ideas were inspired by the racial superiority of British and Western education. He disliked the prevalence of the native system of education. Slowly and gradually, besides the dominant caste's resilience, they moved on the path of education. Though the number of people taking up English education was meagre, they occupied important positions in administration and various professions. For the depressed class this act, brought an opportunity which led to revolutionary change in their social and mental makeup. Chandrabhan Prasad remarked that "three reasons for revering Macaulay - his insistence to teach the "natives" English broke the stranglehold of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic teaching, a privilege of only the elite castes and, he argued, for the European kind of modern education, with focus on modern sciences."²² It is true that English education broke the monopoly of caste features and led to scientific thinking on the basis of modern education. It took time to understand the basic features but in the long run, it proved detrimental for the depressed class. As a corollary, we often find that English-educated Indians in colonial times became the torch bearer of Indian society. In this category, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule who had studied in a missionary school became a pioneer in educational reform. This arrangement of being educated in English got impetus when the British administration "declared in 1844 that proficiency in English was essential for taking up jobs under the British."²³ This step did not find enough men to take up the job due to the fact that they did not trust British rule and lack of physical and material difficulties. However, it brought economic opportunity for the people of every caste and community. In the mid of the nineteenth century, recruitment of the depressed class into the army and different other jobs provided an opportunity to grab the chances for betterment through education for self and family members. The opportunity for government jobs through education brought a new playing field for the depressed class. The revolt of 1857 and its aftermath brought many changes at a societal and political level. There was debate among the Britishers regarding the criteria of literacy. In the Census of 1881 and 1891, "the population was divided into three classes-literate, illiterate and learning."²⁴ The person who could read sufficiently to decipher the sacred texts but could not write at all (except perhaps to sign their own names) was treated as literate in 1901. This was one of the determining factors while deciding the educational qualification required for the exercise of the franchise. Such consideration must have led people to acquire knowledge and education.

By the time of the census of 1911, the marginalized communities of Bihar such as Barai, Ahir, Kurmi, Dusadh, Chamar, Dhobi, Dhanuk, Dom, Hajjam, etc started figuring in both vernacular as well as in English education. The new education had a great impact on marginalized communities. When Bihar got separated from Bengal, a kind of political vacuum, as well as job opportunities,

²¹ Bhattacharya, S. (et.al.) (2001), *The Development of Women's Education in India: A Collection of Documents (1850-1920)*, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, p. xxi.

²² Happy Birthday Lord Macaulay, thank you for 'Dalit empowerment' Vrinda Gopinath: New Delhi, October 25, Thu Oct 26 2006, <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/happy-birthday-lord-macaulay-thank-you-for--dalit-empowerment>.

²³ Gopal, Surendra, (2018), *Mapping Bihar: From Medieval to Modern times*, Manohar, New Delhi, p. 225.

²⁴ Lacey, W.G., *Census of India, 1931, Vol. VII Bihar and Orissa, Part I*, Superintendent, Government Printing, Patna, 1933, p.212. The person who can write and read both were shown as literate; people who were under instruction either at home or at school or college were regarded as learning and the rest of them as illiterate.

got created. Political mobilization was the immediate outcome. The emergence of associations among marginalized communities and castes emerged on the scene after 1911. These caste associations in the beginning were posing to bring reform within the society but later turned political. As early as the 1920s, the formation of alliances and coalitions emerged as dominating features of the party in Bihar and factional rivalries became manifest when the Bihar Congress decided to fight elections in local bodies. These political developments and consciousness among the masses brought both the government and political parties to bring educational reform.

The decline in the number of pupils in the depressed classes was unfortunate, for though it is true that the number of pupils in all classes has declined, the figures now given show that the percentage of pupils to children of school-going age was only 18·7 for males and 3·4 for females. The steps taken for the education of the untouchables were the establishment of two special schools with 43 pupils in Patna, one with 18 pupils in Tirhut, and one with 18 pupils in Chota Nagpur. The number of members of the untouchable classes was as follows: -

1	2	3	4
Name of Division	Males	Females	Total
Patna	6,620	5,994	12,614
Tirhut	13,233	13,665	26,698
Bhagalpur	53,872	54,470	108,342
Chota Nagpur	42,352	42,451	84,803
Total	116077	116580	147654

Source: *The Second Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa (Dealing with the Period from April 1st, 1917 to March 31st, 1922)*, p.122.

The number at school is as shown below: -

Name of Division	1916-17		1921-22.	
	Males.	Females	Males	Females.
1	2	3	4	5
Patna	132	13	93	1
Tirhut	969	68	45	...
Bhagalpur	479	25	373	18
Chota Nagpur	2,868	316	838	79
Total	4448	416	1349	98

Source: *The Second Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa (Dealing with the Period from April 1st, 1917 to March 31st, 1922)*, p.122

The education of the depressed classes was carried on partly in special government schools, partly by Christian missionaries, partly by Indian missions and partly in the common schools. The

difficulties in the first three classes of institutions were the unreadiness of teachers of better caste to take up the work and the paucity of qualified teachers among the depressed class. Why the teachers belonging to the upper caste did not want to teach a depressed class? Was it due to socio-religious considerations or something else? The difficulty in the last was the prejudice felt against the admission of unclean castes. This last trouble intensified when schools were held in temples or rented private houses. Difficulties common to all were the total lack of any tradition of education among classes who had always regarded themselves as excluded from its advantages and bound to certain tasks of their own, the poverty of many, which leads to the employment of child labour and to an insufficient diet, and the opposition of a conservative element jealous of the privileges which it had always regarded as its exclusive property.

Between 1921 to 1923, education was considered as Reserved and Transferred subjects. Both these subject matters were controlled and dealt with by the executive council member or by a Minister appointed from among the elected members of the legislature. As a result, there were restrictions on decision-making and the hierarchy of bureaucracy. However, there was an upward trend in the data and figures in spite of restrictions and challenges. According to the Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa for the year 1923-24, there was a “considerable rise, from 16,053 to 19,072 in the number of children of the untouchable castes at school; there were no college students belonging to these castes. The number of special schools for these children fell from 139 to 3,204 pupils to 138 with 3,064, but there was an increase in expenditure from Rs. 12,508. to Rs. 13,802.”²⁵ The Saran district board had made a special effort to popularise education with this class, paying a grant varying from Rs. 4 to Rs. 48 per quarter, according to the class in which the boy reads, to parents, for allowing their boys to attend schools, and paying rewards to teachers on the results of the annual examinations. The expenditure under this head amounted to Rs. 3,335. It was through such initiatives at the school level, the colonial government tried to bring change in the attitude of both the depressed class as well as the upper caste.

The colonial government took special measures to develop the education of the depressed classes, including the provision of scholarships and fee remissions and the payment of special rates of pay to teachers in schools which admit depressed class pupils. A special inspecting staff had been appointed to supervise the education of the depressed classes. In 1926, the government decided that for a period of five years, depressed-class pupils should be admitted free in all secondary schools managed or aided by the government in which less than half the pupils were depressed-class pupils. In 1931 there were 211 special schools for the untouchables in this province, with 24187 pupils and a total sum of Rs. 45452 was spent on the education of these classes.

Interestingly, “before 1931-32, the total number of the castes included in the category of the untouchable or depressed classes in Bihar was only 6 and their total population was only 287723.”²⁶ It meant that the depressed class population had no fixed criteria. With the enumeration practice in the 1931 census based on caste, things had changed. The determining factor in including a person as depressed was based on “nine tests” adopted by the British administrator. In 1932-33, for the first time, “the members of the untouchable or depressed classes were called “Hindus Other Castes and their total number included the 31 castes.”²⁷ In comparison to the population of depressed classes in Bihar before 1931-32 enlarged by 5064567 after 1931-32,

²⁵Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa for the year 1923-24, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1924, p.35.

²⁶The Fifth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bihar, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1939, p.134

²⁷The Fifth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bihar, 1939, p.133. The following 31 castes were included as depressed classes in Bihar: Bauri, Bhogta, Bhuiya, Bhumij, Chamar, Chaupal, Dhobi, Dom, Dusadh, Ghasi, Ghusuria, Godra, Gokha, Halalkhor including Bhangi and Mehtar, Hari, Irika, Kandra, Kela, Kanjar, Kurariar, Lalbegi, Mahuria, Mangan, Mochi, Musahar, Nat, Pan, Pasi, Rajwar, Siyal and Turi.

nearly eighteen times. According to the Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa for the year 1930-31, the number of untouchables under instruction fell from 24,680 to 24,187. There were again no untouchables in the collegiate stage; the number in the high school stage fell from 18 to 15 and that in the middle stage from 109 to 100. The number of schools specially meant for these castes fell from 231 with 6,011 pupils to 211 with 5,731.²⁸ This fall was due to the fact that the enumeration of caste was taking place and many depressed classes were claiming to take the position of either Brahmans or Kshatriya. The Ranchi municipality opened a school for doms and mehtars. The Gaya municipality had not carried into effect its resolution to give rewards to teachers on the success of untouchable pupils at the examinations and to supply items with books and writing materials free of charge, but the Patna Administration Committee was giving these concessions. Such initiatives at the municipality level encouraged the depressed class to gain knowledge and pursue education for the betterment of their lives. The lack of uniform policies hindered the path of progress of education among these classes. These depressed classes had shown interest in taking up education provided the facilities and social conditions. It was through such opportunities that Pupils of the untouchable castes won one upper primary and 15 lower primary scholarships against 2 upper primary and 15 lower primary scholarships in the year before. The expenditure reported as having been especially “incurred on the education of untouchables was Rs. 45,452 against Rs. 50,181 last year.”²⁹ The increase in expenditure for the education of the depressed class was a testimony that they were taking up education as a means to improve their condition.

The progress of education among the depressed class between 1931 and 1937 was making slow progress. During these intervening periods, the system of diarchy was governing the whole affairs of the provinces. The Government of India Act of 1935 brought many structural changes and brought provincial autonomy which changed the functioning of the whole system. The election in 1936-37 brought the Congress party into power. Out of eleven provinces, the Congress party was able to form the government in seven provinces including Bihar. In the changed circumstances, the ministers had more power as compared to the previous regime. Moreover, the manifesto of the Congress party during the election and as per the promise made them take decisions on the party line with more facilities for the poor and needy including scheduled castes. Though the ministry was short-lived the decision and planning remained better as compared to the previous regime. This is because of the fact that the political consciousness of the depressed class asked for more facilities. However, the progress made in the previous regime erected a solid base on which future decisions can be made to bring further reform in the field of education.

In 1933-34, there were many concessions granted and sanctioned which brought further change to the depressed classes. The depressed class students were “exempted for a period of three years from the payment of seat rent and furniture rental in the hostels attached to the school run by the government. Further, ten stipends of the value of Rs. 6 a month or Rs. 3 a month, if the boy is living with his parents, tenable at high schools, were created for the period from the 1st July 1933, to the end of the year 1936.”³⁰ These steps had given a chance to the depressed class to get admitted to the schools and hostels. Needless to say, these initiatives by the colonial government opened the door of education for the depressed class which was confined to a selected few based on caste in the past. In 1935-36, “two junior scholarships, one of Rs. 15 a month and one of Rs. 10

²⁸ Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa for the year 1930-31, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1931, p.39.

²⁹ Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa for the year 1930-31, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1931, p.41.

³⁰ Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar and Orissa for the year 1933-34, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1934, pp.35-36.

a month, were sanctioned for award to pupils of these classes on the result of the matriculation examination and it had been decided that all pupils of these classes who were studying in colleges and were not in receipt of scholarships from public funds should be entitled to free tuition.”³¹ In September 1933, the Primary Education Committee made six recommendations regarding the education of the depressed classes. Of these Government accepted and commended the following to the consideration of local bodies: “(1) Schools receiving aid from local bodies should if depressed class pupils are excluded, be removed to other sites, (2) Depressed class pupils should be given equal facilities for their lessons with other pupils, i.e., they must be admitted to the school-house and be given a seat in front of the teacher and the blackboard. (3) More adequate facilities should be provided for the education of the depressed classes, especially in the form of special schools, in areas where a considerable population of these classes is concentrated, but the provision is to be only a temporary measure to last until these children are freely admitted to ordinary schools.”³² These recommendations led to remarkable policy formulations by the colonial government. The other three recommendations were adopted immediately by the government compensatory in order to make progress in education for the depressed class. Firstly, it was “required by the local bodies to prepare a special budget for compensatory allowances to teachers who admit pupils of the depressed classes and can therefore admit fewer fee-paying pupils, and also for the supply of books and writing materials to depressed class pupils. Secondly, it required the reservation of scholarships in every district for depressed class pupils, with the total number of scholarships available being divided up according to the number of pupils in these classes and the number of other pupils at each stage of instruction. Thirdly, secured special consideration for candidates of the depressed classes when admissions are made to elementary training schools.”³³ These three recommendations brought a change in the admission process as well as the intake capacity of depressed classes and monetary benefits to the teachers who were involved in imparting or including such people. The reform within the system by the people involved in education brought a change in society.

The progress of education among scheduled caste of the quinquennium is shown below: -Stages of

Instruction	1932-33		1933-34		1934-35		1935-36		1936-37	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
College Stage	1	-	2	-	2	-	5	-	10	-
High Stage	110	-	164	-	205	-	289	-	428	1
Middle Stage	477	-	586	-	777	2	920	6	1179	13
Primary Stage	74191	896	80294	1351	85034	1759	87318	1969	36498	101

Source: *The Fifth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bihar, (Dealing with the period from April 1st, 1932, to March 31st, 1937), Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1939, p.134.*

From the above data, it is clearly understood that there was a steady rise in the education of depressed classes at the beginning of four years.

A lot of political activities and representations around the depressed classes were witnessed around this year. Apparently, leaders from almost every rung appeared to be involved and was led majorly by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. However, in the last year, there was a slight setback due to the economic depression and its impact, The other reason cited by one inspector was that it was due to the non-existence and in some cases discontinuance of capitation allowances for

³¹ The Fifth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bihar, {Dealing with the period from April 1st, 1932, to March 31st, 1937), Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1939, p.135.

³² The Fifth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bihar, {Dealing with the period from April 1st, 1932, to March 31st, 1937), Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1939, p.136.

³³ The Fifth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bihar, {Dealing with the period from April 1st, 1932, to March 31st, 1937), Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar, Patna, 1939, p.136.

teaching pupils of these classes. The female education among the depressed class was negligible in all five years.

For the year 1936-37, depressed class students received one college scholarship and two middle, two upper primary and two lower primary scholarships. With the change in nomenclature as per the provisions of the Government of India act 1935, the progress of education and data becomes cumbersome. The expenditure, meant for the education of the depressed classes, besides expenditure for their education as is incurred for them in ordinary schools, was shown in the following statement: Special schools -Rs.16,636, Capitation grants and rewards-Rs.2,496, Scholarships-Rs.1,255, Special inspecting staff-Rs.3,413, a total of Rs.23,800. The policies and programmes undertaken by the colonial government underwent a change depending upon time and situation. However, they never neglected the progress of education and continuously made efforts to bring change in the lives of the depressed class.

Since the advent of the Congress Government in power, a fresh impetus had been given to the education of these castes by offering them special scholarships, exempting them from the payment of admission fees and enforcing rigidly the rule for the grant of free studentships in schools and colleges, the details of which will be dealt with below. If this rate of advance continues, they will soon reach the educational level of the more advanced communities and improve their social status as a result. The number of pupils in “the collegiate stage rose from 12 to 21, in the high stage 371 to 480, in the middle stage 1,411 to 1,795, in the primary stage 50,115 to 57,259, and in unrecognized schools from 4,469 to 6,001; but the number in special schools fell from 289 to 247.”³⁴ There were increasing tendencies at the collegiate level which was only possible due to the policies adopted by both the government.

In the Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar for the year 1938-39, it was highlighted that “two junior scholarships, one of Rs. 15 and one of Rs 10 a month, are still earmarked for the students of the scheduled castes. Pupils of these castes won 2 juniors, 7 middle, no upper primary and 22 lower primary scholarships against 2, 5, 1 and 29 respectively. Two special college scholarships of Rs. 20 each, 10 special college scholarships of Rs. 15 each, and about 425 special school scholarships at rates ranging from Rs- 2 to Rs. 7 a month tenable in all grades of institutions but mostly in high and middle schools were awarded to them at a cost of Rs. 22,310.”³⁵ Further, a provision of Rs. 24,320 had been made in the budget for the year 1939-40 for the same purpose. The Gaya municipality awarded scholarships to the pupils of these castes. Free studentships were granted to all such students reading in colleges whether or not they were receiving merit scholarships.

The Congress government granted concessions for the scheduled caste in respect of educational facilities. It was decided to provide facilities for technical education and provisions of scholarships. On the appeal made by Rajendra Prasad in the meeting of the senate of Patna University for the formation of the committee for educational reforms. It was soon constituted by the congress government with Prof. K.T.Shah as Chairman to survey the whole field of education in Bihar to suggest suitable means of educational reform. The Hindustani Committee under the Chairmanship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad suggested: “the mother tongue as the medium of education at the primary stage and English at the secondary stage.”³⁶ The congress ministry within a short span of time did a lot for the improvement of scheduled caste education through indigenous reforms. An amendment to the Bihar and Orissa Primary Education Act, 1939 enabled the Patna

³⁴ Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar for the year 1938-39, p.63.

³⁵ Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar for the year 1938-39, p.64.

³⁶ Ojha, P.N., (ed.), (1985), History of the Indian National Congress in Bihar, 1885-1985, K.P.Jayasawal Research Institute, Patna, P.455.

Administration Committee and similar committees in Bihar to introduce compulsory education in their areas. The Bihar and Orissa Primary Education Act 1919 was amended to empower the Basic Education Board to introduce compulsory Basic Education in areas where such schools have been in existence. This change in rule further made the scheduled caste people in acquiring knowledge not available to them previously.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the education of scheduled castes during the colonial period saw many types of changes. Initially, it was difficult to impart education due to the socio-religious conditions prevalent in the society of Bihar. The prevalence of the caste system hindered the progress of education of the scheduled caste. With the introduction of the English education system, a slight change in the mindset of pupils was brought which helped in the progress of education. The colonial government's intention was something else when they were introducing modern English education. It was both boon and a bane for the Indians. In the changing scenario, the scheduled caste slowly and gradually picked up the benefits provided by the government and came out of bewilderment. It was the colonial government which opened the door to the education of the scheduled caste. Later on, the provincial government carried forward its legacy and brought further change and progress due to political considerations. The policies of Congress as per the Poona Pact and especially the Wardha education system gave an impetus to the progress of education among scheduled castes. With the colonial intervention, Congress also made certain experiments in the education system. However, it was the colonial government who had given a chance to improve their lot by acquiring English education. The progress of education was also dependent on the demand of depressed class leaders and congress policies against the colonial government. The movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar played an important role in policy-making by the British administrator as well as by the provincial government.