

# Empowerment of Panchama's through Education in the Princely State of Mysore

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## Abstract

This paper makes an effort to evaluate steps undertaken by the Princely state of Mysore, the South Indian state presently known as Karnataka towards empowering the downtrodden and depressed class through education during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The role of the Wadiyar's, the erstwhile kings of the said region set a testament at the national level during the colonial rule in India.

**Keywords:** Untouchables, Depressed Class, Panchamas.

## Introduction

The British colonial rule in India for a period of nearly two centuries has brought about many changes in social and economic conditions to a great extent. The changes that were brought about in Indian society through education and intellectual activity as a result of the British colonial rule have been called by Indian historians as 'Renaissance'<sup>1</sup>, a word borrowed from the European Writers. Due to the fourth Anglo Mysore war and fall of Tippu Sultan in 1779, major parts of Karnataka was subjected to British colonial rule and from this period onwards I. e. early 19<sup>th</sup> century is to be considered as the beginning of modern period in Karnataka history<sup>2</sup>. This modern age witnessed Renaissance in Karnataka in particular and that of India in general. Renaissance led to the growth of nationalism and social reformism in India. Social reforms and nationalism were the two facets of Renaissance influenced on began to convulse Indian life<sup>3</sup>. The Ideas and institutions popularized by the British had an adverse effect on themselves. Having been taught in the democratic ideas and liberty and equality the Indians began to have an introspection of their own rights and privileges. They also realized what the defects were in their own social and political set up. It naturally propelled them to think seriously on bringing about changes.

## The Indian national movement

The Indian national movement was also responsible for taking up social reforms as one of its important programmers. The Great social reformers like JyothyBhaPhule, SavithriPhule, M G Ranade, Gandhiji, Ambedkar and others who gave greater priority to social reforms. Even before their entry into Indian politics and the advent of congress into Mysore princely state, there were various socio-religious movements in Mysore state echoing the moorings of the elite all over India. The partition of Bangala and the growth of the Swadeshi and Swaraj agitations had their impact on the people of Mysore state. The newspapers also spread the ideas of Congressmen among the mass. In Mysore State the people launched the agitations for greater powers for the Representative Assembly and curtailment of the power of the Dewan<sup>4</sup>. The State of Mysore under the benevolent rule of the Maharajas of princely state of Mysore had enjoyed many advantages to bring about reforms. Due to the direct efforts on the part of the people and the government, many social reforms were brought about both by legislation and people's efforts of M.Venkatakrishnayya, M Basavaiah, GopalSwamyAiyer, TagaduruRamachandraRao, TagaduruSubbanna and others did a pioneering job in this respect. In this context, an attempt is made to discuss the main aspects of social reforms like emancipation and empowerment of women, removal of obnoxious practices, and eradication of untouchability and uplift of the depressed classes through education.

The inspiring influence of the pioneers in the cause of emancipation of the practices of social evils like caste system, practice of untouchability and others in India. Social reformers like RajaramMohana Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Gandhi, Ambedkar and others gradually stirred the thoughtful section of the people in the State of Mysore. The chief means by which it was accomplished was by imparting education to the womenfolk. Education to women and depressed classes was a most noticeable feature of the educational development at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Mysore State. From the rule of Sri Jayachamarajawodeyar X, the female education came to receive the encouragement and support of the State government was a remarkable achievement.

### **The Panchamas Education in Mysore**

The education of the depressed class communities may be said to have been first begun in the princely state of Mysore by the Christian Missionaries. The task of the welfare and uplift of the depressed classes had been taken up in the Princely state of Mysore long before Gandhi, Ambedkar and other social reformers attempted to do so. The rulers of Mysore state had ever been benevolent in this respect. With the Rendition, the great Dewans like sir KantharajeUrs, Mirza Ismail and others took keen interest in the welfare of the

depressed classes. More over the humanitarian consideration urged the public to organize voluntary institutions to redress to some extent their grievances.

The depressed class communities were also called as panchamas in the princely state of Mysore. The low caste communities like Holeyas, Madigas, Lambanis, Korachas, Koramas, Naindas and other untouchables were officially recognized as Adi Karnataka sects by the government<sup>23</sup>. In the historical literature of our period they are usually referred to as Panchamas. These communities had been subjected to social degradation all through the ages of Indian history. It is gratifying to note that state of the Mysore was pioneer in bringing about many reforms, there by endeavoring to bring them on for with any other community. The chief means by which this was done in the first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century was through giving every encouragement to promote literacy among them. Literacy was the sure means by which any class of the people can come abreast of the prevailing standard of culture and civilization. The main lines on which the education of the depressed classes had been developed were:

1. Opening of primary schools for their benefits in all centers of Panchama population.
2. The establishment of central Panchama institute with suitable boarding and residential arrangements in Mysore city and similar institutions in certain other district headquarters for the training of teachers and higher education for Panchama boys.
3. Grant of liberal scholarships including bonus to parents for sending their children to schools.
4. Combinations of industrial training with general education where ever possible.
5. Throwing open ordinary schools for the panchamas.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the state government initiated several programs to encourage the Panchamas to acquire knowledge for their uplift through education. In the year 1901-1902 the government opened 11 schools in the districts of Shimoga, Chitradurga, Tumkur and Hassan for the children of the Lambanis, a forest tribe that had hitherto remained outside the sphere of the department.<sup>25</sup> In the same year there were 66 schools for the Panchamas with an attendance of 1816 pupils of whom 224 were girls.<sup>26</sup> The number of schools for depressed castes were 102 in the year 1911-12 and the strength was 2581. of these schools 58 were departmental, 38 aided and 6 unaided.<sup>27</sup> A league known as the Panchama Education League composed of gentlemen interested the spread of Panchama education had been started in Mysore and monthly fees etc; were paid to poor Panchama children.

Of these gentlemen the names of VenkataKrishnayya must be remembered reverently. In the cause of panchama education he was ably helped by G.Virupakhaiah, Sham Iyengar, R GopalaSwamyIyer, Smt. Vanajamma.<sup>28</sup> Under the auspices of this league numerous Panchama conferences were held between 1913-1922, in which leading men of the community were encouraged the children to schools. On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1918 the government issued a proclamation to the effect that there shall not be any bar to the entry of Panchama children to the school. Though this proclamation was not complimentary to conscience of the orthodox section of the people, all schools admitted Panchama children.<sup>29</sup>The government was promoted to take such decision for earlier attempts in that direction had not borne any fruit.

The following institutions had been established for the benefit of the depressed classes. (1) A central panchama institute had been organized at Mysore at a recurring cost of Rs. 37,124 and nonrecurring cost of Rs. 32,000 for the building, equipment etc. This institution provided for general, industrial and moral education and lodging shoe making, mat weaving, smithy, carpentry, agriculture, sericulture were taught in the institute.<sup>30</sup> (2) A Panchama boarding school at recurring cost of Rs. 9,651 per annum and nonrecurring initial cost of Rs. 2,000 had been organized at tumkur. This institution provided for the general, industrial and agriculture education of about 40 Panchama Boys. Tailoring, shoe making, carpentry were some of the industries taught here. Boys were fed, bedded and clothed free, a sum of Rs.15 being provided for each boy for clothing.<sup>31</sup> Another Panchama school at chikkamagalur was started at annual recurring cost of Rs.2,148 for annum.<sup>32</sup> Weaving classes had been attached to a dozen Panchama schools, in the state to impart the Panchama Boys the elementary training in weaving. The inspector General of Education had been empowered to open Government Panchama schools in anticipation of sanctions in places in which there was likely to be a minimum admission of 25students.<sup>33</sup>

To further stimulate education among the Panchamas in 1919, special concessions were granted in the shape of scholarships, traveling allowance to and from the schools to pupils learning English, free supply of books and slates and alliance to parents while the children were under training in schools.<sup>34</sup>M.VenkataKrishnayya of Mysore started SadanandaVardhiniShabha in 1901 for the uplift of the down trodden. For their social uplift, about 65 Bhajanamandiras were started.<sup>35</sup>Thus, it is clear as to how the Princely state of Mysore Government was very generous and keen on uplift of the depressed classes through education.

**Conclusion:** Thus, the above examination highlights the efforts undertaken by the Princely State of Mysore to uplift and mainstream the depressed section of the society popularly known as the panchama's.

These reforms and the humanistic values practiced and amalgamated as a matter of the state policy set new precedent and influenced the other princely states to change the attitude towards the panchamas during the colonial rule in India. It stands as a testimony of embracing the modern day Human Right.

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