

CHAPTER - VII

Education of the Depressed Classes from 1932 to 1937

In the chronology of the History of Education in India, the period 1922-1937 is usually considered as a compact unit. But in the case of the education of the Depressed classes,

the impact of Yervada Pact, the campaign of Mahatma Gandhi and the activities of the Harijan Sewak Sangh were so great that the period 1932-1937 emerges as a unit in itself. This period was dominated by Gandhian movement for the abolition of untouchability and the emergence of national consciousness for ameliorating the conditions of the Depressed classes. It was during this period that the Depressed classes were renamed as Exterior Castes, Harijans, Scheduled Castes to rid them of the stigma of untouchability and social suppression. The connotation of new terms to replace the old ones which carried a stigma of inferiority, by themselves reflect the national consciousness for elevating their status.

Depressed Classes Termed as Exterior Castes, Harijans, Scheduled Castes

A few technical terms that came to be used extensively for the Depressed classes during the period 1932-37 were the, 'Exterior Castes', 'Harijans', 'Scheduled Castes'. In the earlier days, the Depressed classes or the untouchables of the Hindu Society were called by certain names as Antyjas, Pariahs in addition to their caste names as Chura, Chamar,

Mehtar etc. Since these terms appeared to connote a sense of degradation, Towards the end of 19th century a better term 'Panchma' came to be used for them in the South. But generally the accepted official term to identify them for over a century was the 'Depressed classes'. During the Census operations, 1931, the Census Superintendent, Mr. H.J.Hutton, coined a new term 'Exterior Castes' as a substitute of the term 'Depressed Classes'.¹ In his note Mr.Hutton, explained his view point on the need to change the term for the following reasons.²

'The term 'Exterior' for the Hindu Castes hitherto known as 'Depressed' was originally suggested by the Census Superintendent for Assam and was adopted in the report on the census of India, 1931 as the most satisfactory alternative to the unfortunate and depressing label 'Depressed Classes'. It has been criticized as being the same term as 'outcaste', only of five instead of two syllables, and it must be admitted that exterior is but old out writ large. At the same time it is here submitted that out caste, with an 'e', has not unnaturally attracted to its connotation the implications, of the quite differently derived outcast, with no 'e'. Out caste correctly interpreted seem to mean no more than one who is outside the caste system and is therefore, not admitted to Hindu society, but since in practice the exterior castes also contained those who had been cast out from the Hindu social body for some breach of caste rules, out caste and outcast' were in some cases synonymous, and the derogatory implications of obliquity attaching to the latter term have unjustly coloured the former, a taint which is not conveyed by the substitution of the word ' exterior' which may connote exclusion but not extrusion. The term a varna without varna or outside the four varnas is sometimes used and apathy expresses the same idea'.

¹Hutton, J.H., Caste In India, London, Oxford University Press, 1963. Pp.192-94.

²Ibid.

Regarding the development of a single criterion to identify the exterior castes throughout the country, Mr. Hutton had felt quite diffident. But the terms 'Exterior Castes' covered in its scope only such castes as were earlier regarded as the Depressed classes i.e. the untouchables in Hindus. Explaining this, Mr.Hutton clarified:³

"No specific definition of Depressed Castes was framed and no more precise instructions were issued to the Superintendents of Census operations, because it was realized that conditions varied so much from province to province and from district to district even, within some provinces, that it would be unwise to tie down the Superintendents of Census operations with too meticulous instructions. The general method of proceeding prescribed was that of local enquiry into what castes were held to be Depressed, and why and the framing of a list accordingly. It was decided that Muslim and Christians should be excluded from the term 'Depressed class' and that generally speaking, hill, and forest tribes who had not become Hindu but religion was returned as Tribal, should also be excluded".

The term 'Harijans' also came to be used as a replacive of the term 'Depressed classes' about this time and since this derivation was arrived at by Gandhiji, it grew into a very popular term and is in use even todate. Explaining the origin of the term 'Harijan', Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1923:⁴

"It is not a name of my own coining. Some years ago, several 'Untouchable' correspondents complained that I used the word 'Asprishya' in the pages of the Navajivan. Asprishya means literally untouchable.

³Ibid.

⁴Tandulkar, D.G., Mahatma - Life of Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi, Vol.III, Delhi, Publication Division, Government of India, 1961, p.192.

I then invited them to suggest a better name and one of the 'untouchable' correspondents suggested the adoption of the name 'Harijan', on the strength of its having been used by the first poet saint of Gujarat. Though, the quotation he sent me did not exactly fit the case, he wanted to make out for the adoption, I thought that it was a good word. Harijan means 'a man of God'. All the religions of the world describe God pre-eminently as the Friend of the friendless, help of the helpless, and Protector of the weak. The rest of the world apart, in India who can be more friendless, helpless or weaker than the forty million or more Hindus who are classified as untouchables? If, therefore, any body of people can be fitly described as men of God, they are surely these helpless, friendless and despised people. Hence, in the pages of the Navajivan since the correspondence, I have adopted Harijan as the name signifying 'Untouchables'".

The third term that came to be used for the 'Depressed classes' during this period and has been in currency even todate was 'Scheduled Castes'. Its origin and application have been discussed as:⁵

"The term 'Scheduled castes' appeared for the first time in the Government of India Act, 1935. In April, 1936, the British Government issued the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order 1936, specifying certain castes, races and tribes as Scheduled Castes in the then provinces of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Orissa, Punjab and United provinces, Prior to that these castes were generally known as the Depressed Classes'. The Depressed Classes were systematically categorised in 1931 by Hutton, the then Census Commissioner of India. The list of Scheduled Castes issued in 1936 was a continuation of the earlier list of Depressed classes. The list drawn in 1950 was a revised version of the list of Scheduled Castes under the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order, 1936.

Thus the terms 'Exterior Castes', 'Harijans', 'Scheduled Castes' are synonymous to the Depressed classes

⁵Report, Handbook on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Delhi, Commissioner for Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1968, p.27.

and have been used for each other from time to time. Whereas the term 'Exterior Castes' was sparingly used, the term 'Scheduled Castes' was adopted as an official term for the Depressed classes and has been in use since 1936. The term 'Harijans', previously used by the Indian National Congress and other Nationalists was also used officially after 1937 and is in currency even today.

Gandhi's Campaign for the Elevation
of the Depressed Classes.

By 1932, the Indian National Congress had definitely attained the status of an All India Organisation. Of the several political organisations in the country, it was the most prominent one and it recognised 'no difference between British India and Indian India, between one province and another, between the classes and the masses, between towns and villages, between the rich and the poor, between agricultural and industrial interests, between castes and communities or religions'.⁶ In a way, it had from its very commencement taken up the cause of the so called 'Untouchables'. As already discussed earlier, there was a time when the Congress had at every annual session, as its adjunct, the National Social Conference to which the late Bhaade had dedicated his energies to a great extent. From 1920 onwards, the Congress took a bold

⁶ Dua, R.P., Social Factors in the Birth and Growth of the Indian National Congress Movement, Delhi, S.Chand & Co., 1967, p.107.

step and took upon itself the task of removal of untouchability as an integral part of its political programmes. The Congress considered the removal of the curse of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom.⁷

Gandhiji had undertaken 'fast unto death' in September, 1932, over some political issues concerned with the status of the Depressed Classes. Since the political issues emanated from social conditions, the implication of Gandhiji's fast were many. One of its offshoots was the emergence of some common points of agreement between the two political groups headed by Gandhi and Ambedkar. The agreement known as the 'Yervada Pact' was primarily over the question of having joint electorates for the Hindus and the Depressed classes. In addition, certain aspects and programmes for the political, social and economic elevation of the Depressed classes had also been considered. It had also included provision of educational facilities for the Depressed classes as a priority item on the charge of the Provincial Governments.

Gandhiji's 'fast unto death' and the consequent 'Yervada Pact' had created a social movement in the country. The news of Gandhi-Ambedkar agreement had brought the two

⁷Ibid., 108.

streams of leadership of the Depressed classes nearer to each other. The orthodox Hindus were also made conscious of the possible repercussions of exercising untouchability. To intensify the campaign against untouchability, it was declared that an 'Untouchability Abolition Week' would be observed all over the country from September 27 to October 2, 1932.⁸ In this week, public meetings were held all over the country and in these meetings the Yervada Pact was explained and appeals were made to abolish untouchability. Inter-caste dinners were arranged in big cities. Public temples and public wells were thrown open to untouchables. An appeal for a living bond with the Harijans and for the establishment of larger unity was made. A voluntary organisation by the name of 'All India Anti-Untouchability League' was set up. This organisation was later renamed as the Harijan Sewak Sangh. Its organisation was personally looked after by Gandhiji for a long time. Within a short time, the Harijan Sewak Sangh had gained popularity and a number of branches were opened in the different parts of the country. Its headquarters were located at Delhi and Shri Amrit Lal V. Thakkar had acted as its first Secretary.

The 'All India Anti-Untouchability League', was formed by a resolution of Hindu Conference held on 30th September, 1932. This Conference was attended by

⁸Tandulkar, op.cit. 4, p.177.

the leaders of Hindu religion from all parts of the country.

The Resolution establishing the organisation read as the following,⁹

'This public meeting of Hindus resolves that an All India Anti-Untouchability League, with its headquarters at Delhi and branches in different provincial centres be established for the purposes of carrying propaganda against untouchability and that for this purpose the following steps should be immediately taken:-

- (a) All public wells, dharamshalas, roads, schools, cremations, burning ghats etc. be declared open to the Depressed classes.
- (b) All public temples be open to members of the Depressed classes.

Provided that no compulsion or force shall be used with regard to (a) and (b) above. But peaceful persuasion will be adopted as the only means.'

The Executive of the Harijan Sewak Sangh had also decided to publish a weekly by the name 'Harijan' as its news organ. The Harijan Weekly reported news on the steps taken for the welfare of the Depressed classes at various places. Through its columns appeals were made to the general public to help the campaign on Anti-Untouchability movement, as also for the donation of funds for launching programmes for the amelioration of the Depressed classes etc. Sometimes, the Harijan weekly as well served as the platform for exchange of ideas on political, social,

⁹Harijan, December 14, 1934 issue, p.346.

educational and economic problems with regard to the Depressed Classes. The volumes of Harijan Weekly are a very precious source of information for the period 1932-47 and show the enthusiasm with which people followed Gandhiji in his efforts for the elevation of the Depressed classes. In the initial stages of the launching of Anti-Untouchability Campaign, Gandhiji had appealed for raising a fund amounting to rupees twenty five lakhs. There was a good response from all sections of the Indian society. All the people in the country irrespective of their caste and creed supported him in this movement, for example, the Nawab of Bhopal had publicly expressed his sympathy with the objects of reform by announcing a donation of Rs.5000/- to the Anti-Untouchability Movement.¹⁰

But at a time when Gandhiji reined the nations' sentiments through his campaign against untouchability from within the prison walls of the Yervada jail, the British Government drew a curtain on the scene when on September 29, 1932 all the special facilities granted to him in respect of interviews and correspondence were withdrawn. After a lengthy correspondence between the Government and Gandhiji on this issue, the privileges to carry on his campaign on behalf of the untouchables were restored to him in November, 1932. Gandhiji poured his soul's agony in a

¹⁰Dua, op.cit.6, p.112.

series of statements calling upon the caste Hindus to abolish untouchability. Some of the orthodox Hindus, for whom untouchability was the very essence of Hinduism, regarded him as a renegade. They quoted scriptures in their defence and said that Gandhiji had imbibed notions against untouchability and the like from Christianity and Islam.¹¹ Gandhiji contradicted them by saying that he was a Sanatanist and argued,¹²

'These critics forget, that the caste Hindus are responsible for whatever bad habits are to be observed amongst the Harijans. The so called higher castes have deprived them of the facilities for keeping themselves clean and also the incentives for doing so.....every mother is a a scavenger in regard to her own children and every student of modern science is a tanner in as much as he has to dissect and skin human carcasses. But we consider them to be sacred occupations. I submit that the scavenger's and tanner's occupations are no less sacred and no less, useful than those of mothers and medical men.'

One of the programmes of the 'Anti-Untouchability Campaign' was the entry of Harijans in Hindu Temples. Gandhi extended his fullest support by declaring his intentions to undertake a fast with Kellapan over the question of Harijan entry into Guruvayur temple. Though opening of temples to the Harijans was in no way a step that could lead to any material advantage to the Depressed classes but as the social scene of that period stood, nothing could have impressed the imagination of Hindu mass mind,

¹¹Tandulkar, op.cit.,4, Pp.178-180.

¹²Ibid., Pp.181-82.

including the Harijans as the throwing open of the public temples to Harijans precisely on the same terms as to the caste Hindus. Inaugurating the Campaign for Harijan Temple Entry, Gandhiji said,¹³

'for men with deep religious conviction there is no other outlet for the soul than this final sacrifice... ..This campaign, therefore, in my opinion, is the acid test of what I have claimed for Hinduism. Hinduism dies if untouchability lives and untouchability has to die if Hinduism is to live'.

Gandhi's campaign against untouchability had eclipsed every thing else in 1933. Undeterred even by political circumstances, he continued with this forceful movement adding strength to it every time. On May 8, 1933, Gandhiji undertook a fast of 21 days, 'for a heart prayer for purification of myself and my associates for greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection with the Harijan cause'.¹⁴ In November of the same year, he undertook a country wide 'Harijan Tour' for an intensive study of the problem of untouchability.....(in order to evolve) the best methods of solving it.¹⁵ During his tour one of the usual programmes of Gandhiji used to be to enter Hindu Temples in the company of Depressed class people. On November 1, 1933, Dr. Subbarayan's resolution in the Madras legislative council permitting the so called untouchables entry into temples, was carried.¹⁶ A referendum amongst the

¹³Ibid., p.183.

¹⁴Ibid., p.203.

¹⁵Ibid., p.219

¹⁶Ibid., p.189.

temple worshippers at Gurvayoor was taken. The issue was whether the Untouchables should be allowed temple entry or not. Seventy five percent respondents including about 8000 women had favoured Untouchables' entry into temples.¹⁷

During the last two months of 1933, Gandhiji had further intensified his Campaign to shake off untouchability from the Hindu society. He travelled very widely covering almost all parts of the country and wherever he went, a social revolution took place. Temples were thrown open to Harijans; schools and public wells were opened to them; intercaste dinners were arranged and untouchability was shunned by practising touchability. At Gandhiji's call donations for the Harijan welfare schemes poured in. Men, women and children generously parted with their money, ornaments and savings and were happy to serve a good cause. The hurricane like speed of Gandhiji's tour can be judged by an example that during the third week of December 1933, he covered 700 miles and collected more than Rs.27,000. He addressed public meetings at various places. Though the theme of his speech was the same everywhere but the spirit in him shed freshness to his every discourse. He would request people to donate money for the economic uplift of the Harijans and then pray:¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., p.188.

¹⁸Tandulkar, op.cit,4, Pp.237-38.

'My mission covers a much wider theme than the economic welfare of the Harijans. We are bound to jealously guard their economic and educational welfare. But this is not enough if we are to do reparation to the Harijans for the untold hardships to which we have subjected them for centuries past. They are entitled to precisely the same rights and privileges as any other citizen. And as Hindus they are entitled to the same social amenities and religious privileges that any other Hindu is entitled to. My mission, therefore, is to invite the Savarna Hindus to wash themselves clean of the guilt of untouchability. And if you will understand thoroughly the spirit of this message, the change of heart is incredibly simple performance; and you can see in the twinkling of an eye how, if this change comes about in Savarana Hindu hearts, the economic, social and religious progress of the Harijans must follow.

Invoking further, he would voice,¹⁹ 'Untouchability is a dead thing, but being a monster, it still seems to be taking breath. But it is the last breath'.

Gandhian Philosophy on Harijan Education

For quite some time, Gandhiji had acted as the editor of Harijan Weekly. His editorial notes on the themes related to educational development among the Harijans are very interesting. It is but natural that the man who opposed Untouchability with his life must oppose the continuance of separate schools for the children of Depressed classes. But since these classes were considerably backward in their socio-economic and educational status, Gandhiji wanted some special steps to be taken in the preparatory form for the Depressed class children, so that when they join the

¹⁹Ibid., p.236.

ordinary schools, they might not be distinguished as less civilized. Explaining the need for opening special preparatory schools or special preparatory classes for the children of these classes, he wrote:²⁰

"Even wild children are better than Harijan children. Wild children are not sunk in utter degradation as the Harijan children are, nor do they live in such filthy surroundings.....It is because the children are so raw, uncleaned and noisy that they shall be taught how to live in a clean and decent manner. Having learnt some rudimentaries of clean living, their admission to common schools would be liked. Therefore, preparatory schools for them are absolutely essential if we mean honest business".

One of the persons responsible for managing 25 Harijan schools wrote to Gandhiji explaining the managerial difficulties being faced by him in handling the children of these classes. He enquired how Gandhiji would have acted in such a situation. Gandhiji was of the opinion that such children have to be handled in a manner wholly different from the ordinary children. Explaining the preparatory steps required for Harijan children, he wrote²¹

"On first admission their bodies have to be minutely examined and thoroughly cleaned. Their clothes might have to be cleaned and patched. The first daily lesson, therefore, will for sometimes consist of applied hygiene and sanitation and simple needle work. I should use no books probably for the whole of the first year. I should talk to them about things with which they are familiar and doing so, correct their pronunciation and grammar and teach them new words. I should note all the new words they may learn from day to day so as to enable them to use them frequently till they have them fixed in their minds regularly.

²⁰Harijan, issue March 4, 1933.

²¹Harijan, issue Nov.10, 1933.

The teacher will not give discourses, but adopt the conversational methods. Through conversation he will give his pupils progressive instruction in History, Geography and Arithmetic. History will begin with that of our times, and that too, of events and persons nearest to us. Geography will begin with that of the neighbourhood of the school. Arithmetic will begin with the sums applicable to the pupils homes. Having tried the method myself, I know that infinitely more knowledge can be given to the pupils through it, and without strain on them, than can be given through the orthodox method, within a given time. Knowledge of the alphabet should be treated as a separate subject altogether. The letters should be treated as pictures which the children will first be taught to recognise and name. Writing will follow as part of the drawing lesson. Instead of making daubs of their letters, pupils should be able to make perfect copies of the models placed before them. They would not, therefore, be called upon to draw the letters till they had acquired control over the fingers and the pen. It is criminal to stunt the mental growth of a child by letting him know as much only as he can get through a book, he can incoherently read in a year. We do not realize that, if a child was cut off from the home life and was merely doomed to the school, he would be a perfect dunce for several years. He picks up information and language unconsciously through his home and not in the school room. Hence do we experience the immense difference between pupils belonging to cultural homes and those belonging to the uncouth homes, which are no homes in reality. I must postpone the consideration of the stage when we have to arm the pupils with books".

On May 18, 1935, a special issue of 'Harijan Weekly' was devoted to Harijan Education. Mahatma Gandhi contributed an article entitled 'Harijan Education'. Explaining his ideas on preliminary or preparatory Education for Harijan children, he quoted from his personal experiences and emphasized upon the need to have some special classes for Harijan children.²²

²²Harijan, issue May 18, 1935.

"The question of Primary Education is in many respects much more difficult than secondary and college education. And Harijan Education is the most difficult of all. Be it in the crudest manner possible, a non-Harijan child receives some home culture. A Harijan child being shunned by society, has none. Even when, therefore, all primary schools are open to Harijan Children, as they must be soon or late, preliminary schools will be needed for Harijan children, if they are not to labour under a perpetual handicap. This preliminary training can be discovered and tried in all the Harijan schools conducted under the aegis of Harijan Sevak Sangh scattered throughout India. That preliminary training should consist in teaching Harijan children manners, good speech and good conduct. A Harijan child sits anyhow, dresses anyhow; his eyes, ears, teeth, hair, nails, more are often full of dirt; many never know what it is to have a wash. I remember what I did when in 1915 I picked up a Harijan boy at Tranguebar and took him with me to Hoehrah where the Ashram was then situated. I had him shaved. He was then thoroughly washed and given a simple dhoti, vest and a cap. In a few minutes in appearance he became undistinguishable from any child from a cultural home. His nails which had become repositories of dirt were pared and cleaned. His feet which were laden with dust were rubbed and cleaned out. Such a process has to be gone through every day, if need be, with Harijan children attending schools. Their lesson should begin for the first three months with teaching them cleanliness. They should be taught also how to eat properly, though as I write this sentence, I recall what I had seen during the walking pilgrimage in Orissa. Harijan boys and grown ups who were fed at some of the stages, ate with much better cleanness than the others who soiled their fingers, scattered about the savings and left their places in a massive condition. Harijans had no savings and their dishes were left thoroughly clean. Their fingers, whilst they were eating, were after every morsel taken licked clean. I know that all Harijan children do not eat so cleanly as the particular ones I have described".

'If this preliminary training is to be given to all Harijan schools, pamphlets giving detailed instructions for teachers in their languages should be prepared and distributed and Inspectors of schools be required during their inspection to examine teachers and pupils on this head and to send full reports of the progress made in this direction'.

Gandhiji's concept of Harijan education was not limited to a preliminary training at the pre-school or primary level only, he even took into scope the education of the adult Harijan community. He gave a call to the university students to come forward and spend their vacation in educating the Harijans. Gandhiji considered that the university students could do a really useful service to the country by serving the Harijans in the following ways.²³ As a pre-condition, they should treat the Harijans as if they were their own blood relations, speak to them kindly. Furthermore, they can

- (i) conduct night and day school with just a short course, well conceived to last for the period of vacation;
- (ii) visit Harijan quarters and clean them taking the assistance of Harijans if they would give it;
- (iii) taking Harijan children for excursions, showing them sights near their villages, and teaching them how to study nature and generally interesting them in their surroundings giving them by the way a working knowledge of Geography and History;
- (iv) reading to them simple stories from the Ramayan and Mahabharata;
- (v) teaching them simple Bhajans;

²³Harijan, issue April 1, 1933.

- (vi) cleaning the Harijan boys of all the dirt and giving both the grown ups and children simple lessons in Hygiene;
- (vii) taking a detailed census in selected areas of the condition of the Harijans;
- (viii) taking medical aid to ailing Harijans.

Thus it would be seen that Gandhiji did not think of establishing a separate system of education suited to the needs of these castes or to open a parallel organisation of Harijan schools. Rather he was very much opposed to such special schools for their continuance would mean 'perpetuation of untouchability'. What he meant by 'Harijan Education' was the provision of some preliminary additional steps necessary to make up for the cultural lags these classes suffered from. At the call of Mahatma Gandhi, some university students had come forward to take up some work for the uplift of Harijans. In order to coordinate their activities, 'The Harijan Service League of Students' was formed in Delhi in the beginning of the year, 1933. The objectives of this organisation were stated to be,²⁴

- (i) To bring about a feeling of solidarity of the student class throughout the country and do all things necessary for the social uplift and educational betterment of the whole community,

²⁴Harijan, issue Dec. 22, 1933.

- (ii) to undertake educational uplift of Harijan adults and boys by opening free night schools in vernacular and English.

The following activities were proposed to be undertaken by the Harijan Service League of Students,

- (i) to undertake the distribution of medicine to untouchable sufferers by taking aids earmarked for the purpose from the public,
- (ii) to educate the Harijans for getting rid of filthy and insanitary ways of living both in person and surroundings, by direct demonstrations of hygienic conditions and personal cleanliness,
- (iii) to carry on propaganda work among Harijans to induce them to leave off the evil habits of smoking, drinking and carrion-eating besides elimination of other minor social evils which are prevalent amongst them,
- (iv) to encourage the use of Swadeshi articles as a means of cheapening the cost of their living and improving their material conditions,
- (v) to encourage sporting activity and general physical culture among Harijan boys.

The extent to which the Harijan Service League of students carried out its proposed activities is not known but there is an exchange of letters between students and Gandhiji and from the correspondence it appears that this organisation followed Gandhiji's philosophy on Harijan Education and functioned for quite some time.

At the secondary and higher stages of education, Mahatma Gandhi desired for vocational courses for the Depressed classes rather than mere literary education. He viewed that only such kind of education could ameliorate the conditions of the Harijans. Once a Harijan Graduate from Assam wrote to Gandhiji regarding unemployment amongst educated Harijans. According to him, a few Harijan Arts Graduates had failed to seek employment despite the best efforts of the Depressed class communities. Gandhiji had pondered over the problem and considered the need for introducing diversified courses in curriculum. In his own words,²⁵

'There is no doubt, that with the fillip which the present movement cannot fail to give to the community, the number of such students will increase in the near future. If all the Harijan students are encouraged to go in for the same kind of education as the caste Hindus and develop a deplorable tendency to hanker after government service as a Summum Bonum of their education, we are afraid there will be a great disillusionment and much heart burning. The situation will be full of possibilities for mischief. It behoves every one concerned, therefore, to be forewarned in time and endeavour to direct the educational advancement of the Harijans in more fruitful and less helpless channels.

As would^{be} seen from the accounts of Harijan Sewak Sangh and other voluntary institutions, a number of industrial schools were opened for the students of the Depressed classes. Such type of schools became quite popular and served the Harijan Communities in a far better

²⁵ Harijan, issue September 30, 1933.

way in so far their aim of improving skills for a greater learning capacity was concerned. But since these institutions could not lead to degree or higher education courses, they could not catch the intelligentsia of these classes who generally availed of such scholarships as would equip them for higher education.

The Educational Activities of the
Harijan Sewak Sangh.

Gandhiji's campaign against Untouchability had stirred the public consciousness for ameliorating the condition of the Depressed classes. Whatever donations for Harijan welfare were made by the people, Gandhiji had passed them on to Harijan Sewak Sangh for undertaking Harijan uplift programmes. The organisation 'Harijan Sewak Sangh' had started its activities for Harijan uplift on a large scale. By 1933-34, twenty six branch offices had been opened and a lot of educational activity was initiated by the Sangh through its branch offices. Within the first year of its establishment, the Sangh had started financing 909 schools with an enrolment of 25000 children. In addition, the Sangh was also maintaining hostels for Harijan children, and granting scholarships, stipends and other economic incentives to the Harijan children. It was also providing services like free gift of books, slates etc. An estimate of Sangh's contribution to the educational development among the Depressed classes could be made from the following description of its educational activities.

~) Scholarship Scheme of Harijan Sewak Sangh

One of the drawbacks in the educational progress of the Depressed classes was that a majority of them could not continue their study beyond Primary stage of education. To encourage further education, especially higher and technical education, a scholarship scheme was mooted by the Sangh as early as in September, 1932. By September, 1934, 96 scholars were availing the scholarships granted by Harijan Sewak Sangh. The scholarships were distributed over the various provinces and they were being availed by the various castes of the Depressed classes. The provincewise and castewise distribution of the scholars was reported to be the following,²⁶

'20 scholarships to Mahars of Maharashtra and Central Provinces. (In addition to this, all Harijan students of the Central Provinces were exempted from the payment of College as well as examination fees by the Central Provinces Government and Nagpur University); next to Mehars were chamars enjoying 12 scholarships; Next to chamars come the Kaibartas (fishermen) of Assam and Bengal; 7 Adi-Dravidas and 5 Adi-Andhras were also getting scholarships; about 24 scholarships were being enjoyed by small Harijan castes.'

These scholars were studying in the various institutions of higher Education. The classification of the scholars with regard to faculties of learning was reported as²⁷

"65 scholars in Arts Colleges; 8 in law colleges; 6 in medical colleges; 5 in Science colleges; 5 in Teacher Training Colleges; 3 in Fine Arts Colleges; 2 in English

²⁶ Harijan., issue September 28, 1934

²⁷ Ibid.

Colleges; 2 in Veterinary Colleges.²⁸

The annual statement of expenditure of the Harijan Sewak Sangh contained that during the year 1933-34, a sum of rupees thirty thousand five hundred and ninety five and fourteen annas (87 paises) was spent on scholarships. The distribution of this amount according to the stages of education and also among the various branch offices was as the following.

TABLE - VI

Expenditure Incurred by Harijan Sewak Sangh on Educational Scholarships in the Year 1933-34.

No.	Provinces	<u>Value of Scholarships(excluding David & Baghumal)</u>								
		Primary Schools			Middle & Hr.Educn.			Vocational Schools		
		Rs.	An.	P.	Rs.	An.	P.	Rs.	An.	P.
1.	Andhra	-			-			-	3142	12 3
2.	Assam	-			-			-	864	9 0
3.	Bengal	-			-			-		-
4.	Berar	-			-			-	472	0 0
5.	Bihar	-			-			-	1168	12 6
6.	Bombay	-			-			-	5735	0 0
7.	Chattisgarh	-			-			-		-
8.	C.P.Hindi	-			196	6	0	112	0 0	308 6 0
9.	C.P.Marathi	-			-			-	220	1 6

Contd...

²⁸ Harijan, Issux, January 18, 1935.

No.	Provinces	Value of Scholarships(excluding David & Raghmal).											
		Primary Schools			Middle & Hr.Educn.			Vocational Schools			Total amount spent.		
		Rs.	An.	P.	Rs.	An.	P.	Rs.	An.	P.	Rs.	An.	P.
10.	Delhi	19	0	0	713	0	0	-			732	0	0
11.	Gujarat	-			2218	14	9	215	0	0	2433	14	9
12.	Kathiawar	-			-			-			68	0	0
13.	Karnatak	-			-			-			696	13	9
14.	Karela	-			-			-			683	13	1
15.	Madras	72	8	1	893	8	0	125	0	0	1091	0	0
16.	Mysore	-			137	12	0	60	0	0	197	12	0
17.	Orissa	-			-			-			2297	15	1½
18.	Punjab	-			-			-			2135	12	6
19.	Rajputana	274	8	9	120	0	0	400	9	6	795	2	3
20.	Sind	775	0	0	243	7	3	335	4	0	1353	11	3
21.	Tamil Nad	-			-			-			2337	13	8
22.	United Province.	-			-			-			1982	13	0
23.	Maharashtra	-			-			-			1399	10	6
24.	Nizam's Doms	-			-			-			99	9	0
25.	Gwalior	-			-			-			58	2	0
26.	Indore	-			12	0	0	8	0	0	20	0	0
Total		1143	0	9	4535	0	0	1255	13	6	30594	14	1½

Source: The Harijan Weekly, issue, January 18, 1935.

Note.— Some branch offices had not supplied the distribution of the amount according to the various stages of education. Only the total amount has been shown against such branch offices.

6. The David Scholarship Scheme of the Sangh

Another scholarship scheme being pursued simultaneously by the Harijan Sewak Sangh was the David Scholarship Scheme.²⁹ Mr. David, a philanthropic gentleman, had approached Gandhiji with a scheme to facilitate higher education among Harijans. Mr. David's idea was to find 1000 caste Hindus each one of them willing to bear the expenses for the higher education of one Harijan pupil for 5 years. Mr. David believed that these 1000 Harijans would be a fine living memorial to caste Hindu-Harijan friendship. Scholarships were to be awarded after a selection test and were to be of an amount which may be sufficient for meeting a pupil's expenditure on educational fees, books and living expenses on a modest scale. According to Mr. David's estimate an expenditure around Rs.500/- per annum per student for higher education and Rs.250/- per annum per student for high school education could suffice as the scholarship amount. The second aspect of his scheme was that these Harijan scholars were expected to reimburse the amount originally advanced to them as scholarship as soon as they were in a position to do so. This was mainly for building self-respect in the Harijan scholars. The David scholarship scheme was more in the shape of loans for studies than stipends. Mr. David was of the view that in this manner very shortly there could be a large number of doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers from amongst

²⁹ Harijan, Issue February 2, 1933.

Harijans. Accordingly, 'the existence of a considerable number of such persons would be of material help in raising the social status of the Depressed classes'.³⁰ Gandhiji had appealed to the people to send their donations to Harijan Sewak Sangh under the title 'David Scheme'.

Reports received by July 1933 indicate that a sum of Rs.35000/- had been received as contributions, under David Scheme.³¹ It has been reported that applications for the grant of scholarships had been invited from all parts of India, but only 117 candidates had applied. Not only that, the number of applications was far below expectations, but most of the applicants had applied for scholarships for studying in the ordinary Arts colleges for B.A. course. Such a trend, of course, proved to be an anti-thesis of David's expectations of facilitating studies for medical, legal and other professional pursuits.³² In the year 1933, 46 scholarships of the monthly value of Rs.560/- were awarded. The average rate of a monthly scholarship was Rs.12/- and the highest sum awarded was Rs.20/-. Out of 46 scholarships 12 were tenable for one year only, 15 for 2 years, 7 for 3 years and 12 for four years. The total expenditure incurred for all scholarships was Rs.17,300/-. Of the scholars, 6 had joined Teacher Training colleges;

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Harijan, issue July 8, 1933.

³²Harijan, issue August 19, 1933.

4 took up law; one was in the Arts College; two had sought admission in M.A. Classes and a large majority studied in ordinary Arts Colleges.³³

Reports for the subsequent periods show that in the year 1934, the number of David Scholarships was increased to 100. It was decided to reserve 22 scholarships for Industrial and Professional Courses of study.³⁴ It is learnt from some reports for the period 1937 that the scholarships originally named as David Scholarships were renamed as Gandhi Educational Scholarships. Between July, 1933 and June, 1937, the Harijan Sewak Sangh had spent a sum of rupees forty four thousand one hundred and thirteen and fourteen annas (i.e. Rs.44113-87 paisas) by way of college scholarships under this scheme and a sum of Rs.17000/- had been earmarked to be spent during 1937-38 on such scholarships.³⁵ It was reported that there was a greater demand for literary education (pure arts and sciences) in comparison to vocational, industrial and professional courses. The following figures show the progress of the scholarships awarded to the Harijan pupils under the David Scheme:³⁶

³³Harijan, issue April 13, 1934.

³⁴Harijan, issue April 20, 1934.

³⁵Harijan, issue July 24, 1937.

³⁶Ibid.

Year	No. of Scholarships for Arts and Science.	No. of Scholarships for vocational and Industrial Courses.	No. of girls Scholars.
1933-34	35	10	Nil
1934-35	71	28	3
1935-36	84	33	9
1936-37	94	10	10
1937-38	84	35	11
	<hr/> 368 <hr/>	<hr/> 127 <hr/>	<hr/> 33 <hr/>

Originally David's Scheme was designed to benefit 1000 pupils in a period of 5 years who would then be returning the amount to be reinvested in fresh scholarships. But only 495 scholars could be benefitted in the first five years. In the year 1937-38, i.e. the last year of the first phase, the classification of scholars in the different educational faculties was as:-

Intermediate Arts and Science	-	46
Bachelor of Arts and Science	-	32
Master of Arts	-	5
Law	-	4
Medicine and Nursing	-	17
Agriculture	-	1
Engineering	-	4
Teachers Training	-	7
Veterinary	-	1
Commerce	-	2

It has been reported that around 1938 there was a rush of applicants and that the Harijan Sewak Sangh could hardly afford to accommodate any more number, the existing monthly expenditure having been Rs.1400/- per mensem.³⁷ The purpose of instituting the above scholarship schemes was to encourage the Depressed classes for higher and technical education. Though the incidence of higher education was too poor, yet it would be seen that there was a rise in the number of scholars year by year. The fact that the number of applicants exceeded the number of scholarships shows that the Depressed classes were becoming enthusiastic about higher education but they had to depend upon the availability of facilities for higher education. There could be several reasons for the slow expansion of higher education among these classes. The institutions of higher education were located in cities and there was a dearth of hostels for the Depressed class pupils. The society had not reached that stage of enlightenment when these pupils could be accommodated in the private residences or even residential colonies of upper caste Hindus. Secondly higher education was quite costly. In addition to these two factors, it may be pointed out that there was a heavy drop out of these pupils at the higher primary stage of education itself and even the incidence of secondary education was poor among these classes. The Sangh also opened schools and hostels to facilitate school education among these classes.

³⁷Ibid.

c) Schools and Hostels run by Harijan Sewak Sangh

Tables VII and VIII on pages 289 and 290 contain details regarding schools, and hostels maintained by the Sangh at its different branch centres in the year 1933-34. It may be recalled that the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha and the Depressed classes Education Society had started opening special hostels for Harijan students from 1922 onwards. The Depressed classes leader, Dr. Ambedkar was of the opinion that opening of special hostels was a necessary step for promoting secondary and higher education among the Depressed classes. As would be seen from the educational activities of the Harijan Sewak Sangh, this organisation was equally alive to such felt needs of the time. Secondly, it may be recalled that the Prarthana Samaj had envisaged the need to open night schools to promote primary and adult education among these classes. In the same vein, the Harijan Sewak Sangh had visualised the difficulties of these poorer classes in sending their children to the day schools and had, therefore, established a net work of night schools in the various provincial centres. Thus it appears that the Sangh had taken a stock of the various problems in the way of expansion of education among these classes and planned its educational activities to meet these problems squarely. It is observed from the tables that the Harijan Sewak Sangh had been maintaining 538 day schools and 371 night schools with a total of 23164 boys and 1660 girls enrolled in the

year 1933-34. The annual expenditure for the maintenance of these schools was Rupees seventy five thousand eight hundred and fourteen and eighty seven paisas (Rs.75814-12As-4½pies). The Sangh had opened sixty hostels for the children of the Depressed classes in which about one hundred and eighteen children were staying. The Sangh was spending a sum of rupees Twenty eight thousand, eight hundred and seventy seven and twenty eight paisas (i.e. 28877-4As-7pies) on the maintenance of these hostels.

In addition to incurring expenditure on the maintenance of schools and hostel, the Sangh was also affiliating institutions and granting them financial aid. It had granted a sum of rupees nine thousand five hundred and seventy two and eighty nine paisas (i.e. Rs.9572-14As-3pies) to various educational institutions in the year 1933-34. The Sangh was also distributing free books etc. to the needy students and in the same year it had spent a sum of rupees Eighteen Thousand six hundred and ninety four and eight paisas (i.e. Rs. 18694-14As-3½pies) on such ancilliary services.

The total expenditure of Harijan Sewak Sangh had gone up to Rupees One lakh, sixty three thousand, nine hundred and forty five and seventy paisas for the year 1933-34. Figures for the consecutive years are not available, but from the various reports available during the period 1934-1937, it appears that the activities of the Sangh had definitely been multiplied year by year upto the time when the Provincial Governments had come forward to lend

a hand to Harijan Sewak Sangh in the fulfilment of its mission. The Congress had gained power in eight provinces. The Congress ministries had chalked out their educational activities for the Depressed classes on the lines of Harijan Sewak Sangh.

TABLE - VII

Number of Harijan School, Scholars and the Expenditure on them by Harijan Sewak Sangh in 1933-1934.

No.	Province	No. of Schools		No. of Pupils		Amount spent on Schools.		
		Day	Night	Boys	Girls	Rs.	Ans.	Ps.
1.	Andhra	10	42	1222	-	1941	3	6
2.	Assam	68	4	2106	262	4495	14	0
3.	Bengal	-	-	-	-	1552	0	0
4.	Berav	-	8	120	90	317	7	0
5.	Bihar	122	36	4770	229	11202	14	1½
6.	Bombay	2	15	400	-	2240	11	0
7.	Chattisgarh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	C.P.(Hindi)	4	7	495	-	453	0	0
9.	C.P.(Marathi)	2	5	175	-	1224	12	3
10.	Delhi	2	2	200	-	1791	13	3
11.	Gujarat	52	5	1200	50	6614	15	10
12.	Kathiawar	-	-	-	-	408	2	0
13.	Karnatak	8	8	1158	-	1213	1	3
14.	Kerala	20	12	1038	-	3003	4	5
15.	Madras	1	9	400	40	767	15	8
16.	Mysore	11	11	503	-	977	0	9
17.	Orissa	22	15	600	100	3012	1	3
18.	Punjab	8	20	519	93	4913	4	8
19.	Rajputana	65	57	3343	66	14756	13	0
20.	Sind	4	17	449	19	3734	13	1
21.	Tamil Nad	60	61	1861	514	7481	0	4
22.	United Province	57	28	2029	103	1820	1	0
23.	Maharashtra	12	5	296	45	580	0	9
24.	Nizam's Doms	-	-	-	-	9	12	0
25.	Gwalior	7	-	150	-	935	14	6
26.	Indore	1	4	133	49	366	12	0
Total		538	371	23164	1660	75814	12	4½

Source: Harijan, issue January 18, 1935.

TABLE - VIII

Harijan Sewak Sangh - Delhi (Headquarters)

Number of Hostels for Harijan Pupils and the
Expenditure incurred on them by Harijan Sewak
Sangh in 1933-34.

No.	Province	No. of Hostels	<u>No. of Resident</u>		<u>Amount Spent</u>		
			Boys	Girls	Rs.	Ans.	Ps.
1.	Andhra	19	273	22	8054	6	9
2.	Assam	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Bengal	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.	Berar	1	13	-	-	N.A.	
5.	Bihar	3	13	229	432	14	0
6.	Bombay	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Chattisgarh	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	C.P.(Hindi)	3	28	-	-	-	-
9.	C.P.(Marathi)	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Delhi	-	-	-	-	-	-
11.	Gujarat	5	74	16	4220	8	0
12.	Kathiawar	-	N.A.	N.A.	1023	5	9
13.	Karnatak	4	61	20	20155	10	10
14.	Kerala	3	57	-	3875	6	1
15.	Madras	1	25	-	526	15	6
16.	Mysore	2	23	-	406	11	0
17.	Orissa	-	-	-	-	-	-
18.	Punjab	3	80	-	-	-	-
19.	Rajputana	3	25	-	3034	7	7
20.	Sind	-	-	-	256	6	9
21.	Tamil Nad	4	65	-	1652	1	8
22.	United Province	-	-	-	-	-	-
23.	Maharashtra	5	56	-	2436	11	11
24.	Nizam's Dom	3	27	4	235	2	0
25.	Gwalior	-	-	-	-	-	-
26.	Indore	1	15	-	511	8	9
Total		60	827	291	28377	4	7

Source: Harijan, issue January 18, 1935.

Note: N.A. - Figures not available.

Other Voluntary Institutions Opened
for the Depressed Classes.

In addition to Harijan Sewak Samaj, there were other minitiature organisations which had also taken upon themselves the mission of Harijan Uplift. Some of such organisations were working independently while some of them had sought affiliations with Harijan Sewak sangh. Some of these institutions provided vocational training to the Depressed class pupils while some of them imparted general education courses. Some of the model institutions that had been established by the 1936-37 and taken up suitable activities for the educational development among the Depressed classes were the following:-

a. The Harijan Industrial Home, Delhi

Reports obtainable for the period 1936 indicate that an Institution, Harijan Industrial Home had been established in Delhi with the specific objective of imparting specialized instruction to Harijan Children in Vocational Courses.

In July 1936, out of a total number of 20 boys in the Home, 17 were Harijans. Regarding the curricular activities of the Harijan Industrial Home, the report mentions that every week four periods were devoted to general Instruction with special emphasis on personal hygiene and rules of health. The vocational training courses were in leather work, shoe making and carpentry. In one of the reports of the Industrial Home, it was mentioned, "our shoes find a ready sale in the adjoining villages and this department may soon

pave its way. Our shoes are popular but the output is small as the teacher has too many boys at his hands.... The carpentary Department has been asked to do the fittings and furnishings of the buildings under construction".³⁸

As would be seen from the above, the activities of the Harijan Industrial Home, Delhi, were directed to enriching some of the traditional pursuits of the Backward classes. One of the merits of such institutions was that a pupil could earn and learn simultaneously. Secondly such training courses equipped the pupils with the competence which enabled them to start work of their own rather than depend for outside help.

b. The Viswa Bharti Sanskar Bhawan

Gandhiji's 'fast unto death' in the Yervada jail had created a stir in the country. His decision to campaign for the abolition of Untouchability was hailed by the various sections of the society. Rabinder Nath Tagore, the great poet of India, had assured Gandhiji his full support to the cause of Harijan uplift. He also contributed the following poem entitled 'The great Equality', and appealed to the Caste Hindus to shun Untouchability and to accept the Depressed classes as their brethern.³⁹

'Proud castemen of my unfortunate country
For Centuries you have humiliated,

³⁸Harijan, issue, July 25, 1936.

³⁹Harijan, issue, August 15, 1933.

These children of God,
 by the Impudence of your pride of caste
 and you still fail to bow low
 to the divinity that is in them
 Why do you not bend your head
 and open your eyes to see
 the God of the poor and the helpless
 dwelling in the dust where grovels
 the victims of your suicidal pride'.

Tagore also opened a school for the poor and the
 Depressed classes within the premises of Vishwa Bharti.
 It was named as the Viswa Bharti Sanskar Bhawan and was
 established on December 1, 1932, with the following objectives⁴⁰

- i) to provide facilities to poor students for prosecuting
their education as residents in the Asharam,
- ii) to impart education to Harijan students and to train
workers for Harijan service.
- iii) To provide for the education and service of the
menials of the Ashram.

The Vishwabharti Sanskar Asharam paid special
 attention to ensure that the resident students had all
 possible opportunities of making themselves independent
 with regard to their expenses and of taking some sort of
 vocational training to earn their livelihood.

⁴⁰ Harijan, issue June 15, 1934.

The following were the different sections of the Sanskar Bhawan, (i) School (ii) Hostel (iii) Kitchen (iv) Agriculture (v) Business (vi) Kirtan (vii) Religious and Educational Congregations for Adults.

In the year 1933-34, 28 pupils were on the rolls of the Sanskar Bhawan. Out of these 28 pupils, 20 belonged to the Depressed Castes and 8 belonged to castes classifiable as borderline Depressed classes. The distribution of pupils in the various manual training classes was as,

Carpentary	-	4
Weaving	-	5
Book Binding	-	4
Agriculture	-	8
Business	-	2

Eleven of these pupils were earning and therefore, self-sufficient. These students were given free training in the technical departments of Santi-Niketan and Sri-Niketan. To promote inter-caste association, those students of the various departments of Vishwa Bharti who would render some service for the realization of the objectives of the Asharam were offered free boarding facilities at the auspicious of the Sanskar Bhawan.⁴¹

c. Karnatak Harijan Balika Ashrama

The Karnatak Harijan Balika Ashram was started at Hubli on 20th June, 1934. By November 1934, 30 Depressed class

⁴¹Ibid.

pupils, i.e. 20 girls and 10 boys were enrolled.

As to the curricular activities of the Ashram, it was reported:⁴²

'Generally we follow the school curriculum. In addition we teach them Hindi and English. Some lessons are given in History and Geography. Some idea about our national history and national leaders is given. Bigger: pupils are encouraged to read newspapers. Twice in a week, singing classes are held by an expert. Bigger girls are utilising this time to advantage by learning stitching and embroidery. Prayers are held regularly, both in the morning and evening. Some Indian games are played and training in physical exercise is not neglected. The children had grown a vegetable garden by themselves.

The management of the Ashram was planning to confine the Ashram to girls only. As such it proposed to shift the boys from the Ashram to some other institution in the near future.

The description of the above three institutions is by way of example of the types of the schools that were being opened for the Depressed classes. There were numerous institutions of these types. In addition to such institutions, a number of night schools had also been opened at various places.

Special Facilities Granted by the
Universities, Boards of School
Examinations for the Depressed Classes

At the time when the Harijan Sewak Sangh and other voluntary institutions had been actively working for the

⁴²Harijan, issue November 2, 1934.

expansion of education among the Depressed classes, some of the official organisations had also come forward to lend a hand to the Depressed classes in this matter. It appears that the Harijan Sewak Sangh had also appealed to the Universities, Boards of School Education and other examining bodies to grant facilities to such of the Depressed class examinees who wanted to appear in public examinations. The Resolution No.91 of the Baneras Hindu University granting exemption from payment of the examination fees for the Depressed class examinees begins as, 'Read letter number 1074 dated the 5th October, 1933 from the General Secretary, Servants of the Untouchables Society, requesting the Vice-chancellor that the Harijan boys of the Andhra Province who are appearing at the ensuing examinations may be exempted from the payment of the examination fees'.⁴³ Consequently, the University of Baneras had resolved to grant exemption from payment of examination fees to all the poor Depressed class examinees.

In May, 1934, the university of Delhi had by a resolution exempted the Depressed class students from the payment of examination fee of the university till 1940.⁴⁴ In the same year, the syndicate of the Andhra University had resolved⁴⁵ that 'it shall, however, be competent for the

⁴³Harijan, issue, May 11, 1934.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

syndicate to waive payment of the examination fees by students belonging to the Depressed classes, subject to the following conditions,

- i) that the candidate is appearing for the first time for the examination concerned,
- ii) that he is poor,
- iii) that in the case of a college student, he is recommended for the grant of the concession by the principal of the college in which he contemplated his course for the examinations.
- iv) That he could not get the benefit of the concession shown in G.O. No.2396 L of the Public Works and Labour Department dated 20th October 1927 for want of sufficient funds with the Labour Commissioner, Madras.

N.K.Behere, a member of the Nagpur University and Central Provinces High School Board moved the resolution that⁴⁶ 'students belonging to the Depressed classes and Aboriginal Tribes should not be charged examination fees'. The resolution was carried successfully with the amendment that the exemption would be valid in the University upto 1940 in the first instance, it was to remain valid in the high school Board for five years. Thus the Depressed class students were exempted from payment of examination fees from Matriculation to the M.A. or L.L.B. examinations so far as Central Provinces

⁴⁶ Harijan, issue October 14, 1933.

were concerned. Rather, the High School Education Board of the Central Provinces took a further step for promoting education among the Depressed classes. It resolved⁴⁷ 'The Board recommends that every recognised school should admit at least three pupils belonging to the Harijan classes or the Aboriginal or Wandering Tribes to classes V and IX every year (if there be candidates forthcoming) and that such candidates should be taught free'. Such a step of the Board would not only have facilitated the admission of the Depressed class pupils in the recognised schools but it paved a way for the exemption of tuition fees for the Depressed class pupils in the schools of Central Provinces.

During the same period, the University of Madras passed the following resolution exempting the Backward classes from the payment of Examination fees,⁴⁸ 'On the motion of Dr.A.Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, the Senate accepted the recommendations of the Syndicate to exempt candidates belonging to the Untouchables, Hill and Aboriginal tribes from payment of University examination fees and sanctioned a grant of Rupees one thousand per year for the purpose for a period of three years from the year 1935-36, the amount being met from the fee-fund accounts'.

The recommendation was based on a Resolution of the Senate which requested the Syndicate in March, 1934 to take

⁴⁷Harijan, issue November 2, 1934.

⁴⁸Harijan, issue Dec.7, 1934.

steps to encourage and promote higher education among the Backward classes by granting exemptions from payment of fees prescribed for University Examination.

It is just possible that some other Universities and Boards of Examination might have followed suit in the matter. The exemption of Examination fees by these universities and Boards of Examinations was a great step in the promotion of education of the Depressed classes.

The Position of the Educational Progress
of the Depressed Classes in the Provinces
of British India.

As already discussed earlier, the period 1932-37 saw an unprecedented campaign for the social elevation and the educational advancement of the Depressed classes. Since the Harijan Sewak Sangh was managed by the nationalists, there was no question of any governmental aid to this organisation and such other institutions during this period. Nor has any instance come to light when the Harijan Sewak Sangh would have requested the Government of India or the Provincial Governments for extending any financial grants to it upto 1937. The activities of the Harijan Sewak Sangh and such other institutions may thus be considered as other than the official efforts for promoting education among these classes. But the impact of these agencies was so great on the public that the caste apathies for the Depressed classes had started decreasing. A glimpse of the educational scene for these classes in the various provinces of British India could be had from the following provincial reports:-

a. Madras

Reports from the Education Department, Madras, for the period 1932-37 mention⁴⁹ that the Government of Madras had continued its policy to get the Depressed class pupils admitted into the elementary schools already existing in the locality and to open separate schools for them only in places where owing to caste prejudices, the existing schools are not easily accessible to them or where there are no schools. Incentives in the form of scholarships, remission of fees, boarding grants, stipends, allowances for books etc. were provided by the government to enable the deserving students of the Depressed classes to prosecute their studies in schools and colleges, and to pursue industrial and technical courses of study.⁵⁰

Regarding the social attitudes towards the Depressed classes, these can be said to have further improved in the Province. The following description throws light on the social inter-mixing that had started developing between the Caste Hindu pupils and the Depressed class pupils:⁵¹

'Gopinayak Kampati is a village in Madura District in Tamilnad. The middle school in the village, Sri Vallippa Nada Kshatriya Vidhya Shala is run under a private management. There are at present 250 students in the school of whom more than 60 are Harijans. Students are drawn from about 15 villages from the neighbourhood. I was agreeably surprised

⁴⁹Sargent, John., Progress of Education in India, 1932-37, Simla: Manager, Govt. of India Press, 1940. Pp.248-55.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Harijan, issue, Oct., 3, 1936.

at the freedom with which both the Harijan and Caste Hindu boys were mixing with one another and the entire absence of any caste prejudices both among the caste Hindu boys and teachers.

b. Bombay

Reporting on the educational awakening in the Depressed classes, the report for Bombay mentions⁵² 'Not only has there been a general awakening among these classes themselves, but the prejudice against them is dying out. Scheduled caste pupils are now admitted freely into all but a very few schools and sit in the class alongwith other children. And it is only when the school is held in a temple that there is any difficulty about admitting scheduled class pupils. Necessary steps are being taken to move these schools to other buildings and, if no other building is available, to other villages.

It was during this period that Gandhi had started his campaign on temple entry for the Harijans. At his insistence, many temples were thrown open to the Harijans but the very fact stands that there was a resistance by the orthodox Hindus in some parts of the country. In a vast country as India with large population, a tradition continuing for thousands of years would take long to lose hold on the minds of the people especially in the rural parts of the country. Under the circumstances, the steps sought by the Government of Bombay, were necessary and timely for

⁵²Sargent, op.cit., 49, p.135.

encouraging the Depressed classes to continue their education.

c. Bengal

The report from Bengal mentions⁵³ that the extension of the franchise and the reservation of a number of seats for the backward classes in the provincial legislatures created great enthusiasm amongst them for higher education and if larger educational facilities are made available to them, they will undoubtedly make greater progress and take their rightful place in the public life of the province.

The report from Bengal is in line with the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar that the restoration of the political rights to the Depressed classes would in itself encourage them for higher education.

d. Punjab

The organisation of Arya Samaj and especially the Suddhi Movement launched by it had done a magic like effect on the Depressed classes in Panjab, so much so that in some cases, the Depressed class people had started adopting better sounding caste names. In view of such changes, the segregate schools for the Depressed classes had practically been abolished. The obstacles of social bigotry and religious prejudice were almost extinct. The report mentions⁵⁴ 'Untouchability in so far as the

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

schools are concerned, is a matter of past now'. To encourage the Depressed classes further, the government of Punjab gave preferential treatment to the Depressed class children in the matter of training as teachers and their subsequent employment.⁵⁵

e. Bihar

In the year 1933, the Provincial Government of Bihar had appointed 'A Primary Education Committee' to recommend measures for the expansion of Primary Education in the Province. This Committee made the following recommendations for promoting education among the Depressed classes:⁵⁶

- i) Schools receiving aid from local bodies should, if Depressed class pupils are excluded, be removed to other sites.
- ii) More adequate facilities should be provided for the education of the Depressed classes especially in the form of the 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 the ordinary schools.

The Committee had desired for an early implementation of its recommendations.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

f. Orissa

It is reported that during the period 1932-1937, Harijan children were usually allowed admission in the common schools. Workers of the Harijan Sewak Sangh had made special efforts to get Harijan boys and girls admitted to mixed local, board, and aided schools, as a result of which hundreds of children were admitted to those schools. Furthermore, it is reported that the exemption granted by the Education Department of the Government of Orissa from paying school fees from the primary to the high school course, had no doubt acted as an additional impetus.⁵⁷

g. Central Provinces and Berar

In Central Provinces and Berar, the special schools were being merged into ordinary schools in view of the disappearance of caste prejudices. For example, reports from Berar mention, 'There was no longer any need felt for separate schools for Depressed class pupils as the Harijan boys were freely allowed to take their place in schools, as in most other public places without any objection from other communities.'⁵⁸

h. Delhi

It has been reported that there was a decrease in the enrolment of Depressed class pupils in Delhi. The decrease in number was attributed to the following factors,⁵⁹

⁵⁷Harijan, issue July 6, 1935.

⁵⁸Sargent, op.cit., 49.

⁵⁹Ibid.

- i) the growing unwillingness on the part of the parents as well as the school teachers to return children as belonging to castes coming under the unhappy designation of the Depressed classes.
- ii) the economic depression.
- iii) for want of sympathy on the part of the teachers with the backward classes.

i. Other Provinces

It has been reported that in Coorg, the separate schools for the Depressed classes were abolished as their children could freely be admitted to the ordinary schools.⁶⁰ In United Provinces also the prejudices against these classes were reported to be diminishing.⁶¹

From the above reports for the different provinces of British India, it is seen that Gandhiji's campaign for the social elevation of the Depressed classes had influenced the Indian people in every part of the country. One of the pertinent reasons for the educational backwardness of the Depressed classes had been the social segregation practised in their case. A large number of schemes of the provincial governments were directed to meet the social prejudices against the education of these classes and naturally, a large amount of money, being invested for opening special schools for these classes, could now be saved or re-invested for the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the development of higher education among them.

Though the period 1932-37 holds its significance primarily for awakening public consciousness for the amelioration of Depressed classes, the progress of education among these classes during this period was none the less too low. The official figures of enrolments for these classes do not include the Depressed class pupils studying in the National institutions or the schools opened by organisations such as the Harijan Sewak Sangh. Even then, there has been reported a general rise in their enrolments in most of the provinces. Table IX gives a comparative picture of enrolments of the Depressed classes in 1932 and 1937.

(continued)

TABLE - IX

Depressed Class Pupils Under Instruction in
1932 and 1937.

Province	Enrolment in 1931-32	Enrolment in 1936-37	Increase or Decrease
Madras	292211	328445	Increase
Bombay	66687	80486	Increase
Bengal	440054	436796	Decrease
United Provinces	113228	161407	Increase
Punjab	33258	28870	Decrease
Bihar	28235	43583	Increase
(fig. for 32-33)			
Central Provinces & Berar	47501	54479	Increase
Sind	N.A.	3042	Not available
Orissa	Not available	48835	Not available
Coorg	215	340	Increase
Delhi	2950	2375	Decrease
Ajmer Marwar	2162	2379	Increase
Bangalore	3652	3525	Decrease
Other Areas	855	918	Increase

Source: Sargent John, Progress of Education in India,
1932-37 (Simla, Manager, Govt. of India Press),
1940, Report, Pp.248-255.

Note: (i) For Bihar, the enrolment figures for the Depressed
class pupils were not collected.

(ii) In Assam, owing to a large number of Aboriginal
tribes, it could not be possible to attempt a
separate classification for the Depressed classes.

As would be seen from table IX, there was a general rise in the enrolments of the Depressed class pupils in the various provinces of British India during the period 1932-37. The small decrease in enrolments in Bengal was because some castes such as Halisyas were excluded from the classification of the Depressed classes in 1936-37⁶² and therefore, the pupils belonging to these castes would have not been included as the Depressed class pupils. Fall in the number of pupils in Panjab has been explained as due to the refusal of the parents to record themselves as Depressed classes.⁶³

A perusal of table IX will show that the rate of increase of enrolments of Depressed class pupils in the various provinces had been disproportionate. Whereas Bihar and United Provinces recorded a sharp rise by 54% and 42% respectively; the provinces of Bombay and Madras recorded a rise by 20% and 15% respectively. From table VII it will be seen that Bihar and United Provinces had also been quite forward than many other parts of the country in securing the enrolments of Depressed class pupils in the schools sponsored by the Harijan Sewak Sangh. The similarity of trends could obviously be for a few reasons viz., consciousness in the masses to educate Depressed classes, consciousness in the Depressed classes themselves for their education, etc. It may be mentioned that both Bihar and United Provinces were the centres of hectic political activity

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

of Indian National Congress and were day by day coming under the influence of Gandhiji. It could, therefore, be due to his campaign against Untouchability and the Harijan Sewak Sangh's efforts for the expansion of education among these classes that a general public consciousness for the education of ^{the} Depressed classes was created. By 1937, almost all the provinces had started reporting on the diminution of social prejudices against the education of the Depressed classes and now a time had come when the opening of special schools for the Depressed class children was considered to be somewhat a social abuse. If a comparison of the social scene obtainable now were to be made with the social scene in the times of Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley's opening of the first school for the Depressed classes, the position stood juxtaposed. But it had meant hundred years of effort on the part of the Social Reformers in India.
