

CHAPTER - IX

Summary and Conclusions

The present study ~~into~~^{of} the educational development of the Depressed classes in the historical perspective is an attempt to trace the factors that contributed to fostering education in a backward section of the Indian society. The developments in education have been seen in the light of socio-cultural and economic factors, the political events, the social and national movements, the major educational events, schemes and policies, as also other such decisions that directly or indirectly influenced the development of education among the Depressed classes. These developments can briefly be categorised into

- (i) the important events and trends that directly or indirectly contributed to the spread of education among these classes,
- (ii) the progress of education in them in the consecutive periods,

In this chapter, these two aspects have been dealt with separately. The first section is devoted to a summary of the major events, policies, societal trends with their implications for the development of education among the Depressed classes. It has been attempted to present them in chronological sequence. In the next section, an appraisal of the educational progress has been made. Lastly the outcomes of the present study have been drawn on the

the basis of the data presented in the above two sections.

The Depressed Classes, also called as Scheduled Castes and Harijans, constituted about 14.67 per cent of the country's total population in 1961. Their number was around 64.5 millions.¹ Before 1947, they were also identified as Exterior castes, Outcastes, Untouchables, Panchmas, Antyjas, Chandalas and other caste connotations prevalent in different parts of the country. These classes are generally backward both economically as well as educationally, and have been recognised as the weaker sections of the Indian society. There was hardly any incidence of education among them during the Ancient, Medieval and Pre-British periods. The history of their educational development originates from the last one century or so but the causes for their educational backwardness had roots in the socio-religious factors affecting them for centuries together.

The Hindu society in India is caste based and the institution of caste generally influences the social, political and economic aspects of its life. In the earlier times, the caste domination was still stronger and sometimes, it controlled the decision making power to a prejudicial extent. Since the caste system divided the Hindu society not in parts but also in a ~~heirarchical~~ hierarchical order, feelings of 'high blood' and 'low blood' in various castes characterized

¹Census of India, 1961 (according to Census, 1951, the population of the Depressed Classes was around 55 millions).

the thinking of the society. In such a context the social and occupational activities of the various caste groups were prescribed to meet the different needs of the society.

Consequently, the educational sanctions also differed for the various castes. The Depressed classes were denied education by the sanctions of caste system as laid down by the Hindu religious institutions of the country. The history of their education is as well a part of the history of continual efforts made by the inside agencies and outside agencies affecting social and political reform for elevating the status of the millions of the Depressed class people.

We have discussed earlier in details, the institution of caste , its evolution and its pernicious effects on the Indian society to identify the handicaps of the Depressed classes through the ages. The Indian ^{barrier} society originally created a system to classify the individuals according to their talents with the provision of mobility between the different varnas (major caste categories) and there were not to be any social apathies between the different groups of people. With the passage of time, the social structure did not only become hereditary, complex and rigid but also some prestige values were assigned to the different caste groups. The consequences of caste superiority-inferiority complexes were that the upper castes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas monopolised knowledge, power and wealth respectively and the 'Shudras' were assigned performance of services for these three caste groups. To perpetuate such

a system, the 'Shudras' were made to suffer from many a politico-legal, social, economic, educational and other disabilities. In due course, another group of castes appeared which came to be placed at the lowest order in the social heirarchy. These castes were not given any place within the 'Varnic society' and were usually recognised as Low Castes, Degraded Castes, Outcastes, Exterior Castes, Antyjas, Panchmas, Untouchables, Depressed classes, Harijans, Scheduled Castes, and various other caste names such as Churhas, Chamars, Pariahs, Holiyas, Doms, etc.² Several theories are advanced in support of the origin of these classes but the fact ^{remains} ~~stands~~ that whatever the blood in them, they were socially despised and economically degraded so much so that their shadow was considered to have polluting effect. Their educational status was also a counterpart of their social and economic position and they were not allowed to impart any formal education to their progeny. Education in ancient India was conceived as a means of bringing out and developing fully the inherent qualities with which a child is endowed with by birth. Later on, it came to be supposed that birth in a particular caste implied the inheritance of certain talents specifically needed for caste occupations. Since these classes were to perform menial occupations, they were not supposed to educate their children. Secondly the Hindu society being ritualistic, children

²List of Scheduled castes in Appendix.I

were required to be initiated into education by the performance of Upanyana Sanskara which was a taboo for these classes. In such a situation the only system of education for the children of these classes could be the domestic one. They had particularly no choice in the matter, but were, as a matter of course, brought up to the same occupational activity as their ancestors. Since the vocational pursuits followed by the Depressed classes^{were} mostly traditional, these classes practically could not grow out of their ancient pursuits even though other sections of the society enriched their trade skills generation by generation.

India being the land of villages, the agrarian economy was the mainstay of the people. Each village usually had an agricultural community more or less self contained. Besides the land lords, Brahmins, Vaishyas, and farmers, there dwelt in each village certain service classes such as carpenter, blacksmith, potter, washerman, barber, scavenger, tailor, leather-worker, goldsmith, etc. and the economic structure of the village remained the same for centuries together without any social mobility in the caste groups. With this the pattern of educational system also remained as it was till the advent of 'English Education' in India.

The Christian missionaries were the first to introduce the European system of education in India. The evangelical point of view was religious and their prominent activity was proselytisation. The establishment of educational

institutions was thus to be in consonance with such an objective. There too, the missionaries concentrated more on the conversion of upper castes than that of the Depressed classes whose living standards were too poor to have any dividends for a new culture to transcend. But the establishment of 'Charity Schools' in the Presidencies between 1698 and 1765 for the Indian families of British soldiers, destitutes etc. added another type of educational institution to the existing Hindu and Muslim ones. These institutions were meant to educate the poor and were aided, assisted and supported by the East India Company to a certain degree.

Generally the roots of the present system of education are traced to section 43 containing the educational clause of the Charter Act of 1813. Quite for sometime, there was a controversy over the utilisation of financial allocations under the Charter Act. Later on, the concept of 'Downward Filtration of Education' dominated the state policy on education. But the official attention was also drawn to the need of spreading education among the masses. Philanthropic christian missionaries, some Company officials and some Indians piloted the idea of opening schools for the children of peasantry and other poorer classes to equip them with the basic knowledge applicable in every day life. Special credit is due to Fraser, Thomas Munroe, Jainarian Ghoshal, Patcheappah Trust, Captain Shortrede and others for taking a lead in this direction. The schools opened by these persons were first patronized, then aided and finally taken over by

the Government, thus bringing in the idea of direct participation of the state in the development of education in India. These schools were open to children of all castes and communities and their curriculum was more designed after the British system of education than that of the indigeneous educational institutions. Even though, the objective of establishing these institutions was to facilitate the spread of primary education in the masses, the disabilities imposed upon the Depressed classes through social and religious hierarchies, conventions and Caste regulations etc. had complete hold on the minds of the people and the number of Depressed class pupils in these schools was negligibly small.

The year 1848 signalled the advent of a new era for the Depressed classes. A school exclusively for the children of these classes, perhaps, the first in the educational history of India, was established in Poona by Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley so as 'to better their conditions through means of Education'. Amidst odious circumstances created by the upper caste communities, Jotirao Phoolley continued to work for the elevation of these communities and ultimately succeeded in establishing a few schools for the children of these classes. To give the movement further impetus, he established a society for the education of Mahars and Mangs. Around 1853, the government of Bombay recognised

the need to encourage education among the Depressed classes and extended some financial grants to their schools. The curriculum of the schools for these classes was on the lines of the schools opened by Lt. Shortrede and others. The war of 1857 had its adverse effect on the progress of these schools and ultimately, they were taken over under the public control. By and by this led to the governmental involvement in the management of the special schools for the Depressed classes. A historic event of the period was 'the Dharwar Case' of 1858 wherein the Government declared that 'all schools maintained at the sole cost of the government shall be open to all classes of its subjects without distinction'.

The ⁿ Nineteenth century is also significant for the social reform movements in the country. The prime objective of these movements was the elevation of the social and moral state of the Indian Society and naturally the welfare of the Depressed classes could not remain out of their folds. The Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthna Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society, the Rama Krishana Mission and the Satya Shodak Samaj did some work contributing to the educational progress of the Depressed classes. All of these organisations had decried the conventional caste heirarchies and found no reasons for perpetuating injustice, intolerance and social inflictions on these classes. On the educational front whereas the Prarthna Samaj opened night schools for them,

the Arya Samaj negated the dogmatic theories disallowing education to these classes. They provided them with the rights to wear sacred thread and read the holy scriptures. Through Shuddhi Movement, the Arya Samaj reclaimed them at par with caste Hindus. The Theosophical Society established by Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky did a considerable work for the education of the Depressed classes. In fact, the movement of opening separate schools for the Depressed classes in the South India, popularly known as Panchma schools, was initiated by Col. Olcott. Swami Vivekanand of the Rama Krishna Mission strongly held the view that if the Brahmin had more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, no more money was to be spent over the Brahmin's education and all money was to be spent on Pariah's education. The Satya Shodak Samaj was established by Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley himself and its strivings for the education of the Depressed classes had the backing of Jotirao's magnimonious personality. Contemporary to the Social Reform Movement, a social legislation 'The Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1872', was enacted.

Despite of all the social reform movements the caste prejudices were hard to disappear. They only gave way at places where it was hit hard and continued unabated in other places especially in rural areas which were obscure for the social reform movements due to lack of transport and communications. The accounts of the treatment meted to the Depressed class pupils in the ordinary government schools

by the schoolmasters, high caste pupils and the general community are pathetic and are examples to see as to the extent the negative social attitudes can harm a limb of the society itself.

The Dépatch of 1854 had made no recommendations for the education of the Depressed classes but the system of grants-in-aid recommended by it was quite instrumental in encouraging the running of special schools for these classes. The Education Commission of 1882 took note of the social prejudice against the education of the Depressed classes and, therefore, tightened the policy of grants-in-aid in a way that the children of these classes could not be refused admission in aided schools. It further stressed the principle of equality of treatment in the admission of all children irrespective of their caste, creed or community in all schools maintained or aided by the government. The Commission was of the opinion that every encouragement should be given for the education of low castes and had recommended for the establishment of special schools or classes for children of low castes. Subsequently, the Government of India had endorsed the recommendations of Education Commission on the education of the Depressed classes as well while resolving the general recommendations made by the Commission, but had advised a word of caution in dealing with public opinion. From the quinquennial reports, it appears that in the initial stages, only a few provincial

governments had taken up the cause of expanding education among the Depressed classes seriously. In 1893, the government of Madras had sanctioned a series of eight proposals called as the 'Magna Charta' for developing the education of the Depressed classes and sanctioned a few scholarships for the children of these classes. The proposals proved to be quite effective in increasing the number of Depressed class pupils at school. Largely the Depressed class pupils did not study beyond lower primary stage of education. Only 403 boys and 61 girls out of a total enrolment of 52000 pupils enrolled in various Panchma schools appeared in the examinations at the end of Primary course in the Presidency of Madras. The position was not much different in other Provinces even though the degree of enthusiasm differed. The variations were from a strict enforcement of the recommendations of Education Commission in Kaira district of Bombay leading to social revengefulness and loss of property to the Depressed classes to the passivity adopted by the officials of North West Provinces who considered the admission of Depressed classes in common schools 'unobjectionable in principle but the special declaration of it unnecessary'. The practice of seating the Depressed class boys outside the class room in the varandahs in the common schools had developed around 1897 as a prejudicial solution to the departmental rules. Mr. Nesfield's case studies of the Depressed class pupils offer interesting insights into the genesis of their educational problems summing up that unless simultaneous

changes in the occupational structure of the society are introduced, the incidence of education in these classes would continue to be poor.

The social reform movements led to the creation of a general consciousness and the formation of National Social Conference in 1885. The National Social Conference with its branches all over the country had also included social elevation of the Depressed classes as one of its important programmes. In its annual session in 1900, it had strongly recommended to its branches that the reform sabhas and associations should make every effort in their power to raise these classes to a position where through education and industry they could improve their conditions. The scene around 1902 presented a situation wherein the official efforts were indirectly being supported by social thrusts in the Hindu society leading thereby to a weakening of the prejudicial attitudes of the caste Hindus for the Depressed classes on the one hand and to a consciousness in the Depressed classes for their amelioration on the other.

The strong regime of Lord Curzon, in a bid to check the growth of Indian nationalism had rather intensified the desire for political advancement in the Indians. The controversy between the British officials and the Indian Nationalists impelled each of the two wings to advance claims of the support of the masses on its side and under such a circumstance, the Depressed classes gained a political

importance. The petition of the Mahar community of the presidency of Bombay to Lord Lamington in 1904 for ameliorating their conditions can be quoted as an evidence of the growing political consciousness among them. The founding of the Depressed classes Mission Society of India, Bombay in 1906 and its subsequent activities to elevate the condition of the Depressed classes by promoting education, providing work, remedying their social disabilities and preaching to them principles of liberal religion, personal character and good citizenship was a landmark in the non-official efforts directed towards the welfare of the Depressed classes. The Nirashrit Sewa Sadan, established in 1907 with the aim of the training of such of the high caste people as might be found to be disposed to devote for the elevation of the Depressed classes, complemented the efforts of the Depressed classes Mission Society of India. With about 15 branches working in full swing, the society had convened an all India Conference in 1912 to discuss the varied social and political problems of the Depressed classes including opening of free boarding houses for the Society's schools, the outlines of the literary and industrial education for these classes and the cooperation of the municipalities, educational and philanthropic bodies, education departments and other governmental institutions for expanding education among the Depressed classes. Akin to this society was the Bengal Depressed classes Mission established in 1908, but it had confined its activities mainly in the educational domain.

During this period Lala Lajpat Rai, the popular Arya Samaj leader of Punjab, had also started doing commendable work for the social elevation and educational progress of the Depressed classes. For him, the question of raising the social status of the Depressed classes was neither that of charity nor of goodwill but that of national self-preservation.

The enumeration of the Depressed classes as a separate entity in the Census. Operations of 1911, and the grant of separate representation to the Muslims under the Morley-Minto Reforms had excited the Depressed classes to demand political recognition as a minority community. But some of the Depressed class leaders disagreed with such a political outlook. This led to a cleavage in the Depressed classes into two streams, the one believing in separate entity for the Depressed classes and the other following the one nation theory of Mahatma Gandhi. In so far as education was concerned, each of these wings professed the important role, education could play for their amelioration. To serve the imperialistic interests, the British officials also attempted to manipulate the various situations so as to win the support of the Depressed classes. Sir O. Sankaran Nair's confidential note on Education of the Depressed classes strikes the imperialistic outlook that 'by imbuing English Education, the Hindu Lower classes will grow a consciousness of their moral, religious and economic servitude, and will learn that without the permanence and assistance of British

government, they have little chance of justice at the hands of the superior classes or of their present leaders.'

Mahatma Gandhi had started working for the elevation of the Depressed classes from 1917 onwards. He was against untouchability and professed that the social and economic condition of the Depressed classes could not improve unless the caste Hindus would of their own come forward to accept the Depressed classes as their brethern. The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi during this period. One of the planks of the movement was the boycott of public institutions and the establishment of national educational institutions. It was declared that no institution that especially excluded the Depressed class pupils, could be accepted as a national institution. In the year 1922, the Indian National Congress had resolved that prior to one's enrolment as a member of the Indian National Congress one would have to pledge to render service to the Depressed classes.

The movement for the legislation of Compulsory Primary Education, India had become quite persistent during the period 1904-22. The demands for compulsory primary education though not legislated as a law, had considerably strengthened the movement in favour of mass education. The movement for mass education led to the growth and expansion of the education of the Depressed classes.

The Provincial Governments had also taken various steps to promote education among the Depressed classes during

this period. These steps largely consisted of providing some economic incentives and educational facilities to these classes. The Government of Madras had realized that one of the impediments in the educational progress of the Depressed classes was the location of primary schools in religious buildings and had, therefore, ordered for shifting such primary schools to public places wherein they may be accessible to all. Since the children of these classes were engaged in some economic activity to contribute to the family's economy, the idea of half day schools for them was mooted in Madras. In the province of Bombay a number of special schools were opened for them. To encourage higher education, it was considered that Industrial education would be of greater importance to these castes than mere literary education. Special hostels for Depressed class pupils were also envisaged as a necessary step to promote secondary and higher education among them.

The period 1922-32 opens with the emergence of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the leader of the Depressed classes. His dominating leadership created a consciousness in the Depressed classes, to demand rights and privileges equal to other sections of Hindu Society. The Poona Resolutions, the Mahad case and the establishment of Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha were some of the political events of importance for the Depressed classes. Due to these political events, a number of Depressed class Associations had emerged. Many of

these Associations had represented to the Simon Commission for adequate representation of the Depressed classes on public bodies. In addition to the political demands, demands for putting the educational provisions of the Depressed classes as the 'first charge on the revenues of the province' had been raised. But since the general atmosphere in India was surcharged with political activity, the demands for education had tailed behind. The Round Table Conference with Gandhiji and Ambedkar arguing over the political status of the Depressed classes and the consequent Communal Award stirred the Hindu leaders of the possible consequences of exercising untouchability in the society. Their feelings were evoked when Gandhiji announced his decision to fast unto death if the Depressed classes were treated other than the Hindus. It was only on the fifth day of Gandhiji's fast that a political compromise, popularly known as Yervada Pact, was signed between the Depressed class leaders and the Upper caste leaders. It provided for the abolition of untouchability, due representation of the Depressed Classes in the Assemblies and the famous educational clause 'In every province out of the educational grants, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to the members of the Depressed classes'. To elevate the conditions of the Depressed classes, an 'All India Anti-Untouchability League was established. This League was later on renamed as 'Harijan Sewak Sangh'. The Harijan Sewak Sangh did tremendous work for the educational

development among the Depressed classes and since, it was sponsored by Gandhiji and the All India Congress, it wielded influence on the provincial Congress Governments, Universities and Boards of Secondary education.

The order of transference of education as a provincial subject had advised the provincial governments to attach more importance and special attention to the educational advancement of the Depressed classes. As many as 12 compulsory education bills were passed between 1922-1930 and since these Acts primarily aimed at educational expansion in the masses, their implication for the educational development among the Depressed classes was obvious. The Chandravarkar Committee's findings that the Depressed classes were not mentally ready for the extension of compulsory education in all areas, reveals that full advantages of legislation for compulsory education were not accessible to these classes partly due to their own passivity. The Hartog Committee, 1929, had observed that the Depressed classes had begun to assert their right to education and recommended certain measures such as the abolition of the separate schools, the appointment of Depressed class teachers in common schools, etc., for the further expansion of education in these classes. The provincial reports for the period show that the various provincial governments had been alive to the problem and taking special steps to stimulate education among these classes.

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on Harijan Education were published in the Harijan Weekly from time to time and are very interesting. One of his suggestions was that preparatory schools should be opened for Harijan children because these children are so raw, unclean and noisy that they should first be taught how to live in a clean and decent manner as rudimentaries and then only their admission to common schools would be liked. He believed that these children should be taught simple craft, simple vocabulary and an understanding of the natural environment by adopting conversational methods of teaching. Actually, Mahatma Gandhi had the feeling that the dislike of other castes for the admission of Depressed class children in the common schools was due to the reasons that the Depressed classes children were too dirty, unmannered and noisy. He was, therefore, of the opinion that attempts should be made to remove the cultural lag by giving these pupils lessons in applied hygiene, sanitation, simple needle work, correct pronunciation and applied knowledge of history, geography and arithmetic. Mahatma Gandhi had also suggested a different approach for teaching these pupils reading and writing. He was of the opinion that the university students could also help in the uplift of the Harijans in their educational progress. He, therefore, gave a call to them to come forward for such a service. Consequently, organisations such as 'Harijan Service League of Students' emerged as voluntary

organisations around 1933. His campaign for the uplift of the Depressed classes was at its peak during the last two months of 1933 when he undertook the Harijan Tour. The coverage of his tour was very wide and its impact unprecedented. Funds poured in at his call and he passed them over to Harijan Sewak Sangh.

Harijan Sewak Sangh, an all India body dedicated to the Harijan uplift could be ranked as the biggest non-official organisation contributing to the educational progress of these classes. The zeal with which it took up the cause of Depressed classes' education can be seen from the very fact that within a period of one year of its work, it was working with 26 branch offices, financing 909 schools with about 25000 pupils, maintaining hostels, granting scholarships and providing funds for helping Harijan pupils in the purchase of book, stationery etc. The scholarship scheme of Harijan Sewak Sangh deserve a special appreciation in this context. The David Scholarship Scheme, later on renamed as Gandhi Scholarship Scheme, was planned to help Harijan students for higher studies. In addition, Harijan Sewak Sangh maintained special hostels for Depressed class children. The total expenditure of Harijan Sewak Sangh on educational activities for the Depressed classes had exceeded more than one and a half lakhs of rupees for the year 1933-34. Many other similar organisations had come up

during the period but their activities were largely localised. The activities of Harijan Sewak Sangh had gathered momentum by 1937-38. Many of the activities of the Harijan Sewak Sangh were taken over by the Congress Ministries which came to power in the legislative assemblies in 1937. Another feature of the period was that some of the Boards of Examinations and Universities had passed resolutions exempting Depressed class pupils from the payment of examination fees. The Central Provinces High School Board, Universities of Nagpur, Delhi, Andhra, Banaras were the pioneers to give a lead in this direction.

During 1932-37 even the official attempts for the educational progress of Depressed classes were in the form of scholarships, remission of fees, boarding grants, stipends, allowances for books etc. The government of Bombay took steps to shift the public schools out of the religious buildings. There was a greater enthusiasm for higher education ⁱⁿ Bengal. The government of Punjab gave preferential treatment to the Depressed classes in the matter of training as teachers and their subsequent employment. Special efforts in this direction were also made in the provinces of Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, Delhi, Coorg and United Provinces. The Congress party came in power in seven of the eleven provinces and enjoyed public support in the other provinces as well. The Executive Committee of the Harijan Sewak Sangh had urged the Congress Ministries to take measures for Harijan uplift. It had also

drawn their attention to clause 9 of the Yervada Pact of 1932. The steps taken by the various provincial governments were reported to be on similar lines. Some special features of the provincial schemes included stoppage of grants to schools refusing admission to Depressed class pupils, fee remission on liberal scale, institution of scholarships, boarding grants and allowances for books especially for students pursuing industrial and technical courses of training. The Harijan Sewak Sangh had as well intensified its activities further. Its total annual expenditure had exceeded rupees three and a half lakhs during the year 1939-40. Contributions were raised for Thakkar Jayanti Fund, out of which a large sum was set apart for awarding scholarships to Harijan girl students.

The Congress ministries resigned in 1940 after having been in power for less than three years only. Between 1940 and 1945, caretaker governments were formed, their principal objective was the prosecution of war. Actually, programmes on education had more or less to mark time till the popular ministries came back to power in 1946. The political scene being rife with political and communal tensions, the all India Depressed classes Conference met again in 1942, after a long gap of ten years, under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to review the political situation. It passed a number of resolutions impressing upon the government to provide special safeguards to these classes. The Conference emphasized upon the government to

declare special provisions for the expansion of Primary education among the Depressed classes and also promotion of advanced education among these classes to be the first charge on the revenues of the Province.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who had been appointed a member of the Executive Council of Government of India in 1942, strove a great deal to gain the Depressed classes some privileges. One of his major achievements was to secure reservation of posts for Depressed classes in Government jobs and seats for technical education ⁱⁿ London. Another scheme proposing for the grant of scholarships to pursue scientific and technological studies was mooted in 1943 and instituted in 1944. But no scholarships for overseas studies could be granted in view of non-availability of the passages for candidates in 1944-45. In the next year, 22 overseas scholarships were granted but in 1946-47, the sum allotted for overseas scholarships was transferred to the scheme on inland scholarships and a quota was allotted for the Depressed class pupils under the general overseas scholarships scheme. But the progress of overseas education for the Depressed classes was too low to be expanded further. Though the Post War Reconstruction Scheme had almost side-tracked the problems concerning education of the Depressed classes, the Viceroy's executive council directed the provincial governments to pay special attention to the education of the Depressed classes while preparing post-war development plans.

In general, the pace of progress of the education of the Depressed classes was satisfactory. The various provincial governments had continued with their efforts and in the wake of such an educational scene of these classes, India was proclaimed as an independent country. The nation had now the option to plan and launch the schemes of political, social, economic and educational reforms in their own way. It was the fulfilment of a wish, the beginning of a task - the task of bringing up millions of Depressed classes at par with other communities. Consequently, the will to undertake the educational task was embodied in Article 46, as a Directive principle of the Constitution of the Republic of India.

We turn now to a review of the progress of education among the Depressed classes during the British period. Enrolment figures for the children belonging to the Depressed classes are available for the different provinces from 1886 onwards. Even though the population figures of the Depressed classes in the different provinces are not available for these periods yet a comparison between the rise and fall of enrolments for children belonging to these classes is possible with the general enrolments of all the children for the same periods. On the basis of such a data, an attempt has been made to study the progress of education among the Depressed classes.

In table XIII, enrolments of the Depressed class pupils in all the educational institutions of British India from 1886-87 to 1946-47 have been presented. Table XIV, presents the total number of pupils enrolled in all the educational institutions for the period 1916-17 to 1946-47. Table XV, gives the percentage of Depressed class pupils to the total number of pupils enrolled for the period 1916-17 to 1946-47.

TABLE - XIII

Enrolment of Depressed Class Pupils in all the Educational Institutions
of British India from 1886-87 to 1946-47.*

Province	Enrolments in												Remarks
	1886-87	1891-92	1896-97	1901-02	1906-07	1911-12	1916-17	1921-22	1926-27	1931-32	1936-37	1946-47	
Madras	N.A.	31659	57894	52438	NA	100000	120607	157113	228511	292210	328445	435834	*The figures have been taken from the Quinquennial Reviews, for the respective periods.
Bombay	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	26204	30568	36543	60261	66687	80486	262134	
Bengal	NA	10000	NA	12583	41450	73751	80952	96552	344179	440054	436796	264225	
United Provinces	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10924	59873	94669	113228	161407	223762	2. Only those major provinces which had large number of Depressed classes have been taken. Small territories have also been excluded.
Panjab	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6906	3732	19502	33258	28870	33863	
Bihar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	19841	15096	25006	28235	43583	60641	
Central Provinces and Berar.	NA	2410	NA	2552	15331	16231	26668	28910	34531	47501	54479	64905	3. N.A. means figures not available.
Orissa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	48835	36196	(a) approximately (b) figures for Bihar include Bihar and Orissa both. (c) figures for partitioned Bengal and Panjab.
4. figures for 1941-42 were not available.													

TABLE - XIV

Total Number of Pupils Enrolled in all the Educational Institutions in the Major Provinces of British India from 1916-17 to 1946-47.

Province	1916-17	1921-22	1926-27	1931-32	1936-37	1946-47
Madras	1661012	1837022	2523188	2924882	3181871	3998234
Bombay	780504	958392	1151428	1335547	1335889	2114905
Bengal	1918432	1890454	2343380	2783225	3205896	4433916 ^b
United Provinces.	894888	1029565	1349401	1517988	1649169	2210293
Punjab	476738	626690	1182736	1333567	1285682	1776850 ^b
Bihar	(a) 845025	(a) 310382	(a) 1108494	(a) 1094823	1007408	1334190
Central Provinces and Berar.	351165	333303	399289	459942	499834	625448
Orissa	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	331088	330160

- Footnotes: 1. The figures have been taken from the Quinquennial Reviews and the general educational tables for the respective periods.
2. Only those major provinces which had large number of Depressed classes have been taken. Small territories have also been excluded.
3. Since the figures of enrolment of the Depressed class pupils for the period 1941-42 were not available, this period has purposely been omitted from the table.
- (a) figures for Bihar include Bihar and Orissa both.
- (b) figures for partitioned Bengal and Panjab.

TABLE - XV

Percentage of the Depressed Class Pupils to the total number of Pupils Enrolled in all the Educational Institutions in the Major Provinces of British India from 1916-17 to 1946-47.

Province	1916-17	1921-22	1926-27	1931-32	1936-37	1946-47
Madras	7	8	8	9	13	10
Bombay	4	4	5	5	6	12
Bengal	4	5	14	15	13	6 ^b
United Provinces.	1	6	7	6	9	10
Panjab	1	0.6	2	2	2	2 ^b
Bihar	2 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	4	4
Central Provinces and Berar	7	8	8	10	10	10
Orissa					14	10

Foot notes: 1. The percentages have been worked on the basis of tables XIII and XIV

(a) Bihar includes figures for Bihar and Orissa both.

(b) figures for partitioned Bengal and Panjab.

From table XIII, it would be seen that enrolment figures for the Depressed class pupils are not available for some provinces upto 1916-17. It appears that the various provinces started taking action on the recommendations of the Education Commission, 1882 at different intervals of time. Alternatively, it may be an indication of the fact that some of the provinces did not consider it necessary to collect separate enrolment figures for the Depressed classes between the periods 1886-1916. It may also be indicative of the non-persuance of special programmes for the Depressed class pupils in some provinces. It can be hypothesized here that the incidence of education in the Depressed classes was too low upto the beginning of the Twentieth Century.

The number of Depressed class pupils shows a rising trend in almost all the provinces even though the pace of progress differs from province to province. Prima facie, the increase in the number of Depressed class pupils by thousands at each quinquennial interval indicates an increase in the incidence of education among these classes. From table XIV, however, it will be seen that the general enrolment of all children shows a rising trend after 1916. There is thus a parallel between the general enrolment and the enrolment of the depressed class children in so far as the rise in total enrolments is concerned. It can be hypothesized that the efforts for spread of education in the different provinces had identical effects in boosting the enrolment of children belonging to the Depressed classes despite the social taboos.

To understand the increase of the incidence of education in the Depressed classes, a comparison has been drawn by computing the relative percentages of enrolments of the Depressed class children to the general enrolments. These percentages are given in table - XV. These percentages are indicative of the pace of educational progress of the Depressed classes in relation to the progress of education in general in British India. It would however be necessary to make some broad assumptions for these comparisons.

These assumptions are,

- (i) the educational policies of the various provinces providing for the spread of education ^{among} the general masses had their impact on the Depressed classes as well,
- (ii) the variations in the percentages of enrolment from period to period may have been caused by the special incentives provided for the educational development among these classes. The social movements may have also facilitated education among these classes, and
- (iii) the growth of consciousness for education may have been a causal factor for the spread of education in the Depressed classes.

It would be seen from the table xv, that the enrolment of the Depressed class children as a percentage of the general enrolments shows a rising trend between 1916-1937 in all the provinces even though the rise in different provinces

varies from period to period. There are no regressive tendencies. Some fluctuations for the period 1946-47 are largely due to the Economic Depression, the World War II, the politically surcharged atmosphere in the country, the partition of India in Bharat and Pakistan, and the large scale movements of the people from one part of the country to another. Secondly, it appears from the percentages for the Province of Panjab as if the development of education among the Depressed classes was the poorest in Panjab. It may not be so. As discussed earlier, the Shuddhi Movement of the Arya Samaj had reclaimed thousands of the Depressed classes to the folds of varnic society and, therefore, a large number of Depressed classes refrained from identifying themselves as low castes.

The increase in percentages in the various provinces shows that the Depressed classes maintained the educational progress once attained and improved upon it in the subsequent periods. This would imply that one of the reasons for their educational progress was the growing educational consciousness in them. The fluctuations in the rate of growth also show that in some provinces the Depressed classes had grown more conscious for imbibing education than in others.

Again, there are certain periods when the rise in percentages are sharp enough to attract attention. *Prima facie*, these fluctuations could be attributed to certain

events, policies, provisions which preceded these periods and accelerated the pace of educational progress in these classes. To have a synoptic review of the factors catalytic to the growth of education, the following periods have been picked up from the table,

- (i) period preceding 1916-17 for Madras, Central Provinces and Berar on the one hand and Bombay and Bengal on the other,
- (ii) period 1916-17 to 1921-22 for the United Provinces,
- (iii) period 1921-22 to 1926-27 for all Provinces in General and Bengal in particular,
- (iv) period 1931-32 to 1936-37 in Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, and Bihar,
- (v) period 1936-37 to 1946-47 for Bombay.

It may be noted that in Madras, and Central provinces and Berar, children of Depressed classes constituted 7% of the total enrolments in schools and colleges. In Bombay and Bengal, their percentage was 4 and in the remaining provinces, it stood at as low as 1 to 2 percent in the year 1916-17. The reasons for these variations are easy to understand. In Madras and Central provinces and Berar, for example, emphasis was laid on the provision for educational facilities to the Depressed classes by way of exemption of fees, free supply of materials like books, slates, grant of scholarships etc. which had a magnificent effect on spread of education among these classes. Such facilities

were in the shape of economic incentives to compensate for the costs of education to the parents. Since the Depressed classes were economically too poor, one of the handicaps in their way for obtaining education was the economic burden of education. The opening of half day schools in Madras has been reported to have encouraging effect on these classes. Here again, the general poverty of these classes compels them to involve the children in the domestic activities which are mostly economic. The provision of half day schools provided an opportunity to the parents to send their children to the schools with undue economic loss.

A review of the steps taken by the provincial education departments for promoting education among the Depressed classes upto the period 1916-17 shows that whereas the Education departments of Madras and Central provinces had concentrated their attempts in opening common schools for the Depressed classes, the Education departments of Bombay and Bengal had striven to open special schools for the Depressed classes. The radical measures introduced by the Government of Madras in stopping grants to schools refusing admission to Depressed class children and consequently shifting all the schools from the religious places were directed to make the schools secular. Similarly the insistence of the Government of Central provinces that Depressed class pupils cannot be excluded from the common schools on grounds of caste prejudice was to secularise education. The Governments of Bombay and Bengal had taken up their programmes

more with a view to introduce a social reform by providing educational facilities to the Depressed classes than as a measure to equalise educational opportunities for all sections of the people. Despite the fact that a number of voluntary agencies such as the Depressed classes Mission Society of India in Bombay, the Bengal Social Service League etc. had taken up considerable work for the educational development of these classes, the percentage of Depressed class pupils was more in Madras and Central Provinces than in Bombay and Bengal. Thus the extension of the system of secular education could lead to a faster rate of educational development among the Depressed classes.

The rise in percentage of Depressed class pupils to the pupils in general population in Uttar Pradesh during the period 1916-17 to 1921-22 may be due to the brisk political activity of Indian National Congress in these areas. It may be recalled that the Indian National Congress had already passed resolutions for the elevation of the Depressed classes and Mahatma Gandhi had also started taking interest for the amelioration of the Depressed classes. In view of the growing influence of the Indian National Congress, the inclusion of the amelioration programmes ⁱⁿ its manifesto might have helped in reducing the social prejudices. It is through propaganda that the political parties remould public opinion. Thus the propaganda programmes for the elevation of the Depressed classes could have created a consciousness for their amelioration.

in the general public as well as in them simultaneously. This may have motivated the development of education them and helped in sustaining the efforts already made.

During the period 1921-22 to 1926-27, there was a general rise in the enrolments. As already reported, a burst of enthusiasm had swept children into schools with unparalleled rapidity during this period. One of the reasons for increased enrolments of the Depressed classes during this period was quoted to be 'the seed of tolerance towards the less fortunate in life was begotten'. This would mean that the lessening of the social prejudices against the Depressed classes helped in their admission to the common schools. Here again social propaganda and secularization of educational institutions tended to spread education among the Depressed classes.

During the period 1931-32 to 1936-37, the country had witnessed a grim political controversy over the status of Depressed classes as a community separate from the Hindus. This was followed by Gandhiji's fast unto death, and the signing of the Yervada (Poona) Pact. Gandhiji had, thereafter, devoted himself to the eradication of Untouchability in the country. The Harijan Sewak Sangh was established to take up social reform programmes for Harijans. One of its main activities was spreading education among the Depressed classes. Gandhiji's dedication for Harijan uplift had the greatest impact on the minds of both the caste Hindus and the Depressed classes. The rise in enrolments for this...

period shows that the socio-political activity launched by Gandhiji had contributed to the spread of education among these classes.

The period 1937-47 was comparatively dull because of the world economic depression, outbreak of world war II, hectic political activities for the independence of the country etc. Even then the efforts made earlier seem to have their sway. Bombay was the only province which recorded a sharp rise in the percentages of enrolment. As would be seen from the reports, it was during this period that the Government of Bombay had introduced compulsory primary education among backward class children between the ages of 6-11 years in areas with a considerable backward class population in each district. An important step taken to re-inforce the scheme by the Provincial Government was the appointment of organisers under district/local boards for increasing attendance of the backward class pupils. The legislation of compulsory education and its persuance could have also paved way for developing education among these classes to a great extent.

Since the development of education in the country before 1947 was in itself poor, it would be incorrect to assume that the Depressed classes had made much progress during the pre-independence period. According to the census figures of 1931, the literacy level of the Depressed classes was only 1.9 percent. The literacy percentage figures for

1941 and 1951 being not available, it is difficult to assess the progress made by these classes in attaining literacy during these periods but even in the year 1961 i.e. after 14 years of Independence, there was a wide gap between the percentage of literacy among general population and Scheduled Castes (Depressed classes) which was reported to be 24.00 and 10.27 respectively.

A limitation of this study has been the non-availability of the educational statistics in respect of the Depressed classes for the various stages of education. It may be recalled here that the general education tables did not contain any statistics on the stage-wise enrolment of the Depressed classes after 1921-22. Some of the provincial reports only casually referred to the number of Depressed class pupils studying at higher stages of education. It has, however, been repeatedly mentioned in many reports that by and large only a few students of Depressed classes studied beyond the primary stage of education and a large number of those studying in Primary schools dropped out before completing it. It was only in the Census operations of 1961 that detailed data on the educational status of these classes was collected. The tables XVI and XVII below show the educational status of the scheduled castes (Depressed classes) residing in the rural and urban areas of India in 1961.

TABLE - XVI

Educational Status of the Scheduled Castes
Residing in the Rural Areas of India in 1961

Category	Males		Females	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Total Population	29282272		28284692	
Illiterate	24421457	83.4	27020386	95.5
Literate (without any educational qualification)	3144825	10.7	469758	1.5
Primary or Junior Basic	972447	3.3	129433	0.5
Matriculation and above.	92253	0.3	3433	Very small

Source: Census of India, 1961.

Note: 1. The total of the Break up in the subsequent columns does not tally with the population figures.

2. Percentages mean approximate round number.

TABLE - XVII

Educational Status of the Scheduled Castes
Residing in the Urban Areas of India in 1961.

Category	Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%
a) Total population.	3655008		3227303	
b) Illiterate	2445590	66	2859889	88
c) Literate (without educational level).	732017	22	204831	6
d) Primary/Jr. Basic.	351364	9	94806	3
e) Matriculation or Higher Sec.	56971	1.5	6368	0.2
f) Technical diploma not equal to degree.	987	negligibly small.	78	negligibly small.
g) Non Technical diploma not equal to degree.	1353	-do-	178	-do-
h) University Degree or Post-graduate degree other than technical degree.	4966	-do-	439	-do-
i) Technical degree or diploma equal to degree or post Graduate degree.	575	-do-	54	-do-

Source:- Census of India, 1961.

Note: The total of the break up in the subsequent columns does not tally with the population figures.

The figures in the above two tables XVI and XVII pertain to 1961, a period with a credit of 11 years of perusal of the Constitutional Directives. Even then the position is discouraging. As would be seen, 89.3 percent of the total population of the Schedule Castes lives in the villages. Of the total population, about 90 percent are illiterate; the percentage of illiterate males to total male population is 83.37, where as among females about 97 percent of them are illiterate. A comparison of the rural and urban positions would show that in the rural areas, the scheduled castes continue to be very much backward in educational matters. The females are more or less uneducated except of course for a fraction of them say 5 in a thousand who have passed the Primary school examination. In the secondary or higher stages, it is far too low in these classes and though there is no basis to deduce here, it appears prima facie that whosoever among the Depressed classes is educated, he or she tends to migrate to the towns and cities with the result that the Depressed classes continue to remain in perpetual state of educational backwardness in the rural areas.

The educational status of the Depressed classes residing in the Urban areas is also far below expectations. In so far as the female population is concerned, by and large, illiteracy prevails. Even the incidence of Primary education among the female population is too low, let alone

higher education. It would thus be seen that whereas the provincial governments made special schemes for spreading education among the Depressed classes in general, no particular efforts to popularise education among the girls belonging to the Depressed classes were ever made. It was only at a few places that some special schools for the Depressed class girls were opened or some scholarships earmarked but in general this important aspect of the educational activity remained ignored. Hence a small number of Depressed classes studied beyond Primary stage of education and in the post-matric education their achievement has been dismally low. The Government of India as also the state governments have instituted a number of post-matric scholarships for encouraging high/higher education among these classes but it seems that these facilities could not fully motivate the Depressed classes as was expected. What may be the impediments for the same? The problem of spreading secondary and higher education among these classes was never attended to seriously by the provincial governments in the pre-independence era. However, Gandhiji and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had striven earnestly for creating facilities for the high/higher education among these classes. The institution of David Scholarship Scheme by Harijan Sewak Sangh and the remission of examination fee by the various secondary boards of education and universities were inspired by Gandhiji. The credit for securing reservation of posts in services for the Depressed classes and the institution

of Post-matric and Overseas scholarship schemes goes naturally to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. It was envisaged that it was necessary to construct hostels for the Depressed class pupils so as to provide them with study facilities at a subsized cost. The steps sought for the promotion of secondary/higher education among Depressed classes such as opening of hostels etc. hold their significance even todate. Some of them have to be modified to hold their significance as incentives and have to be given due support to achieve a higher rate of educational development among these classes.

In the light of the above, we may conclude the following as the major findings of the present study:

- i) During the Pre-British period, the Depressed classes were deprived of equality of opportunity in social, political, economic and educational matters. This had led to a state of general backwardness among these classes.
- ii) The social reform movements initiated in the 19th century were instrumental for awakening consciousness for ameliorating the conditions of the Depressed classes. All these institutions had considered education as an important force for social and economic welfare.
- iii) Political consciousness in any class or community leads to consciousness for education as well. The Depressed classes conferences, and other Associations of the Depressed classes, though primarily worked/political for the

rights and privileges of the Depressed class^{es}, had included the provisions for the development of education among the Depressed classes in their programmes.

- iv) The role played by the non-official agencies was crucial in strengthening the efforts of the government for the promotion of education among the Depressed classes.
- v) The religious neutrality practised by the British government and the establishment of government schools which were secular in character helped the promotion of education among the Depressed classes.
- vi) The contribution of Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar, Gandhiji and their co-workers was significant for the promotion of education among the Depressed classes.
- vii) Provision of special amenities, creation of monetary incentives in the shape of scholarships, etc, reservation of seats in educational institutions and reservation of posts in services were considered as motivational forces necessary for the promotion of education among these classes.
- viii) Creation of hostel facilities was considered ^{to} be an important step in the promotion of secondary and higher education among these classes.

- ix) The education of girls of the Depressed classes comparatively remained neglected.

A study of the trends and events that precipitated the development of education among the Depressed classes upto 1947 has obviously its implications for further education among them. After the declaration of Independence, the need to bridge the gap between the general public and the Depressed classes as early as possible has become more imperative. The Fundamental Rights envisage the equality of opportunity. The Directive Principles guide that the state should make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward sections of the society. The schemes envisaged for the development of education among these classes in the pre-independence period continue to be applied today in one form or the other. But it may be said that the programmes on educational development among the Depressed classes should be so well planned as to take into their scope the various facets of educational development viz. expansion of education among the females and expansion of secondary, high and technical education. The economic incentives should not remain as mere grants to the children and their families. They should rather have a motivational force in them and may act as educational incentives. The provision of hostel facilities at subsidized costs is equally necessary. The programmes for facilitating education among the Depressed classes should

also include large scale social education programmes for awakening consciousness in the people of the country as a whole in order to realize the need for educating the Depressed classes and raising them to a level of equality with others. The only remedy to remove the educational backwardness of the Depressed classes is to adopt the principle of inequality by creating extra provisions for these classes and thereby inducing them to progress at a faster rate.
