

## PREFACE

People's long drawn struggle for the Independence of India was more directed to the achievement of some social, political and economic goals rather than a revolt against colonialism. Independence having been achieved, the cherished desires of the people were embodied in the Constitution of India in the form of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. The Fundamental Rights provide for social equalities and the Directive Principles pave the way for their achievement. In the context of education, the Directive Principles contained in Articles 45 and 46 aim at expansion of education among the masses in India. Whereas Article 45 stipulates for the provision of free and compulsory education to all children upto a certain age level within a specified period, Article 46 directs for the removal of inequalities and imbalances and contains that the State shall promote with special care the educational interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. The follow up of Article 45 by Article 46 as a moral percept has a revealing historical background and it has been attempted in this investigation to trace the same with respect to the Scheduled Castes.

The Scheduled Castes, popularly denoted by the term, the 'Depressed Classes' in the Pre-Independence period, are

some of the specified castes in Indian society which were socially regarded as low and, therefore, deprived of many opportunities of social and economic growth. Denial of education was one of such disabilities imposed upon them. Caste having roots in the genesis of Hindu Society itself, its sanctions dominated the Hindu Social Order for thousands of years i.e. throughout the Ancient and the Medieval periods. The advent of the British in India had precipitated a social change. The social reform movements of the Nineteenth Century followed by the political movements in the first half of the Twentieth Century had made people conscious of the lags in the Indian society. There were, therefore, simultaneous efforts by the Government and the people to take care of the weaker sections of the Society especially the Scheduled Castes. Expansion of education among these classes was considered as an indispensable programme for their social and economic betterment. Education of the Depressed classes came to be regarded as a special area of educational activity of the government and the people. The stigma of untouchability, the orthodoxical social prejudice against the education of the Depressed classes, the inertia and the inhibitions in these classes, and the cultural and social lags were some of the retarding forces that very often countered the positive efforts made in this direction. There has been, therefore, an admixture of social, political, and educational decisions in the extension

of education to these classes. It has, therefore, also been attempted to trace the various factors and events that contributed to the expansion of education among the Depressed classes.

In the initial stages, special institutions had to be opened for the Depressed classes to cause education among them in the face of social prejudices but as and where the caste apathies lessened, the Depressed class pupils could seek admission to common schools along with pupils of other castes. In view of such a situation, adequate statistical figures of enrolment for these classes at different stages of education could not be collected. But wherever available, statistical data have been examined to study the trends in the educational progress of these classes.

In most of the cases, the Depressed class pupils did not study beyond Primary stage of education even though the various official agencies and non-official organisations had instituted a number of schemes to encourage these classes for higher education. Further, the incidence of education among the girls of the Depressed classes was too low. While there had been considerable progress of education among these classes during the British Period, but relative to the general educational expansion in the country, these classes have yet to make up the educational lag. In view of the tremendous expansion of education in the post-Independence period, it has become still more important to devise schemes

and policies pertaining to the educational development among these classes in a way that the educational imbalances between the general population and these classes may be removed at the earliest. These policies and programmes should be adequately supported by social education programmes for awakening consciousness in the people of India in general and the Depressed classes in particular that education is an ameliorative force for the all round development of these classes.

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