

CHAPTER - VIII

Education of the Depressed Classes from 1938 to 1947

The introduction of Provincial Autonomy in 1937 and the assumption of power by the Indian National Congress in the majority of the British Provinces had enlivened the hopes that the new leadership would do speedier work for the welfare of the Depressed classes. The Government of India Act 1935, was primarily based on the deliberations of the Round Table Conferences of 1932 and as such the principle of Joint Electorates between the Hindus and the Depressed classes was incorporated in the Act. The elections of 1937 had again revived the problems concerning the status of the Depressed classes to some degree. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was dissatisfied with the programmes taken up by the Indian National Congress for the welfare of the Depressed classes and had established a political party of his own. Simultaneously the Indian National Congress had gained popularity with the Depressed classes in view of its campaign for the eradication of untouchability and the activities of Harijan Sewak Sangh. In fact the Harijan Sewak Sangh had been serving as a unit of the Indian National Congress for looking after the interests of the Depressed classes. With the emergence of Indian National Congress in power in seven out of the eleven provincial assemblies, chances for a greater cooperation between the governments and the people for taking up programmes pertaining to the amelioration of the Depressed classes had increased.

The Government of India Act, 1935, was as well a step towards the political emancipation of the Indians. It had put an end to the diarchical system of administration, abolished the distinction between reserved and transferred departments and placed the whole field of Provincial Administration under a Ministry, which enjoyed an overwhelming support of the elected members. The Ministry was responsible to the legislature. In this way the elected representatives of the people had a greater scope to launch activities and programmes for the welfare of the various sections of the society.

Efforts of the Provincial Congress Ministries
for the Educational Progress of the Depressed
Classes.

Immediately on the assumption of office by the Congress Ministries, the Executive of the Harijan Sewak Sangh had met. The Executive discussed the various aspects of Harijan reform and considered that mainly the efforts were to be directed to the abolition of Untouchability i.e., removal of social disabilities upon the Depressed classes, and the expansion of educational facilities among these classes. The following resolution was passed by the Executive of the Sangh.¹

'The Executive Committee of the Harijan Sewak Sangh urges upon the Congress Provincial Governments to issue declarations of their policies regarding the removal of untouchability of Harijans at an early date.

¹Harijan, issue November 20, 1937.

The Committee further requests Provincial Governments to create special departments and appoint special officers, where they do not already exist to look after the uplift work of the Harijans in general and particularly to the removal of disabilities with regard to the use of common schools, public wells, tanks and water taps, and help the Harijans in the enjoyment of their civic rights.

This Committee further draws the attention of the Provincial Governments to clause 9 of the Yervada Pact of September, 1932 which is as follows and requests them to give effect to the same.....'In every province out of the educational grants, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to members of the Depressed classes'.

Endorsing the resolution of the Harijan Sewak Sangh, Gandhiji had requested all the provincial governments to take up work in this direction,² 'I think the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Harijan Sewak Sangh applies to all the Governments. And where the Governments are supine or indifferent, the opposition should wake them up to the sense of their duty'. Consequently, the Congress Ministries took measures for the abolition of Untouchability and also made special efforts for the spread of education among the Depressed Classes.³ Legislation pertaining to the removal of disabilities on these classes was passed by several provincial governments. It has been reported that the schemes planned by the Congress Ministries for the educational advancement of these classes in the various provinces were on similar lines.⁴ The efforts made by the

²Ibid.

³Nurrulah and Naik, A History of Education in India, London: MacMillan & Co., 1951, p.825.

⁴Ibid.

Province of Madras in this direction show the extent to which work would have been undertaken by the Congress Ministries in the various provinces. In Madras, a special department to undertake activities for the welfare of the Depressed classes was created. It has been reported that apart from their share of the benefit that the Scheduled Castes derived from the general expenditure on education and public health, the following special additional expenditure was incurred on the Scheduled Castes through this Department.⁵

	Year <u>1937-38</u> Rs.	Year <u>1938-39</u> Rs.	Year <u>1939-40</u> Rs.
On Education	7,71,872	7,78,764	8,49,022
On Public health.	1,60,174	1,70,680	1,29,452

The above expenditure was exclusive of salary expenditure for the provincial and district administrative staff employed for the purpose. The special steps taken by this Department for the promotion of education among the Depressed classes were in the shape of remission of fees on a very liberal scale; grant of scholarships, boarding grants and allowances for books to enable poor students of these classes to prosecute their studies and pursue industrial and technical courses of training. All students belonging to the scheduled castes were given full exemption from payment of any fees whatsoever for pursuing university courses.

⁵Ibid., Pp.828-29(quoted)

The following scholarships were granted to pupils belonging to the Scheduled Castes:

1. 62 residential and 3159 non-residential scholarships in secondary and elementary schools.
2. 22 scholarships in art colleges.
3. 180 scholarships to students undergoing professional, commercial, industrial and other courses of training.

In addition to the above scholarships given by the special department working for scheduled castes, the Education Department granted 17 scholarships in colleges and 128 scholarships in secondary schools to pupils of the scheduled classes.

Five hostels were run by the special department for pupils of the Scheduled Castes. There were, besides, 7 aided hostels. The Harijan Sewak Sangh also received grants towards the maintenance of 15 hostels under its control.

One out of every 12 appointments made to the provincial or subordinate services was reserved for members of Scheduled castes. Certain special concessions were granted to members of the Scheduled castes in the matter of qualification for appointment. The minimum standard attained in the school final examination to qualify for appointment to subordinate posts was lowered for candidates belonging to these classes and the age limit was raised to 27, the age limit for other communities being 25. Scheduled caste candidates who were graduates of a university or had

secured an intermediate certificate were exempted from all age restrictions for recruitment to the public services'.

Besides these educational provisions, some political legislations were also passed during the period 1937-39. The great temples of Madura, Tanjore and Palani, which were located in the most orthodox parts of Southern India were thrown open under the new laws and the Scheduled Castes were now free to enter them and have their share in the performance of religious rites. But some temples could not still be opened for these classes. It was because the Congress Ministries had resigned from the Government in 1940 and therefore, the programmes of political reform had again to wait for an opportune time.

Even though some Provincial Assemblies had taken big strides in the direction of affecting educational reform for the Depressed classes, the social resistences to their education still persisted in some parts of the country. The 'Harijan Weekly' had ^{been} reporting these hurdles. One of its reports describes the social scene as,⁶ 'no doubt there was an increase in the enrolments of the Depressed classes and more common schools were opened to them but the fact stands that out of the 97.4 per cent of the schools theoretically opened to the Harijans, there were still 36 per cent which had not actually any Harijan pupils on their rolls.' 'In the districts of West Godavari, Kirna, Guntur, South Arcot,

⁶Harijan, issue July 9, 1938.

Malabar and South Kanara', says the report, 'disparity between the number of schools accessible to Scheduled Castes and the number they were actually admitted was still great'. The Director of Public Instruction of Madras had viewed the situation as,⁷ 'Although progress is noticed year after year in this regard yet the rate of progress cannot be considered satisfactory. For about two decades now the campaign of breaking down hostility in regard to the admission of scheduled caste pupils in schools not intended for them is being carried on and despite persuasion, vigorous propaganda and exhortations, the progress has not been satisfactory. Rules have been framed requiring the free admission of these pupils into all schools and even these rules have not proved very effective.

The Government had issued an order dated 25th April, 1938, containing⁸ that 'one of the conditions for recognition of schools is that they should be accessible to all castes and communities. There is, therefore, no justification for the continuance of recognition to schools situated in localities not accessible to Schedule Castes. District Educational Councils should withdraw recognition of schools so situated. The Director of Public Instruction is requested to instruct the Inspecting Officers to furnish particulars of such schools to the Councils.'

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

Thus it appears that the Congress Ministries in the Provincial Legislatures had taken strong steps for the educational development among the Depressed classes. These measures had largely included the abolition of special schools and the admission of Harijan children to common schools on terms of perfect equality; grant of stipends and scholarships; exemption from fees at almost all levels of education; reservation of seats in educational institutions; opening of technical and industrial schools; providing facilities for the running of special hostels for Depressed class students; encouraging Depressed class students for undergoing teacher training and the like. In addition to these steps, the Congress Ministries had also drawn up programme for the economic uplift and the political emancipation of these classes. But the vigour and enthusiasm with which the Congress Ministries had taken up the reform slowed down as these provincial governments had to resign in 1940 with the outbreak of World War II. The contribution of these ministries could be regarded as quite significant since the steps proposed by them were not withdrawn by the caretaker governments, but the force behind these steps had, of course, weakened.

The Educational Activities of Harijan Sewak Sangh During the Period.

Simultaneous to the official steps taken by the Congress Ministries, the Harijan Sewak Sangh/also been
had

actively working for the educational development among the Depressed classes. The Congress Ministries had taken over quite a big responsibility from the Harijan Sewak Sangh and the Sangh was now attending only to such problems which were specific to the educational expansion among these classes. It is reported that in the year 1939-40, the Sangh was maintaining 96 free hostels and Asharams for the students of these classes. Of these about 10 hostels were exclusively meant for girl students. In addition to the maintenance of hostels, the Sangh was running Tanning Centres in Bengal and Tamilnad; Industrial and Agricultural Centres at Barama in Assam, Delhi, Navsari, Allahabad, Guntur, Ranchi, Bangalore, Conjeevarem, Kodambakam, Trivandrum, Deva Cottar, etc. The Harijan Sewak Sangh's annual expenditure had amounted to about Rs.3,50,000 during the year 1939-40. Out of this amount a sum of Rs.42,543 were spent on administration, Rs.6297 on propaganda work and the rest of the amount was spent on the welfare work among these classes for example on the maintenance of schools and hostels; on the construction and repairing of wells for these classes and also on scholarships, etc. It is reported that the Sangh had raised contributions amounting to Rs.1,27,991 for Thakkar Jyanti Fund, out of which a sum of Rs.30,000 was set apart for awarding scholarships to Harijan girls for 5 years for higher vocational education.⁹ A separate

⁹Harijan, issue March 9, 1940.

subcommittee consisting of Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, Shri A.V.Thakkar, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Shri Parikshit Lal Majumdar and Shri Shyam Lal was formed in this connection.¹⁰

Dr. Ambedkar's Efforts for Obtaining Special Facilities to Depressed Classes.

With the outbreak of World War II, differences had arisen between the Indian National Congress and the British Government over the question of the war and peace aims of the Allies (with special reference to their application to India). Consequently, the Congress Ministries resigned in 1940 after having been in office for less than three years. Between 1940 and 1945, Caretaker Governments were formed to look after the provincial administration. The principal objective of these governments was the prosecution of war and hence educational reconstruction had more or less to mark time for a very long period, upto the formation of popular ministries in 1946. During this period the Indian scene was rife with political tensions and very little attention was paid to the promotion of education among the Depressed classes, even by the voluntary organisations.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who had virtually shifted to the Labour was displeased with Gandhi, Harijan Sewak Sangh and the Indian National Congress. But with the Congress having a hold on the people in the country, he did not do

¹⁰Ibid.

much during the tenure of Congress Ministries. When Cripps had visited India in 1942 to settle the Indian political problems, Ambedkar interviewed him on behalf of the Depressed classes. It is reported that Cripps had asked Ambedkar whether he represented the Labour of the Depressed classes and asked him also about the strength of his party.¹¹ Dr. Ambedkar stood for the cause of the Depressed classes. He decided, therefore, to hold an All India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur, in July 1942 with a view to creating an All India Organisation, and impressing upon the Government the strength of the Depressed classes. The Conference was held on 18th and 19th July, 1942 at Nagpur. It passed a number of resolutions to represent the case of the Depressed classes. Resolution No. III of the Conference pertained to the essential provisions that should be made in the Constitution of India. It contained the following Educational Clause:¹²

'that in the budget of every provincial government, an annual sum as may be determined upon by agreement be set apart for promoting the primary education among the children of the Scheduled castes and another annual sum for promoting advanced education among them, and such sums shall be declared to be the first charge on the revenues of the province'.

¹¹Keer, D., Dr. Ambedkar, His Life and Mission, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1962, p. 241.

¹²Ambedkar, B. R., Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables, Jullunder, Bhim Patrika Publications, 1943, p. 13.

In addition, the Conference had put forth its demands for proportionate representation in the Central and Provincial Legislatures; representation in public services; proportionate representation in local bodies; separate electorate, provision for the representation of the Scheduled Castes on all public service commissions - Central and Provincial.¹³ The Conference had also declared the formation of an All India Organisation by the name of 'All India Scheduled Castes Federation'.¹⁴

It was during this period that the Viceroy of India had expanded his Executive Council by raising the strength of Indians to 14 as against that of 15 Europeans. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was appointed as a member on it in July 1942. It was, perhaps, for the first time in the history of India that an untouchable Hindu was appointed as a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy of India and, therefore, there was a great jubiliante in the Depressed classes. Dr. Ambedkar strove a great deal to profit the Depressed classes of his sincerity and status. He secured for them reservation of posts to the extent of 8-1/3 percent. He had also succeeded in seeking reservation of seats for Technical Education in London for these classes.¹⁵

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Keer, op.cit., 11, p.349.

¹⁵Ibid.

In July, 1946, members for the Constitution Assembly were elected by the Provincial Legislatures. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was also elected on it. The working Committee of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation had requested Dr.B.R.Ambedkar to prepare a manual on the 'safeguards for the Scheduled Castes' for submission to the Constitution Assembly on behalf of the Federation.¹⁶ The reasons for the necessity to provide special safeguards for these classes were explained by Dr.Ambedkar himself as, 'the social, economic and educational condition of the Scheduled castes is so much worse than that of the citizens and other minorities that in addition to protection they would get as citizens and as minorities, the Scheduled Castes would require special safeguards against the tyranny and discrimination of the Majority'.

The Memorandum contained draft proposals to be incorporated under the various sections of the Constitution of India. Its portion on 'special responsibilities of the State', included the following as the provisions for the higher education of the Scheduled Castes.¹⁷

'That the United States of India shall undertake the following special responsibilities for the betterment of the Scheduled Castes

¹⁶Ambedkar, B.R., States and Minorities: What are their rights and How to secure them in the Constitution of Free India, Hyderabad, Dr.Ambedkar Memorial Society.

¹⁷Ibid.

1. Governments - Union and State - shall be required to assume financial responsibility for the higher education of the Scheduled Castes and shall be required to make adequate provisions in their budget. Such provisions shall form the first charge on the educational budget of the union and state governments.
2. The responsibility for finding money for secondary and college education of the Scheduled Castes in India shall be upon the state governments and the different states shall make a provision in their annual budgets for the said purpose in proportion of the population of the Scheduled Castes to the total budget of the state.
3. The responsibility for finding money for foreign education of the Scheduled Castes shall be the responsibility of the Union Government and the Union Government shall make a provision of rupees ten lakhs per year in its annual budget on their behalf.
4. These special grants shall be without prejudice to the right of the Scheduled Castes to share in the expenditure incurred by the state governments for the advancement of Primary Education for the people of the State.

The Memorandum was submitted to the Constitution Assembly. Since the Constitution Assembly had already been planning for making provisions of Compulsory and Universal Primary Education in India, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar might not have emphasized on creating special facilities for the expansion of Primary Education among the Depressed classes.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar continued with his efforts for seeking special provisions for the Depressed classes. On April 29, 1947, the Constituion Assembly had resolved 'Untouchability in any form is abolished and the imposition of any disability on that account shall be an offence.¹⁸ With the passing of the Act of Indian Independence on July 15, 1947 by the British Parliament, the Constitution Assembly became a sovereign body, and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was sworn in as its Law Minister. Finally on August 29, 1947, the Constitution Assembly appointed a Drafting Committee with Dr.B.R.Ambedkar as its Chairman. The appointment of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar as the Chairman of the Constituion Assembly was hailed by all sections of the Society. A man of his wisdom was expected to create the various checks and balances for a healthy and harmonious development of the Indian Society. A proof of his ingenuity can be seen through the efficient functioning of the Indian Democracy wherein the status of the minorities is no less than that of the majority and all people irrespective of their caste, creed and colour have been living in harmony.

Institution of Scholarship Scheme
for the Depressed Classes.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, appointed as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in July 1942, was also given the charge of the Labour portfolio. It was mainly due to his efforts that the Central Government, ^{had} accepted the scheme of giving scholarships to Backward class students. This was reported to be the first

instance, since the Decentralisation Order of 1870, when the Government of India directly undertook an activity for the encouragement of Education among Harijans.¹⁹ In 1943, a proposal was mooted for the grant of scholarships to students belonging to the Scheduled Castes for their education in scientific and technological subjects in India and abroad. In 1944, the government of India announced of their policy to institute a scheme for the award of scholarships to scheduled caste candidates to enable them to pursue post-matriculation education in scientific and technological subjects. The scheme was restricted to 'British Indian' subjects only and an annual grant of Rs.3 lakhs was given for a period of five years beginning from the year 1944-45, and it was stipulated that the unspent balance in a year would be carried over to the following year.²⁰ The details are of the scholarships provided upto 1947-48/given in table X below.²¹

¹⁹Nurrulah and Naik, op.cit., p.827.

²⁰Report, Progress of Scholarships for Scheduled Castes, Tribes and other Backward Classes, Delhi, Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, 1957, p.2.

²¹Ibid., extracted from Appendix VII.

TABLE - X

Number of Scholarships Awarded to Depressed Class Pupils and Expenditure Incurred on them Annually from 1944-45 to 1947-48.

Year	No. of Scholarships awarded			Expenditure incurred (In Rupees)
	Fresh	Renewal	Total	
1944-45	114	-	114	47,697
1945-46	216	76	292	2,11,962
1946-47	311	216	527	4,70,397
1947-48	409	246	655	5,39,307

The above scholarships were awarded to the scholars studying within India. Regarding the facilities for overseas studies, no scholarship for foreign studies was, however, awarded under the scheme during 1944-45 in view of the following resolution passed by the Board at its meeting held on August 30, 1944.²² "Resolved that in view of passages for candidates not being available for foreign studies at present, applications for foreign scholarships may not be considered in 1944-45". The passage position had eased somewhat the next year and the Board after considering the applications received for Overseas Scholarships, had selected 22 candidates.²³ In the year 1946-47, the demand for Inland scholarships had increased and the Board ^{had} accepted the suggestions made by the Honourable Member, Finance of the

²²Ibid., p.6.

²³Ibid.

Viceroy's Executive Council that the annual grant of Rs.3 lakhs allotted for the Scheduled Caste: scholarships should be utilised only for scholarships tenable within the country, all overseas scholarships being covered by the Government of India General Overseas Scholarships Scheme.²⁴ At this stage, it was also provided that funds upto a maximum of Rs.one lakh per year could be diverted from the Central Overseas Scholarships Scheme to the Scheduled Castes Inland Scholarship Scheme, on account of the non-availability of scheduled caste students to fill in the quota allotted to them. Thus about Rs.2 lakhs were added to the Scheduled Castes Scholarships funds in the years 1946-47 and 1947-48 as suitable qualified Scheduled caste: candidates were not available to utilise the quota allocated to them under the General Overseas Scholarships Scheme.²⁵

From the subsequent reports it appears that the scheme of Overseas Scholarships to Scheduled Castes had a setback since the group of scholars sent abroad in 1945-46 had not shown satisfactory progress. In 1948, it was decided that the benefit to the Scheduled Castes would be greater, if instead of sending abroad a few students of mediocre abilities, a much larger number of students were given scholarships to complete their university studies in the country. This was particularly emphasised in view of the

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

fact that well qualified Scheduled caste students would always be eligible for Overseas Scholarships under the General Overseas Scholarships Scheme.²⁶ But the presumptions of the Government did not prove true. The Scheduled caste students could hardly compete in open competition and during the period 1947-48 to 1952-53, only two Schedule caste candidates could secure scholarships for studying abroad under the various schemes.²⁷

Sargent Report on the Education of the Depressed Classes

There was comparatively a lull on the educational scene in the country between 1939-44 because of India's involvement in World War II and the intensification of political activities. But the old measures introduced for the development of education had been continued. The Central Advisory Board of Education had been revived in 1935 and was entrusted with the work to advise on any educational question referred to it by the Government of India or any local government. When the War was over, the Central Advisory Board of Education was called upon by the Government of India to prepare a plan for the 'Educational Development' in India. A report to this effect, popularly known as Sargent report, was submitted in 1944. The Sargent report reaffirmed the old policy of secularism or neutrality of the Government and

²⁶Ibid., Pp.6-7.

²⁷Ibid.

contained',²⁸ 'It is certainly intended that the educational provisions contemplated in this report will cater equally for all irrespective of the community or caste to which they belong'. The report did not devote any special section to the education of the Depressed classes except for devoting a few lines on the communal and caste divisions of India. Commenting on the report, Sir Meveral Statham, the Director of Public Instruction, Madras had observed:²⁹

'In one half paragraph, the report deals with the question of communal and caste division of India. Briefly, in my opinion, there are still communities and sections of communities which cannot and will not be educated, even under a compulsory system, unless special provision continues to be made for them for many years to come. To ignore communal difficulties and to plan upon purely idealistic lines will not solve India's future educational problems. In my opinion the difficulties of special communities, minority communities and backward communities should be stated and squarely faced. These difficulties should be realized and plans should be made to overcome them, until in the distant future no difference between communities, in so far education is concerned, remains'.

The Viceroy's Executive Council, while they had generally approved the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education, had also decided that steps should be taken to provide adequate educational facilities for Backward communities and that the Provincial Government, while planning their developmental plans,³⁰ should be asked to pay special attention to this. Consequently the provincial plans

²⁸ Sargent John, Post War Educational Development in India, Delhi: Bureau of Education, Manager of Publications, 1944, p.4.

²⁹ Ibid., p.107.

³⁰ Report, Progress of Education in India, 1937-47, Vol.I, Publication No.113, Delhi, Central Bureau of Education, Pp.253-56.

contained schemes for the establishment of additional educational institutions for the Backward communities. Provisions were also made for the improvement of existing institutions. Schemes such as the institution of special scholarships, provision of ancillary service, the opening of libraries and hostels for the Depressed classes were also contemplated.³¹

Steps Taken by the Provincial Governments
for Promoting Education of the Depressed Classes

Gandhiji's campaign for the abolition of Untouchability had stirred public consciousness on the need to uplift the Depressed classes and consequently a lot of educational activity for promoting education among them had been taken up in the preceding period. The activities of Harijan Sewak Sangh and allied organisations were in the shape of voluntary efforts and had nothing to do with the existing programmes and schemes of the education departments on the subject. Similarly, the education departments had not concerned themselves with the activities of these voluntary organisations, even though their contribution was significant. The elections of 1937 had returned Congress to power in many of the provinces and this provided an opportunity to blend the official and non-official steps in harmony. Rather, some of the Provincial Governments had taken over part of the work from the voluntary

³¹Ibid.

institutions and some of them had started aiding such institutions. This naturally provided a better scope of work for the amelioration of the Depressed classes. As has already been discussed in the case of Madras, the Congress Ministries had made special provisions for providing educational facilities to the Depressed classes. These provisions were other than the usual steps undertaken by the Provincial Education Departments for promoting education among the Depressed classes. The steps taken by the various Provincial Governments in this direction were as the following.

In the Province of Bombay, the Government had widened its sphere of activity by extending educational facilities to other sections of the Backward classes. The Department of Backward classes also lent hand for extension of education among the Backward classes. Naturally, the Depressed classes were to be benefitted by such measures. The following steps were taken for promoting education among the Backward classes during the period 1937-47.³²

- (i) Introduction of compulsory Primary Education among backward class children between the ages of 6-11 in areas with a considerable backward class population in each district.
- (ii) Increase in stipends to children living in hostels and opening of new hostels.
- (iii) More monthly scholarships in Primary and Secondary schools and Colleges.

³²Report, op.cit.,30.

- (iv) Free studentship for all the Backward class pupils in secondary schools and an increase in the present rates for scholarships.
- (v) Provision of mid day meals or milk to Backward class pupils in primary schools.
- (vi) Appointment of organisers under district/local boards for increasing attendance of Backward class pupils.
- (vii) Provision of circulating libraries, magazines etc. and opening of night classes and adult literacy classes for the Backward classes.
- (viii) Free studentship in arts, science and professional colleges and scholarships for training at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Training.

In 1946-47, the Department of Backward classes was reorganised with a Director of Backward Class Welfare as its head. Committees were established in every district to assist the officers of the department in discharging its responsibilities.³³ Furthermore, as a part of the general policy of eliminating all discrimination against the Scheduled Castes, the government decided to close down all special schools and classes conducted for them. In 1946-47 they were done away with.³⁴

³³Report, A Review of Education in Bombay State, Poona, Government of Bombay, 1958, p.428.

³⁴Ibid.

In Bihar, the Provincial Government had sanctioned the creation of 100 college scholarships of the value of Rs.30/- a month each and 506 school scholarships (200 for classes VIII to XI schools at Rs.15/- per month per scholar, 206 for classes VI to VII scholars at Rs.10/-per month per scholar and 100 for primary classes scholars at Rs.5/- per month per scholar). The total sum spent from public funds for the special benefits of the Scheduled Castes in the province amounted to Rs.72,885 in 1946-47.³⁵ Orissa which was a part of Bihar for a very long time had been continuing the existing schemes and policies for the educational development of the Depressed classes. In the year 1947-48, some of its special measures could be categorised as the following,³⁶

- i) free distribution of books, clothes etc.
- ii) scholarships and stipends to deserving pupils
- iii) exemption from payment of fees in schools and colleges.
- iv) maintenance of orphanages and boarding houses for destitute children.
- v) starting of vocational classes,
- vi) opening of new primary and middle schools were continued during the year with a view to encouraging education among Scheduled castes.

³⁵Report, Education in India(1947-48), Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1951, Pp.120-122.

³⁶Ibid.

In Bengal, the educational interests of the Backward classes were safeguarded and fostered by special measures. There was also a standing committee to advise the government upon all matters relating to the education of the Scheduled castes. During the year 1947-48, a provision of Rs.3,88,000 for stipends, grants etc. was made for the pupils of Scheduled castes.³⁷

In the United Provinces, the Scheduled Caste communities lagged much behind in education than the other sections of the society. Their educational backwardness was considered as a block in the proper development of the province itself. The following measures were, therefore, introduced to promote education among these classes:³⁸

- i) Award of stipends,
- ii) Exemption of fees from Primary to University stage,
- iii) Reservation of one sixth of the total vacancies at the time of admission.
- iv) Award of scholarships in vocational institutions,
- v) Non recurring assistance for the purchase of books in Anglo-Hindustani Institutions.
- vi) Seats at Government expenses in hostels attached to government training colleges.
- vii) Reservation of posts in government service.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

It was reported that these measures had proved quite successful in spreading education among the Depressed classes. In the year 1947-48, the Government of United Provinces had given a grant of Rs.5200/- to 26 libraries established for the Depressed classes, and a sum of Rs.6000/- was granted to such non-official bodies which managed hostels for the Scheduled Caste children. The Government also incurred an expenditure of Rs.40,900 for increasing the number of stipends and granting free supply of books to students belonging to Backward classes.³⁹

The steps taken by the Provincial Government of Madras from 1937-39 have already been discussed earlier. According to the reports obtainable in 1947-48, some of the causes preventing a large attendance of Harijan pupils originated generally from the poverty and famine which made children go to work in preference to education. As an incentive to attract these classes, the Government, had emphasized upon the scheme of supplying mid-day meals to Harijan children. The number of children being fed daily in year 1946-47 was reported to be 71541 in the year 1946-47 and 74319 in the year 1947-48.⁴⁰

As would be seen, the steps envisaged for the promotion of education among the Depressed classes during the period were by way of creating educational facilities

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

in the common schools. The social resistences to the admission of Depressed classes having been decreased, no special schools for these classes were opened. The schemes were largely in the shape of monetary incentives to the children of these classes. As already discussed earlier, the Depressed classes had generally suffered from social discrimination, educational deprivation and economic poverty. The educational schemes in the earlier periods were largely directed to creating provisions for meeting social apathies and also for reducing the costs of education to the Depressed class pupils. In the changed circumstances, the provincial governments could now divert large amounts for creating economic incentives by way of granting stipends, scholarships, freeships, etc. This would have enthused the Depressed classes for more and better education.

(Continued)

Educational Progress of the Depressed Classes
during the Period

Table XI shows the position of ^{the} total enrolments of the Depressed class pupils for the year 1936-37 and 1946-47 in the various provinces of British India.

TABLE XI
Depressed Class Pupils under
Instruction in 1937 and 1947

Province	Enrol- ments in 1936-37	Enrol- ments in 1946-47	Increase in en- rolments	Decrease in en- rolments.	Remarks
Madras	328445	435834	107389	--	
Bombay	80486	262134	181648	--	
Bengal	536796	464225	--	72571	1946-47 enrol- ments for W.B.
United Provinces	161407	223762	62355	--	
Punjab	28870	33863	4993	--	1946-47 enrol- ments for
Bihar	43583	60641	17058	--	East Punjab.
Central Provinces and Berar	54479	64905	10426	--	
Orissa	48935	36196	--	12739	
Coorg	340	307	--	33	
Delhi	2375	3662	1287	--	
Ajmer Marwah	2379	3294	915	--	

Source: The figures have been taken from the report 'Education in India in 1947-48', and the Eleventh Quinquennial Review (1932-1937).

It has already been discussed in the last chapter that certain castes in Bengal were excluded from the classification of Depressed classes in the year 1937. Therefore, the enrolments of the children of these castes were not included in the general enrolments for the Depressed classes in 1946-47. The decrease in enrolments in Bengal may, therefore, be due to these changes. The reports are silent over the decrease in enrolments in the provinces of Orissa except that there was a famine in some parts of Bihar and the surrounding areas during the period. In other provinces, the enrolments of the Depressed class pupils show an upward trend. The greatest increase was recorded for the province of Bombay where the enrolments had more than trebled. This could be due to many reasons including the legislation of compulsory primary education in the backward areas of the Province. Bihar and United Provinces recorded about 39% and 38% of the additional enrolments during the period. They were followed by Madras and Central provinces which recorded a rise of 32% and 19% respectively. Delhi, though a smaller territory, also recorded a sharp rise in the enrolments of the Depressed classes. From the above statistics, it would appear that the provinces wherein the Indian National Congress had triumphed, recorded a better progress than those where it could not come in power. It could be due to the political consciousness in the people as also due to the special provisions made for the education of the Depressed classes in these provinces.

Table XII has been drawn to study the trends of the increase in enrolments of the Depressed class pupils towards the close of the period of ^{the} present study. Enrolments for two consecutive years i.e. 1946-47 and 1947-48 have been compared for the various provinces of British India.

TABLE - XII

Depressed Class Pupils Under Instruction
in the Years 1946-47 and 1947-48.

Province	Enrolments in 1946-47	Enrolments in 1947-48	Increase in enrolments	Decrease in enrol- ments.
Assam	70021	53524	--	16497
West Bengal	264225	282418	18193	
Bihar	60641	76863	16222	
Bombay	262134	393045	130911	
Central Provinces and Berar	64905	72144	7239	
Madras	435834	448311	12477	
Orissa	36196	59732	23536	
East Punjab	33863	38760	4897	
United Provinces	223762	272317	48555	
Ajmer-Marwah	3294	3716	422	
Coorg	307	341	34	
Delhi	3662	4941	1279	
India	1459244	1706512	247268	

Source: Report. Education in India(1947-48), Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1951, p.120.

In 1947, India was partitioned and several parts of the country were separated to form Pakistan. A large number of Depressed classes which were inhabiting in the areas of Pakistan had remained there and these should have been a fall in the increase in enrolments of the Depressed classes as a consequence of the same. For example, the Selyat district of Assam with a fairly large population of the Depressed classes had been transferred to East Pakistan. But despite all such disturbances, there was an all India increase by 16 to 17 per cent in the enrolments of the Depressed classes.

There was a sharp rise in the number of Depressed class pupils in Bombay and United Provinces as much as that in a single year, Bombay had recorded a rise of 50% in the enrolments. The Provinces of Madras, Orissa and Bihar had also recorded appreciable increase in enrolments. The Provinces of Bengal and Punjab had suffered from communal riots and refugee influxes. The expansion of education would naturally have slowed down in such areas. In general, the pace of the progress of the Depressed classes in matters of education had increased as compared to the previous periods. Such an optimistic trend promised fair hopes for the removal of educational backwardness among the Depressed classes in the near future.

The period of the present study closes with the year 1947 when the country was proclaimed as an independent

nation and the century long efforts to change the conditions and raise the status of the Depressed classes could ultimately be realized constitutionally. For the first time in the history of the country extending over more than five thousand years, the Depressed classes came to be accepted as equals of the other sections of the society and Constitutional guarantees were provided for their amelioration. To see through the eradication of the social evil of Untouchability, the Constitution of the Republic of India provides 'Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden.'⁴¹ To provide lawful protection against discrimination, safeguards such as 'the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them', have been provided.⁴² To raise the Depressed classes from their backwardness and to bring them at par with other advanced castes, special provisions such as, 'the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic 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', have been made. These and similar other provisions in the Constitution of India were the fruits of the efforts of thousands of persons who had stroven hard

⁴¹Constitution of the Republic of India, Article 17.

⁴²Ibid. Article 15.

to secure the Depressed classes a rightful place in the Indian society. It was in 1842 when Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley had contemplated 'to better their lot through means of education', and for more than a century, education continued to be regarded as a means of social elevation and economic amelioration of the Depressed classes.
