CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

With the dawn of independence, the question of granting reservation of seats to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislatures was taken up by the Constituent Assembly in May, 1949. The issue of reservation of seats became very controversial between its protagonists and its opponents and both the sides opposed the viewpoints of other. Members who favoured the issue were also argumentative and did not let the ground slip under their feet. Ultimately, their views prevailed and the issue was decided in favour of having reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

During the debates, as noted above, prominent members like Shri Z.H. Lari, Naziruddin Ahmad and Dr. H.C. Mukerjee spoke critically against the motion. Shri Z.H. Lari was very emphatic in his assertion when he argued, "If you concede the principle of representation by reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, do you not accept that such reservation does not go against the national interest? If it goes, why accept it." The other member of opposition, Naziruddin Ahmad, characterized such a concession to a particular community as an unhealthy political practice. Separate electorates, according to him, would lead to embitterments and would have a 'crippling effect upon the object protected.' Dr. H.C. Mukerjee spoke in favour of their economic safeguards and levelled vehement criticism.

2. Ibid., pp. 295-296.
against their political concession. He opined that masses are not interested in reservations. They want food, clothing, a shelter over their heads, medical aid and good roads. He also put forward the plea that the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy were adequate safeguards, enormous in scope for all communities of India.

The version of the opposition was seriously reviewed by members like K. Santhanam, H.V. Kesavam, Prof. N.G. Ranga, S. Nagappa, Pt. Thakurdas Bhargava and a few others. The most prominent speaker among these was S. Nagappa who showed his proven intelligence like a custodian of the rights of the Harijans who, according to him, were the backbone of Indian Society, and without whom, 'the Britishers could not rule this country'. Citing the examples of inadequate representation of Harijans in the Legislatures in proportion to their actual population, he referred to the States of Madras, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Travancore and Punjab. He strongly opined that the Harijans were not a separate nation; they were of the same religion, same culture, same custom; and they were the true sons of the soil.

1. "I do not see why a person belonging to a backward community should feel that his grievances cannot be placed before the legislatures unless he elects somebody in whom he has faith." Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. VIII, p. 292.
2. "We Scheduled Castes have not invaded this country from Arabia. We have not come here from outside and we do not have a separate State to go and live if we cannot absorb other people." Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. VIII, 1949, p. 292.
3. Ibid., p. 293.
Ultimately the issue was decided in favour of the Scheduled Castes. It was indeed a step further for the safeguards of their political rights. The implementation of those safeguards has inculcated in them a sense of political consciousness and has awakened them from the age-long social and political slumber. Critics have pointed out that the quality of the elected representatives is not up to the mark; that the representatives are politically ignorant and do not truly represent these classes. There is some modicum of truth in these charges but while accepting these charges we should always keep this fact in our minds that these classes have for the first time been given a fair opportunity. It is reasonably expected that in the coming two decades they will elect better qualified representative. The pertinent fact is that the scheme of political safeguards has, enabled them to elect their own representatives, vested with the responsibility of devising ways and means for the amelioration of the condition of these classes.

Doubts have been raised and charges levelled that the safeguards so provided are nebulous in nature and inadequate in extent. But what we have shown in our earlier relevant chapter (Chapter No. II) is that these safeguards are indeed not inadequate in their nature and extent. The problem is that of their proper implementation and execution. If it is solved, the whole idea enshrined in the Constitutional provisions, would go a long way in the social, culture, economic and above all, the political development of the Scheduled Castes and other minority communities of India. The crux of the
problem lies in the proper and sincere implementation of the provisions of the Constitution. There has been some antipathy or at least apathy to the safeguards given to these communities from the more vocal and advance sections of the country but such attitudes would wither away with the passage of time and with more consciousness of enlightenment coming to these communities. It is true that additional biases die hard but looking to the record of implementation of the safeguards, to the sincerity of approach of the National and State Governments, hope can be cherished that these communities will not be allowed to lag behind only on the ground that they are or were 'Backward' classes.

The representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Government services is another important problem, so far as the economic development of these communities is concerned. In all the States requisite percentage has been fixed up as reserved quota for their representation in the civil services of various Grades. The Central Government has also fixed up a proportionate quota in all types of services. But it has been seen that on account of lack of basic qualification, the response from these communities has not been satisfactory and such vacancies are, at times, filled from among the members of other communities. Of course, it is neither possible nor desirable for the Government to relax the basic qualifications — the prerequisites for civil services. If the basic
qualifications are relaxed, the consequences would be bad which would greatly mar and jeopardise administrative efficiency. Thus, without jeopardising administrative efficiency and at the same time without losing sight of their interests the best remedy to give them proper representation in services is to allocate them more funds so as to enable them to receive proper education. Unless, their educational standards are raised, they cannot hope for their proper representation in services reserved for them. Serious efforts in this connection are needed both by the Central and State Governments.

If we have to strengthen and advance our national economy, the necessity of strengthening the economic position of these classes and Tribes can not be over-emphasised. After all, these communities are a part and parcel of the national life and the national economic regeneration would be meaningless if these vulnerable, and vital parts remain economically backward. An all-embracing programme of economic welfare, which could help them to realise their needs and to secure from them the capacity and power to meet these needs well and effectively must, therefore, inevitability constitute the main bulk of social services in India. From the time the Indian intelligentsia realised the fact and discovered that the villagers held the key to almost all the economic and social problems of the country, their attention had been focussed on the tasks of rural reconstruction. It is a happy sign that the welfare
schemes of today are village-oriented where these classes constitute the bulk of the people.

If economic amelioration of these communities is the goal, the question arises as what should be appropriate machinery for the realization of that objective? Should they stick to the tribal economy as it existed in the past? But that is the sure way to economic damnation, inevitably leading to economic servitude. Looking to the tribal way of community living, it is suggested that co-operation should be the keynote of any economic machinery that is to be established for them, especially for the Scheduled Tribes. The machinery for economic development should, therefore, consist of two agencies: one to promote cooperation in the various activities relating to agriculture, animal husbandry, forest and cottage industry including credit, marketing and processing modelled on the lines of Andhra Scheduled Tribes Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation Limited and the other to mobilise and organise labour on the lines of Forest Labourers' Cooperative Societies of Gujrat and Maharashtra.

The programmes of agriculture should emphasise measures for soil conservation, irrigation and improvement in techniques of cultivation. The schemes of cooperation should stress the ultimate realisation of the objective of farming-cum-dairying, poultry and piggery included. The Forest Deparand the tribal community should both develop a partnership
approach. The programmes of rural industries should lead to the maximum utilisation of all available agricultural, forest and animal husbandry resources for conversion into processed materials. The guiding principle of economic development should be work, credit and market and not charity subsidy and waste.

On the main problems of social disabilities which is most glaring in our society is that of untouchability. Although Article 17 of the Indian Constitution forbids untouchability, it still persists in one form or the other in the rural areas. This section of society is maltreated and is not given a proper place in our religious, social and cultural gatherings, functions and festivities. The question of high and low castes is still very much prevalent in the minds of the villagers. A woman of the so called higher caste would not like to be touched by the woman of Scheduled Castes. In marriages when they work as menials they are not allowed to use the utensils used by others. So much so, they are not allowed to enter the religious places and draw water from wells meant for the higher castes in the villages. Although law does not allow all this, it is being practised and no definite measures have so far been taken to remove such an anomaly. It is often suggested that the Central Legislation for the removal of these social disabilities of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is an urgent need. But mere legislation, though very necessary, will not take us very far. It is the
change of hearts, achieved through persuasion and propaganda that can prove instrumental in effecting such a revolutionary change. The tempo of propaganda for doing away with untouchability from every nook and corner of India should be enthusiastically accelerated by the non-official agencies like the Harijan Sevak Sangh and other organizations for backing up Harijans in their efforts of enjoyment of fundamental rights like the use of water from the common public wells and other places of public utility in the villages. This will restore a sense of equality and dignity in these classes. It should be admitted that untouchability is disappearing gradually on account of the effects made by the official and non-official agencies, but it must be rooted out before the specific period of safeguards provided in the Constitution comes to an end in 1970. It is, however, difficult to find a measuring rod to estimate how much of the problem of untouchability has been solved and how much remains unsolved.

In the sphere of education, many State Governments have opened, at least one primary school in each village by which the children of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been largely benefited. No fee is being charged from their children. Besides, both by the Central and State Governments, they are given educational grants for higher education in arts, science and technology. Thus the percentage of literacy amongst them is growing. Inspite of these efforts, it has been noticed that the results achieved in
many States are not very satisfactory. Many families do not send their children to the educational institutions. On account of the prevailing poverty and poor economic resources, they want their young male children to become the earning members of the family. This fact deprives them of educational facilities and they remain illiterate as before and there is no mental development amongst them and the schemes of the Government do not lead anywhere. However, to solve the educational problem, especially in tribal areas, it has to introduce multi-purpose middle schools in tribal areas, so that tribal youth may leave their own areas only after completing a post-basic or high school education. Then only an adequate member of capable (and well-to-do) boys will go to the town or city for secondary or higher education.

Besides, special attention should be paid to the education of girls in tribal areas. At present, a very small number of girls attend the school in the villages. The better standards of life that community development may be able to achieve will not produce higher standard of general social health and progress, unless all sections of the community receive the benefits of education. At present, mothers bear the responsibility of economic duties and, therefore, most of the girls at the age of 7 to 9 have to look after the home. Hence they do not go to the schools. This aspect should be looked into by all the States and special provision made for the education of girls of these classes.)
It has been noticed that the medical aid in most backward and tribal areas is meagre, and medical service is either non-existent or is fifty years behind the times in some areas. The result of all this is that the problem of disease is difficult to deal with because of the absence of medical personnel and the unwillingness of the doctors to work in backward or tribal or village areas. The long distances, the absence of communications, the small size in a village community and the inability of most of the tribals to pay for medical assistance act as damper to the young doctors. The causes of diseases like yaws and leprosy which are widely prevalent in some areas have not been systematically studied. Malaria prevails extensively in some forest areas. Forest fevers, typhoid and other fevers are generally prevalent. Even Tuberculosis is prevalent where there is low vitality and malnutrition. Severe shortage of drinking water causes seasonal illness. Epidemics such as smallpox and chickenpox are common, and at times virulent. Besides, the problems of maternity, maternity welfare and family planning need very careful investigation, experimental programmes and gradual development of maternity services along with child care. Next to the diseases, the problem of drinking water facilities is also very serious. In many of the forest areas, up the hills and down the dales, the tribal people suffer acutely from the shortage of drinking water. It is the bounden duty of the States to provide drinking water in every village, whether it be in the tribal areas or
otherwise. Schemes for additional wells and additional expenditure on drinking water facilities in inaccessible areas qualify rightly for grants from the Central Government.

Next to the problem of medical and public health is the provision of communication. The great shortage of road transport in the backward and tribal areas is generally admitted and its expansion and development for carriage of goods as well as passengers must receive top priority for allround development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The village approach roads will help the tribals to bring their produce to the markets and by which they can raise their economic status and social standard. The achievements in this connection in several States and Union Territories are hardly satisfactory. It has been seen that as against the all-India average of 28 miles of roads per 100 square miles area, the average length in many tribal areas is not even 12 miles. The result is that most of the tribal areas are still isolated from the currents of modern development and progress. This work should be taken up mainly by the State Governments that have ignored their backward areas for a long time. The States can take help of the Road Funds. The Central Government can also help them by giving good grants for this purpose.

A number of non-officials are busy in the execution of welfare schemes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They are working in different fields of education, removal
of untouchability, provision of medical aid and public health facilities and executing programmes for resettlement and colonization of tribals. The welfare activities of Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, The Indian Council of Child Welfare, and a few others are commendable. But the work done by the Christian Missionaries in the tribal areas have proved to be prejudicial to their religious faith. As a result thereof, the minds of some of the tribals are much confused, divided and perturbed. These activities are thus having an adverse effect amongst them and the attention of the Government must be drawn towards these problems.

Gandhiji, who held Swaraj as the main goal of all his activities, insisted that self-rule could not be achieved without a programme of total reconstruction of the rural areas. The colossal problems of poverty, low production of wealth in agriculture and industries and of the misconceived plan of education, inertia, superstitions and taboos needed the primary attention, and then only the villagers, the mainstay of our population, could be free from economic and social distress and be rehabilitated in a new atmosphere of freedom. In the primary phase, the rural reconstruction work initiated by Gandhiji was, therefore, an inevitable and logical corollary of his greater political movement for independence. To him, the rural reconstruction programme represented chiefly a three-ties activity. Economic reorganization of the rural areas, by adoption of a comprehensive
programme of village industries which may enable villagers to meet their daily requirements of food, shelter and clothing and some other basic needs of life, was one of these. Thus in his rural welfare programmes were included the problems of agriculture and rural industries, of village health and sanitation. It is expected from the leaders of India today that they will realize the ideals of Gandhiji for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Many of his ideas have been implemented in the interests of the backward classes but it will still be better that these programmes were permeated with the true Gandhian spirit.

While devising welfare schemes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the sole consideration that should guide us must be their acceptability and easy implementation and not what we conceive to be good. No strict uniformity can, however, exist in this. There are vast differences among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in their social, economic and political environment, racial make up, cultural patterns as well as the degrees of refinement they have attained. Nor the manner and the extent of our relationship with them have been the same. The principle that should guide us in planning welfare measures for these classes and in carrying them into practice, whether concerning the material or the mental and spiritual aspects of their lives, must be the one which can be integrated with their value system and with which they will be able to identify themselves. Otherwise
not only will the welfare measures to fail, but may in the process of trial, cause irreparable damage to the true interests of these classes.

This does not mean, however, that these communities must be the sole judge of what is good for them and that there will be no scope for educating and influencing their opinion. What is implied is that in matters concerning their interests, they alone should have the last say as to how their social structure is to be affected. In other words, a clear undertaking of the purpose and effect of the measures has to be brought home to them. In welfare schemes, it is essential to remember that the creation of psychological identification between the people among whom the work is to be undertaken and those who intend to introduce them must be ensured before, they can be expected to succeed.

To ignore this basic principle will endanger the successful implementation of measures which in turn would create tribal antipathy and even hostility of these backward classes. A sudden uprooting from the soil or a breakaway from the institutions based on age-long traditions, instead of putting a people on the road of progress, is likely to produce the contrary effect. For an imposition of welfare measures which ignore these classes in every sphere only gives rise to that loss of interest in life which caused the gradual extinction of primitive tribes in Australia and other Pacific Islands, as shown by the enquiry of Dr. W.H.R.
Ravens on behalf of the British and Australian Scientific Association. In India, in some cases, we are faced with a similar situation, particularly with regard to the aboriginal races of the Great Andamans, of which there are now only twenty-two 'Left-out' tribes of about 5,000 a century ago, and there is little doubt that in a few decades we will see the last of this ancient race which was once a terror to the mariners who crossed their seas.

In dealing with development measures for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, therefore, a rational approach based on an objective study of their life and habits is imperative. It is not to be considered that measures found suitable for us can simply be implemented on these classes without proper apprisement. Nor can there be a uniform plan for all these communities, as there is a wide divergence of customs, rites and approach to life's problem among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes themselves.

The attempts of the organization of welfare programmes for the backward classes in India have hitherto been to solve these fundamental social and economic problems. Yet the solution of these basic problems, in course of time, will in its very process give further impetus to men to proceed forward and to solve newer problems impeding the realisation of all their needs. Social welfare work is a perpetual race between human capacities and human aspirations, and as new problems arise and are solved, and the basic and fundamen-
tal obstacles of life are removed, social welfare work tends to develop new textures of services to meet the needs. With the solution of each of its problems, the community in its turn, set up new goals, new targets and newer achievements. The question of social, political and economic safeguards has to be understood and interpreted in this wider context.)