CHAPTER VI

THE STATUS QUO (1937-1947)

Under the Government of India Act of 1919, education was a subject which was "partly all-India, partly reserved, partly transferred with limitations and partly transferred without limitations." This anomalous position was to a great deal improved by the Government of India Act of 1935. All educational activities under the new Act were divided into two categories - Federal or Central and the State and Provincial, and the old distinction between reserved and transferred subjects disappeared.

The popular Government formed under provincial autonomy (conferred by the Government of India Act of 1935) in the Punjab in 1937, decided to give first priority to nation-building activities; education being the most important of these activities, naturally received careful attention.

The Government was satisfied that secondary schools were sufficient in number and enrolment in them was progressively increasing. The Education Department was asked to make secondary education more effective and more practical by introducing hobbies and hand work, by improving teaching methods, and by making a more adequate assessment of the capacity of students.

A number of Model Schools were established to provide ordinary schools guidance in the improvement of instructional work. Inspection and teacher training were recast to meet the new needs.

1. Despatch on the Functions Committee Report, para 93.
2. State here means princely state. During British rule India was divided into Provinces (British Provinces) and States (Indian States under Indian Princes).
Education of girls was extended and adult literacy campaign was started with greater vigour.

For quite a long time there had been discontent with the methods of teaching and the content of instruction in secondary schools. A committee was appointed by the Government in May, 1938 to examine the curriculum. The Committee recommended the introduction of new subjects like everyday science, civics, sanitation and arts and crafts and the curtailment of subject matter in certain other subjects in the Middle Department to avoid repetition in the high classes. The Government accepted all the recommendations and a new curriculum for the Middle Classes was put into operation in all the schools. Efforts were made to improve instructional efficiency and promote hobbies, games, sports, scouting and other extra-classroom activities. But no vocational bias was given to the high school curriculum.

Regrouping of High School Subjects

The efforts of the Punjab University for making improvement in the curriculum were meagre and half-hearted. In 1939 it made the choice of offerings for the Matriculation Course more flexible by excluding vernacular and classical languages and physics and chemistry from the list of compulsory subjects. The new arrangement stood as under:

### Compulsory subjects:

1. English.
2. Mathematics (Domestic Arithmetic and Household Accounts for girls).
3. History and Geography.

---

4. The Punjab University Calendar, 1940-41. pp. 143-144.
Electives

Two out of the following subjects were to be taken up by each student:

1. A Modern Indian Language (Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Pashto or Bengali) or French or German.
2. A Classical Language (Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Latin or Greek).
4. Agriculture.
5. Drawing.
6. Physiology and Hygiene or Civics and Hygiene or Domestic Economy for girls.

The new arrangement was in no way an improvement. There was a greater scope for neglecting the study of science which in view of the scientific development was gaining more and more importance as also the study of vernacular language. It was also made impossible for girls to study domestic economy and 'physiology and hygiene (or civics and hygiene) at the same time. The subject of 'history and geography' retained the position it was given in 1927. It was compulsory for students to study the subject but it was not necessary for them to obtain pass marks in it to qualify for the Matriculation Certificate. The result was that not much importance was attached to a careful study of the subject despite the fact that the medium of instruction in it was generally a vernacular. The standard of attainment of an average Matriculate in both history and geography was deplorably low. Expressing his views on this point Mr. G.C. Chatterjee, Principal of the Central Training College, Lahore and later on Director of Public Instruction, Punjab wrote, "A compulsory pass in the combined subject should be required for the Matriculation Certificate, for so long as this is not done the product of our Indian Universities

will continue to remain weak in general knowledge and will fail to take that intelligent interest in world events which is expected of every educated man today.  

For the first time in 1941 the University defined (of course, inadequately) the aims of teaching English - something which should have long been done in detail in the case of all the subjects of the curriculum. The syllabus in English stated that "the aims of the teaching English are:-

i) to give the pupil such a knowledge of English that on entering life (at the end of the Matriculation and School Leaving Certificate if need be) he should be able to comprehend in English, and re-express in the vernacular at least such forms of English as are current in every day use;

ii) to train the pupil to write in some simple form of correct English a letter, description of an elementary topic of every day life;

iii) to train the pupil in speaking, comprehending and writing of English so as to enable him to profit by his lectures and study of books, at the intermediate stage." 

Surely enough these aims only relate to the acquisition of competency in the language. What part the learning of a language plays in the development of a child is not made known to the teacher.

The syllabus in English was detailed. Besides a selection of English poems, three groups of books of the following subject matter were recommended for study:-

1. Fiction, narrative, literary selection, short stories, playlets, etc.

2. General knowledge, scientific interest, travel, exploration, discovery, etc.

6. Ibid.

Each group had five books and students were required to study one book from each group. No questions in examinations were to be set on the subject matter of the prose books which were intended to indicate the standard. Through this procedure, it was hoped, English teaching would be free from the tyranny of text-books and the teachers would be forced to teach the elements of the language instead of merely burdening the memory of the poor school boy. In order to help the teachers to evaluate students properly, the University also published model question papers.

The scheme, unfortunately, did not work well. Since books were meant purely for study and no questions were set on them, they soon went out of use. Test-papers containing passages from here and there, shorn out of their context, took their place. Thoroughness, depth and joy which result from the study of a systematically well-written book were not to be found any longer.

The abolition of the regulation necessitating the study of science by the students who took up agriculture brought into the agriculture course in 1937, elements of science considered necessary for the students of agriculture. These additions continue to this day although they are no longer necessary in view of the compulsory study of general science by students at all stages of the school course. There were no other changes in the contents, during the period between 1937 and 1947 except that in 1939 the contents of geometrical drawing were specified.

Certain items like the moon and its phases, the effect of tides on shipping, and economic geography were removed from the geography course. During the War and afterwards up to 1947, no further changes were made in the curriculum.

Vocational and Practical Education

The question of vocational and practical education in secondary schools had remained a subject of debate for quite some time. In the Punjab, as in other provinces, the stand of the Government had been that general education and vocational training could not be effectively imparted together in secondary schools. In 1936, the Government of India had requisitioned the services of two experts A. Abbott and S.H. Wood to examine the whole problem of vocational training at school level. The Report on Vocational Education in India that appeared towards the middle of 1937 was mostly based on their study of education in the Punjab, United Provinces and Delhi.

The Report stated, "General and vocational education are not essentially different but the earlier and the latter phases of a continuous process. General and vocational education should not, however, be provided in the same school since the pupils in the two types have very diverse aims". The common belief that vocational education would lead to the promotion of industry was not supported by the Report. It argued, "There appears to be a common belief in India that a more adequate supply of vocational education would lead quickly to greater use being made by organised industry of the raw materials of the country. The

existence of skilled workers, though essential, is not in itself enough to create organised industries. Capital, means of transport and reasonably assured markets are also needed.  

Abbott and Wood were of the opinion that vocational education must be based on adequate general education. They recommended separate junior and senior vocational schools. The former were to receive pupils at the end of Class VIII and provide a three-year course, parallel to the higher secondary school and of the same repute and the latter were to receive pupils at the end of Class XI and provide a two-year course parallel to the Intermediate Colleges.  

It was also recommended that a number of higher secondary schools should have a bias towards the needs of agriculture throughout their curriculum, which should be continuation of that of the rural middle school.

Abbott and Wood did not favour English as the medium of instruction in high schools and urged that so far as possible the vernaculars should be the medium of instruction throughout the high or higher secondary schools but English should be made a compulsory language for all pupils in these schools. It was also recommended that the teaching of English should be made more domestic and less attention should be devoted by the average boy to the study of English 'prose and poetry' - arrangements being made to meet the needs of those boys specially qualified to pursue more advanced English studies. Creative manual activities of diverse kinds were recommended to be the part of the curriculum.

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p.113.
12. Ibid., p.114.
13. Ibid., p. 33.
14. Ibid.
The Report suggested a very sensible solution of the two ticklish problems of medium of instruction and place of vocational training in high schools. The vernacular medium and the establishment of separate junior and senior vocational schools would have almost revolutionised education. But unfortunately the slow process of deciding educational issues and the out-break of the World War stood in the way of any change.

Another very important development in 1937 was the sponsoring of the national scheme of Basic Education by Mahatma Gandhi who during the Non-Co-operation Movement had asked for the boycott of Government educational institutions and the establishment of schools and colleges on national lines and under national control. With its emphasis on mother tongue as a medium of instruction, productive work as a medium of education, self-sufficiency in education and school community relationship, Basic Education was soon to press for adjustment in the high school curriculum.

A careful thought was being given in several provinces to the remodelling of secondary education. In 1938, the Bombay Government appointed a committee to recommend the reorganisation of secondary education. The committee drew up curriculum for 4-year secondary schools accepting students from 7-year primary schools. This curriculum recommended general and scientific streams. The former comprised (i) Literary (ii) Arts and (iii) Commerce Courses and the latter (i) Agriculture (ii) Commercial and Technical and (iii) Scientific and Vocational Courses. A Committee appointed by the Uttar Pradesh Government for similar purpose under the chairmanship of Acharya Narendra Deva submitted its report in 1939. The Committee recommended that the secondary
school curriculum should make provision for (a) Language, Literature and Social Science (b) Natural Science and Mathematics (c) Art (d) Commerce (e) Technical and Commercial subjects and (f) Home science (for girls).

The All-India Educational Conference held in Bombay in December, 1938, also, gave thought to the problem of the reconstruction of education and recommended alternative courses at the secondary stage.

The Punjab Government realised that the growing demand for agricultural, vocational and industrial handicrafts and other ancillary activities in the schools was indicative of their increasing popularity. But it did not launch upon any scheme of vocational training at school level or parallel to it. Towards the close of the British rule in India there were in the Punjab only a very few industrial and vocational schools and a very small number of manual training centres in high schools.

Important developments took place in England during the period. In 1938 the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (headed by Will Spens) recommended that the studies of schools providing secondary education should be brought into closer contact with the practical affairs of life, especially towards the end of the course where some studies should have a definite bearing on the next stage of life. It was reiterated that preparation for a vocation was an important part of education, but any specialised training of a vocational character should come after towards the end of school life. The Committee,

however, was convinced that it was of great importance to establish a new type of higher school of technical character quite distinct from the traditional academic Grammar but enjoying equality of status with it. Above the age of 13, the curriculum in this school was to be so designed as to provide a liberal education with science and its applications as the core and inspiration. The subject matter was to be English, history, geography, mathematics, science, engineering, drawing, practical crafts in the workshops, physical education and the aesthetic subjects, together with a continued study of a foreign language for those pupils who were capable of profiting by it.  

The Spens Report made bold departure from traditional thinking. It had far-reaching effect. The educational reforms initiated by Butler in England in 1943-44 and the formulation of the Post-War Educational Development Scheme (1944) in India bore its influence.

The Norwood Report (1943) enlarged the definition of secondary education so as to embrace three broad types of education, each type containing within itself the possibility of variation and each school within the type offering alternative courses. These three types of secondary education - Grammar School, Technical School and Modern School were to be accorded all the parity which amenities and conditions could bestow.  

The fact that the three secondary schools - Grammar, Modern and Technical - came to be recognised and accepted in

---

the wake of the Education Act of 1944 softens the criticism against the English for not providing in India technical education at secondary school level. But while in England independent industrial and technical schools had existed for long and met the needs of the youth not destined to go to University, in India such schools were fewer in numbers and were not given sufficient encouragement.

**Plan For Post-War Educational Development**

Before the war came to an end the Government of India realised that the changed circumstances after the War would demand a different type of education. In 1944 the Central Advisory Board of Education brought out a comprehensive report (commonly known as Sargent Report after the name of Sir John Sargent, Educational Advisor to Government of India) on post-war educational development in India. It dealt with all important aspects of education. The Report advocated that only children above the average in ability should be admitted to the high school. This was something repugnant to the wishes of large sections of Indian population clamouring for the benefits of higher education. Nevertheless, the Report made useful suggestions for the improvement of the high school curriculum.

The Report asserted that the high school education should on no account be considered simply as a preliminary to university education, but as a stage complete and comprehensive in itself. Since with the expansion of national system entrants to high schools would be increasingly drawn from junior basic (primary) schools, it was clearly necessary that the curriculum in the lower classes of high schools should develop naturally from that of the
junior basic school. While it would remain a very important function of the high schools to pass on their most able pupils to universities or other institutions of equivalent standard, the large majority of high-school leavers should receive an education that would fit them for direct entry into occupations and professions.18

The Central Advisory Board found that there was a tendency for the high school curriculum to be unduly dominated by the requirements of the universities. In a well-organised system of public education only about one in ten to fifteen of the high-school leavers would go on to the universities. Consequently the high schools should attach the utmost importance to preparing the great bulk of their pupils, who would not proceed to universities, for entry into useful and remunerative employment of all kinds immediately on leaving school. The Board hoped that in the near future with the development of a higher standard of high school education, a school leaving certificate, supplemented where necessary by further training of technical or commercial type, would come to be regarded as a more normal qualification than a university degree for entry to all but the highest grades both in Government service and business. A changed outlook of this kind demanded a thorough overhauling of the organisation and curriculum of high schools. It was, therefore, essential that some kind of occupational interest or bias should enter into the later stages of the high school course.19

It was recommended that the reorganised high schools should be of two main types - (1) the Academic High Schools and

19. Ibid., p.20.
(ii) the Technical High Schools. The differentiation was to be broad and not rigid. The Academic High Schools were to impart instruction in the arts and sciences while the Technical High Schools were to provide training in the applied sciences and in industrial and commercial arts. It was recommended that art and music should form an integral part of the curriculum in both; and that all girls should take a course in domestic science. In rural areas the curriculum was to be given agricultural bias.\textsuperscript{20}

The Board further emphasized that while the needs of the area would be the dominant factor in deciding what types of schools and what variety of courses should be provided, it was not to be forgotten that many pupils would benefit most from a practical course even though they might not be destined for an industrial or commercial career.\textsuperscript{21}

The mother tongue of the pupils was recommended as the medium of instruction in all high schools. English was to be a compulsory second language. All students should also acquire some knowledge of mathematics and elementary science. Physical training should also be compulsory for all.\textsuperscript{22}

The Board did not consider it desirable to draw any rigid distinction between compulsory and optional subjects. The range available should be as wide as circumstances permitted and subject to the same proviso, the individual pupil's course should be settled in the light of his own aptitudes and interests and of the requirements of his probable future occupation. The following list of suitable subjects was intended to be suggestive rather than comprehensive; it was certainly not suggested that all pupils

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp.20-21.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 21.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
should study all the subjects up to the school leaving certificate standard though some were obviously suitable only at the senior stage:

### Academic High Schools

| 1. The Mother-Tongue. |
| 2. English. |
| 3. Modern Languages. |
| 4. History (India and World). |
| 5. Geography (India and World). |
| 7. Economics. |
| 8. Agriculture. |
| 11. Art. |
| 12. Civics. |
| 13. Classical Languages. |
| 14. Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Physiology and Hygiene). |

### Technical High Schools

| 1. The Mother-Tongue. |
| 2. English. |
| 3. Modern Languages. |
| 4. History (India and World). |
| 5. Geography (India and World). |
| 7. Economics. |
| 8. Agriculture. |
| 11. Art (including designing for industrial and commercial purposes). |
| 12. Commerce (book-keeping, shorthand, typewriting, accountancy, commercial practice, etc.). |
| 13. Chemistry. |
| 15. Biology. |
| 16. Technological subjects (Wood and Metal work, Elementary Engineering, Measured Drawing, etc.). |

The Sargent Report aimed at freeing the high school from the domination of the University and making it a stage complete in itself for many. It is difficult to imagine how it could have been possible to enhance the high school stage by one year and set up two parallel high schools, when the country was feeling economic difficulties and when minimum educational facilities were not within the reach of the great majority of children.

Restricting admission to the high school was also not in consonance with the spirit of times. What, however, is of significance is the fact that the Report suggested a progressive and bold departure from the traditional and exclusively literary high school education and the Government of India gave its approval to it. The Report

23. Ibid.
proved to be of great value and inspiration to the Mudaliar Secondary Education Commission when eight years later it set about its task of surveying the entire field of secondary education with a view to suggesting a truly national scheme of secondary education.

With the end of the War, however, events took a different turn. The demand for independence began to be considered seriously by the Government. Efforts for a political solution took the time and attention of the Government as well as of the Indian leaders. The report of the Central Advisory Board was shelved and like the reports of the previous commissions and committees on education it became a part of the historical documents to be referred to. Nine years later in 1953, the Secondary Education Commission suggested the establishment of multi-purpose schools on the lines of the technical high schools.

Circumstances so conspired that inspite of the great powers that the Minister of Education was given under the Government of India Act 1935 and in spite of a good deal of fresh thinking done by various committees on education, there came about no change in the nature of the high school education in the Punjab during the decade 1937-1947. The Second World War that broke out in 1939 made great demands on the resources of the country. Furthermore, uncertainty in political atmosphere did not permit launching upon any long-term plan for reform. The result was that the status quo was maintained; the period saw no advancement over the position as existed in 1937, except that the expansion had gone apace as usual and the number of high schools had risen from 397 in 1937 to 602 in 1947.  

The high school curriculum in the Punjab posed a challenge for drastic action when the British withdrew in August, 1947. All the defects that irritated the national educationists in the beginning of the century continued to exist in accentuated form. Unresponsive to national ideals, the curriculum neither provided sound general education nor did it prepare for, or even initiate into, different vocations of life. Subjects burdened with a great deal of superfluous content matter fashioned more often in arbitrary manner sapped the vitality of children. Except in history and geography, (and of course in Indian and Oriental Languages), the medium of instruction and examination was English. Decades of opposition had not succeeded in changing the medium from English to mother tongue or regional language. A sound psychological and educational principle was sacrificed on political considerations. "The English medium put a heavy strain on pupils in their formative years. Children's capacity for free and original thought and creation was atrophied."

The high school found itself hitched to the wagon of the University. Although the Matriculation Examination was a great source of income to the University, the improvement of the high school education did not receive its proportionate attention. There was no permanent body to construct the curriculum systematically and improve upon it from time to time. The School Board consisting of 4 members of Arts Faculty, two of Oriental and two of Science Faculty, three headmasters, three nominees of the Government and the Director of Public Instruction met occasionally for very short hours. Such a body did hardly give serious thought to such a difficult work as that of the curriculum

construction and the improvement of Matriculation Examination which unfortunately with time came to have deadening effect on the curriculum.

Hampton's comments on secondary education although published four years before the withdrawal of the British power very aptly summed up the situation:

When the present is viewed in its historical perspective, it seems reasonable to conclude that the secondary school system suffers from arrested development; it has failed to keep pace with the changes - social and political, economic and industrial - which have gone to the making of modern India, and it has failed to keep abreast of the latest development in educational theory and practice. Schools are weighed down by the incubus of Matriculation, and fettered by regulations governing recognition; courses are bookish and theoretical and provide little to attract pupils with a practical turn of mind; the excessive use of English as the medium of instruction places a severe psychological burden on both pupils and teachers - it stifles individuality, encourages memorization and makes instruction lifeless and mechanical; scientific and practical subjects are neglected and inadequate provision is made for out-door games and other recreational activities. The whole system is rigid and inelastic and is characterized by a dull and monotonous uniformity. On the whole, India has been well served by expert advice but, despite the recommendations of various committees and commissions, little has been done to adapt an outworn system to the conditions of modern life. Indeed, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that Indian high school, with a few notable exceptions, is much the same as it was in 1904 and has but little changed from what it was as far back as 1884. It is abundantly clear, therefore, that the secondary system must be reorganised and made more fruitful; at present, it brings only disillusionment and discontent to many whose abilities and aspirations are deserving of a better reward. 26

Such then was the picture of the high school in the Punjab and elsewhere in the country during the last phase of the British rule in India.