

Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability: Political

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Political

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CHAPTER 1

FROM MILLIONS TO FRACTIONS

- I. Population of the Untouchables long unknown.
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What is the total population of the Untouchables of India? This is bound to be the first question that a person who cares to know anything about them is sure to ask. It is now easy to answer this question. For the Census of India taken in 1931 gives it as 50 millions. While it is possible now to give more or less exact figures of the Untouchable population in India it was not possible to do so for a long time.

This was due to various causes. Firstly untouchability is not a legal term. There is no exact legal definition of untouchability whereby it could be possible to define who is an Untouchable and who is not. Untouchability is a social concept which has become embodied in a custom and as custom varies so does untouchability. Consequently there

is always some difficulty in the way of ascertaining the population of the Untouchables with mathematical exactitude.

Secondly there has always been serious opposition raised by high caste Hindus to the enumeration by caste in the Census Report. They have insisted on the omission of the question regarding caste from the schedules and the suppression of the classification of the population by caste and tribe. A proposal to this effect was made in connection with the 1901 Census mainly on the ground that the distribution of various castes and tribes in the population changed at large intervals and that it was not necessary to obtain figures at each decennial enumeration.

These grounds of objection did not have any effect on the Census Commissioner. In the opinion of the Census Commissioner enumeration by caste was important and necessary. It was argued by the Census Commissioner that,

" Whatever view may be taken of the advantages or disadvantages of caste as a social institution, it is impossible to conceive of any useful discussion of the population questions in India in which caste would not be an important element. Caste is still 'the foundation of the Indian social fabric,' and the record of caste is still 'the best guide to the changes in the various social strata in the Indian Society'. Every Hindu (using the term in its most elastic sense) is born into a caste and his caste determines his religious, social, economic and domestic life from the cradle to the grave. In western countries the major factors which determine the different strata of society, viz. wealth, education and vocation are fluid and catholic and tend to modify the rigidity of birth and hereditary position. In India spiritual and social community and traditional occupation override all other factors. Thus, where in censuses of western countries, an economic or occupational grouping of the population affords a basis for the combination of demographic statistics, the corresponding basis in the case of the Indian population is the distinction of religion and caste. Whatever view may be taken of caste as a national and social institution, it is useless to ignore it, and so long as caste continues to be used as one of the distinguishing features of an individual's official and social identity, it cannot be claimed that a decennial enumeration helps to perpetuate an undesirable institution."

The objections to the enumeration by castes in the census were urged with greater force on the occasion of the census of 1911 when the special questionnaire containing ten tests was issued for the purpose of grouping together castes which satisfied those tests. There was no doubt that those tests were such as would mark off the Depressed Classes from the Caste Hindus. It was feared by the Caste Hindus that this circular was the result of the Muslim Memorial to the Secretary of State and its aim was to separate the Depressed Classes from the Hindus and thereby to reduce the strength of the Hindu Community and its importance.

This agitation bore no fruit and the objection of separately enumerating in the Census Report those castes which satisfied those ten tests was carried out. The agitation

however did not die out. It again cropped up at the Census of 1920. At this time, effort was made to put forth the objection to the caste return in a formal manner. A resolution was tabled in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1920 attacking the caste inquiry on the grounds (a) that it was undesirable to recognise and perpetuate, by official action, the system of caste differentiation and (b) that in any case the returns were inaccurate and worthless, since the lower castes took the opportunity of passing themselves as belonging to groups of higher status. If this resolution had been carried, it would not have been possible to know the population of the Untouchables. Fortunately owing to the absence of the mover, the resolution was not discussed and the Census Commissioner of 1921 remained free to carry out his inquiries in the usual manner.

Thirdly no attempt was made for a separate enumeration of the Untouchables by any of the Census Commissioners previous to the year 1911. The first general Census of India was taken in the year 1881. Beyond listing the different castes and creeds and adding up their numbers so as to arrive at the total figure of the population of India, the Census of 1881 did nothing. It made no attempt to classify the different Hindu castes either into higher and lower or Touchable and Untouchable. The second general Census of India was taken in the year 1891. It was at this census that an attempt to classify the population on the basis of caste and race and grade was made by the Census Commissioner for the first time.

The third general Census of India was taken in 1901. At this census a new principle of classification was adopted namely "Classification by Social precedence as recognised by native public opinion." For a society like the Hindu society which does not recognise equality and whose social system is a system of gradation of higher and lower, this principle was the most appropriate one. Nothing can present a more intelligible picture of the social life and grouping of that large proportion of the people of India which is organised admittedly or tacitly on the basis of caste as this principle of social precedence.

II

The first attempt of a definite and deliberate kind to ascertain the population of the Untouchables was made by the Census Commissioner in 1911.

The period immediately preceding the Census of 1911 was a period during which the Morley-Minto Reforms were in incubation. It was a period when the Mahomedans of India had started their agitation for adequate representation in the legislatures by separate electorates. As a part of their propaganda, the Mahomedans waited upon Lord Morley, the then Secretary of State for India in Council, in deputation and presented him a Memorial on the 27th January 1909. In that memorial there occurs the following statement: (*The statement is not recorded in the MS.—Ed.*) Whether there was any connection between what the Muslim deputation had urged in their memorial regarding

the Untouchables in 1907 and the idea of the Census Commissioner four years after to make a separate enumeration of the Untouchables, is a matter on which nothing definite can be said. It is possible that what the Census Commissioner proposed to do in 1911 was only a culmination of the

ways adopted by his predecessors in the matter of the demographic study of the population. Be that as it may, there was a great uproar on the part of the Hindus when the Census Commissioner announced his plan of separate enumeration of the Untouchables. It was said that this attempt of the Census Commissioner was the result of a conspiracy between the Musalmans and the British Government to divide and weaken the Hindu Community. It was alleged that what was behind this move was not a genuine desire to know the population of the Untouchables but the desire to break up the solidarity of the Hindu Community by separating the Untouchables from the Touchables. Many protest meetings were held all over the country by the Hindus and condemned in the strongest terms this plan of the Census Commissioner.

The Commissioner of Census however undaunted by this storm of protest decided to carry out his plan. The procedure adopted by him for a separate enumeration of the Untouchables was of course a novel one. The Census Superintendents for different Provinces were instructed by the Census Commissioner to make separate enumeration of castes and tribes classed as Hindus but who did not conform to certain standards or who were subject to certain disabilities.

Under these tests the Census Superintendents made a separate enumeration of castes and tribes who (1) denied the supremacy of the Brahmins, (2) did not receive the Mantra from Brahmana or other recognized Hindu Guru, (3) denied the authority of the Vedas, (4) did not worship the great Hindu Gods, (5) were not served by good Brahmanas, (6) have no Brahman priests at all, (7) have no access to the interior of the ordinary Hindu temple, (8) cause pollution, (9) bury their dead and (10) eat beef and do not revere the cow.

The investigation conducted by the Census Commissioner left no room for guessing. For he found as a fact what the population of the Untouchables was. The table below gives the population of the Untouchables, province by province, as found by the Census Commissioner of 1911. [\[f1\]](#)

| Province | Total Population in Millions | Population of Depressed Classes in Millions | Total seats | Seats for the depressed classes |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Madras | 39.8 | 6.3 | 120 | 2 |
| Bombay | 19.5 | 0.6 | 113 | 1 |
| Bengal | 45.0 | 9.9 | 127 | 1 |
| United Provinces | 47.0 | 10.1 | 120 | 1 |
| Punjab | 19.5 | 1.7 | 85 | |
| Bihar and Orissa | 32.4 | 9.3 | 100 | 1 |
| Central Provinces | 12.0 | 3.7 | 72 | 1 |
| Assam | 6.0 | 0.3 | 54 | |
| Total | 221.2 | 41.9 | 791 | 7 |

An outsider might not realise the significance and the bearing of these tests. They might ask what all this got to do with untouchability. But he will realise the significance and the bearing on the question of ascertaining the population of the Untouchables. As has been said there is no legal definition of untouchability and there cannot be any. Untouchability does not express itself through the hair of the head or the colour of the skin. It is not a matter of blood. Untouchability expresses itself in modes of treatment and observance of certain practices. An Untouchable is a person who is treated in a certain way by the Hindus and who follows certain practices, which are different from the Hindus. There are definite ways in which the Hindus treat the Untouchables in social matters. They are definite practices, which are observed by the Untouchables. That being so the only method of ascertaining who are Untouchables is to adopt their ways and practices as the criteria and find out the communities which are subject to them. There is no other way. If the outsider bears this in mind, he will understand that even though the tests prescribed by the Census Commissioner do not show any colour of untouchability, they are in fact the hall marks of untouchability. That being so, there can be no manner of doubt that the procedure was proper and the tests were correct. Consequently it can be truly said, the results of this investigation were valuable and the figures obtained were accurate as far they can be in a matter of this sort.

III

The findings of the Census Commissioner of 1911 regarding the total population of the Untouchables were confirmed by the Census Commissioner of 1921.

The Census Commissioner of 1921 also made an investigation to ascertain the population of the Untouchables. In this Report Part I para 1931 the Census Commissioner observed:

" It has been usual in recent years to speak of certain section of the community as 'depressed classes'. So far as I am aware, the term has no final definition nor is it certain exactly whom it covers. In the Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education from 1912/17 (Chapter XVIII paragraph 505) — the depressed classes are specifically dealt with from the point of view of Educational assistance and progress and in Appendix XIII to that Report a list of the castes and tribes constituting this section of the Community is given. The total population classed according to these lists as depressed amounted to 31 million persons or 19 per cent of the Hindu and Tribal population of British India. There is undoubtedly some danger in giving offence by making in a public report social distinction which may be deemed invidious; but in view of the lists already prepared and the fact that the " Depressed Classes " have, especially in South India, attained a class consciousness and a class organisation, are served by special missions, " raised " by philanthropic societies and officially represented in the Legislative Assemblies, it certainly seems advisable to face the facts

and to attempt to obtain some statistical estimate of their numbers. I therefore asked Provincial Superintendents to let me have an estimate based on census figures of the approximate strength of the castes who were usually included in the category of "depressed".

" I received lists of some sort from all provinces and states except the United Provinces, where extreme delicacy of official sentiment shrank from facing the task of attempting even a rough estimate. The figures given are not based on exactly uniform criteria, as a different view is taken of the position of the same groups in different parts of India, and I have had in some cases to modify the estimates on the basis of the figures in the educational report and of information from the 1911 reports and tables. They are also subject to the general defect, which has already been explained, that the total strength of any caste is not recorded. The marginal statement gives however a rough estimate of the *minimum* members which may be considered to form the "depressed classes" of the Hindu community. The total of these provincial figures adds up to about 53 millions. This, however, must be taken as a low and conservative estimate since it does not include (1) the full strength of the castes and tribes concerned and (2) the tribal aborigines more recently absorbed in Hinduism, many of whom are considered impure. We may confidently place the numbers of these depressed classes all of whom are considered impure, at something between 55 and 60 millions in India proper."

Then came the inquiry by the Simon Commission which was appointed by the British Parliament in 1929 to examine the working of the Reforms introduced by the Government of India Act of 1919 and to suggest further reforms.

At the time when the reforms which subsequently became embodied in the Act of 1919 were being discussed, the authors of the Montague-Cheirnsford Report clearly recognised the problem of the Untouchables and the authors pledged themselves to make the best arrangement for their representation in the Legislatures. But the Committee that was appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Southborough to devise the franchise and the electoral system ignored them altogether. The Government of India did not approve of this attitude and made the following comments:

"They (Untouchables) are one fifth of the total population and have not been represented at all in the Morley-Minto Councils. The Committee's report mentions them (Untouchables) twice, but only to explain that in the absence of satisfactory electorates they have been provided for by nomination. It does not discuss the position of these people, or their capacity for looking after themselves. Nor does it explain the amount of nomination which it suggests for them..... The measure of representation which they propose..... suggested that one fifth of the entire population of British India should be allotted seven seats out of practically eight hundred. It is true that in all the Councils there will be roughly speaking a one-sixth proportion of officials who may be expected to bear in mind the interests of the (Untouchables); but that arrangement is not, in our

opinion, what the Report on reforms aims at. The authors stated that the (Untouchables) also should learn lessons of self-protection. It is surely fanciful to hope that this result can be expected from including a single member of the community in an assembly where there are sixty or seventy caste Hindus. To make good the principles of the Report we must treat the outcastes more generously ".

The Government recommended that the seats allotted to the Untouchables by the Committee should be doubled. Accordingly in place of seven they were given fourteen seats. It will be seen that the generosity of the Government of India when put into practice did not amount to much. It certainly did not do to the Untouchables the justice that was their due.

Among the problems that were not properly settled in 1919, was the problem of the Untouchables, which was bound to loom large before the Simon Commission. Quite unexpectedly the problem received a special emphasis at the hands of the late Lord Birkenhead who was then the Secretary of State for India. In a speech which he made on ^[12] just before the appointment of the Simon Commission he said— (*Left blank in the MS.—Ed.*).

Naturally the problem became a special task of the Simon Commission. Although the problem as presented was one of providing representation—and in that sense a political problem at the bottom it was a problem, of ascertaining the population of the untouchables, Because unless the population was ascertained, the extent of representation in the legislature could not be settled.

The Simon Commission had therefore to make a searching inquiry into the population of the untouchables. It called upon the various provincial governments to furnish returns showing the numbers of untouchables residing in their area and it is well known that the provincial governments took special care in preparing these returns. There can therefore be no question regarding the accuracy of the figure of the total population of the untouchables. The *following table*^[13] gives the figures for the population of the untouchables as found by the Southborough Committee and by the Simon Commission.

IV

It is thus clear that the population of the Untouchables has been estimated to be somewhere about 50 millions. That this is the population of the Untouchables had been found by the Census Commissioner of 1911 and confirmed by the Census Commissioner of 1921 and by the Simon Commission in 1929. This fact was never challenged by any Hindu during the twenty years it stood on the record. Indeed in so far as the Hindu view could be gauged from the reports of the different Committees appointed by the Provincial and Central Legislatures to co-operate with the Simon Commission, there can be no doubt that they accepted this figure without any demur.

Suddenly however in 1932, when the Lothian Committee came and began its investigation, the Hindus adopted a challenging mood and refused to accept this figure as the correct one. In some provinces the Hindus went to the length of denying that there were any Untouchables there at all. This episode reveals the mentality of the Hindus and as such deserves to be told in some details.

The Lothian Committee was appointed in consequence of the recommendations made by the Franchise Sub-Committee of the Indian Round Table Conference. The Committee toured the whole of India, visited all the Provinces except Central Provinces and Assam. To aid the Committee, there were constituted in each Province by the provincial Government, Provincial Committees comprising, so far as possible, spokesmen of the various schools of thought and of the various political interests existing in each Province. These Provincial Committees were in the main composed of members of the Provincial Councils with non-officials as Chairmen. With a view to concentrating discussion, the Indian Franchise Committee issued a questionnaire covering the field included in its terms of reference. The procedure laid down by the Franchise Committee was that Provincial Governments should formulate their own views on the points raised in the questionnaire and discuss them with the Committee and that the Provincial Committees who were regarded as the authoritative advisers should independently formulate their views and should at their discretion conduct a preliminary examination of witnesses on the basis of their written statements. The Report of the Indian Franchise Committee was therefore a thorough piece of work based upon detailed investigation.

The letter of instruction sent by the Prime Minister to Lord Lothian as Chairman of the Indian Franchise Committee and which constituted the terms of reference of the Committee contained the following observation:

" It is evident from the discussions which have occurred in various connections in the (Indian Round Table) Conference that the new constitution must make adequate provision for the representation of the depressed classes and that the method of representation by nomination is no longer regarded as appropriate. As you are aware, there is a difference of opinion whether the system of separate electorates should be instituted for the depressed classes and your committee's investigation should contribute towards the decision of this question by indicating the extent to which the depressed classes would be likely, through such general extension of the Franchise as you may recommend, to secure the right to vote in ordinary electorates. On the other hand, should it be decided eventually to constitute separate electorates for the depressed classes, either generally or in those Provinces in which they form a distinct and separate element in the population, your Committee's inquiry into the general problem of extending the franchise should place you in possession of facts which would facilitate the devising of a method of separate representation for the depressed classes

". Accordingly in the questionnaire that was issued by the Indian Franchise Committee there was included the following Question:

" What communities would you include as belonging to Depressed Classes? Would you include classes other than Untouchables, and if so which"?

I was a member of the Indian Franchise Committee. When I became a member of the Committee, I was aware that the principal question on which I should have to give battle with the Caste Hindus was the question of joint versus separate electorates for the Untouchables. I knew, that in the Indian Franchise Committee, the odds would be heavily against them. I was to be the only representative of the Untouchables in the Committee as against half a dozen of the Caste Hindus. Against such an unequal fight I had prepared myself. Before accepting membership of the Indian Franchise Committee, I had stipulated that the decision of the question whether the Untouchables should have joint or separate electorates should not form part of the terms of reference to the Committee. This was accepted and the question was excluded from the purview of the Indian Franchise Committee. I had therefore no fear of being out voted on this issue in the Committee— a strategy for which the Hindu Members of the Committee did not forgive me. But there arose another problem of which I had not the faintest idea. I mean the problem of numbers. The problem of numbers having been examined between 1911 to 1929 by four different authorities, who found that the population of Untouchables was somewhere about 50 millions, I did not feel that there would be any contest over this issue before the Indian Franchise Committee.

Strange as it may appear the issue of numbers was fought out most bitterly and acrimoniously before the Indian Franchise Committee. Committee after Committee and witness after witness came forward to deny the existence of the Untouchables. It was an astounding phenomenon with which I was confronted. It would be impossible to refer to the statement of individual witnesses who came forward to deny the existence of such a class as the Untouchables. It would be enough if I illustrate my point by referring to the views of the Provincial Franchise Committees and their members relating to the question of the population of the Untouchables.

PUNJAB

Opinion of the Punjab Government.

"The Punjab Government is of opinion that the enfranchisement of the tenant will give the vote to a considerable number of the Depressed Classes and to that extent will give them influence in the election of representatives to the Council. "^[4]

" As regards the Depressed Classes, the Punjab Government has no reason to depart from the view which it has already expressed in para 25 of the Memorandum containing the opinions of the official members of the Government on the recommendations of the Indian

Statutory Commission, that these classes are not a pressing problem in the Punjab and will get some representation as tenants. "^[5] *Opinion of the Punjab Provincial Franchise Committee.*

"K. B. Din Mahomed and Mr. Hansraj (who represented the Untouchables on the Committee) held that, while there are no depressed classes among the Musalmans, there exist depressed classes among the Hindus and Sikhs..... Their total number being 1,310,709. Mr. Hansraj considers this list incomplete."

"They held that provision should be made for separate representation by treating the depressed classes as a separate community. Mr. Nazir Husain, Rai Bahadur Chaudhri Chhotu Ram, Mr. Own Roberts, K. B. Muhammad Hayat, Mr. Qureshi, Mr. Chatterji, Sardar Bhuta Singh and Pandit Nanak Chand held that it is impossible to say that there are depressed classes in the Punjab in the sense that any person by reason of his religion suffers any diminution of civic rights..... The Chairman, Pandit Nanak Chand and Sardar Bhuta Singh are of opinion that the depressed classes do not exist in the sense in which they exist in Southern India, and that, while there are in the villages certain classes who occupy a very definitely inferior economic and social position, it is not possible to differentiate the Hindu leather worker or Chamar who is claimed as a depressed class from the Musalman leather worker or Mochi who no one alleges belongs to a separate class. "^[6]

It will thus be seen that the Punjab Provincial Government avoided to answer the question. The Punjab Provincial Committee by a majority denied that there existed a class such as depressed or untouchable.

UNITED PROVINCES

Opinion of the Provincial Franchise Committee.

"The United Provinces Franchise Committee is of opinion that only those classes should be called "depressed" which are untouchable. Judged by this test, the problem of untouchability is non-existent in these provinces except in the case of Bhangis, Doms and Dhanuks, whose total population, including those sections which are touchable is only 582,000."^[7]

Babu Ram Sahai, a member of the United Provinces Provincial Franchise Committee representing the untouchable classes, in his minute of dissent gave the numbers^[8] of the Untouchables in U. P. as 11,435,417. Rai Sahib Babu Ramcharan another member of the United Provinces Provincial Franchise Committee representing the Depressed Classes in his minute of dissent gave the numbers^[9] of the Depressed Classes in U.P. as 20 millions.

The Government of the United Provinces reported^[10] that the maximum estimate amounts to 17 million persons; the minimum something less than one million. In its opinion the least number was 6,773,814.

BENGAL

The Bengal Provincial Franchise Committee in its first Report^[f11] said.

" The Committee could come to no decision on this question and resolved to put it back for consideration along with the Central Committee." In its final Report the same Committee said—

" According to the criterion laid down viz, untouchability and un-approachability, as these terms are understood in other parts of India, the Committee consider that, except Bhumalis only, there is no such class in Bengal."^[f12]

Mr. Mullick who was a representative of the Depressed Classes on the Bengal Provincial Franchise Committee in his minute of dissent gave a list of 86 castes as belonging to the Untouchable Classes.

BIHAR AND ORISSA

The population of the Depressed Classes in Bihar and Orissa according to the Census of 1911 was 9,300,000 ^[f13] and according to the Census of 1921 was 8,000,000 ⁶.

But the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Franchise Committee in its provincial memorandum⁷ observed—

" It is difficult to give an exhaustive list of the castes or sects who come under the definition of Depressed Classes. The only classes which can be called depressed are *Mushahars, Dusadhs, Chamars, Doms* and *Mehtars*. Their number is not sufficiently large to justify their being grouped in a separate electoral roll. The problem of Depressed Classes is not so acute in Bihar as in Bombay or South India. The Committee considers that there is no need for special representation of the Depressed Classes."

The same Committee in its final report^[f14] said :

"The classes which are commonly regarded as Untouchables are Chamar, Busadh, Dom, Halalkhor, Hari, Mochi, Mushahar, Pan Pasi. . . . The majority of the Committee, however consider that there is no need for special representation as the Depressed Classes as their grievances are not so acute here as in Bombay or South India".

Why did the Hindus suddenly turn to reduce the population of the Untouchables from millions to fractions? The figure of 50 millions had stood on the record from 1911. It had not been questioned by any one. How is it that in 1932 the Hindus made so determined an effort without any regard to the means to challenge the accuracy of this figure?

The answer is simple. Up to 1932 the Untouchables had no political importance. Although they were outside the pale of Hindu Society which recognises only four classes namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, yet for political purposes they were reckoned as part of the Hindu Society. So that for political purposes such as representation in the Legislature etc., the question of the population of the

Untouchables was of no consequence. Up to 1932 the political question was one of division of seats in the Legislature between Hindus and Musalmans only and as there was no question of the seats that came to the lot of the Hindus being partitioned between the Touchables and the Untouchables and as the whole share went to the Touchables they did not care to inquire what the population of the Untouchables was. By 1932 the situation had completely altered. The question of partition was no longer a question between Hindus and Musalmans. The Untouchables had begun to claim that there should not only be a partition between the Hindus and Musalmans but that the share allotted to the Hindus should be further partitioned and the share of the Untouchables given to them to be enjoyed by them exclusively. This claim to separation was recognised and the Untouchables were allowed to be represented by members of their own class at the Indian Round Table Conference. Not only was the separate existence of the Untouchables thus recognised but the Minorities Subcommittee of the Indian Round Table Conference had accepted the principle that under the new Constitution the depressed classes should be given representation in all Legislatures in proportion to their population. It is thus that the population of the Untouchables became a subject of importance. The less the population of the Untouchables the greater the share of the political representation that would go to the Touchable Hindus. This will explain why the Touchables who before 1932 did not care to quarrel over the question of the population of the Untouchables, after 1932 began denying the very existence of such a class as Untouchables.

The ostensible grounds urged by the Hindus before the Lothian Committee for reducing the population of the Untouchables were two. One was that the figures given by the Census Commissioner were for Depressed Classes and not for Untouchables and that Depressed Classes included other classes besides Untouchables. The second ground urged by them was that, the definition of the word should be uniform throughout all India and should be applied in all Provinces in determining the population of the Untouchables. In other words they objected to a local test of untouchability.

The first contention was absolutely untrue. The term Depressed Classes was used as a synonym for Untouchables and the term Depressed Classes was used instead of the term Untouchables because the latter it was felt, would give offence to the people meant to be included under the term. That, it was used to denote only the Untouchables and it did not include the Aborigines or the Criminal Tribes was made clear in the debate that took place in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1916 on the Resolution moved by the Honourable Mr. Dadabhoi. The second contention of the caste Hindus was that the test of untouchability should be uniform. The object of putting forth this contention was to reduce the number of Untouchables. It is well known that there are variations in the forms which untouchability assumes in different parts of India. In some parts of India, Untouchables are un-seeables i.e. they cause pollution if they come within the sight of a Touchable Hindu. In some parts Untouchables are

unapproachables i.e. they cause pollution if they come within a certain distance of a Touchable Hindu. Of these unapproachables there are two classes. There is a class of unapproachables who cannot come within a certain fixed distance of a Touchable Hindu. There is another class of unapproachables who cannot come so near a Hindu as to let his shadow fall upon him. In some parts of India an Untouchable is not an unseeable or unapproachable. It is only his physical contact which causes pollution. In some parts an Untouchable is one who is not allowed to touch water or food. In some parts an Untouchable is one who is not allowed to enter a temple. With these variations it is clear, that if unseeability was taken as the only test of untouchability, then the unapproachables would have to be excluded from the category of Untouchables. If unapproachability was taken as a test, then those whose touch only caused pollution will have to be excluded from the category of Untouchables. If causing pollution by touch be taken as a test, then those whose disability is that they are not allowed to touch water or food or those whose only disability is that they are not allowed to enter the temple, shall have to be excluded. This is what the Hindus wanted to do. By insisting upon uniform test they wanted to eliminate certain classes from the category of Untouchables and thereby reduce the population of the Untouchables. Obviously their point of view was fallacious. Untouchability is an outward expression of the inner repulsion which a Hindu feels towards a certain person. The form which this repulsion takes is comparatively a matter of small moment. The form merely indicates the degree of repulsion. Wherever there is repulsion there is untouchability. This simple truth the Hindus knew.

But they kept on insisting upon uniformity of test because they wanted somehow to reduce the population of the Untouchables and to appropriate to themselves a larger share of political representation.

VI

This struggle between the Hindus and the Untouchables constituted undoubtedly the main episode. But within this episode there was another which though of a smaller character, was yet full of significance. It was the struggle between the Backward Classes and the Untouchables. The representatives of the Backward Classes contended that the category known as Depressed Classes should not only include Untouchables in the strict sense of that term but should also include those classes which are economically and educationally backward.

The object of those that wanted, that not only the Untouchables but also those who are educationally and economically backward shall also be given separate representation, was a laudable one. In putting forth this contention they were not asking for anything that was new. Under the reformed constitution that came into operation in 1920, the right of the economically and educationally backward communities was

recognised in the two provinces of India namely Bombay and Madras. In Bombay the Marathas and allied castes and in Madras the Non-Brahmins were given separate representation on the only ground that they were economically and educationally backward.

It was feared that if special representation was not given to those communities, they would be politically suppressed by the minority of high caste Hindus such as Brahmins and allied castes. There are many communities in other Provinces who are in the same position and who need special political representation to prevent their being suppressed by the higher castes. It was therefore perfectly proper for the representatives of the Backward Classes from the Hindus to have claimed special representation for themselves.^[15] If their point of view had been accepted the total number of Depressed Classes would have swelled to enormous proportions.

But they received no support either from the Untouchables or from the high caste Hindus. The Hindus were opposed to the move which was calculated to increase the population of the Depressed Classes. The Untouchables did not want to be included in their category any class of people who were not really Untouchables. The proper course for these backward communities was to have asked to make a division of Touchable Hindus into advanced and backward and to claim separate representation for the Backward.

In that effort the Untouchables would have supported them. But they did not agree to this and persisted in being included among the Depressed Classes largely because they thought that this was easier way of securing their object. But as the Untouchables opposed the backward communities turned and joined the Hindus in denying the existence of Untouchables, more vehemently than the Hindus.

In this struggle between the Touchables and Untouchables the latter did not get any support from the Mahomedans. It will be noticed that in the Punjab Provincial Franchise Committee, only one Mahomedan supported the representative of the Untouchables in his assertion that there are in the Punjab communities, which are treated as Untouchables. The rest of the Mahomedan members of the Committee did not join. In Bengal the Hindu and the Mahomedan members of the Bengal Provincial Franchise Committee agreed not to express any view on the matter.

It is rather strange that the Mahomedans should have kept mum. It was in their interest that the Untouchables should be recognized as a separate political community. This separation between the Touchables and the Untouchables was to their benefit. Why did they not help the Untouchables in this struggle for numbers? There were two reasons why the Mahomedans took this attitude. In the first place the Mahomedans were asking for more than their population ratio of representation. They were asking for what in Indian political parlance is known as weightage.

They knew that their weightage must involve a loss to the Hindus and the only question was which section of the Hindus should bear the loss. The Touchable Hindus

would not mind the weightage if it could be granted without reducing their share. How to do this was the problem and the only way out of it was to reduce the share of the Untouchables. To reduce the share meant to reduce the population. This is one reason why the Mahomedans did not help the Untouchables in this struggle for numbers. The second reason why the Mahomedans did not help the Untouchables was the fear of exposure by the Hindus. Although Islam is the one religion which can transcend race and colour and unite diverse people into a compact brotherhood, yet Islam in India has not succeeded in uprooting caste from among the Indian Musalmans. Caste feeling among the Musalmans is not so virulent as it is among the Hindus. But the fact is that, it exists. That this caste feeling among the Musalmans leads to social gradation, a feature of the Muslim Community in India, has been noticed by all those who have had an occasion to study the subject. The Census Commissioner for Bengal in his report says: (*The quotation is not recorded in the MS.—Ed.*)

These facts are quite well known to the Hindus and they were quite prepared to cite them against the Muslims if the Muslims went too far in helping the Untouchables in this struggle for numbers and thereby bringing about a diminution of the seats for Caste Hindus in the Legislature. The Mahomedans knew their own weak points. They did not wish to give an excuse to the Hindus to rake up the social divisions among the Musalmans and thought that their interest would be best served by their taking a non-partisan attitude.

The Untouchables were thus left to themselves to fight for their numbers. But even they could not be depended upon to muster for the cause. When the Hindus found that they could not succeed in reducing the number of the Untouchables, they tried to mislead the Untouchables. They began telling the Untouchables that Government was making a list of the Untouchable communities and it was wrong to have a community's name entered in such list because it would perpetuate untouchability. Acting on this advice, many communities who were actually an Untouchable community would send a petition stating that it was not classed as Untouchable and should not be listed. Much effort had to be made to induce such communities to withdraw such petitions by informing them that the real purpose was to estimate their numbers in order to fix their seats in the Legislature.

Fortunately for all, this struggle is now over and the controversy is closed and the population of the Untouchables can never be open to dispute. The Untouchables are now statutorily defined. Who are Untouchables is laid down by a schedule to the Government of India Act 1935, which describes them as Scheduled Castes. But the struggle reveals a trait of Hindu character. If the Untouchables make no noise, the Hindu feels no shame for their condition and is quite indifferent as to their numbers. Whether they are thousands or millions of them, he does not care to bother. But if the Untouchables rise and ask for recognition, he is prepared to deny their existence,

repudiate his responsibility and refuse to share his power without feeling any compunction or remorse.

CHAPTER 2

THE REVOLT OF THE UNTOUCHABLES

The movement of the Untouchables against the injustice of the Hindu Social Order has a long history behind it, especially in Maharashtra. This history falls into two stages. The first stage was marked by petitions and protests. The second stage is marked by open revolt in the form of direct action against the Hindu Established Order. This change of attitude was due to two circumstances. In the first place it was due to the realisation that the petitions and protests had failed to move the Hindus. In the second place Governments had declared that all public utilities and public institutions are open to all citizens including the Untouchables. The right to wear any kind of clothes or ornaments are some of the rights which the British Indian Law gives to the Untouchables along with the rest. To these were added the rights to the use of public utilities and institutions, such as wells, schools, buses, trams. Railways, Public offices, etc., were now put beyond the pale of doubt. But owing to the opposition of the Hindus the Untouchables cannot make any use of them. It is to meet the situation, the Untouchables decided to change the methods and to direct action to redress their wrongs. This change took place about 1920.

I

Of such attempts at direct action only few can be mentioned so as to give an idea of the revolt of the Untouchables against the Hindu Social Order. Of the attempts made to vindicate the right to use the public roads, it is enough to mention one, most noteworthy attempt in this behalf was that made by the Untouchables of Travencore State in 1924 to obtain the use of the roads which skirted the temple at Vaikorn. These roads were public roads maintained by the State for the use of everybody, but on account of their proximity to the temple building, the Untouchables were not allowed to use certain sections, which skirted the temple too closely. Ultimately as a result of Satyagraha, the temple compound was enlarged and the road was realigned so that there the Untouchables even if they used it were no longer within the polluting distance of the temple.

I

Of the attempts made to vindicate the right to take water from the public watering places, it is enough to mention the case of the Chawdar Tank.

This Chawdar Tank is situated in the town of Mahad in the Kolaba District of Bombay Presidency. The tank is a vast expanse of water mainly fed by the rains and a few

natural springs. The sides of the tank are embanked. Around the tank there are small strips of land on all sides belonging to private individuals. Beyond this strip of land lies the Municipal road which surrounds the tank and beyond the road are houses owned by the Touchables. The tank lies in the heart of the Hindu quarters and is surrounded by Hindu residence.

This tank is an old one and no one knows who built it or when it was built. But in 1869 when a Municipality was established by the Government for the town of Mahad, it was handed over to the Municipality by the Government and has since then been treated as a Municipal i.e., public tank.

Mahad is a business centre. It is also the headquarters of a taluk. The Untouchables either for purposes of doing their shopping and also for the purpose of their duty as village servants had to come to Mahad to deliver to the taluka officer either the correspondence sent by village officials or to pay Government revenue collected by village officials. The Chawdar tank was the only public tank from which an outsider could get water. But the Untouchables were not allowed to take water from this tank. The only source of water for the Untouchables was the well in the Untouchables quarters in the town of Mahad. This well was at some distance from the centre of the town. It was quite choked on account of its neglect by the Municipality.

The Untouchables therefore were suffering a great hardship in the matter of water. This continued till matters got going. In 1923 the Legislative Council of Bombay passed a resolution to the effect that the Untouchable classes be allowed to use all public watering places, wells, Dharmashalas which are built and maintained out of public funds, or are administered by bodies appointed by Government or created by Statutes as well as public schools, courts, offices and dispensaries. Government accepted the resolution and issued the following orders:

"In pursuance of the foregoing Council Resolution the Government of Bombay are pleased to direct that all heads of offices should give effect to the resolution so far as it related to the public places, institutions belonging to and maintained by Government. The Collectors should be requested to advise the local bodies in their jurisdiction to consider the desirability of accepting the recommendations made in the Resolution." In accordance with this order of the Government, the Collector of Kolaba forwarded a copy thereof to the Mahad Municipality for consideration. The Mahad Municipality passed a resolution on 5th January 1924 to the effect that the Municipality had no objection to allow the Untouchables to use the tank. Soon after this resolution was passed there was held at Mahad, a Conference of Untouchables of the Kolaba District over which I presided. The Conference met for two days, the 18th and 20th March 1927. This was the first Conference of the Untouchables held in the Kolaba District. Over 2,500 Untouchables attended the Conference and there was great enthusiasm. On the first day of the Conference, I delivered my presidential address, in which I exhorted them to fight for their rights, give up their dirty and vicious habits and rise to full manhood.

Thereafter high caste Hindus who were present and, who held out that they were the friends of the Untouchables, addressed the gathering and told the Untouchables to be bold and exercise the right that is given to them by law. With this, the proceedings of the first day were closed. The subject committee met at night to consider the resolution to be moved in open conference the next day. In the Subject Committee, attention was drawn by some people to the fact that there was great difficulty at Mahad for the Untouchables in the matter of obtaining water for drinking purposes, and that this difficulty was felt particularly by the members of the Reception Committee of the Conference which had to spend Rs. 15 an enormous amount to employ caste Hindus to dole out water in sufficient quantity to satisfy the needs of those who had attended the Conference.

Next day on the 20th, the Conference met about 9 in the morning. The resolutions agreed upon in the Subject Committee were moved and passed by the Conference. It took about three hours in all. In the end one of my co-workers in moving a vote of thanks to the President and others who had helped to make the Conference a success referred to the question of the difficulty in the matter of getting water and exhorted the Untouchables present to go to the tank and exercise their right to take water from Chawdar tank, especially as the Municipality had by resolution declared it open to the Untouchables and that their Hindu friends were ready to help them. The Hindus who had exhorted them to be bold and begin fearlessly to exercise their rights, instantly realised that this was a bombshell and immediately ran away. But the effect upon the Untouchables was very different. They were electrified by this call to arms. To a man they rose and the body of 2,500 Untouchables led by me and my co-workers marched in a procession through the main streets. The news spread like wild fire while crowds thronged the streets to witness it.

The Hindu inhabitants of the town saw the scene. They were taken by storm. They stood aghast witnessing this scene which they had never seen before. For the moment they seemed to be stunned and paralysed. The procession in form of fours marched past and went to the Chawdar tank, and the Untouchables for the first time drank the water. Soon the Hindus, realising what had happened, went into frenzy and committed all sorts of atrocities upon the Untouchables who had dared to pollute the water. These atrocities will be narrated in their proper places.

The assault committed by the Hindus on the Untouchables at Mahad when they entered the Chawdar tank was undoubtedly a challenge to the Untouchables. The Untouchables on the other hand were determined not to be satisfied with merely exercising their right but to see it established. They naturally felt that they must take up the challenge thrown at them by the Hindus. Accordingly a second Conference of the Untouchables was called. The Untouchables were told that they must come fully prepared for all eventualities for Satyagraha (i.e., for civil disobedience and even for going to gaol).

The Hindus, when they came to know of this, applied to the District Magistrate of Kolaba for issuing an order under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code against the Untouchables, prohibiting them from entering the Chawdar Tank and polluting its water. The District Magistrate refused and said that the tank was a public tank open to all citizens and he could not by law prevent the Untouchables from taking water therefrom. He advised them to go to a Court of law and get their right of exclusive user established. The dates fixed for the Conference were 25th, 26th, 27th of December 1927. As these dates drew near, and as they heard that the Untouchables were quite in earnest, and knowing that the District Magistrate had refused to come to their rescue, they did the only thing that was open to them, namely, to get their right to exclude the Untouchables from a public tank established by law. Accordingly, nine Hindus drawn from different castes joined as Plaintiffs in filing on 12th December 1927 a suit No. 405 of 1927 as representatives of the Hindus, in the Court of Sub-Judge of Mahad. I and four others were made defendants as representing the Untouchables. The suit was for obtaining a declaration 'that the said Chawdar tank is of the nature of private property of the Touchable classes only and that the Untouchable classes have no right to go to that tank nor take water therefrom and also for obtaining a perpetual injunction restraining the defendants from doing any of those acts.' On the same day on which the suit was filed, the plaintiffs applied to the Court for a temporary injunction against the defendants restraining them from going to the tank and taking water therefrom pending the decision of the suit. The judge holding that it was a fit case, granted a temporary injunction against me and the other defendants on the 14th December 1927.

The temporary injunction issued by the Judge was sent to Bombay and was served upon me two or three days before the Conferences actually met. There was no time to have consultation and no time to postpone the Conference either. I decided to leave the matter to the Conference to decide.

The Conference was called with the specific object of establishing the right to take water from the tank, which was challenged by the Hindus last time. The District Magistrate had left the way open. But here was a Judge who had issued an order banning such action. Naturally, when the Conference met, the first question it was called on to consider was whether to disobey the order of injunction issued by the Court and enter the tank. The District Magistrate who had been favourable to the Untouchables now took a different view. He explained his view very clearly to the Conference, which he came and addressed personally. He said that if the Civil Court had not issued an injunction, he would have helped the Untouchables in their attempt to enter the tank as against the caste Hindus, but that as the Sub-Judge had issued his order, his position had become different. He could not allow the Untouchables to go to the tank because such an act would amount indirectly to help them to break the order of His Majesty's Court with impunity. He therefore felt bound to issue an order prohibiting the Untouchables, should they insist on going to the tank notwithstanding the injunction

not because he wanted to favour the Hindus but because he was bound to maintain the dignity of the Civil Court by seeing to it that its order was respected.

The Conference took what the Collector had said into its consideration and also the reaction of the Hindus to the attempt of the Untouchables going to the tank in defiance of the order of the Court, which they had obtained. In the end, the Conference came to the conclusion that it was better and safer for them to follow law and see how far it helped them to secure their rights. It was therefore decided to suspend civil disobedience of the order of the Judge till the final decision of the suit.

The occasion for civil disobedience never came because the Untouchables won the suit and the Hindus lost it. One of the principal reasons which led the Untouchables to follow law and suspend civil disobedience was that they wanted to have a judicial pronouncement on the issue whether the custom of untouchability can be recognised by the Court of law as valid. The rule of law is that a custom to be valid must be immemorial, must be certain and must not be opposed to morality or public policy. The Untouchables' view is that it is a custom which is opposed to morality and public policy. But it is no use unless it is declared to be so by a judicial tribunal. Such a decision declaring the invalidity of the custom of untouchability would be of great value to the Untouchables in their fight for civil rights because it would seem illegal to import untouchability in civic matters. The victory of the Untouchables in the Chawdar tank dispute was very great. But it was disappointing in one way that the Bombay High Court did not decide the issue whether the custom of untouchability was valid or not. They decided the case against the Hindus on the ground that they failed to prove that the custom alleged by them in respect of the tank was not immemorial. They held that the custom itself was not proved. The tank became open to the Untouchables. But the Untouchables cannot be said to have gained their point. The main issue was whether the custom of untouchability was a legal custom. Unfortunately the High Court avoided to give judgement on that issue. The Untouchables had to continue their struggle.

IV

The next item in this history of direct action which is worthy of mention relates to the entry in the famous Hindu Temple at Nasik known as the Kala Ram Temple. These are instances of direct action aimed to achieve specific objects. The movement includes two cases of direct action aimed at the demolition of the Hindu Social Order by applying dynamite to its very foundations. One is the burning of the Manu Smriti and the second is the mass refusal by the Untouchables to lift the dead cattles belonging to the Hindus and to skin them.

The Burning of Manu Smriti took place at Mahad on the 20th of December 1927. The function was a part of the campaign for establishing the right to take water from the Chawdar tank. The Burning of the Manu Smriti took place publicly and openly in a Conference of Untouchables. Before burning the Manu Smriti, the Conference passed

certain resolutions. As these resolutions form a land mark in the history of the movement of the Untouchables they are given below:

"Resolution 1.—*Declaration of the rights of a Hindu.* This conference is firmly of opinion that the present deplorable condition of the Hindu Community is only an illustration of how a community becomes fallen by reason of its tolerating social injustice, following erroneous religious beliefs and supporting economic wrongs. The fall of the Hindu community is due entirely to the fact that the masses have not cared to know what are the birth-rights of a human being and much less have they cared to see that they are recognised and not set at naught the base acts and deeds of selfish people. To know what are these birth-rights of man and to endeavour to see that they are not trampled upon in the struggle between man and man and class and class, are the sacred duties of every person. In order that every Hindu may not know what are in the opinion of the Conference the inalienable birthrights of man, this Conference resolves to issue the following proclamation containing a list thereof—

(i) All Hindus have the same social status from birth. This equality of social status is an attribute, which they retain till death. There may be distinctions and differences between them in point of their functions in society. But that must not cause differences in their social status. This Conference is therefore opposed to any action—whether in the political, economic or social field of life— which would result in producing a difference in social status.

(ii) The ultimate aim of all political, economic or social changes should be to maintain intact the equal status of all Hindus. That being the view of the Conference, the Conference strongly disapproves of all literature of the Hindus, whether ancient or modern, which supports in any way the pernicious doctrine of inequality underlying the Hindu social system.

(iii) All power is derived from the people. The privileges claimed by any class or individual have no validity if they are not granted by the people. This Conference therefore repudiates the social and religious privileges enjoyed by some classes of Hindus in as much as they are founded upon the Vedas, Smritis and Puranas and not upon the free consent of the people.

(iv) Every person is entitled as his birthright to liberty of action and speech. This liberty could be limited only for the purpose of saving the right of another person to his liberty and for no other purposes. Further this limitation can be imposed only with the sanction of the people and not by any injunction of the Hindu Shastras. This Conference therefore repudiates all restraints on religious, social and economic freedom imposed upon the thought and action of the Hindus in as much as they are imposed by the Shastras and not by the people.

(v) Hindus can be deprived of their rights other than their birthrights only by law. What is not prohibited by law, a Hindu must be free to do and what is not obligatory by law, a Hindu must not be forced to do. For this reason there must be no obstruction to persons

using public roads, public wells and tanks, public temples and all other public utilities. Persons, causing obstruction in matters where law has laid down no prohibition, are in the opinion of this Conference enemies of the public.

(vi) Law is not a command of an individual or a body of individuals. Law is the peoples prescription for change. That being so, law to be respected, must be made with the consent of ail and must have equal application to all without any distinction. Social divisions if they are necessary for the ends of society can only be made on the basis of worth and not of birth. This Conference repudiates the Hindu caste-system firstly as being detrimental to society, secondly as being based on birth and thirdly as being without any sanction from the people." The Second Resolution passed by the Conference was worked as follows:

" *Resolution No. 2.*—Taking into consideration the fact that the laws which are proclaimed in the name of Manu, the Hindu lawgiver, and which are contained in the Manu Smriti and which are recognised as the Code for the Hindus are insulting to persons of low caste, are calculated to deprive them of the rights of a human being and crush their personality. Comparing them in the light of the rights of men recognised all over the civilised world, this conference is of opinion that this Manu Smriti is not entitled to any respect and is undeserving of being called a sacred book to show its deep and profound contempt for it, the Conference resolves to burn a copy thereof, at the end of the proceedings, as a protest against the system of social inequality it embodies in the guise of religion." A cursory reading of these resolutions will show the line which the Conference adopted. Although the Conference met to redress a particular wrong, it showed that it was not going to be satisfied with the redress of petty wrongs. The Conference felt that the time had arrived for laying down the goal of the Untouchables. The goal laid down by it was far-reaching. The Conference proclaimed that the Untouchables wanted a complete overhauling of the Hindu social system. It proclaimed that this reconstruction must not be on the old foundation of Shastras. It proclaimed that whatever character of the new foundations, they must be consonant with justice and equity between Hindu and Hindu and to leave no doubt that in the matter of this reconstruction, they would not consent to the Hindu shastras being drawn upon. The Conference not only repudiated them but actually went to the length of burning them to ashes.

It was an echo of Voltare's denunciation of the Catholic Church of his time. For the first time a cry was raised against the Hindu Social Order "*Ecraze la Infame*". It is also clear that these resolutions were absolutely revolutionary in character.

The rock on which the Hindu Social Order has been built is the Manu Smriti. It is a part of the Hindu Scriptures and is therefore sacred to all Hindus. Being sacred it is infallible. Every Hindu believes in its sanctity and obeys its injunctions. Manu not only upholds caste and untouchability but gives them a legal sanction. The burning of the Manu Smriti was a deed of great daring. It was an attack on the very citadel of Hinduism. The

Manu Smriti embodied the spirit of inequality which is at the base of Hindu life and thought just as the Bastille was the embodiment of the spirit of the Ancient regime in France. The burning of the Manu Smriti by the Untouchables at Mahad in 1927 is an event which has the same significance and importance in the history of the emancipation of the Untouchables which the Fall of Bastille had in the liberation of the masses in France and Europe.

The second instance of direct action against the frame of the Hindu Social Order itself is the refusal to skin the dead animals belonging to the Hindus and carrying them.

One often hears the Untouchables being condemned for having brought upon themselves the curse of untouchability. The main ground on which this accusation rests is the adoption by the Untouchables as their occupation, the carrying of the dead animals of the Hindus and skinning them and eating the carrion.

Even so great a friend of the downtrodden as the Abe Dubois writing about the *Pariahs* of the Madras Presidency said:

" What chiefly disgusts other natives is the revolting nature of the food which the Pariahs eat. Attracted by the smell, they will collect in crowds round any carrion and contend for the spoil with the dogs, jackals, crows and other carnivorous animals. They then divide the semi-putrid flesh and carry it away to their huts, where they devour it, often without rice or anything else to disguise the flavour. That the animal should have died of disease is of no consequence to them, and they sometimes secretly poison cows or buffaloes so that they may subsequently feast on the foul, putrefying remains. The carcasses of animal's that die in a village belong by right to the *thoti* or scavenger, who sells the flesh at a very low price to the other Pariahs in the neighbourhood. When it is impossible to consume in one day the stock of meat thus obtained, they dry the remainder in the sun, and keep it in their huts until they run short of their food. There are few Pariah houses where one does not see festoons of these horrible fragments hanging up; and though the Pariahs themselves do not seem to be affected by the smell, travellers passing near their village quickly perceive it and can tell at once the caste of the people living there....

Is it to be wondered at, after what has been just stated that other castes should hold this in abhorrence? Can they be blamed for refusing to hold any communication with such savages, or for obliging them to keep themselves aloof and to live in the separate hamlets?...."

It is true that this occupation has created a feeling of repugnance against the Untouchables in the mind of the Hindus. But the Abe or those who adopt his reasoning forget to raise two very important questions. First is why do the Untouchables eat carrion? Will the Hindus allow the Untouchables the freedom to give up skinning and carrying their dead animals? The answer to the question why the Untouchables eat carrion has already been given in previous chapters.

No one would prefer carrion to flesh meat if it is available. If the Untouchables have been living on carrion it is not because they like it. They eat carrion, because there is nothing else on which they can live. This will be clear to anyone who realises that on account of untouchability they have no way left to earn a living. All professions have been closed to them. There is no land on the produce of which they can live. There is no trade, which they can engage in. Their main stay is therefore the food they collect from the villagers and the carrion, which is left to them. Without carrion they would literally die of starvation. It is therefore clear that the fault does not lie with the Untouchables. If the Untouchables eat carrion it is because the Hindus have left no honourable way of earning a living open to them.

To the second question the answer is equally clear. If the Untouchables skin and carry the dead animals of the Hindus, it is because the Untouchables have no choice. They are forced to do it. They would be penalised if they refused to do it. The penalty is legal. In some provinces the refusal to do this dirty work is a breach of contract. In other provinces it is a criminal offence involving fines. In

Provinces like Bombay the Untouchables are village servants. In their capacity as village servants they have to serve the Government as well as the Hindu public. In return for this service they are given lands which they cultivate and on the produce of which they maintain themselves. One of the duties of the Untouchables is to skin and carry the dead animals of the Hindus in the villages. If the Untouchables refuse to perform these duties to the Hindu public, the land which they live on is liable to be confiscated. They have to choose between doing the dirty work or facing starvation.

In Provinces like the United Provinces, refusal to do scavenging by sweeper is made an offence. The United Provinces Municipalities Act II of 1916 contains the following provisions:

Section 201(1).—" Should a sweeper who has a customary right to do the house-scavenging of a house or building (hereinafter called the customary sweeper) fail to perform such scavenging in a proper way, the occupier of the house or building or the board may complain to a Magistrate."

(2) "The Magistrate receiving such complaint shall hold an inquiry and should it appear to him that the customary sweeper has failed to perform the house-scavenging of the house or building in a proper way or at a reasonable intervals, he may impose upon such a sweeper a fine which may extend to ten rupees, and upon a second or any later conviction in regard to the same house or building, may also direct, the right of the customary sweeper to do the house scavenging the house or building to be forfeited and thereupon such right shall be forfeited."

Exactly similar provision is to be found in Section 165 of the Punjab Municipalities Act of 1911. The Punjab Act is an advance over the U. P. Act, in as much as it provides for punishment of a sweeper who is not customary sweeper but a contract-sweeper. The Punjab Act adds:

" (3) Should any sweeper (other than a customary sweeper), who is under a contract to do house-scavenging of a house or a building, discontinue to do such house-scavenging without fourteen days' notice to his employer or without reasonable cause, he shall on conviction be punishable with a fine which may extend to Rs. ten."

"227. Every order of forfeiture under Section 165 shall be subject to an appeal to the next superior court, but shall not be otherwise open to appeal."

People may be shocked to read that there exists legal provision which sanctions forced labour. Beyond doubt, this is slavery. The difference between slavery and free labour lies in this. Under slavery a breach of contract of service is an offence which is punishable with fine or imprisonment. Under free labour a breach of contract of service is only a civil wrong for which the labourer is liable only for damages. Judged in the light of this criterion, scavenging is a legal obligation imposed upon the Untouchables which they cannot escape.

Given these conditions, how can the Untouchables be accused of doing these dirty work voluntarily?

The question whether the Untouchables can be accused of having invited the curse of untouchability upon themselves for doing the dirty work of the Hindus is really beside the point. What is important to note is that the Conference of the Untouchables which met in Mahad resolved that no Untouchable shall skin the dead animals of the Hindus, shall carry it or eat the carrion. The object of these resolutions was two-fold. The one object was to foster among the Untouchables self-respect and self-esteem. This was a minor object. The major object was to strike a blow at the Hindu Social Order. The Hindu Social Order is based upon a division of labour which reserves for the Hindus clean and respectable jobs and assigns to the Untouchables dirty and mean jobs and thereby clothes the Hindus with dignity and heaps ignominy upon the Untouchables. The resolution was a revolt against this part of the Hindu Social Order. It aimed at making the Hindus do their dirty jobs themselves.

This is a brief summery of the history of the revolt of the Untouchables against the established order of the Hindu. It originated in Bombay. But it has spread to all parts of India.

CHAPTER 3

HELD AT BAY

- I. Hindu reaction to the revolt of the untouchables.
- II. Lawless means for ruthless repression.
- III. Untouchables, a weak force.
- IV. Officers who are shameless partisans.
- V. A weapon which is made blunt.

The story of the revolt of the Untouchables tells how the old is ringing out and the new is ringing in. What is the reaction of the Hindus to this revolt? No one who knows anything about it can have any hesitation in answering this question. For it is clear that his attitude is one of opposition. It might be difficult to understand why the Hindus should oppose. But there can be no manner of doubt that he is opposed.

The reasons why the Hindus are opposed to this fight for rights of the untouchables for their rights will not be difficult to understand if certain important features of the relationship that is now subsisting between the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables are borne in mind.

The first and foremost consideration that must never be forgotten is the sharp division between the Touchables and the Untouchables. Every village has two parts, the quarters of the Touchables and quarters of the Untouchables. Geographically the two are separate. There is always an appreciable distance between the two. At any rate there is no contiguity or proximity between them. The Untouchables have a distinct name for their quarters such as Maharwada, Mangwada, Chamrotti, Khaykana, etc. *De Jure* for the purposes of revenue administration or postal communication the quarters of the Untouchables are included in the village. But *de facto* it is separate from the village. When the Hindu resident of a village speaks of the village he means to include in it only the Caste Hindu residents and the locality occupied by them. Similarly when the Untouchable speaks of the village he means to exclude from it the Untouchables and the quarters they occupy. Thus, in every village the Touchables and Untouchables form two separate groups. There is nothing common between them. They do not constitute a folk. This is the first thing, which must be noted.

The second things to note with regard to this division of the village into two groups is that these groups are real corporations which, no one included within them, can escape. As has been well said the American or European belongs to groups of various kinds, but he "joins" most of them. He of course is born into a family, but he does not stay in it all his life unless he pleases. He may choose his own occupation, residence, wife, political party, and is responsible, generally speaking, for no one's acts but his own. He is an "individual" in a much fuller sense because all his relationships are settled by himself for himself. The Touchables or Untouchables are in no sense individuals because all or nearly all of their relationships are fixed when they are born in a certain group. Their occupation, their dwelling, their gods and their politics are all determined for them by the group to which they belong. When the Touchables and Untouchables meet, they meet not as man to man, individual to individual, but as members of groups or as nationals of two different states.

This fact has an important effect upon the mutual relationship between the Touchables and Untouchables in a village. The relationship resembles the relationship between different clans in primitive society. In primitive society the member of the clan has a

claim, but the stranger has no standing. He may be treated kindly, as a guest, but he cannot demand "justice " at the hands of any clan but his own. The dealing of clan with clan is a matter of war or negotiations, not of law; and the clanless man is an outlaw, in fact as well as in name, and lawlessness against the stranger is therefore lawful. The Untouchable, not being a member of the group of Touchables, is a stranger. He is not a kindred. He is an outlaw. He cannot claim justice nor any rights which the Touchable is bound to respect.

The third thing to note is that the relationship between the two, the Touchables and the Untouchables, has been fixed. It has become a matter of status. This status has unmistakably given the Untouchables a position of inferiority *vis-a-vis* the Touchables. This inferiority is embodied in a code of social conduct to which the Untouchables must conform. What kind of code it is, has already been stated. The Untouchable is not willing to conform to that code. He is not prepared to render unto Caesar what is claimed by Caesar. The Untouchable wants to have his relationship with the Touchables by contract. The Touchable wants the Untouchables to live in accordance with the rules of status and not rise above it. Thus, the two halves of the village, the Touchables and the Untouchables, are now struggling for resettling what the Touchable thinks is settled forever. The conflict is centred round one question—What is to be the basis of this relationship? Shall it be contract or shall it be status?

That is the question, which is agitating the Hindus. The Hindu does not look at the revolt of the Untouchables as an attempt on the part of the latter for social and economic improvement of their people. He looks at it as an attempt directed against him, an attempt to equalise. That is why he is opposed.

II

The opposition of the Hindus is a determined opposition bent on stamping out the revolt at any cost. In this, they are prepared to use any means and to go to any length. This revolt of the Untouchables has been met with equally determined attack on the part of the Hindus. How cruel the Hindus can be in suppressing this revolt of the Untouchables will appear from one or two cases.

On the occasion of the entry of the Untouchables in the Chawdar Tank at Mahad, in the exercise of their right to take water from a public place, the assault made upon the Untouchables who had attended the Conference and taken part in the march upon the Tank has been described in the Bombay Chronicle in the following terms:

"The procession was a most peaceful one and everything passed off quietly. But after about two hours some evil minded leaders of the town raised a false rumour that the depressed classes were planning to enter the temple of Vireshwar, whereupon a large crowd of riffraff had collected all armed with bamboo sticks. The crowd soon became

aggressive and the whole town at once became a surging mass of rowdies, who seemed to be out for the blood of the depressed classes.

The depressed classes were busy in taking their meal before dispersing to their village. When a large part of them had left the town, the rowdies entered the kitchen where the depressed classes were taking their food. There would have been a regular battle between the two forces, but the depressed classes were held back by their leaders, and thus a far more serious riot was averted. The rowdies, finding no occasion for provocation, began patrolling the main street and assaulting the members of the depressed classes who, in stray batches, were passing along on their way to their villages, and committed trespass in the houses of several depressed class people and gravely assaulted them. In all, the number of wounded among the depressed classes is supposed to be as large as 20. In this, the attitude of the depressed classes was as commendable as the attitude of many of the upper classes was unworthy. The depressed classes assembled vastly outnumbered the upper classes. But as the object of their leaders was to do everything in a non-violent and absolutely constitutional manner, they set their faces against any aggression on the part of the depressed classes. It speaks a great deal in favour of the depressed classes, that, although the provocation given to them was immense, they kept their self-control. The Mahad Conference has shown that the upper classes are not willing to allow the depressed classes to enjoy such elementary civic rights as taking water from public water sources.

The most reprehensible part of the conduct of the upper caste Hindus in Mahad and Kolaba district was that, messages were sent immediately to the different villages asking the upper class people there to punish the delegates of the Conference as soon as they returned to their respective villages. In obedience to this mandate, assaults were committed on a number of Mahars returning from the Conference either before or after they reached their villages, where the depressed classes have the disadvantage of being overwhelmingly outnumbered by the upper caste Hindus. The leaders of the Depressed Classes have appealed to the authorities for protection and the District officials, including the District Superintendent of Police are making inquiries on the spot. It must, however be stated that, if the Resident Magistrate had not allowed two precious hours to pass without doing anything, the riot would have probably been averted."

The assault committed on the Untouchables as a result of the Kalaram Temple Satyagraha was no less severe.

The third instance is more recent and occurred in the year 1935 in the village of Kavitha in Dholka Taluka of the Ahmedabad District of the Bombay Presidency.

The Bombay Government having issued orders requiring the admission of the children of the Untouchables in public schools, it is reported that :

"On August 8th, 1935, the Untouchables of the village Kavitha took four of their children to be admitted in the village school. Many caste Hindus from the village had gathered near the school to

1 This account of the incident is a translation of the Statement sent to me by the Secretary of the Nava Yuga Mandal of Dholka witness this. This occasion for admission passed off quietly and nothing untoward happened."

The next day however the caste Hindus of the village withdrew their children from the school, as they did not like their children sitting with those of the Untouchables and getting themselves polluted.

Some time thereafter, an Untouchable from the village was assaulted by a Brahmin. On August 12th. the male members of the Untouchables of the village had come to Dholka to file a criminal complaint against the Brahmin in the Court of the Magistrate. Coming to know that the adult members of the Untouchables were absent, the Hindus of the village invaded the quarters of the Untouchables. They were armed with sticks, spears and swords. Among the invaders were caste Hindu women. They started attacking the old men and women of the Untouchables. Some of these victims fled to the jungles some shut themselves up. These invaders directed their vehemence against those Untouchables who were suspected of having taken a lead in the matter of the admission of their children in the village school. They broke open their doors and not finding them in, they broke the tiles and rafters of the roofs over their houses.

Terror-stricken, these Untouchable men and women who are assaulted and beaten were anxious about the safety of those of their elders who had gone to Dholka and who were expected back that night. The caste Hindus knowing that the leaders of the Untouchables who had gone to Dholka would be returning sometime in the night went out of the village fully armed to assault them and had concealed themselves behind the bushes and shrubs on the way to the village. Having come to know of this, an old Untouchable woman crept out of the village in the dark, met the leaders who were returning and informed them that armed gangs of caste Hindus were hiding themselves to waylay them and that therefore they should not come into the village.

They refused to listen, fearing that the caste Hindus might do greater mischief in their absence. At the same time they were afraid that if they did enter they might be assaulted. They therefore decided to wait outside the village in the fields till after midnight. In the meantime, the gang of caste Hindus who were in ambush waited and waited and finally gave up the game and retired. The leaders of the Untouchables entered the village after about 3 a.m. in the night. If they had come earlier and met the murderous gang they would probably have been done to death. On seeing the harm done to person and property, they left the village for Ahmedabad before daybreak and informed the Secretary of the Harijan Seva Sangh, a body organised by Gandhi to look after the welfare of the Untouchables. But the Secretary was helpless. Not only did the caste Hindus use physical violence, but they conspired to make the life of the Untouchables intolerable. They refused to engage them as labourers; they refused to sell them foodstuff. They refused to give them facilities for grazing their cattle and they committed stray assaults on Untouchable men and women. Not only this, but the caste

Hindus in their frenzy poured kerosene oil in the well from which the Untouchables had to get their supply of drinking water. This they did for days together. The result was that the Untouchables of the village had no water. When things reached this stage, the Untouchables thought of filing a criminal complaint before a Magistrate which they did on 17th October, making some of the caste Hindus as the accused. The strange part of the case is the part played by Gandhi and his Lieutenant, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. With all the knowledge of tyranny and oppression practised by the caste Hindus of Kavitha against the Untouchables, all that Mr. Gandhi felt like doing, was to advise the Untouchables to leave the village. He did not even suggest that the miscreants should be hauled up before a Court of Law. His henchman, Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, played a part which was still more strange.

He had gone to Kavitha to persuade the caste Hindus not to molest the Untouchables. But they did not even give him a hearing. Yet this very man was opposed to the Untouchables hauling them up in a court of law and getting them punished. The Untouchables filed the complaint notwithstanding his opposition. But he ultimately forced them to withdraw the complaint against the caste Hindus making some kind of a show of an undertaking not to molest, an undertaking, which the Untouchables can never enforce. The result was that the Untouchables suffered and their tyrants escaped with the aid of Mr. Gandhi's friend, Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel.

This systematic suppression of the Untouchables is resorted to by the caste Hindus even in small matters such as the wearing of better clothes or the wearing of jewellery. Two such instances may be cited.

III

To whom the victory will go in the end is an interesting speculation, and those who are leading the movement of the Untouchables, are carefully watching the situation. Whatever the ultimate result, one thing is plain, that in this struggle, the odds are heavily against the Untouchables.

In this conflict with the Hindus, the Untouchables are always at bay. As against caste lawlessness, the Untouchables are always helpless. The question is, why are the Untouchables always beaten, why are they always at bay? The question is an important question and needs to be answered.

The reasons why the Untouchables are at bay in this struggle with the caste Hindus are quite obvious. The first reason is that the two groups are unequally matched so far as numbers are concerned. In no village do the Untouchables constitute a considerable body of people as compared with the Caste Hindus. Most often they are composed of a few families and their number is very small, too small to give them any power to repel an attack of the caste Hindus. Although the Untouchables number 50 millions, which appears in lump to be a formidable figure, in fact they are scattered all over the villages

in India so that in each village they form a small minority pitted against a great majority of the caste Hindus. Strategically speaking the forces are so badly distributed that they cannot but be overwhelmed by the caste Hindus.

The Mahomedans in the village of some provinces are in the same position as the Untouchables so far as numbers are concerned. They are also scattered throughout the villages and in some villages the population of the Mahomedans is much smaller than the population of the Untouchables. Yet the Mahomedans are not subjected by the Hindus to the disabilities and the indignities to which the Untouchables are subjected. This is rather strange, because there is as deep an antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims as there is between the Hindus and the Untouchables. This difference in treatment is due to an advantage which the Muslims have but which the Untouchables do not have.

It was a rule in all ancient societies that a stranger was sacred. His person must be guarded from insult and injury. The Romans had their *dii hospitales* and the duties towards a stranger were even more stringent than those towards a relative. " He who has a spark of caution in him," says Plato " will do his best to pass this life without sinning against the stranger." It is strange that so much sanctity should have been attached to the person of a stranger. There is no doubt that this sanctity of the stranger's person was not due to pure kindness. The whole conduct of group life is opposed to a general spirit of consideration for those who are outside the group. The real reason why the stranger was treated as sacred and his person inviolate was because he belonged to a hostile group, and any injury to him was sure to lead to bloodshed. It was the fear of a blood feud, which was the cause of this attitude towards the stranger.

The same thing applies to the Mahomedan in a village. In the eyes of the Hindus he is a stranger. But the Hindus dare not molest him because they know that any injury to him will be avenged by Muslims in a blood feud with the Hindus. The communal riots between the Hindus and Mahomedans are really blood feuds and they are caused by some injury done to a Mahomedan or to some Mahomedan interests. It is this fear of a blood feud, which makes the life of a Muslim in a Hindu village safe.

There is nobody to avenge an injury done to an Untouchable. There is no fear of a blood feud. The Hindus therefore can commit any wrong against the Untouchables with impunity. This is because the Mahomedans are a solid mass, held together with a deep consciousness of kind, ready to act as one man to vindicate any wrong to the community or to a member thereof. The Untouchables, on the other hand, are a disunited body, they are infested with the caste system in which they believe as much as does the caste Hindu. This caste system among the Untouchables has given rise to mutual rivalry and jealousy and it has made common action impossible. The Mahomedans have also a caste system among themselves. Like the Untouchables they are also scattered all over the country. But their religion is a strong unifying force, which

gives them the feeling that, if they are parts, they are parts of one Muslim Community. There is nothing to instil such a feeling among the Untouchables. In the absence of any unifying force, the Untouchables are just fragments with no cement to bind them and their numbers are therefore of no advantage to them.

A large majority of the Untouchables in the villages are either village servants or landless labourers. As village servants, they depend upon the Hindus for their maintenance, and go from door to door every day and collect bread or cooked food from the Hindus in return for certain customary services rendered by them to the Hindus. This is a part of their remuneration. A part also of their remuneration consists in quantities of grain given to them by the Hindus at the harvest time. Whenever there is a disagreement between the Hindus and the Untouchables, the first thing the Hindus do is to stop giving bread, stop the payment of the harvest share and stop employing the Untouchables on any job. The result is that the struggling hoards of the Untouchables are face to face with starvation.

The Untouchables have no way of earning a living open to them in a village. He cannot do any business such as selling milk or vegetables. Because he is an Untouchable no one will buy these things from him. He cannot take to any trade because, all trades being hereditary, no one will accept his service. His economic dependence upon the Hindu is complete and the Hindu takes a complete advantage of it whenever the Untouchables prove arrogant, or naughty in the eyes of the Touchables.

Not only is the Untouchable dependent upon the Touchable for earning his livelihood but the Untouchable is also dependent upon the Touchables for the purchase of his necessaries of life. In a village all shops belong to the Touchables. Trade is, and must necessarily be, in the hands of the Touchables. An Untouchable has to depend upon the Touchable shopkeepers for their shopping. If the Touchable shopkeeper is willing to sell, the Untouchables can obtain the necessaries of life. If the shopkeeper refuses to sell, the Untouchable must starve although they might have money to live on. Now whenever any dispute arises between the Touchables and the Untouchables the one thing the Touchables never fail to do is to command the shopkeepers not to sell anything to the Untouchables. The Touchables constitute an organised conspiracy to bring about a cessation of all economic relationship with Untouchables. A war is proclaimed against the Untouchables. The means used for reducing the "enemy" is to send a "punitive expedition" consisting of rascals into the Untouchable quarters who ruthlessly carry on arson of destruction of property and shamelessly commit acts of violence against all including women and children.

The more common and the more effective weapons is the declaration of complete boycott against the offending Untouchables. The horrors of the boycott, which is merely another name for Gandhi's "noncooperation", can hardly be adequately described. The Committee appointed by the Government of Bombay to inquire into the grievances of the Backward Classes speaks of the social boycott in the following terms:

"Although we have recommended various remedies to secure to the Untouchables their rights to all public utilities we fear that there will be difficulties in the way of their exercising them for a long time to come. The first difficulty is the fear of open violence against them by the orthodox classes. It must be noted that the Untouchables are a small minority in every village, opposed to which is a great majority of the orthodox who are bent on protecting their interests and dignity from any supposed invasion by the Untouchables at any cost. The danger of prosecution by the police has put a limitation upon the use of violence by the orthodox classes and consequently such cases are rare.

The second difficulty arises from the economic position in which the Untouchables are found today. The Untouchables have no economic independence in most parts of the Presidency. Some cultivate lands of the orthodox classes as their tenants at will. Others live on their earnings as farm labourers employed by the orthodox classes, and the rest subsist on the food or grain given to them by the orthodox classes in lieu of service rendered to them as village servants. We have heard of numerous instances where the orthodox classes have used their economic power as a weapon against those Depressed classes in their villages, when the latter have dared to exercise their rights and have evicted them from their land, and stopped their employment and discontinued their remuneration as village servants. The boycott is often planned on such an extensive scale as to include the prevention of the Untouchables from using the commonly used paths and the stoppage of the sale of the necessaries of life by the village bania or shopkeeper. According to the evidence small causes suffice for the proclamation of a social boycott against the Untouchables. Frequently it follows on the exercise by the Untouchables of their right to the use of the common well, but cases have been by no means rare where stringent boycott has been proclaimed simply because an Untouchable man has put on a sacred thread, has bought a piece of land, has put on good clothes or ornaments, or has led a marriage procession with the bridegroom on the horse through the public street.

We do not know of any weapon more effective than this social boycott which could have been invented for the suppression of the Untouchables. The method of open violence pales away before it, for it has the most far reaching and deadening effects. It is the more dangerous because it passes as a lawful method consistent with the theory of freedom of contract. We agree that this tyranny of the majority must be put down with a firm hand if we are to guarantee to the Untouchables the freedom of speech and action necessary for their uplift."

IV

The third circumstance which adds to the helplessness of the Untouchables is the impossibility for the Untouchables to obtain any protection from the police or justice from

the courts. The police are drawn from the ranks of the caste Hindus. The Magistracy is drawn from the ranks of the Caste Hindus. The police and the magistracy are the kith and kin of the caste Hindus. They share the sentiments and the prejudices of the caste Hindus against the Untouchables. If an Untouchable goes to a police officer with a complaint against the caste

Hindus instead of receiving any protection he will receive plenty of abuse. Either he will be driven away without his complaint being recorded or, if it is recorded, it would be recorded quite falsely to provide a way of escape to the Touchable aggressors. If he prosecutes his offenders before a Magistrate the fate of his proceedings could be foretold. He will never get Touchable witnesses because of the conspiracy of the villagers. If he brings witnesses from the Untouchables the Magistrate will not accept their testimony because they are interested and not independent witnesses or, if they are independent witnesses, the Magistrate has an easy way of acquitting the accused by simply saying that the complainant Untouchable did not strike him as a truthful witness. He can do this fearlessly because he knows full well that the higher tribunal will not reverse his finding because of the well-established rule which says that an appellate court should not disturb the finding of a Magistrate based upon the testimony of witness whose demeanour he had observed. This fact has now been admitted even by Congress workers among the Untouchables.

The Annual Report of the Tamil Nad Harijan Sevak Sangh for the year ending September 30, 1937, says: "The political consciousness of the Harijan having been roused by the rights, in the remotest villages where it is only the policeman that reigns, it is not always possible for the Harijan to do this, for the assertion of his rights means a clash between him and the castemen, in which it is always the latter that have the upper hand. The natural consequence of this scuffle is a complaint either to the police or the magistrate. The latter course is beyond the means of a Harijan, while the former resort is worse than useless. The complaints are in many cases not inquired into at all, while in others a verdict favourable to the castemen is entered. Our complaints to the police also meet with similar fate. The trouble seems to us to be this : there is no change in the mentality of the lower policemen. Either he is unaware of the rights of the Harijans of which he is supposed to be the guardian, or he is influenced by castemen. Or it may also be that he is absolutely indifferent. In other cases corruption is responsible for this taking the side of the richer castemen". (Hindu, March 7, 1938).

This means that the official is anti-Untouchable and pro-Hindu. Whenever he has any authority or discretion it is always exercised to the prejudice of the Untouchable.

The police and the magistrate are sometimes corrupt. If they were only corrupt, things would not perhaps be so bad because an officer who is corrupt is open to purchase by either party. But the additional misfortune is that the police and magistrates are often more partial than corrupt. It is this partiality to the Hindus and his antipathy to the Untouchables, which results in the denial of protection and justice to the Untouchables.

There is no cure to this partiality to the one and antipathy to the other. It is founded in the social and religious repugnance, which is inborn in every Hindu. The police and the Magistrate by reason of their motives, interest and their breeding do not sympathise with the living forces operating among the Untouchables. They are not charged with the wants, the pains, the cravings and the desires, which actuate the Untouchables. Consequently they are openly hostile and inimical to their aspirations, do not help them to advance, disfavour their cause and snap at everything that smacks of pride and self-respect. On the other hand they share the feelings of the Hindus, sympathise with them in the attempt to maintain their power, authority, prestige and their dignity over the Untouchables. In any conflict between the two they act as the agents of the Hindus in suppressing this revolt of the Untouchables and participate quite openly and without shame in the nefarious attempt of all Hindus to do everything possible by all means, fair or foul, to " teach the Untouchables a lesson ", and hold them down in their own place.

The worst of it is that all this injustice and persecution can be perpetrated within the limits of the law. A Hindu may well say that he will not employ an Untouchable, that he will not sell him anything, that he will evict him from his land, that he will not allow him to take his cattle across his field, without offending the law in the slightest degree. In doing this he is only exercising his right. The law does not care with what motive he does it. The law does not see what injury it causes to the Untouchable. The police may misuse his power and his authority. He may deliberately falsify the record by taking down something which has not been stated or by taking down something which is quite different from what has been stated. He may disclose evidence to the side in which he is interested. He may refuse to arrest. He may do a hundred and one things to spoil the case. All this he can do without the slightest fear of being brought to book. The loopholes of law are many, and he knows them well. The magistrate has vested in him an enormous amount of discretion. He is free to use it. The decision of a case depends upon the witnesses who can give evidence. But the decision of the case depends upon whether the witnesses are reliable or not. It is open to the magistrate to believe one side and disbelieve the other side. He may be quite arbitrary in believing one side, but it is his discretion, and no one can interfere with it. There are innumerable cases in which this discretion has been exercised by the Magistrate to the prejudice of the Untouchables. However truthful the witnesses of the Untouchables, the magistrates have taken a common line by saying " I disbelieve the witnesses ", and no body has questioned that discretion. What sentence to inflict is also a matter of discretion with the magistrate.

There are sentences which are appealable and there are sentences which are non-appealable. An appeal is a way of getting redress. But this way may be blocked by a magistrate by refusing to give an appealable sentence. Such are the forces which are arrayed against the struggling Untouchables. There is simply no way to overcome them

because there is no legal way of punishing a whole society which is organized to set aside the law.

V

One way of lessening these difficulties they certainly cannot be overcome was open to the Untouchables. That way lay through politics and through effective use of political power. But in this matter the Untouchables have been foiled.

CHAPTER 4

THEIR WISHES ARE LAWS UNTO US

1. Adharma for Dharma.
- II. Manu and Dharma.
- III. Modern Counterparts.
- IV. Effect of Dharma on character and outlook.

Any one who reads of the lawlessness of the Hindus in suppressing the movement of the untouchables, I am sure will be shocked. Why does the Hindu indulge in this lawlessness is a question he is sure to ask and none will say that such a question will not be a natural question and in the circumstances of the case a very pertinent question—Why should an untouchable be tyrannized if he wears clean clothes ? How can it hurt a Hindu. Why should an untouchable be molested because he wants to put a tiled roof on his house ? How can it injure a Hindu? Why should an untouchable be persecuted because he is keen to send his children to school? How does a Hindu suffer thereby? Why should an untouchable be compelled to carry dead animals, eat carrion, and beg his food from door to door? Where is the loss to the Hindu if he gives these things up. Why should a Hindu object if an untouchable desires to change his religion? Why should his conversion annoy and upset a Hindu? Why should a Hindu feel outraged if an untouchable calls himself by a decent, respectable name? How can a good name taken by an untouchable adversely affect the Hindu? Why should the Hindu object if an untouchable builds his house facing the main road? How can he suffer thereby? Why should the Hindu object if the sound made by an untouchable falls upon his ears on certain days? It cannot deafen him. Why should a Hindu feel resentment if an untouchable enters a profession, obtains a position of authority, buys land, enters commerce, becomes economically independent and is counted among the well-to-do ? Why should all Hindus whether officials or non-officials make common cause to suppress the untouchables? Why should all castes otherwise quarreling among

themselves combine to make, in the name Hinduism, a conspiracy to hold the untouchables at bay?

All this of course sounds like a fiction. But one who has read the tales of Hindu tyranny recounted in the last chapter will know that beneath these questions there is the foundation of facts. The facts, of course, are stranger than fiction. But the strangest thing is that these deeds are done by Hindus who are ordinarily timid even to the point of being called cowards. The Hindus are ordinarily a very soft people. They have none of the turbulence or virulence of the Muslims. But, when so soft a people resort without shame and without remorse to pillage, loot, arson and violence on men, women and children, one is driven to believe that there must be a deeper compelling cause which maddens the Hindus on witnessing this revolt of the untouchables and leads them to resort to such lawlessness.

There must be some explanation for so strange, so inhuman a way of acting. What is it?

If you ask a Hindu, why he behaves in this savage manner, why he feels outraged by the efforts which the untouchables are making for a clean and respectable life, his answer will be a simple one. He will say: "What you call the reform by the untouchables is not a reform. It is an outrage on our Dharma". If you ask him further where this Dharma of his is laid down, his answer will again be a very simple one. He will reply, "Our Dharma is contained in our Shastras". A Hindu in suppressing what, in the view of an unbiased man, is a just revolt of the untouchables against a fundamentally wrong system by violence, pillage, arson, and loot, to a modern man appears to be acting quite irreligiously, or, to use the term familiar to the Hindus, he is practising *Adharma*. But the Hindu will never admit it. The Hindu believes that it is the untouchables who are breaking the *Dharma* and his acts of lawlessness which appear as *Adharma* are guided by his sacred duty to restore Dharma. This is an answer, the truth of which cannot be denied by those who are familiar with the psychology of the Hindus. But this raises a further question: What are these Dharma which the Shastras have prescribed and what rules of social relationship do they ordain ? II

The word *Dharma* is of Sanskrit origin. It is one of those Sanskrit words which defy all attempts at an exact definition. In ancient times the word was used in different senses although analogous in connotation. It would be interesting to see how the word *Dharma* passed through transitions of meaning [\[16\]](#). But this is hardly the place for it. It is sufficient to say that the word *dharma* soon acquired a definite meaning which leaves no doubt as to what it connotes. The word *Dharma* means the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of the Hindu community, as a member of one of the castes, and as a person in a particular stage of life. The principal sources of *Dharma*, it is agreed by all Hindus, are the Vedas, the *Smritis* and customs. Between the Vedas and *Smritis*, so far as *Dharma* is concerned, there is however this difference. The rules of *Dharma*, as we see them in their developed form,

have undoubtedly their roots in the Vedas, and it is therefore justifiable to speak of the Vedas as the source of Dharma. But the Vedas do not profess to be formal treatises on *Dharma*. They do not contain positive precepts (*Vidhis*) on matters of Dharma in a connected form. They contain only disconnected statements on certain topics concerned with *Dharma*. On the other hand, Smritis are formal treatises on Dharma. They contain enactments as to the Dharma. They form the law of the Dharma in the real sense of the term. Disputes as to what is Dharma and what is not Dharma (Adharma) can be decided only by reference to the text of the law as given in the Smritis. The Smritis form, therefore, the real source of what the Hindu calls Dharma, and, as they are the authority for deciding which is Dharma and which is not, the Smritis are called Dharmashastras (scriptures) which prescribe the rules of Dharma.

The number of Smritis which have come down from ancient times have been variously estimated. The lowest number is five and the highest a hundred. What is important to bear in mind is that all these Smritis are not equal in authority. Most of them are obscure. Only a few of them were thought to be authoritative enough for writers to write commentaries thereon. If one is to judge of the importance of a Smriti by the test as to whether or not it has become the subject matter of a commentary, then the Smritis which can be called standard and authoritative will be the Manu Smriti, Yajnavalkya Smriti and the Narada Smriti. Of these Smritis the Manu Smriti stands supreme. It is pre-eminently the source of all Dharma.

To understand what is the Dharma for which the Hindu is ready to wage war on the untouchables, one must know the rules contained in the Smritis, particularly those contained in the Manu Smriti. Without some knowledge of these rules, it would not be possible to understand the reaction of the Hindus to the revolt of the untouchables. For our purpose it is not necessary to cover the whole field of Dharma in all its branches as laid down in the Smritis. It is enough to know that branch of the Dharma which in modern parlance is called the law of persons, or to put it in non-technical language, that part of the Dharma which deals with right, duty or capacity as based on status.

I therefore propose to reproduce below such texts from Manu Smriti as are necessary to give a complete idea of the social organization recognized by Manu and the rights and duties prescribed by him for the different classes comprised in his social system.

The social system as laid down by Manu has not been properly understood and it is therefore necessary to utter a word of caution against a possible misunderstanding. It is commonly said and as commonly believed that what Manu does is to prescribe a social system which goes by the name of Chaturvarna a technical name for a social system in which all persons are divided into four distinct classes. Many are under the impression that this is all that the Dharma as laid down by Manu prescribes. This is a grievous error and if not corrected is sure to lead to a serious misunderstanding of what Manu has in fact prescribed and what is the social system he conceived to be the ideal system.

I think this is an entire misreading of Manu. It will be admitted that the divisions of society into four classes comprised within Chaturvarna is not primary with Manu. In a sense this division is secondary to Manu. To him it is merely an arrangement *inter se* between those who are included in the Chaturvarna. To many, the chief thing is not whether a man is a Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra. That is a division which has existed before him. Manu added, accentuated and stratified that difference. The division did not originate with him. But what did originate with Manu is a new division between (1) those who are within the pale of Chaturvarna and (2) those who are outside the pale of Chaturvarna. This new social division is original to Manu. This is his addition to the ancient Dharma of the Hindus. This division is fundamental to Manu because he was the first to introduce it and recognize it by the stamp of his authority.

The texts which have a bearing on the subject must therefore be arranged under two heads (1) texts relating to those who are within the Chaturvarna and (2) texts relating to those who are outside the Chaturvarna.

1. *Those within the Pale of the Chaturvarna. Their origin and their duties*

(1) (1) [\[f17\]](#) This (Universe) existed in the shape of Darkness, unperceived, destitute of distinctive marks, untenable by reasoning, unknowable, wholly immersed, as it were in a deep sleep.

(2) [\[f18\]](#) Then the divine self-existent (Svayambhu, himself) indiscernible (but making (all) this, the great elements and the rest discernible, appeared with irresistible (creative) power, dispelling the darkness.

(3) [\[f19\]](#) But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Shudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet.

(4) [\[f20\]](#) But in order to protect this Universe. He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet.

(5) [\[f21\]](#) To the Brahmans he assigned teaching and studying (the Vedas), sacrificing (performing sacrificial ceremonies) for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).

(6) [\[f22\]](#) The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.

(7) [\[f23\]](#) The Vaishya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money and to cultivate the land.

(8) [\[f24\]](#) One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes.

(9) [\[f25\]](#) A student, an apprentice, a hired servant, and fourthly an official; these must be regarded as labourers. Slaves are those who are born in the house and the rest.

(10) [f26]The sages have distinguished five sorts of attendants according to law. Among these are four sorts of labourers (mentioned above). The slaves (are the fifth category, of which they are) fifteen species.

(11) [f27]One born at (his master's) house; one purchased; one received by gift; one obtained by inheritance; one maintained during a general famine; one pledged by his rightful owner.

(12) [f28]One released from a heavy debt; one made captive in a fight; one won through a wager, one who has come forward declaring ' I am thine' an apostate from asceticism; one enslaved for a stipulated period.

(13) [f29]One who has become a slave in order to get a maintenance; one enslaved on account of his connection with a female slave; and one self sold. These are fifteen classes of slaves as declared in law.

(14) [f30]*Among these the four named first cannot be released from bondage, except by the favour of their owners. Their bondage is hereditary.*

(15) [f31]The sages have declared that the state of dependence is common to all these; but that their respective position and income depends on their particular caste and occupation.

2 Those outside the Pale of Chaturvarna. Their origin and their duties.

This is what Manu has to say about their origin and their position.

(1) [f32]All those tribes in this world, which are excluded from (the community of) those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet (of Brahman), are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the Mlekkhas (barbarians) or that of the Aryans.

(2) [f33]Near well-known trees and burial ground, on mountains and in groves, let these (tribes) dwell, known (by certain marks), and subsisting by their peculiar occupations.

(3) [f34]But the dwellings of the Chandalas and Shwapakas shall be outside the village, they must be made apapatras and their wealth (shall be) dogs and donkeys.

(4) [f35]Their dress (shall be) the garments of the dead, (they shall eat) their food from broken dishes, black iron (shall be) there ornaments, they must always wander from place to place.

(5) [f36]A man who fulfils a religious duty, shall not seek intercourse with them; their transactions (shall be) among themselves and their marriages with their equals.

(6) [f37]Their food shall be given to them by others (than an Aryan giver) in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in villages and in towns.

(7) [f38]By day they must go about for the purpose of their work, distinguished by marks at the King's command, and they shall carry out the corpses (of persons) who have no relatives, that is a settled rule.

(8) [f39]By the King's order they shall always execute the Criminals in accordance with the law, and they shall take for themselves the clothes, the beds and the ornaments of (such) criminals.

(9) [f40]He who has had connection with a woman of one of the lowest castes shall be put to death.

(10) [f41]If one who (being a member of the Chandalas or some other low caste) must not be touched, intentionally defiles by his touch one who (as a member of a twice born caste) may be touched (by other twice born persons only) he shall be put to death.

I have already said, that to Manu, this division between those who are within the pale of Chaturvama and those who are outside of it was a division which was real. It was so real that Manu calls those who were outside the pale of Chaturvama by the name *Bahayas* which means excluded i.e. excluded from or outside of the system of Chaturvama. It was a division to which he attached far reaching consequences. This division was intended to result in a difference of status and citizenship. It is true that all those who are within the pale of Chaturvarna are not all on the same level. Within the Chaturvarna there are the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and Slaves all unequal in status. Still they are within the Chaturvarna. Those within the Chaturvarna have a status in the eye of the law of Manu and a respect in the eye of the public. Those outside it have no respect in the eye of that society. The difference is also one of citizenship. Those within the Chaturvarna have rights to enjoy and remedies to enforce them. Those outside the Chaturvarna have no rights and no remedies.

This difference between those who are within the Chaturvarna and those outside of it have a kind of resemblance to the difference between *civics* i.e. citizens and *preregenis* or *hostis* i.e. non-citizens in the early Roman Law. The early law of Rome was essentially personal—not territorial. A man enjoyed the benefit of its institutions and of its protection, not because he happened to be within Roman territory, but because he was a citizen—one of those by whom and for whom its law was established. The story of the early *jus getium* was that a man sojourning within the bounds of a foreign state was at the mercy of the latter and its citizens; that he himself might be dealt with as a slave, all that belonged to him appropriated by the first comer. For he was outside the pale of the law. Under *the jus civile* the private rights which were peculiar to a Roman citizen were summed up in three abstract terms, *Conubium*, *Commercium* and *Actio*. *Conubium* was the capacity to enter into a marriage which would be productive of the *palua potestas* and agnation which in their turn were the foundation of intestate succession, guardianship etc. *Commercium* was the capacity for acquiring or alienating property. *Actio* was the capacity to bring a suit in a Court of law for the vindication, protection, or enforcement of a right either included in or flowing from *connubium* or *commercium*, or directly conferred by *statute*. These three capacities were enjoyed only by the Roman Citizens. A noncitizen was entitled to none of these rights.

The division between classes who are within the Chaturvarna and those who are without it though real and fundamental is undoubtedly archaic in its terminology. The system of Chaturvarna is no longer operative as law. It is therefore somewhat academic to speak of classes being within Chaturvarna and without Chaturvarna. The question will be asked, what are the modern counterparts of these ancient classes ? The question is perfectly legitimate especially as I have to explain how the ancient law of Manu is responsible for the present day lawlessness of the Hindus. Although I am using archaic language, two things will show that my thesis is true. The first is that the ancient social divisions of Manu are not without their counterpart in modern times.

The modern counterparts of those ancient divisions are Hindus and untouchables. Those whom Manu included within the Chaturvarna correspond to the modern composite class called Hindus. Those whom Manu called Bahayas (outside the Chaturvarna) correspond to the present day untouchables of India. The dividing line between the four classes—Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra—included within Chaturvarna have in modern times become some what blurred and there has been some degree of amalgamation between them. But the line which Manu drew between those within the Chaturvarna from those outside the Chaturvarna is still clear and is not allowed to be effaced or crossed.

That line is the line which at present separates the Hindus from the untouchables. The first thing that is clear is that the ancient divisions have descended to modern times. The only change is the change of names.

The second question is, has the law as laid down by Manu for the Bahayas any counterpart in the present day social relationship between the Hindus and the Untouchables ? To those who doubt I ask to take the following case into consideration. The incident has occurred in the Ramnad District of the Madras Presidency.

In December 1930 the Kallar in Ramanad propounded eight prohibitions, the disregard of which led to the use of violence by the Kallar against the untouchables whose huts were fired, whose granaries and property were destroyed, and whose livestock was looted. These eight prohibitions were as follows :—

- " (i) that the Adi-Dravidas shall not wear ornament of gold and silver;
- (ii) that the males should not be allowed to wear their clothes below their knees or above the hips;
- (iii) that their males should not wear coats or shirts or banyans; (iv) No Adi-Dravida should be allowed to have his hair cropped. (v) that the Adi-Dravidas should not use other than earthenware vessels in their homes;
- (vi) their women shall not be allowed to cover the upper portion of their bodies by clothes or ravukais or thavanies;
- (vii) their women shall not be allowed to use flowers or saffron paste; and

(viii) the men shall not use umbrellas for protection against sun and rain nor should they wear sandals ".

In June 1931, the eight prohibitions not having been satisfactorily observed by the exterior castes in question, the Kallar met together and framed eleven prohibitions, which went still further than the original eight, and an attempt to enforce these led to more violence.

These eleven prohibitions were :—

"1. The Adi-Dravidas and Devendrakula Vellalar? should not wear clothes below their knees.

2. The men and women of the above-said depressed classes should not wear gold jewels.

3. The women should carry water only in mud pots and not in copper or brass vessels. They should use straw only to carry the water pots and no clothes should be used for that purpose.

4. Their children should not read and get themselves literate or Educated.

5. The children should be asked only to tend the cattle of the Mirasdars.

6. Their men and women should work as slaves of the Mirasdars, in their respective Pannais.

7. They should not cultivate the land either on waram or lease from the Mirasdars.

8. They must sell away their own lands to Mirasdars of the village at very cheap rates, and if they don't do so, no water will be allowed to them to irrigate their lands. Even if something is grown by the help of rain water, the crops should be robbed away, when they are ripe for harvest.

9. They must work as coolies from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. under the Mirasdars and their wages shall be for men RS. 0-4-0 per day and for women Rs. 0-2-0 per day.

10. The above said communities should not use Indian Music (melam etc.) in their marriages and other celebrations.

11. They must stop their habit of going on a horse in procession before tying the Thali thread in marriage and they must use their house doors as palanquins for the marriage processions, and no vehicle should be used by them for any purpose". Compare these prohibitions laid down by the Hindus of Ramnad with the prohibitions contained in the texts of Manu quoted earlier in this chapter against the untouchables.

Is there any difference between the law laid down by Manu for the *Bahayas* and the conditions imposed upon the untouchables by the Kallars in 1931 ? After this evidence, who can doubt that the Hindu in doing what appears to be an Adharma to a non-Hindu is merely asking the untouchables to follow the Dharma as prescribed by Manu.

Take another case. Those of the Balais of the Central India. The Balais are an untouchable community. About the year 1927, the Balais started a campaign of social improvement of their community and had made rules prescribing that the members of their community should not do certain kinds of work which is degrading and should

dress in a certain manner. These rules did not in any way affect the interests of the Caste Hindus. But the Caste Hindus took offence at this effort of the Balais to raise themselves above the status prescribed by custom and they decided to deal a deadly blow to what they regarded as the insolence of the Balais. The following is the report which appeared in the papers of how the Caste Hindus dealt with the rebellious Balais.

[42]

Tyranny of Hindus Rules for Balais Mode of Life Laid Down

"Last May (1927) High Caste Hindus, viz, Kalotas, Rajputs and Brahmins, including the patels and putwaris of villages Kanaria, Bicholee Hafsi, Mardana and of about 15 other villages in the Indore District, informed the Balais of their respective village that if they wished to live among them, they must conform to the following rules:—

(1) Balais must not wear gold lace bordered pugrees; (2) they must not wear dhoties with coloured or fancy borders; (3) they must convey intimation of the death of any Hindu to relatives of the deceased—no matter how far away these relatives might be living; (4) in all Hindu marriages, the Balais must play music before the processions, and during the marriage; (5) the Balai women must not wear gold or silver ornaments; they must not wear fancy gowns, or jackets; (6) Balai women must attend all cases of confinement of Hindu women; (7) the Balais must render services without demanding remuneration, and must accept whatever a Hindu is pleased to give; (8) if the Balais do not agree to abide by these terms, they must clear out of the villages.

BALAIS REFUSE COMPLIANCE

"The Balais refused to comply; and the Hindu element proceeded against them. Balais were not allowed to get water from the village wells, they were not allowed to let their cattle graze. Balais were prohibited from passing through land owned by a Hindu; so that if the field of a Balai was surrounded by fields owned by Hindus, the Balai could have no access to his own field. The Hindus also led their cattle to graze down the fields of Balais. The Balais submitted petitions to the Darbar against these persecutions; but as they could get no timely relief, and the operation continued, hundreds of Balais, with their wives and children, were obliged to abandon their homes in which their ancestors lived for generations and migrate to adjoining States, viz., to villages in Dhar, Dewas, Bhopal, Gwalior and other States.

COMPULSORY AGREEMENT

" Only a few days ago the Hindus of Reoti village, barely seven miles to north of Indore City, ordered the Balais to sign a stamped agreement in accordance with the

rules framed against the Balais by the Hindus of other villages. The Balais refused to comply. It is alleged that some of them were beaten by the Hindus; and one Balai was fastened to a post, and was told that he would be let go on agreeing to sign the agreement. He signed the agreement and was released. Some Balais from this village ran up to the Prime Minister the next day, i.e. on the 20th December, and made a complaint about the ill treatment they received from the Hindu villagers of Reoti. They were sent to the Subha of the district. This officer, with the help of the police, made inquiries at the village, and recommended that action be taken against the Hindus under section 342 and 147 and against the Balais under section 147, Indian Penal Code.

**Balais leave villages
Caste Tyranny
Ignorance of law a handicap**

" There has been no improvement in the treatment of the Balais by the Hindu residents of certain villages. Balais, it has already been reported, have been ill treated by the higher caste Hindus. From the Dopalpur Pargana alone, Indore District, a large number of Balais have had to leave their homes and find shelter in adjoining States. The villages from which Balais have been forced to clear out are Badoli, Ahirkharal, Piploda, Morkhers, Pamalpur, Karoda, Chatwada, Newri, Pan, Sanauda, Ajnoti, Khatedi and Sanavada. Pamalpur village has been altogether deserted and not a Balai man, woman or child is to be found there. Nanda Balai a resident of one of the above villages, it is alleged, was severely beaten by the Hindus of the village. In one village, the report goes, the Hindus burnt down all the dwellings of the Balais but the offenders have not yet been traced.

" Balais are ignorant village folk, who are ignorant of legal procedure and think that if a petition is sent to the Sirkar all that is required will be done for them. They have not the knowledge; or the means and practices, to pursue a complaint to its end; and, as they, it is said in some cases, failed to attend or produce witnesses in support of their allegations, the magistrate had no alternative but to dismiss their complaint."

Looked at from the point of view of Dharma and Adharma, can it be doubted that underneath the lawlessness and ruthlessness of the Hindus in suppressing the revolt of the untouchables, they are actuated by what they think a noble purpose of preventing an outrage upon their Dharma ?

IV

It may well be asked how much of this Dharma of Manu now remains? It must be admitted that as law in the sense of rules which a Court of Judicature is bound to observe in deciding disputes, the Dharma of Manu has ceased to have any operative force-except in matters such as marriage succession etc. matters which affect only the

individual. As Law governing social conduct and civic rights it is inoperative. But if it has gone out as law, it remains as custom.

Custom is no small a thing as compared to Law. It is true that law is enforced by the state through its police power; custom, unless it is valid it is not. But in practice this difference is of no consequence. Custom is enforced by people far more effectively than law is by the state. This is because the compelling force of an organized people is far greater than the compelling force of the state.

Not only has there been no detriment to its enforceability on account of its having ceased to be law in the technical sense but there are circumstances which are sufficient to prevent any loss of efficacy to this Dharma of Manu.

Of these circumstances the first is the force of custom. There exists in every social group certain (habits^[43]) not only to acting, but of feeling and believing, of valuing, of approving and disapproving which embody the mental habitudes of the group. Every new comer whether he comes in the group by birth or adoption is introduced into this social medium. In every group there goes on the process of persistently forcing these mental habitudes of the group upon the attention of each new member of the group. Thereby the group carries on the socialization of the individual of the shaping of the mental and practical habits of the new comer. Being dependent upon the group he can no more repudiate the mental habitudes of the group than he can the condition and regulation of his physical environment. Indeed, so dependent the individual is on the group that he readily falls in line and allows the current ways of esteeming and behaving prevailing in the community, to become a standing habit of his own mind. This socializing process of the individual by the group has been graphically described by Grote. He says—

" This aggregate of beliefs and predispositions to believe, ethical, Religious, Aesthetical, and Social respecting what is true, or false, probable or improbable, just or unjust, holy or unholy, honourable or base, respectable or contemptible, pure or impure, beautiful or ugly, decent or indecent, obligatory to do, or obligatory to avoid, respecting the status and relations of each individual in the society, respecting even the admissible fashions of amusement and recreation—this is an established fact and condition of things, the real origin of which for the most part unknown, but which each new member of the group is born to and finds subsisting..... It becomes a part of each person's nature, a standing habit of mind, or fixed set of mental tendencies, according to which particular experience is interpreted and particular persons appreciated..... The community hate, despise or deride any individual member who proclaims his dissent from their social creed..... Their hatred manifests itself in different ways..... At the very best by exclusion from that amount of forbearance, good will and estimation without which the life of an individual becomes insupportable."^[44]

But what is it that helps to bring about this result ? Grote has himself answered this question. His answer is that, this is due to— " Nomos (Law and Custom), King of all "

(which Herodotus cites from Pindar) exercises plenary power, spiritual and temporal, over individual minds, moulding the emotions as well as the intellect, according to the local type.... and reigning under the appearance of habitual, self suggested tendencies.

What all this comes to is that, when in any community, the ways of acting, feeling, believing, or valuing or of approving and disapproving have become crystallised into customs and traditions, they do not need any sanction of law for their enforcement. The amplitude of plenary powers which the group can always generate by mass action is always ready to see that they are not broken.

The same thing applies to the Dharma laid down by Manu. This Dharma of Manu, by reason of the governing force which it has had for centuries, has become an integral and vital part of the customs and traditions of the Hindus. It has become ingrained and has given colour to their life blood. As law it controlled the actions of the Hindus. Though now a custom, it does not do less. It moulds the character and determines the outlook of generation after generation.

The second thing which prevents the Dharma of Manu from fading away is that the law does not prevent its propagation. This is a circumstance which does not seem to be present to the minds of many people. It is said that one of the blessings of the British Rule is that Manu Smriti has ceased to be the law of the land. That the Courts are not required to enforce the provisions contained in Manu Smriti as rules of law is undoubtedly a great blessing—which might not be sufficiently appreciated except by those who were crushed beneath the weight of this "infamous" thing. It is as great a blessing to the untouchables as the Reformation was to the peoples of Europe. At the same time it must be remembered that the Reformation would not have been a permanent gain if it had been followed by what is called the Protestant Revolution.

The essential features of the Protestant Revolution as I understand them are:

- (1) (1) That the state is supreme and the Church is subordinate to the state.
- (2) The doctrine to be preached must be approved by the state.
- (3) The clergy shall be servants of the state and shall be liable to punishment not only for offences against the general law of the land but also liable for offences involving moral turpitude and for preaching doctrines not approved of by the state. I am personally a believer in the "Established Church". It is a system which gives safety and security against wrong and pernicious doctrines preached by any body and every body as doctrines of religion. I know there are people who are opposed to the system of an "Established Church". But whether the system of an "Established Church" is good or bad, the fact remains that there is no legal prohibition against the propagation of the Dharma laid down by Manu. The courts do not recognize it as law. But the law does not treat it as contrary to law. Indeed every village every day. When Pandits are preaching it to parents and parents preach it to their children, how can Manu Smriti fade away ?

Its lessons are reinforced every day and no body is allowed to forget that untouchability is a part of their Dharma.

This daily propagation of the Dharma of Manu has infected the minds of all men and women young and old. Nay, it has even infected the minds of the judges. There is a case reported^[145] from Calcutta. A certain Dome (untouchable) by name Nobin Dome was prosecuted for theft of a goat. He was found to be not guilty. He filed a complaint for defamation against the complaint. The magistrate dismissed the complaint on the ground that as he was low caste man he had no reputation. The High Court had to intervene and direct the Magistrate that he was wrong in his view and that under the Penal Code all persons were equal. But the question remains, how did the Magistrate get the idea that an untouchable had no reputation ? Surely from the teaching of the Manu Smriti.

The Dharma of Manu had never been a mere past. It is as present as though it were enacted today. It bids fair to continue to have its sway in the future. The only question is whether its sway will be for a time or forever.

CHAPTER 5

UNDER THE PROVIDENCE OF MR. GANDHI

(1) His work through the Congress

1. A Strange Welcome.

II. The Great Repudiation.

III. A Charge Sheet.

IV. The Basis of the Charge Sheet.

V. The Tragedy of Gandhi.

VI. His Legacy to India and the Untouchables.

On the 28th December 1931, Mr. Gandhi returned to India from London where he had gone as a delegate to attend the second Session of the Indian Round Table Conference. At the Round Table Conference, Mr. Gandhi had been an utter, ignominious failure both as a personality and as a politician. I know that my opinion will not be accepted by the Hindus. But the unfortunate part is that my opinion in this respect coincides with the opinion of Mr. Gandhi's best friend. I will cite the opinions of two. This is what Mr. Ewer, who was closely associated with Mr. Gandhi during the Round Table Conference, wrote about the role Mr. Gandhi played at the Round Table Conference in London.

"Gandhi in the St. James Palace has not fulfilled the unwise expectation of those who saw him bestriding the Conference like a colossus He was out of his elements."

* * *

" His first speech, with its sentimental appeal, its over-stressing of humility, its reiteration of single-minded concern for the dumb suffering millions, was a failure. No one questioned its sincerity. But somehow it rang false. It was the right thing, perhaps, but it was in the wrong place. Nor were his later interventions on the whole more successful. A rather querulous complaint that the British Government had not produced a plan for the new Indian Constitution shocked some of Gandhi's colleagues, who had hardly expected to see the representative of the National Congress appealing to British Ministers for guidance and initiative. The protest against the pegging of the rupee to the pound was astonishingly ineffective. The contributions to the discussions on franchise and kindred matters were of little importance. Behind the scenes he was active enough in the Hindu-Moslem negotiations, but here, too, results were intangible. Not for a moment did Gandhi take the lead or materially influence the course of committee work. He sat there, sometimes speaking, sometimes silent, while the work went on, much as it would have gone on without him." ^[46]This is what Bolton has to say about Mr. Gandhi's achievement at the Round Table Conference.

How did Mr. Gandhi fare as a statesman and a politician? At the close of the first session of the Round Table Conference there were three questions which had not been settled. The question of minorities, the question of the Federal structure and the question of the status of India in the Empire, were the three outstanding problems, which were the subject matter of controversy. Their solution demanded great statesmanship. Many said that these questions were not settled because the wisdom and authority of the Congress was not represented at the Round Table Conference. At the second session, Mr. Gandhi came and made good the deficiency. Did Mr. Gandhi settle any of these unsettled problems? I think it is not unfair to say that Mr. Gandhi created fresh disunity in the Conference. He began the childish game of ridiculing every Indian delegate. He questioned their honesty, he questioned their representative character. He taunted the liberals as arm-chair politicians and as leaders without any followers. To the Muslims he said that he represented the Muslim masses better than they did. He claimed that the Depressed Class delegates did not represent the Depressed Classes and that he did. This was the refrain which he repeated *ad nauseum* at the end of every speech. The non-Congress delegates deserve the thanks of all honest people for their having tolerated this nonsense and arrogance of Mr. Gandhi and collaborated with him to save him and to save the country from his mistake. Apart from this discourtesy to fellow-delegates, did Mr. Gandhi stand up for the cause he came to champion? He did not. His conduct of affairs was ignominious. Instead of standing up and fighting he began to yield on issues on which he ought never to have ceased fire. He yielded to the Princes and agreed that their representatives in the Federal legislature should be nominated by them and not elected, as demanded by their subjects. He yielded to the conservatives and consented to be content with provincial autonomy and not to insist upon central responsibility for which many lakhs of Indians

went to gaol. The only people to whom he would not yield were the minorities — the only party to whom he could have yielded with honour to himself and advantage to the country.

Nothing has helped so much to shatter the prestige of Mr. Gandhi as going to the Round Table Conference. The spectacle of Mr. Gandhi at the Round Table Conference must have been painful to many of his friends. He was not fitted to play the role he undertook to play. No country has ever sent a delegate to take part in the framing of the constitution who was so completely unequipped in training and in study. Gandhi went to the Round Table Conference with a song of the saint Narsi Mehta on his tongue. It would have been better for him and better for his country if he had taken in his arm pit a volume on comparative constitutional law. Devoid of any knowledge of the subject he was called upon to deal with, he was quite powerless to destroy the proposals put forth by the British or to meet them with his alternatives. No wonder Mr. Gandhi, taken out of the circle of his devotees and placed among politicians, was at sea. At every turn he bungled and finding that he could not even muddle through, he gave up the game and returned to India.

How was Mr. Gandhi received when he landed on the Indian soil? It may sound strange to outsiders and to those who are not the devotees of Mr. Gandhi but it is a fact that when the *S. S. Pilsner* of the Lloyd Triestino entered the harbour of Bombay at 8 a.m. in the morning of the 28th December 1931 there came to receive him an enthusiastic crowd of men, women and children who had assembled at the Pier in tens of thousands to greet him, to welcome him back and to have his *Durshan*. The following extracts from the *Times of India* and the *Evening News* of Bombay will serve to give a vivid idea of the grandeur of this reception.

"The Pilsner was escorted into the harbour by Desh Sevikas (women volunteers of the Congress) in saffron coloured sarees who went out in launches some distance from the pier.

" The Congress Committee had asked the Bombay Flying Club to fly an Aeroplane or two over the Pilsner and drop garlands as she came along side the pier, but the Flying Club, sanely preferring to keep out of politics, refused to grant the Congress demand.

"The spacious Central Hall at Ballard Pier was decorated with festoons and Congress flags and a large dais was put up at the centre with chairs placed on all sides for representatives of various organisations, local and upcountry, who were given passes for admission.

" Both the approaches to the reception hall from the wharf and from the city were lined by Desh Sevikas waving national flags and the duty of guarding the dais and of regulating and directing the assembly inside the hall was also entrusted to the women volunteers.

"Mr. Gandhi reached the dais escorted by the Congress leaders and received an ovation. Hardly had he stepped on the dais when he began to be flooded with telegraph messages (presumably of welcome) which arrived one after another.

" Standing on the dais he was garlanded in turn by representatives of the public bodies who had assembled and whose names were called out from a long printed list of which copies were previously distributed.

"The proceedings inside the reception hall terminated with the garlanding.

" A procession was then formed in four, in place of the carriage which was intended to be the conveyance for Mr. Gandhi. He was seated in a gaily decorated motor car, with Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel to his left and Mr. Vitthalbhai Patel to his right and Mr. K. F. Nariman, President of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, on the front seat.

" Preceded by a pilot car and followed by others containing the Congress Working Committee members, the procession passed through the Ballard Pier Road, Hornby Road and Kalbadevi which had been decorated by the citizens at the instance of the Congress Committee and lined on either side by cheering crowds, five to ten deep till the party reached "*Mani Bhuvan, Gamdevi*". At no stage of this welcome did Mr. Gandhi open his lips to acknowledge it. This man of vows was under his Sunday vow of silence which had not run out till then and nor did he think that etiquette, good manners or respect for those who had assembled required that he should terminate his vow earlier.

The official historian of the Congress describes [\[f47\]](#) this reception given to Mr. Gandhi in the following terms:

" There were gathered in Bombay representatives of all parts and Provinces in India to accord a fitting welcome to the Tribune of the people. Gandhi greeted the friends that went on board the steamer to welcome him, patting many, thumping a few and pulling the venerable Abbas Tyabji by his beard. There was a formal welcome in one of the Halls of Customs House and then a procession in the streets of Bombay which kings might envy in their own country".

On reading this account one is reminded of the Irish Sein Fein Delegates who in 1921, just 10 years before, had gone to London at the invitation of Mr. Lloyd George for the settlement of the Irish Home Rule question. As is well known the Irish Delegates secured from the British Cabinet a treaty which was signed on the 8th December 1921. The Treaty was subsequently submitted for approval to the Dail, the Parliament of the Sein Fein Party which met from 14th December 1921 to 7th January 1922. On the 7th January a division was taken. There were 64 votes for ratifying the treaty and 57 against. And what was the reception given to the Irish delegates who secured this treaty? Arthur Griffith — who was the head of the Irish Delegation and Michael Collins who was his most prominent colleague, were both of them shot by the anti-treaty Sein Feiners, the former on the 12th and the latter on the 22nd August 1922. The reason for sending them to such cruel death was that the treaty which they signed did not secure

the inclusion of Ulster and a republic for Ireland. It is true the treaty did not grant this. But if it is remembered that negotiations were opened on the express understanding on the part of both sides that these two questions were outside the scope of negotiations it will be granted that if the treaty did not include these it was no fault of the Irish Delegates. The fury and ferocity of the anti treaty Sein Feiners against the Irish Delegates had no moral foundation and the fate that befell Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins can by no stretch of imagination be said to be one which they deserved.

Be that as it may, this welcome to Mr. Gandhi will be regarded as a very strange event. Both went to win Swaraj, Griffith and Collins for Ireland, Gandhi for India, Griffith and Collins succeeded, almost triumphed; Gandhi failed and returned with nothing but defeat and humiliation. Yet Collins and Griffith were shot and Gandhi was given a reception which kings could have envied!! What a glaring and a cruel contrast between the fate that awaited Collins and Griffith and the reception arranged for Gandhi? Are the Indian Patriots different from the Irish Patriots? Did the masses render this welcome out of blind devotion or were they kept in darkness of the failure of Mr. Gandhi by a mercenary Press? This is more than I can answer.^[48]

II

While this great welcome was being accorded to Mr. Gandhi the Untouchables of Bombay had come to the Pier to repudiate

Mr. Gandhi. Referring to this demonstration, the newspaper reports said:

"Just outside the gate of Ballard Pier, the scene was most exciting. On one side were drawn up Depressed Class volunteers in uniform, waving black flags to the accompaniment of derisive shouts against Mr. Gandhi and laudatory cries in praise of their leader, while on the other side Congress followers kept up a din of counter shouts."

This Untouchable demonstration included men and women. The demonstrators numbered thousands, all waving Black Flags as a mark of repudiation of Mr. Gandhi. They were a determined crowd and, despite intimidation by the superior forces of the Congress assembled there to welcome Mr. Gandhi, were bent on showing that they repudiated Mr. Gandhi. This led to a clash and blood was split. There were forty casualties on each side.

For the first time Mr. Gandhi was made aware that there could be black flags even against him. This must have come to him as a shock. When he was asked about it later in the day, he said he was not angry, the Untouchables being the flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. This is of course the Mahatmaic way of concealing the truth. One would not mind this convenient and conventional lie if there were behind it a realization that the crowd could not always be trusted to be loyal to its hero. Congressmen in India sadly lack the realism of a man like Cromwell. It is related that when Cromwell returned after a great battle, an enormous crowd came out to greet him. A friend sought to impress upon him the immensity of the crowd. But Cromwell dismissed the subject with the leconic remark, " Oh yes, I know many more will come to see me hanged."!! No

Congress leader feels the realism of Cromwell. Either he believes that the day will never come when he will be hanged or he believes that the Indian crowd will never become a thinking crowd. That part of the Indian crowd does think was shown by the representatives of the Untouchables who assembled on the 28th to greet Mr. Gandhi with black flags.

Why did the Untouchables repudiate Mr. Gandhi ? The answer to this question will be found in a statement issued by the organizers of these demonstrations which was printed and circulated on that day. The following are extracts from it. "Our Charge sheet against Gandhiji and Congress" "Enough of patronising attitude and lip sympathy. We ask for justice and fair play."

1. In spite of the fact that the removal of untouchability has been included in the constructive programme of the Congress, practically nothing has so far been done by that body to achieve that object, and in our fights against untouchability at Mahad and Nasik most of the local Congress leaders have been our bitter opponents.

2. The attitude of Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference in London with regard to the demands of the Depressed Classes as put forward by their accredited and trusted leader Dr. Ambedkar, was most unreasonable, obstinate and inexplicable.

3. Gandhiji was prepared to concede on behalf of the Congress the special claims of the Mohamedans and the Sikhs including their demand for separate representation on "historic grounds", but he was not willing even to concede reserved seats in general electorates to the Depressed Classes, although he knew, or should have known, what sort of treatment they would get, should they be thrown upon at the mercy on caste Hindus. * * * * *

9. Gandhiji has said in opposing the claims of the Depressed Classes for separate representation that he does not want the Hindu Community to be subjected to vivisection or dissection. But the Congress is now dissecting the community of Untouchables by playing one section against another. Gandhiji and the Congress are not playing the fair game. Open enemies are far better than treacherous friends.

10. Attempts are being made to show that Gandhiji and the Congress alone represent the Depressed Classes by presenting addresses through a handful of hirelings and dupes. Is it not our duty to demonstrate the fact by coming out in thousands and proclaiming the truth? This is our charge sheet against Gandhiji and the Congress.

Let those who are not blind hero worshippers and blind partisans judge and give their verdict.

General Secretary, Depressed Classes Institute.

Is this charge sheet true? Mr. Gandhi is known to the world not merely as the Political leader of India, but also as the Champion of the Untouchables. It is perhaps true that the outside world takes more interest in Mr. Gandhi because he is the champion of the Untouchables than because he is a political leader. For instance the Manchester

Guardian very recently devoted an editorial to the work of Mr. Gandhi for the Untouchables.

In the face of this, the charge appears to be quite unfounded. For, has not Mr. Gandhi made the Congress pledge itself to remove untouchability? The Congress before it came into the hands of Mr. Gandhi had refused to allow any social problem to be placed before it for consideration. A clear cut distinction was made between political and social question, and scrupulous attempt was made to confine the deliberations and activities of the Congress to purely political questions. The old Congress refused to take notice of the Untouchables. It was with great difficulty that the Congress in 1917^[f49] for the first time allowed the question of the Untouchables to be placed before it and condescended to pass the following resolution:

"The Congress urges upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the Depressed Classes, the disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience."^[f50]

The Congress fell onto the hands of Mr. Gandhi in 1920 and the Congress at its ordinary session held at Nagpur passed the following resolution:

INTERCOMMUNAL UNITY

" Finally, in order that the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs may be redressed and Swarajya established within one year, this Congress urges upon all public bodies, whether affiliated to the Congress or otherwise, to devote their exclusive attention to the promotion of non-violence and non-cooperation with the Government and, inasmuch as the movement of non-cooperation can only succeed by complete co-operation amongst the people themselves, this Congress calls upon public associations to advance Hindu-Muslim unity and the Hindu delegates of this Congress call upon the leading Hindus to settle all disputes between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins, wherever they may be existing, and to make a special effort to rid Hinduism of the reproach of untouchability, and respectfully urges the religious heads to help the growing desire to reform Hinduism in the matter of its treatment of the suppressed classes. "

Again did not Mr. Gandhi make the removal of untouchability a condition precedent for achieving Swaraj ?

In the *Young India* of December 29, 1920, Mr. Gandhi wrote:

"Non-cooperation against the Government means cooperation among the governed, and if Hindus do not remove the sin of untouchability, there will be no Swaraj in one year or one hundred years...."

Writing again on the conditions of Swaraj in the issue of *Young India* for February 23, 1921, he said:

"Swaraj is easy of attainment before October next if certain simple conditions can be fulfilled. I ventured to mention one year in September last because I knew that the conditions were incredibly simple and I felt that the atmosphere in the country was

responsive. The past five months experience has confirmed me in the opinion. I am convinced that the country has never been so ready for establishing Swaraj as now. "

"But what is necessary for us as accurately as possible to know the conditions. One supreme indispensable condition is the continuance of non-violence. "

"The next condition is..... establishing a Congress Agency in every village. "

"There are certain things that are applicable to all. The potent thing is Swadeshi. Every home must have the spinning wheel and every village can organize.... and become self supporting."

" Every man and woman can give some money—be it even a pice—to the Tilak Swaraja Fund. And we need have no anxiety about financing the movement....."

"We can do nothing without Hindu-Moslem unity and without killing the snake of untouchability..... "

" Have we honest, earnest, industrious, patriotic workers for this very simple programme ? If we have, Swaraj will be established in India before next October."

What more did the Untouchables want ? Here is Mr. Gandhi who had held himself out as the friend of the Untouchables. He prides himself on being their servant. He claims and fought for being accepted as their representative. Why should the Untouchables show such a lack of confidence in Mr. Gandhi ?

On the basis of words, the charge perhaps appears unfounded. But does it appear equally unfounded if we have regard to deeds ? Let me examine Mr. Gandhi's deeds.

The work which is claimed by Mr. Gandhi and his friends to have been done by him and the Congress for the Untouchables falls into two periods, the period which precedes the Poona Pact and the period which follows the Poona Pact. The first period may be called the period of the Bardoli Programme. The second period may be called the period of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

FIRST PERIOD

To begin with the Bardoli Programme period. The Bardoli Programme or what is called the Constructive Programme of the Congress was the direct outcome of the new line of action adopted by the Congress in securing the political demands of the country. At the session of the Congress held at Nagpur in 1920 the Congress declared :

"Whereas the people of India are now determined to establish Swaraj; and

"Whereas all methods adopted by the people of India prior to the last special session of the Indian National Congress have failed to secure due recognition of their rights and liberties;

"Now this Congress while reaffirming the resolution on nonviolent non-cooperation passed at the Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta declares that the entire or any part or parts of the scheme of non-violent non-cooperation, with the renunciation of voluntary association with the present Government at one end and the refusal to pay taxes at the other, should be put in force at a time to be determined by either the Indian

National Congress or the All India Congress Committee and in the meanwhile to prepare the Country for it ",.....

At the session of the Congress held at Ahmedabad in 1921 it was declared that:

"This Congress is further of opinion that Civil Disobedience is the only civilized and effective substitute for an armed rebellion.... and therefore advises all Congress Workers and others.... to organize individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience"..... It is to give effect to this policy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience and to prepare the people to take part in them that the Working Committee of the Congress met at Bardoli in February 1922 and drew up the following programme of action.

"The Working Committee advises all Congress organisations to be engaged in the following activities:

- (1) To enlist at least one crore of members of the Congress.
- (2) To popularise the spinning wheel and to organise the manufacture of hand-spun and handwoven khaddar.
- (3) To organise national schools.
- (4) To organise the Depressed Classes for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral condition to induce them to send their children to national schools and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which the other citizens enjoy.

Note: Whilst therefore where the prejudice against the Untouchables is still strong in places, separate schools and separate wells must be maintained out of Congress funds, every effort should be made to draw such children to national schools and to persuade the people to allow the Untouchables to use the common wells.

- (5) To organise the temperance campaign amongst the people addicted to the drink habit by house-to-house visits and to rely more upon appeal to the drinker in his home than upon picketing.

- (6) To organise village and town Panchayats for the private settlement of all disputes, reliance being placed solely upon the force of public opinion and the truthfulness of Panchayat decisions to ensure obedience to them.

- (7) In order to promote and emphasize unity among all classes and races and mutual goodwill, the establishment of which is the aim of the movement of non-cooperation, to organise a social service department that will render help to all, irrespective of differences, in times of illness or accident.

- (8) To continue the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund collections and call upon every Congressman or Congress sympathiser to pay at least a one-hundredth part of his annual income for 1921. Every province to send every month twenty-five per cent of its income from the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund to the All-India Congress Committee.

The above resolution shall be brought before the forthcoming session of the All-India Congress Committee for revision if necessary. "

This programme was placed before the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting at Delhi on 20th February 1922 and was confirmed by the same. The programme is a very extensive programme and I am not concerned with what happened to the whole of it, how it was received and how it was worked out. I am concerned with only one item and that which relates to the Depressed Classes.

After it was confirmed by the All-India Congress Committee, the Working Committee met at Lucknow in June 1922 and passed the following resolution:

"This Committee hereby appoints a committee consisting of Swami Shraddhanandji, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Messrs. 1. K. Yajnik and G. B. Deshpande to formulate a scheme embodying practical measures to be adopted for bettering the condition of the so-called Untouchables throughout the country and to place it for consideration before the next meeting of this Committee, the amount to be raised for the scheme to be Rs. 2 lacs for the present. " This resolution was placed before the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting in Lucknow in June 1922. It accepted the resolution with the amendment that "the amount to be raised for the scheme should be 5 lacs for the present ", instead of 2 lacs as put forth in the resolution of the Working Committee. How did this programme fare, what practical measures did the Committee suggest and how far were these measures given effect to ? These questions one must ask in order to assess the work of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress for the Untouchables.

It seems that before the resolution appointing the Committee was adopted by the Working Committee, one of its Members Swami Shradhanand tendered his resignation of the membership of the Committee. For one finds that at the very sitting at which the Working Committee passed this resolution, another resolution to the following effect was passed by the Working Committee:

"Read letter from Swami Shradhanandji, dated 8th June 1922 for an advance for drawing up a scheme for depressed classes work. Resolved that Mr. Gangadharrao B. Deshpande be appointed convener of the sub-committee appointed for the purpose and he be requested to convene a meeting at an early date, and that Swami Shradhanand's letter be referred to the sub-committee. " The Working Committee met again in July 1922 in Bombay and passed the following Resolution:

"That the General Secretary be asked to request Swami Shradhanand to reconsider his resignation and withdraw it and a sum of Rs. 500/- be remitted to the Convener, Shri G. B. Deshpande, for the contingent expenses of the Depressed Classes Sub-Committee." The year 1922 thus passed away without anything being done to further that item of the Bardoli Programme which related to the Depressed Classes. The year 1923 came on. The Working Committee met at Gaya in January 1923 and passed the following resolution:

"With reference to Swami Shraddhanand's resignation, resolved that the remaining members of the Depressed Classes Subcommittee do form the Committee and Mr. Yajnik be the convener. "

The All-India Congress Committee met in Feb. 1923 at Bombay and seeing that nothing was done as yet, recorded the following resolution :

"Resolved that the question of the condition of the Untouchables be referred to the Working Committee for necessary action. "

What did the Working Committee do then? It met at Poona on the 17th April 1923 and resolved as follows:

"Resolved that while some improvement has been effected in the treatment of the so-called Untouchables in response to the policy of the Congress this Committee is conscious that much work remains yet to be done in this respect and inasmuch as this question of untouchability concerns the Hindu community particularly, it requests the All-India Hindu Mahasabha also to take up this matter and to make strenuous efforts to remove this evil from amidst the Hindu community. "

Thus came to an end the Constructive Programme undertaken by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress for the Untouchables. The Bardoli programme for the Untouchables was in no sense a revolutionary programme. It did attempt to abolish untouchability. It does not attempt to break up caste. There is no mention of intermarriage or interdinning. It accepts the principle of separate wells and separate schools for Untouchables. It was purely an ameliorative programme. And yet such a harmless programme the Congress failed to carry through.

It must further be remembered that this was a time when the Congress was on the war path. It was determined to fight British Imperialism and was most anxious to draw every community towards itself and make all disaffected towards the British. This was the time when the Congress could have been expected to show to the Untouchables that the Congress stood for them and was prepared to serve them in the same way that it was prepared to serve the Musalmans. There could be no more propitious circumstance which could make the Hindus overcome their antipathy towards the Untouchables and undertake to serve. But even such propitious circumstance did not prove sufficient to energize Congressmen to do this small bit for the Untouchables. How hard must be the anti-social feelings of the Hindus against the Untouchables that even the highest bliss and the greatest stimulant, namely the prospect of winning Swaraj, were not sufficient to dissolve that spirit. The tragedy and the shamelessness of this failure by the Congress to carry through their programme for the Untouchables is aggravated by the way in which the matter was disposed of.

The work of the amelioration of the Untouchables could not have been left in worse hands. If there is any body which is quite unfit for addressing itself to the problem of the Untouchables, it is the Hindu Mahasabha. It is a militant Hindu organization. Its aim and object is to conserve in every way everything that is Hindu, religious and culture. It is not a social reform association. It is a purely political organization whose main object and aim is to combat the influence of the Muslims in Indian politics. Just to preserve its political strength it wants to maintain its social solidarity and its way to maintain social

solidarity is not to talk about caste or untouchability. How such a body could have been selected by the Congress for carrying on the work of the Untouchables passes my comprehension. This shows that the Congress wanted somehow to get rid of an inconvenient problem and wash its hands of it. The Hindu Mahasabha, of course, did not come forth to undertake the work and the Congress had merely passed a pious resolution recommending the work to them without making any promise for financial provision. So the project came to an inglorious and ignominious end. Yet there will not be wanting thousands of Congressmen who would not be ashamed to boast that the Congress has been fighting for the cause of the Untouchables and what is worse is that there will not be wanting hundreds of foreigners who are ready to believe it under the false propaganda carried on by men like Charles F. Andrews, who is the friend of Mr. Gandhi and who thinks that to popularize Gandhi in the Western World is his real mission in life. [\[f51\]](#)

It is not enough to know that the effort failed and had to be wound up. It is necessary to inquire why Swami Shradhanand resigned and refused to serve on the proposed Committee. There must be some good reason for it. For the Swami was the most enlightened Arya Samajist and very conscientiously believed in the removal of untouchability. On this point, the correspondence that passed between the Swami and the General Secretary to the All India Congress Committee throws a flood of light on the mentality of the Congressmen and I make no apology for reproducing below the whole of it.

SWAMIJI'S LETTER

The General Secretary, All-India Congress Committee, Camp Delhi.

I acknowledge, with thanks, receipt of your letters No. 331 and 332 embodying resolutions of the working committee and of the A.I.C.C. about untouchability. I observe with pain, that the resolution of the A.I.C.C. as at present worded, does not include the whole of what was passed by the committee.

The facts are these. I sent the following letter to Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, the then General Secretary on 23rd May 1922, which was also published by the principal dailies of the country.

" My dear Mr. Patel, there was a time (vide *Young India* of 25th May, 1921) when Mahatmaji put the question of untouchability in the forefront of the Congress Programme. I find now that the question of raising the Depressed Classes has been relegated to an obscure corner. While Khadi claims the attention of some of our best workers and liberal sum has been earmarked for it, for the year, while a strong sub-committee has been appointed to look after national education and a special appeal for funds is to be made for the same, the question of the removal of untouchability has been shelved by making small grants to Ahmedabad, Ahmednagar and Madras. I am of opinion that with a majority of 6 crores of our brethren set against us by the beauracracy

even the Khadi Scheme cannot succeed completely. The Members of the Working Committee, perhaps, do not know that on this side our suppressed brethren are leaving off Khadi and taking to buying cheap foreign cloth. I want to move the following resolution in the meeting of the A.I.C.C. which comes off on the 7th of June next at Lucknow.

"That a Sub-committee, consisting of three members of the A.I.C.C., be appointed to give effect to the resolution about the so-called Depressed Classes, that a sum of five Lakhs of rupees be placed at their disposal for propaganda work and that in future all applications for grants be referred to the said Sub-committee for disposal."

My proposal was amended by the Working Committee and ran as follows:

"This Committee hereby appoints a committee consisting of Swami Shradhanand, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Messrs. G. B. Deshpande and I. K. Yajnik to formulate a scheme embodying practical measures to be adopted for bettering the condition of the so-called Untouchables throughout the country and to place it for consideration before the next meeting of the Working Committee, the amount to be raised for the scheme to be Rs. 2 lakhs for the present. "

Mr. Patel asked me to accept the Working Committee's proposed resolution in toto. I refused to accept the Working Committee's resolution and in the very first sitting of the All India Congress Committee substituted 5 lakhs for 2 lakhs with the condition that one lakh of the same be allotted by the A.I.C.C., out of the funds in its hands, in cash and an appeal be made for the balance.

Mr. Rajagopalachariar, on behalf of the Working Committee proposed that instead of fixing the amount to be allotted out of the

Congress funds now, it should be provided that when the Scheme was accepted by the Working Committee, that Committee should allot as much cash as it could then spare for this purpose. I do not recollect the exact words but the support of the amendment as given above is, to my knowledge, true.

On this an uproar arose and the query was pressed from all sides that the cash balance in the hands of the A.I.C.C. ought to be announced. The President called me aside and told me in confidence that the Congress possessed very little cash balance and if pressed to disclose the true state of affairs, it would harm the movement as outsiders and even C.I.D. people were also present. On this I accepted the amendment of Mr. Rajagopalchariar in spite of protests from my seconder and supporters. But my surprise was great when I found the resolution in the dailies, as reported by the associated press, shorn of Mr. Rajagopalchariar's amendment.

After the above resolution was passed, some members suggested that a convener of the Sub-committee ought to be appointed, several members proposed me as the convener. On this Mr. Vithalbai Patel (the then General Secretary) got up and said, "As Swami Shradhanand's name occurs first, naturally he will be the convener and therefore there was no need of moving any fresh resolution at all. "

Members from all parts of the country began to give information to me about untouchability in their provinces and pressed me to visit their parts. On this I made some promises. Then, I thought, that without some cash for preliminary expenses no enquiries, on the spot could be made and hence no proper scheme formulated. I also learnt that Rs. 25,000/- had been voted by the Working Committee for "*the Independent*" of Allahabad and that an application for grant of Rs. 10,000/- to the Urdu daily "*Congress*" of Delhi had been placed by Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari before the Working Committee. So, considering, that after all, the Congress might not be so hard pressed for cash, I wrote a letter addressed to the President asking him to give the Untouchability Sub-Committee an advance of Rs. 10,000/- for preliminary expenses.

After all this, the following resolution of the Working Committee forwarded by your letter No. 331 is very interesting reading:

"Read letter from Swami Shradhanand dated 8th June 1922 for an advance for drawing up a scheme for Depressed Class work— Resolved that Mr. Gangadharrao B. Deshpande be appointed convener of the Sub-committee appointed for the purpose and he be requested to convene a meeting at an early date, and that Swami Shradhanand's letter be referred to the Sub-committee. "

There is another matter which is inexplicable. After my first letter had been acknowledged I addressed the following letter from Hardwar on 3rd June 1922 :

"My dear Mr. Patel, I shall leave Hardwar the day after tomorrow and reach Lucknow on the morning of June 6th. You know, by now, that I feel the most for the so-called Depressed Classes. Even in the Punjab I find that no attention worth the name has been paid to this item of the constructive programme. In the U.P. of course it will be an uphill work. But there is another very serious difficulty.

The Bardoli programme, in its note under item 4, lays down that where prejudice is still strong, separate wells and separate schools must be maintained out of the Congress funds. This leaves a loophole for those Congress workers who are either prejudiced against the Depressed Classes or are weak, and no work can be done in inducing people to agree to allow the Untouchables to draw water from common wells. In the Bijnoor District, I learn, there was no restriction and the Untouchables drew water freely from common wells. But in some places fresh prejudice is being engendered under the aegis of the Bardoli resolution note. In my recent visits to Ambala Cantt., Ludhiana, Batala, Lahore, Arrritsar and Jandiala, I found that the question of the removal of disabilities of the Untouchables is being ignored. In and near Delhi it is the Dalitodhar Sabha, of which I am the President, rather than the Congress which is doing appreciable work. I think that unless item (4) of the Bardoli constructive programme is amended in proper form, the work, which I consider to be the most important plank in the Congress programme, will suffer.

Kindly place the following proposal before the President and if he allows it to be placed before the next meeting of the A.I.C.C. I shall move it there—"Instead of the

Note under item (4) of the Bardoli resolution, substitute the following Note : "The following demands of the Depressed Classes ought to be complied with at once namely that (a) they are allowed to sit on the same carpet with citizens of other classes, (b) they get the right to draw water from common wells and (c) their children get admission into National schools and Colleges and are allowed to mix freely with students drawn from the so-called higher castes. I want to impress upon the members of the A.I.C.C. the great importance of this item. I know of cases where the Depressed Classes are in open revolt against tyranny of the so-called upper castes and unless the above demands are conceded to them they will succumb to the machinations of the bureaucracy." After my first proposals were passed in the A.I.C.C. Meeting on June 7th at Lucknow, I asked Mr. Patel to put my proposed amendment of Note to item (4) of Bardoli resolution before the meeting. He told me that the Working Committee would refer it to the Sub-committee and asked me not to press it there. I agreed. But I have not received copy of any resolution of the Working Committee referring my proposal to the Untouchability Sub-committee.

The untouchability question is very acute in and near Delhi and I have to grapple with it at once. But the Sub-committee cannot begin work off-hand because the Working Committee has to take several other political situations in the country into consideration before deciding upon any scheme of practical measures to be adopted for uprooting untouchability on behalf of the Congress. Under these circumstances I cannot be of any use to the Sub-committee and beg to resign from membership.

Yours sincerely, Delhi, Jan. 30.

Shradhanand Sanyasi.

SECRETARY'S REPLY

Dear Swamiji,

Your letter dated June 1922 received in my office on the 30th of that month has, by a resolution of the Working Committee passed in Bombay on the 18th instant, been referred to me with instructions to explain facts and request you to be good enough to reconsider your resignation from the Depressed Classes Sub-Committee.

As you are aware, I have no personal knowledge of the facts which happened prior to my release from the jail. But I was present at the meeting of the Working Committee which passed the resolution dated 10th June 1922 appointing Mr. Deshpande as the Convenor of the Sub-committee. It was not then mentioned that there was any understanding about any particular member acting as the Convenor of the Sub-committee and the whole resolution was passed merely to complete the necessary formalities in regard to the payment of money. It was felt that a formal resolution of the Sub-committee was necessary before any expenditure could be sanctioned. Mr. Deshpande was accordingly appointed as the convenor and a sum of Rs. 500/- was voted for the expenses of these preliminary steps. By an oversight the resolution as

drafted omitted to mention the sanction of Rs. 500/- You will thus observe that it was not due to the unwillingness of Working Committee to sanction Rs. 10,000/- for untouchability, but the true reason for framing the resolution in the manner it was framed was what I have explained above. Nothing could be farther from the intention of the Working Committee than a desire to understand the importance of the work your Sub-committee was called upon to do or in any way to ignore the valuable advice tendered by you. On your letter being placed before the last meeting of the Working Committee the omission of the grant of Rs. 500/- was supplied, and I was instructed to communicate with you on the subject. It will be a great pity if the Sub-committee is deprived of the benefit of your experience and special knowledge of the whole question of untouchability and I will ask you therefore in the public interest to reconsider your decision and wire to my office at Allahabad withdrawing your resignation from the Sub-Committee. I need hardly add that any resolutions arrived at by your Sub-Committee will receive all the consideration they deserve at the hands of the Working Committee.

As to the alteration in the Working Committee's resolution in regard to separate wells and schools, the best course would be for your Subcommittee to recommend the change and for the Working Committee to adopt it.

I am afraid you are under a misapprehension as regards the grant to ' *The Independent* ', of Allahabad, and " *The Congress* " of Delhi. In reference to the former, all that has been done is to sanction the application of the U. P. Provincial Committee to advance as a loan to the " *nationalist journals*" Ltd., Rs. 25,000 from the funds already granted to that committee and in reference to the latter, the application for a grant of a loan was wholly rejected.

Yours sincerely,

Motilal Nehru. Bombay, July 23, 1922.

General Secretary.
SWAMIJI'S REJOINER

Dear Pandit Motilaji,

I received your letter of 23rd July 1922 addressed from Bombay on my resignation from the Untouchability Sub-Committee. I am sorry I am unable to reconsider it because some of the facts brought out by me in my first letter have simply been ignored.

(1) Kindly enquire of Mr. Rajagopalchariar whether I did not first propose that at least one lakh should be given in cash out of the funds in the hands of the A.I.C.C., whether he did not move an amendment substituting words for the above which purported to promise that when the plan of work formulated by the Sub-Committee was accepted by the Working Committee, that Committee would allot as much money for the untouchability department as it could then spare and whether I did not accept his amendment when the President called me aside and explained the exact financial position at the time. If this is the fact then why did the amendment not appear with the resolution?

(2) Did you enquire of Mr. Vithalbai J. Patel whether the members of the A.I.C.C. did not propose me as the convenor of the Subcommittee and whether he did not then say — "As Swami Shradhanand's name occurs first, naturally he will be the convenor and therefore there was no need of moving any fresh resolution at all " I enquired about this from Dr. Ansari and he wrote back to me on June 17th, 1922 saying that I was appointed convenor. Dr. Ansari is with you and you can verify it from him. I hope Mr. Patel has not forgotten all about it.

(3) Then the immediate work among the Untouchables here is very urgent and I can not delay it for any reason whatever. Kindly have my resignation accepted in the next meeting of the Working Committee, so that I may be free to work out my own plan about the removal of untouchability. This was my position at the end of July last. My experience in the Amritsar and Mianwali jails and the information I gathered there, have confirmed me in the belief that unless sexual purity (Brahmacharya) is revived on the ancient Aryan lines and the curse of untouchability is blotted out of the Indian society, no efforts of the Congress nor of other patriotic organisations out of the Congress will avail in their efforts for the attainment of Swaraj. And as national self realization and virile existence is impossible without Swaraj, I, as a Sanyasi, should devote the rest of my life to this sacred cause—the cause of sexual purity and true national unity.

Delhi. July 23. 1922.

Shradhananda Sanyasi.

This shows what heart Congressmen had in the uplift work of the Untouchables.

So much for what Congressmen volunteered to do. How much did Congressmen or Mr. Gandhi help the Untouchables who were working independently for the uplift of their own people. This was the period when the Untouchables themselves were on the warpath. They too were engaged in offering civil disobedience against the Hindus for the purpose of acquiring their civic and social rights. This was the period during which the Untouchables of Bombay Presidency had launched their Satyagraha at Mahad for establishing their right to take water from the public tank and at Nasik for establishing their right to enter a Hindu temple. How did Mr. Gandhi look upon this Satyagraha movement started by the Untouchables against the caste Hindus? The attitude of Mr. Gandhi to say the least was extremely queer.

In the first place Mr. Gandhi condemned this Satyagraha by the Untouchables against the caste Hindus. He would not support it. In this controversy the Untouchables were perfectly logical. They argued that if Civil Disobedience was the weapon which, according to Mr. Gandhi, the Hindus could legitimately use against the British for securing their freedom, why were the Untouchables not justified in using the same weapon against the caste Hindus for securing their emancipation. However good this logic Mr. Gandhi would have none of it. He tried to meet their logic by his logic. He argued that Untouchability was the sin of the Hindus. It is the Hindus who must therefore do penance. It is they who must offer Satyagraha for the removal of untouchability.

Satyagraha was not the business of the Untouchables because they were not sinners, far from being sinners they were sinned against. This was of course not Aristotolian logic. It is a Mahatmian logic which is another name for casuistry. But it was apparent that this Mahatmian logic was simply nonsense. The Untouchables replied that if that was the view of Mr. Gandhi — namely that Satyagraha is penance which is for the sinner to offer—then why should he call upon the Hindus to offer Satyagraha against the British. British Imperialism was the sin of the British and therefore according to his logic the Satyagraha must be offered by the British and not by the caste Hindus. The Untouchables had destroyed his logic. It was clear that there was either a fallacy or insincerity in this attitude of Mr. Gandhi to Satyagraha by the Untouchables against caste Hindus. But the Untouchables could not dislodge Mr. Gandhi from the position of hostility which he had adopted.

There is another inconsistency in the attitude which Mr. Gandhi showed towards the Satyagraha by the Untouchables against Caste Hindus at Mahad and Nasik and the attitude he showed against similar Satyagraha by the Untouchables at Vaikom. Mr. Gandhi was in favour of the Satyagraha at Vaikom. He blessed it and encouraged it. Why then was Mr. Gandhi opposed to the Satyagraha at Mahad and Nasik? Was there any difference between the two ? Yes, there was. The Vaikom Satyagraha was carried on by the Untouchables under the auspices of the Congress. The other two were launched by the Untouchables independently of the Congress. Had the opposition of Mr. Gandhi something to do with this difference? As Mr. Gandhi has given no answer I must leave the reader to make the best guess.

Perhaps Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to protect the lambs who would not accept him as their shepherd. When Mr. Gandhi refused to give his blessings to the Satyagraha by the Untouchables it was a foregone conclusion that no Congressmen would or could come and help the Untouchables in their struggle against the orthodox Hindus. Indeed this attitude of Mr. Gandhi enabled Congress Hindus to join the orthodox Hindus—they are kith and kin and the line that divides the two is very thin—and batter the heads of the Untouchables with a clear conscience. This was not the only mischief Mr. Gandhi did by his most illogical if not perverse attitude. He came out openly against all non-Hindus and prohibited them from helping the Untouchables in their Satyagraha struggle against the caste Hindus: He was not only against Mahomedans, Christians, Parsis and Jews rendering any help, but he went to the length of objecting to the Sikhs—who are no more than militant and protestant Hindus—coming to help the Untouchables. Here again his argument was queer. Untouchability is the sin of the caste Hindus. It is they who must do penance. Help to the Untouchables being a penance and penance being the obligation of the sinner, only the sinner could offer Satyagraha and help it. The Mahomedans, Christians, Parsis, Jews and Sikhs were not sinners in the matter of untouchability and therefore they could not help the Satyagraha for the removal of untouchability. Mr. Gandhi of course would not see it from the point of view of the

Untouchables. He would not see that what was sin for the caste Hindus was slavery for the Untouchables. If the sinner was bound to do penance, the slave was entitled to break his bonds and every person who believed in freedom, no matter what his caste or his creed, was bound to help and free to join in the struggle. This is exactly the point of view which Mr. Gandhi had adopted with regard to the Khilafat question. The Musalman wanted Khilafat and the territorial integrity of Turkey. The demand for territorial integrity of Turkey was a most impossible demand because it involved the subjugation of the Arabs by the Turks. Still the Musalmans insisted upon it and Mr. Gandhi brought round the whole of the Congress and the Hindus to support this impossible and impious demand of the Musalmans. Mr. Gandhi then argued that if the Musalmans think it their religious duty to fight for the territorial integrity of Turkey, then it was the obligation of the Hindus to help the Muslims to fulfil their duty.^[f52]

The benefit of this logic Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to extend to the Untouchables. He was firm. Non-Hindus may help Hindus. Hindus may help non-Hindus. But none should help the Untouchables.¹ Friends of Mr. Gandhi were anxious to soften the rigour of his logic by pointing out that a distinction was necessary to be made on the basis of the nature of the disabilities of the Untouchables. They argued^[f53] that certain disabilities of the Untouchables were civic, certain were religious and that so far as the civic disabilities were concerned even non-Hindus should be allowed to help the Untouchables to carry on the Satyagraha. Even to this Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to listen. His interdict was applicable to all cases and there was no distinction possible. With this interdict on outside help Mr. Gandhi—the "friend of the Untouchables"—completely cut off the supplies of the Untouchables and left them without any sinews of war.

So far I have explained how the Congress without any qualm of conscience abandoned the idea of uplifting the Untouchables. It did not even undertake it. Secondly I have explained how Mr. Gandhi failed to support the Untouchables in their Satyagraha against the caste Hindus but by his queer logic found justification for not helping them and for preventing help reaching them. There now remains to record the third and the last event which belongs to this period. Though last in point of time it is undoubtedly the first in point of importance. That incident is the touchstone by which Mr. Gandhi's claim as a friend of the Untouchables must stand or fall.

The incident relates to the demand made by the Representatives of the Depressed Classes at the Indian Round Table Conference for political safeguards being embodied in the new Constitution and the attitude of Mr. Gandhi to these demands. The most important of these demands related to representation of the Depressed Classes in the Legislatures. The demand submitted by the representatives of the Depressed Classes was in the following terms—

Adequate Representation in the Legislatures.

The Depressed Classes must be given sufficient political power to influence legislative and executive action for the purpose of securing their welfare. In view of this they demand that provisions shall be made in the electoral law to give them:

- (1) Right to adequate representation in the Legislatures of the Country, Provincial and Central.
- (2) Right to elect their own men as their representatives, (a) by adult suffrage and (b) by separate electorates for the first ten years and thereafter by joint electorates and reserved seats, it being understood that joint electorates shall not be forced upon the Depressed Classes against their will unless such joint electorates are accompanied by adult suffrage."

It is this particular demand by the Depressed Classes which raised such a storm and which became so serious an issue that the solution of it almost shook the foundation of Indian politics and of Hindu Society.

This demand of the Depressed Classes was founded on the recommendation of the Simon Commission. After a careful survey of the problem of the Depressed Classes, the Simon Commission had reported to the following effect regarding their place under the new Constitution:

" It is clear that even with a considerable lowering of the franchise there would be no hope of the Depressed Classes getting their own representatives elected in general constituencies without special provision being made to secure it Ultimately we should hope to see them maintaining their ground in joint electorates without special protection. They will make no headway, however, in this direction as long as they are represented solely by nomination, for nomination provides no opportunities for training them in politics. There are, even with the present restricted franchise, a sufficient number of Depressed Class voters to make methods of election possible.....

Our object, therefore, is to make a beginning which will bring the Depressed Classes within the circle of elected representation. How is this to be done? Most of the Depressed Class associations which appeared before us favoured separate electorates, with seats allocated on the basis of population. . . . separate electorates would no doubt be the safest method of securing the return of an adequate number of persons who enjoy the confidence of the Depressed Classes; but we are averse from stereotyping the difference between the Depressed Classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step, which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to their ultimate political amalgamation with others.....

Our proposal, therefore, is that in all the eight Provinces there should be some reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes. . . . The result of our Scheme would be that spokesmen of the Depressed Classes would be returned as elected members in each of the Provinces. As to the number of seats to be reserved, this should obviously bear some proportion to the total number of the Depressed Classes in the province. We propose that. the proportion of the number of such reserved

seats to the total seats in all the Indian General constituencies should be three quarters of the proportion of the Depressed Classes population to the total population of the electoral area of the province.[\[f54\]](#)"..... As a matter of fact there was nothing new in this demand of the Depressed Classes for separate political representation for themselves by themselves and through themselves and the Simon Commission in conceding it cannot be said to have made a new departure. This demand was put forth in 1919.

At the time when the reforms which subsequently became embodied in the Act of 1919 were being discussed, the authors of the Montague Cheirnsford Report clearly recognized the problem of the Untouchables and the authors pledged themselves to make the best arrangement for their representation in the Legislatures. But the Committee that was appointed under the Chairmanship of Lord Southborough to devise the franchise and the electoral system ignored them altogether. The Government of India did not approve of this attitude and made the following comments:

"They (Untouchables) are one-fifth of the total population and have not been represented at all in the Morley-Minto Councils. The Committee's report mentions the Untouchables twice, but only to explain that in the absence of satisfactory electorates they have been provided for by nomination. It does not discuss the position of these people, or their capacity for looking after themselves. Nor does it explain the amount of nomination which it suggests for them. . . . The measure of representation which they propose. suggested that one-fifth of the entire population of British India should be allotted seven seats out of practically eight hundred. It is true that in all the Councils there will be, roughly speaking, a one-sixth proportion of officials who may be expected to bear in mind their interests: but that arrangement is not, in our opinion, what the Report on reforms aims at. The authors stated that the Untouchables also should learn the lesson of self-protection. It is surely fanciful to hope that this result can be expected from including a single member of the community in an assembly where there are sixty or seventy caste Hindus. To make good the principles of the Report we must treat the outcastes more generously."

The Government recommended that the seats allotted to the Untouchables by the Committee should be doubled. Accordingly in place of seven, they were given fourteen seats.

Again in 1923, the Secretary of State appointed a Committee which is known as the Muddiman Committee. The principal object of the Committee was to find out how far the constitution established by the Act of 1919 could be expanded by alterations in the Rules and without altering the Act. The Committee made certain recommendations and pointed out the necessity of increasing the representation of the Depressed Classes in the Legislatures. This recommendation was accepted by the Secretary of State who increased the number of seats.

Thus the right of the Depressed Classes to special representation in the Legislature had become a principle which was not only accepted but adopted in the Constitution. So

well was this principle recognized that it had been extended even to District Local Boards, School Boards and Municipalities.

A claim which had been given legal recognition in 1919 and which had thereby become a right and which had become perfected by user the representatives of the Depressed Classes felt could not be disputed by any body. There was no reason to fear that the Congress would come forward seriously to dispute this right of the Depressed Classes. Because although the Nehru Committee in 1929 in the Swaraj Constitution which it was asked to frame had denied this right to the Depressed Classes, the report of that Committee was not binding on the Congress. The Congress was bound by nothing except its own resolution which was passed in 1920, at its Nagpur Session to allay the fears of the Sikhs, and which had declared its policy to treat all minorities alike in the matter of representation in the Legislature^[155]

The representatives of the Depressed Classes were therefore justified in hoping that their demand would go through without any difficulty whatsoever from any quarters.

At the first Round Table Conference things went very smoothly. There was no trouble of any kind and although there was no agreement on the minorities question, the right of the Depressed Classes to special representation was accepted by all sections that were represented at the Round Table Conference. The conclusions reached by the Minorities Sub-Committee were embodied in its report which was presented to the General Conference. The following are the extracts from that report:

" There was general agreement with the recommendation of Subcommittee No. II (Provincial Constitution) that the representation on the Provincial Executives of important minority communities was a matter of the greatest practical importance for the successful working of the new constitution, and it was also agreed that, on the same grounds, Mohammadans should be represented on the Federal Executive. On behalf of the smaller minorities a claim was put forward for their representation, either individually or collectively, on the Provincial and Federal Executives, or that, if this should be found impossible, in each Cabinet there should be a Minister specially charged with the duty of protecting minority interests.

(Dr. Ambedkar and Sardar Ujjal Singh would add the words " and other important minorities " after the word Mohammadans in line 6).

The difficulty of working jointly responsible Executives under such a scheme as this was pointed out."

" The discussion in the Sub-Committee has enabled the Delegates to face the difficulties involved in the schemes put up, and though no general agreement has been reached, its necessity has become more apparent than ever."

" It has also been made clear that the British Government cannot, with any chance of agreement, impose upon the communities an electoral principle which, in some feature or other, would be met by their opposition. It was therefore plain, that, failing an agreement, separate electorates, with all their drawbacks and difficulties, would have to

be retained as the basis of the electoral arrangements under the new constitution. From this the question of proportions would arise. Under these circumstances, the claims of the Depressed Classes will have to be considered adequately."

" The Sub-Committee, therefore, recommend that the Conference should register an opinion that it was desirable that an agreement upon the claims made to it should be reached, and that the negotiations should be continued between the representatives concerned, with a request that the result of their efforts should be reported to those engaged in the next stage of these negotiations." Mr. Gandhi was not present at the first Round Table Conference because the Congress had boycotted it. He came for the Second Round Table Conference. What attitude did Mr. Gandhi take to this claim of the Depressed Classes?

Every body expected that Mr. Gandhi would be more interested in seeing that the constitution that was likely to emerge from these deliberations and negotiations was a constitution which gave India *Purna Swaraj* i.e. complete independence and he would not interest himself in so unimportant a subject as the allocation of seats among the different minorities. But events completely falsified these hopes. Mr. Gandhi completely gave up his fight against British Imperialism altogether. He forgot that he had come with a mandate^[156] to secure a constitution which contained *Purna Swaraj*. He left that issue and started fighting the minorities and what is so strange he concentrated all his fire upon the representatives of the Untouchables for daring to put forth the claim for special representation. Mr. Gandhi opposed tooth and nail the representatives of the Depressed Classes. He was not even prepared to look at their claim. He was annoyed at their impudence and the whole Conference was astonished by his opposition. They could not understand how a man like Mr. Gandhi who posed himself as the friend of the Untouchables could in fact be so great an enemy of their interests. His friends were completely baffled. Mr. Gandhi was prepared to recognize a similar right claimed by the Musalmans and to the Sikhs and although he was not prepared to recognize a similar claim by Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians he was not going to oppose their claim. Mr. Gandhi's friends could not understand how he could deny a similar right to the Untouchables. The Mohamedans, Sikhs, Christians, Europeans and Anglo-indians were far better off than the Untouchables. The former were economically far better placed. The latter were poorest of the poor. The former were educationally advanced, the latter were educationally most backward. The former were socially well respected, the latter were socially despised. The former enjoyed a position of free citizens. The latter were suffering from certain disabilities. The former were not subjected to social tyranny and social boycott but social tyranny and social boycott were the every day lot of the latter. Having regard to this difference in status there could never be any doubt that if there was any section of the Indian people whose case called forth

special protection, they were the Untouchables. When his European friends tried thus to argue with Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Gandhi used to fly into temper and his relations with two of the best of them to my knowledge had become quite strained on this account.

Mr. Gandhi's anger was largely due to the fact he could give no rational answer which could convince his opponents that his opposition to the claim of the Depressed Classes was sincere and was founded upon the best interests of the Depressed Classes. He nowhere gave a consistent explanation of his opposition to the Depressed Classes. Reading his speeches in London while he was there one can see that he was using three arguments in support of his position. Speaking as a member of the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi said:

"The Congress has from its very commencement taken up the cause of the so-called "untouchables ". There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade had dedicated his energies, among his many activities. Headed by him, you will find in the programme of the Social Conference, reform in connection with the Untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920, the Congress took a large step, and brought the question of the removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, and made it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim Unity, thereby meaning unity amongst all classes, to be indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of the curse of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom." At the minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi used another argument. He said:

" I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables is to me the " unkindest cut of all ". It means the perpetual barsinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself, in my own person, to represent the vast mass of the untouchables. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the untouchables, their vote, and that I would top the poll. And I would work from one end of India to the other to tell the untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar-sinister, which is the shame, not of them, but of orthodox Hinduism. Let this committee and let the whole world know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who are pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. We do not want on our register and on our census, untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Moslems, so may Europeans. Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather than Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar, and for his desire to see the untouchables uplifted, with all my regard for his ability I must say, in all humility, that here is a great wrong under which he

has laboured and, perhaps, the bitter experiences he has undergone have for the moment warped his judgement. It hurts me to have to say this but I would be untrue to the cause of untouchables, which is as dear to me as life itself, if I did not say it. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. I am speaking with a due sense of responsibility, when I say it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of untouchables in India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever, I do not mind the untouchables being converted into Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are these two divisions set forth in the villages. Those who speak of political rights of untouchables do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life."

At a meeting at the Friends House in London Mr. Gandhi relied upon quite a different argument. He is reported to have said^[57]:

" I have told you what is agitating my mind. You may take the Congress to be incapable of bartering away the minorities rights. The untouchables, I know, as one can claim to know. It would be equal to killing them if separate electorates were given them. They are at present in the hands of the superior classes. They can suppress them completely and wreck vengeance upon the untouchables who are at their mercy and it is because I want to prevent that thing happening that I would fight the demand for separate electorates for them. Whilst I am saying this, I know, I am opening out my shame to you. But in the existing state of things how could I invite destruction for them? I would not be guilty of that crime.^[58]

Dr. Ambedkar, as able as he is, has unhappily lost his head over this question. I repudiate his claim to represent them."

None of his arguments carried any conviction. Indeed they could not. They were all spacious and they had the ring of special pleadings.

His first argument, that the Congress was pledged to look after the untouchables, to remove their untouchability—Was this argument founded in truth? Mr. Gandhi has been telling the world that the whole body of Congress has been pledged to remove untouchability and his friends have been giving him credit for getting the Congress to do what the Congress before him was not prepared to do. I am surprised how so false a view could have been given such a wide currency. I have read and re-read the Resolution passed by the Congress in 1920 at Nagpur Which is the basis of such an assertion as is made by Mr. Gandhi and his friends, and I am sure every one who reads that resolution will agree that the text of the resolution gives no warrant for such an assertion. The resolution is a very clever piece of Gandhian tactics. Mr. Gandhi has been very anxious from the very beginning to keep the untouchables a close preserve of the Hindus. He did not want Musalmans or Christians to be interested in them. He

wanted that the Untouchables who were attached to the British should be detached from them and attached to the Hindus. The second object could be achieved only if the resolution in favour of the removal of untouchability was passed from the Congress platform. To achieve this it was necessary to confine this duty only to the Hindus. This is what the resolution does. It is a clever move on the part of a cunning politician. The resolution does not put the Congress as a whole behind this resolution. Secondly, in what it does there is nothing that is obligatory in it. There is no pledge, there is no vow. There is only moral exhortation. It only recommends to the Hindus that removal of untouchability is their duty. Once Mr. Gandhi tried to alter the conditions for membership of the Congress. Instead of the payment of four annas per annum being the condition of membership Mr. Gandhi wanted to lay down two conditions: (1) removal of untouchability and (2) spinning yarns. Congressmen were prepared to accept spinning of yarn as a condition of membership. But they were not prepared to accept removal of untouchability as a condition. Congressmen told Mr. Gandhi that if he insisted upon it all Congress Committees will have to be closed down. So strong was the opposition that Mr. Gandhi had to withdraw his proposal. That being the case for Mr. Gandhi to have urged before the Round Table Conference that the Congress was pledged to remove untouchability and that the untouchables could safely be left to the mercy of the Hindus shows that even Mr. Gandhi is capable of economising truth to a vanishing point.

The next argument of Mr. Gandhi that the removal of untouchability was made by the Congress a condition precedent to Swaraj urged to prove the sincerity of the Congress could not be taken at its face value by the obvious insincerity of the Congress and Mr. Gandhi. Untouchability was as it had been, yet the Congress and Mr. Gandhi had come forth to demand independence. This was enough to show that Mr. Gandhi did not believe in what he said on this point. No one in India, at any rate no one from among the Untouchables believed in this declaration of Mr. Gandhi and his Congress that for them removal of untouchability was a condition precedent to Swaraj. Long before the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi was questioned to test his sincerity on two occasions and the answers he gave on both left no doubt that even he did not believe this declaration. In 1920 a correspondent asked Mr. Gandhi the following question^[f59] :

" Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs?" To this Mr. Gandhi gave the following reply:

"A correspondent indignantly asks me in a pathetic letter reproduced elsewhere what I am doing for the (untouchables). I have given the letter with the correspondent's own heading. 'Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs ? ' This is a proper question reasonably put. And if a member of a slave nation could deliver the suppressed classes from their slavery without freeing myself from my own, I would so do today. But it is an impossible task....." Does this show that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress were sincere when they said that removal of untouchability was a condition precedent to Swaraj ? That this is not the argument of a

sincere man is shown by the fact that at a later time Mr. Gandhi himself has ridiculed a correspondent who urged upon Mr. Gandhi the desirability of keeping aside the question of the Untouchables until the Hindus had won Swaraj.

The second occasion on which Mr. Gandhi was questioned was when he went to Dandi in March in 1930 to make Salt Satyagraha contrary to law. Some Untouchables went to Dandi and questioned him. They asked him what happened to his declaration that removal of untouchability was condition precedent to Swaraj. Mr. Gandhi's reply as reported to me was this:

" The Untouchables are a part of a whole. I am working for the whole and I therefore believe that I am therefore working for the Untouchables who are a part of the whole."

There is nothing to prove this except what was reported to me by those who had been to see Mr. Gandhi at Dandi. But I have no doubt that Mr. Gandhi must have said something to that effect. For what he is reported to have said tallies with what he has said in his reply in Young India referred to above in reply to the same correspondent. This is what Mr. Gandhi then said:

" . . . though the *Panchama* Problem is as dear to me as life itself, I rest satisfied with the exclusive attention to non-cooperation. I feel sure that the greater includes the less."

Are these the answers of a sincere man ? Can a sincere man believe that the untouchables are a part of a whole.

As to his argument that special representation to the untouchables would perpetuate the existing separation between the touchables and the untouchables was an argument which was absolutely hollow. The way to remove untouchability is to introduce intermarriage and interdining. The way to remove the disabilities of the untouchables is to admit them to the use of the common well and common school. It is difficult to understand that special representation can come in the way of intermarriage, interdinning and the use of a common well and a common school. On the other hand the introduction of these would be only way of disproving the necessity of special representation. Had Mr. Gandhi and the Congress done anything in this direction? The explanatory note added to the Bardoli resolution shows how far Gandhi and the Congress were prepared to go in this direction. The note says:

" Whilst therefore where the prejudice against the untouchables is still strong in places, separate schools and separate wells must be maintained out of Congress funds, every effort should be made to draw such children to national schools and to persuade the people to allow the untouchables to use the common wells." Can it lie in the mouth of persons who want to maintain separate wells, separate schools to say that they object to separate representation because it will cause separation ? It is only persons who are bent on breaking down barriers who can speak against separate representation and ask to be believed in the sincerity of their argument.

Mr. Gandhi's last argument was a fantastic argument. If the superior classes can suppress the untouchables and wreck vengeance upon them then there is all the greater

reason why they should be given special representation so that they may protest themselves against the tyranny of the superior classes. Mr. Gandhi had become desparate and had lost his equanimity and balance to such an extent that he did not know where his arguments would lead him. In using this argument he evidently forgot that he was arguing for the perpetual enslavement of the Untouchables by the Hindus. Mr. Gandhi's argument in short was " don't ask for freedom, because it will enrage your master and he will illtreat you ". If such an argument had been advanced by any one else he would have been told that he was purile and insincere.

Having failed to demolish the justice of the claim of the Untouchables Mr. Gandhi decided to isolate the representatives of the Depressed Classes, to see that they got no support from any other quarter, Gandhi planned to break a possible compact between the Depressed Classes and the Muslims. A part of the plan was to win over the Musalmans to his side and for that purpose he offered to enter into a pact with them. A copy of this pact which was circulated among the Muslim delegates came into my hands and I reproduce the same here.

(This text is reproduced below from Dr. Ambedkar's " What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables ", pp. 72-73 which is not typed in the MS.—Ed.)

"DRAFT OF GANDHI-MUSLIM PACT"[\[f60\]](#)

Muslim Delegation to the Round Table Conference2[\[f61\]](#)

Tel. : Victoria 2360

Telegrams "Courtlike" London

Queen's house,
57, St. James' Court,
Buckingham Gate,
London, S. W. 1
6th October 1931.

The following proposals were discussed by Mr. Gandhi and the Muslim Delegation at 10 p.m. last night. They are divided into two parts—The proposals made by the Muslims for safeguarding their rights and the proposals made by Mr. Gandhi regarding the Congress policy. They are given herewith as approved by Mr. Gandhi, and placed for submission to the Muslim Delegation for their opinion.

| MUSLIM PROPOSALS | GANDHI'S PROPOSAL |
|--|---|
| 1. In the Punjab and Bengal bare majority of one percent of Musalmans but the question of whether it should be by means of joint electorates and | 1. That the Franchise should be on the basis of adult suffrage. 2 . <i>No special reservations to any other community save Sikhs and</i> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>reservation of 51 per cent of the whole house should be referred to the Musalman voters before the new constitution comes into force and their verdict should be accepted.</p> | <p><i>Hindu Minorities. (Italics are not in the original)</i></p> |
| <p>2. In other provinces where the Musalmans are in a minority the present weightage enjoyed by them to continue, but whether the seats should be reserved to a joint electorate, or whether they should have separate electorates should be determined by the Musalman voters by a referendum under the new constitution, and their verdict should be accepted.</p> | <p>The Congress demands: A. A. Complete Independence B. B. Complete control over the defence immediately. C. C. Complete control over external affairs D. D. Complete control over finance. E. E. Investigation of public debts and other obligations by an independent tribunal. F. F. As in the case of a partnership, right of either party to terminate it.</p> |
| <p>3. That the Musalman representatives to the Central Legislature in both the houses should be 26percent of the total number of the British India representatives, and 7 percent at least by convention should be Musalmans, out of the quota that may be assigned to Indian States, that is to say, one-third of the whole house when taken together.</p> | |
| <p>4. That the residuary power should vest in the federating Provinces of British India.</p> | |
| <p>5. That the other points as follows being agreed to: 1. Sindh.^[f62] 2. N.W.F.P.^[f63] 3. Services^[f64] 4. Cabinet^[f65] 5. Fundamental rights and safeguards for religion and culture. 6. Safeguards against legislation</p> | |

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| affecting any community. | |
|--------------------------|--|

This is the agreement which Mr. Gandhi was prepared to enter with the Musalmans. By this agreement Mr. Gandhi was prepared to give to the Musalmans the fourteen points they had been demanding. In return Mr. Gandhi wanted the Musalmans among other things to agree to continue the benefit of the principle of special representation to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Some one might ask what is wrong in such an agreement. Has not the Congress said that they will not agree to extend communal representation to others besides these three? Such a view cannot but be treated as a superficial view. Those who see nothing wrong in it must answer two questions. First is this. Where was the necessity for Mr. Gandhi to get the Musalmans to agree to the Congress policy of not extending the benefit of special representation to other minorities and the untouchables. Mr. Gandhi could have said as the Congress had been saying to the other minorities he was not prepared to agree to their claim. Why did he want the Musalmans to join him in resisting their claim? And if this was not his object why did he make it a term of the agreement which the Musalmans were to perform in return for what he agreed to do for them.

Secondly why did Mr. Gandhi come forward to give the Musalmans their fourteen demands at this particular juncture. These fourteen political demands of the Musalmans rightly or wrongly were rejected by all. They were rejected by the Hindu Maha-Sabha. They were rejected by the Simon Commission. They were rejected by the Congress. There was no support for these 14 demands of the Musalmans from any quarter whatsoever. Why did Mr. Gandhi become ready to grant them except with the object of buying the Musalmans so that with their help he could more effectively resist the demand of the other minorities and the untouchables?

In my view Mr. Gandhi was not engaged in making any bona-fide agreement. He was inducing the Musalmans to join in a conspiracy with him to resist the claim of the smaller minorities and the untouchables. It was not an agreement with the Musalmans. It was a plot against the Untouchables. It was worse, it was a stab in the back.

This so-called agreement fell through because among other reasons it was impossible for the Mahomedans to agree to the exclusion of the Untouchables from the benefit of special representation. How could the Muslims agree to such a project? They were fighting for special representation for Muslims. They were not only fighting for special representation, they were fighting for weightage in representation. They knew that the case for Muslims rested only on the ground that India was once ruled by the Musalmans, that they had political importance to maintain and as Hindus are likely to discriminate against Muslims in elections to the Legislatures, there may not be sufficient Muslims returned to the Legislature, that the Muslims will sink politically and that to prevent such a calamity they must be given special representation. As against this one ground in favour of Muslims there were a hundred grounds in favour of the claim by the

Untouchables. With what face could the Musalmans oppose this demand of the Untouchables?

The Musalmans had not lost their balance or their sense of shame. They refused to be party to such a deal—a deal which they could not publicly defend. Mr. Gandhi still kept on pestering the Musalmans. When he could not induce them to accept the price he offered—namely the grant of fourteen points—because they felt that the world would not call it price but would call it the wages of sin, Mr. Gandhi sought to appeal to the religious scruples of the Musalmans. The day before the 13th November [f66]1931 when the *minorities pact*^[f67] was presented to the Minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi took a copy of the Koran and went to the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly where the Rt. Hon. H. H. Aga Khan was staying to meet the Muslim delegates who had assembled there. To Muslim delegates he asked—"Why are you dividing the Hindu Community which you are doing by recognising the claim of the Untouchables for separate representation? Does the Koran sanction such a deed? Show me where it does? If you cannot, will you not stop perpetrating such a crime upon your sister Community?" I do not know how the Muslim delegates answered this question of Mr. Gandhi. It must have been a very difficult question for them to answer. Such a contingency could not have been present to the mind of the Holy Prophet and he could not have provided for it specifically. His followers knew that contingencies would arise for which he had given no directions and they had therefore asked him what they should do, and the Prophet had given them this general direction. He said to them, "in such a case see what the Kaffirs are doing and do just the opposite of it"^[f68]. Whether the Muslim delegates relied upon this to answer Mr. Gandhi is more than I can say. What I have stated is what I have heard and my source is the most authentic source. Here again Mr. Gandhi failed because the next day in the open Committee when Mr. Gandhi let loose his fury against the Untouchables, the Mahomedans were silent.

What can one say of this conduct of Mr. Gandhi? Mr. Bernard Shaw has said that the British do everything on principle.

Similarly Mr. Gandhi says he does everything on the principle of morality and good faith. Can the acts of Mr. Gandhi be justified by tests of justice and good faith? I wonder. Let me state a few facts.

Before I left for London for the first Round Table Conference I had met Mr. Gandhi in Bombay. At that meeting I had informed Mr. Gandhi that at the Round Table Conference I would be asking for special representation for the Untouchables. Mr. Gandhi would not consent. But he also told me that he would not oppose. I felt that it was just a case of difference of opinion. At the second Round Table Conference I met Mr. Gandhi twice, once alone and second time along with the representatives of the smaller minorities. At the first meeting Mr. Gandhi was spinning and I was talking. I spoke for an hour during the whole of which he did not utter even a word. At the end he just said this much.

' I have now heard you. I will think over what you have said.' At the second interview he again heard me and the representatives of the smaller minorities and he told me that he was not prepared to agree to the claim I was making on behalf of the Untouchables. Thereafter the Minorities Sub-Committee was convened on 28th September 1931. At the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 1st October 1931, the following motion was made by Mr. Gandhi:

" Prime Minister, after consultation with His Highness the Aga Khan and other Muslim friends last night, we came to the conclusion that the purpose for which we meet here would be better served if a week's adjournment was asked for. I have not had the opportunity of consulting my other colleagues, but I have no doubt that they will also agree in the proposal I am making."

The proposal was seconded by the Aga Khan. I at once got up and objected to the motion and in support of my objection made the following statement^[69]:

" *Dr. Ambedkar*: I do not wish to create any difficulty in our making every possible attempt to arrive at some solution of the problem with which this Committee has to deal, and if a solution can be arrived at by the means suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, I, for one, will have no objection to that proposal.

" But there is just this one difficulty with which I, as representing the Depressed Classes, am faced. I do not know what sort of committee Mahatma Gandhi proposes to appoint to consider this question during the period of adjournment, but I suppose that the Depressed Classes will be represented on this Committee. *Mr. Gandhi* : Without doubt.

Dr. Ambedkar : Thank you. But I do not know whether in the position in which I am today it would be of any use for me to work on the proposed Committee. And for this reason. Mahatma Gandhi told us on the first day that he spoke in the Federal Structure Committee that as a representative of the Indian National Congress he was not prepared to give political recognition to any community other than the Muhammadans and the Sikhs. He was not prepared to recognize the Anglo-indians, the Depressed Classes, and the Indian Christians. I do not think that I am doing any violence to etiquette by stating in this Committee that when I had the pleasure of meeting Mahatma Gandhi a week ago and discussing the question of the Depressed Classes with him, and when we, as members of the other minorities, had the chance of talking with him yesterday, in his office, he told us in quite plain terms that the attitude that he had taken in the Federal Structure Committee was a firm and well considered attitude. What I would like to say is that unless at the outset I know that the Depressed Classes are going to be recognised as a community entitled to political recognition in the future Constitution of India, I do not know whether it will serve any purpose for me to join the committee that is proposed by Mahatma Gandhi to be constituted to go into this matter. Unless, therefore, I have an assurance that this Committee will start with the assumption that all those communities which the Minorities Subcommittee last year

recommended as fit for recognition in the future constitution of India will be included, I do not know that I can whole-heartedly support the proposition for adjournment, or that I can whole-heartedly co-operate with the Committee that is going to be nominated. That is what I wish to be clear about.

* * *

"*Dr. Ambedkar* : I should like to make my position further clear. It seems that there has been a certain misunderstanding regarding what I said. It is not that I object to adjournment; it is not that I object to serving on any Committee that might be appointed to consider the question. What I would like to know before I enter upon this Committee, if they give me the privilege of serving on it, is: What is the thing that this Committee is going to consider ? Is it only going to consider the question of the Muhammadans *vis-a-vis* the Hindus? Is it going to consider the question of the Muhammadans *vis-a-vis* the Sikhs in the Punjab? Or is it going to consider the question of the Christians, the Anglo-indians and the Depressed Classes ?

" If we understand perfectly well before we start that this committee will not merely concern itself with the question of the Hindus and the Muhammadans, of the Hindus and the Sikhs, but will also take upon itself the responsibility of considering the case of the Depressed Classes, the Anglo-indians and the Christians, I am perfectly willing to allow this adjournment resolution to be passed without any objection. But I do want to say this, that if I am to be left out in the cold and if this interval is going to be utilised for the purposes of solving the Hindu-Muslim question, I would press that the Minorities Committee should itself grapple with the question and consider it, rather than allow the question to be dealt with by some other informal Committee for arriving at a solution of the communal question in respect of some minorities only." The Prime Minister as Chairman of the Committee called upon Mr. Gandhi to explain his position and Mr. Gandhi made the following statement in reply^[170]:

" Prime Minister and friends, I see that there is some kind of misunderstanding with reference to the scope of the work that some of us have set before ourselves. I fear that Dr. Ambedkar, Colonel Gidney and other friends are unnecessarily nervous about what is going to happen. Who am I to deny political status to any single interest or class or even individual in India? As a representative of the Congress I should be unworthy of the trust that has been reposed in me by the Congress if I were guilty of sacrificing a single national interest. I have undoubtedly given expression to my own views on these points. I must confess that I hold to those views also. But there are ways and ways of guaranteeing protection to every single interest. It will be for those of us who will be putting our heads together to try to evolve a scheme. Nobody would be hampered in pressing his own views on the members of this very informal conference or meeting.

"I do not think, therefore, that anybody need be afraid as to being able to express his opinion or carrying his opinion also. Mine will be there equal to that of every one of us; it will carry no greater weight; I have no authority behind me to carry my opinion against

the opinion of anybody. I have simply given expression to my views in the national interest, and I shall give expression to these views whenever they are opportune. It will be for you, it is for you to reject or accept these opinions. Therefore please disburse your minds, to everyone of us, of the idea that there is going to be any steam-rolling in the Conference and the informal meetings that I have adumbrated. But if you think that this is one way of coming closer together than by sitting stiffly at this table, you will not carry this adjournment motion but give your whole-hearted co-operation to the proposal that I have made in connection with these informal meetings."

* * *

I then withdrew my objection.

Now here is a definite word given by Mr. Gandhi in open Conference—namely that if all others agreed to recognize the claim of the Untouchables he would not object. And after having given this word Mr. Gandhi went about inducing the Musalmans not to recognize the claim of the Untouchables and to bribe them to resile and take back their plighted word!! Is this good faith or is this treachery ? If this is not treachery I wonder what else could be called treachery.

I was pilloried because I signed what is called the Minorities Pact. I was depicted as a traitor. I have never been ashamed of my signature to the pact. I only pity the ignorance of my critics. They forget that the minorities could have taken the same attitude that Ulster took towards Irish Home Rule. Redmond was prepared to offer any safeguard to Ulstermen. The Ulstermen's reply was, " Damn your safeguards we don't wish to be ruled by you". The Hindus ought to thank the minorities that they did not take any such attitude. All the Pact contained were Safeguards and nothing more. Instead of thanking them Mr. Gandhi poured his vials of wrath upon the pact and its authors. He said:

"Coming to this document', I accept the thanks that have been given to me by Sir Hubert Carr. Had it not been for the remarks that I made when I shouldered that burden, and had it not been for my utter failure to bring about a solution. Sir Hubert Carr rightly says he would not have found the very admirable solution that he has been able, in common with the other minorities, to present to this Committee for consideration and finally for the consideration and approval of His Majesty's Government."

" I will not deprive Sir Hubert Carr and his associates of the feeling of satisfaction that evidently actuates them, but, in my opinion, what they have done is to sit by the carcass, and they have performed the laudable feat of dissecting that carcass." 1 Reference is to the Minorities Pact.

Had Mr. Gandhi any right to be indignant ? Had he any right to feel morally offended ? Was he entitled to throw stones at the Minorities ? Mr. Gandhi forgot that he was as much a sinner as the Minorities and worse he was a sinner without a sense of justice. For if the Minorities were dividing the carcass what was Mr. Gandhi himself doing? He too was busy in dividing the carcass. The only difference between Mr. Gandhi and the

Minorities was this—Mr. Gandhi wanted that the carcass should be divided among three only, Hindus, Musalmans and Sikhs. The Minorities wanted that others also should be given a share, and which of these two can claim to have justice, on its side, Mr. Gandhi who wanted that the division of the carcass should be to strong sturdy well-nourished wolves or the minorities who pressed that the lean and hungry lambs should also be given a morsel ? Surely in this controversy justice was not on the side of Mr. Gandhi.

Mr. Gandhi was the man who claimed to be the Champion of the Untouchables better than those who belonged to the Untouchables themselves. Claiming to be their champion he refused without any regard to morality, justice and necessity, their claim to representation which could be their only way to protection against social tyranny and social oppression while he was prepared to give to the Musalmans, the Hindus and the Sikhs a goodly share of political power. When others far better placed were claiming for power, Mr. Gandhi wanted the Untouchables to live under his providence and that of the Congress without any means of protection knowing full well that their lives were exposed to danger and humiliation every moment and when he came to know that the Untouchables were seeking outside aid in support of their claim Mr. Gandhi resorted to a terrible act of treachery. Were the Untouchables unjustified in presenting to the world their charge sheet against Mr. Gandhi when he arrived in Bombay from the Round Table Conference ?

CHAPTER 6

GANDHI AND HIS FAST

1. Poona Pact. II. Harijan Sevak Sangh. III. Temples and Untouchables. IV. The Gandhian Way.

I

The Communal question was the rock on which the Indian Round Table Conference suffered a shipwreck. The Conference broke up as there could be no agreement between the majority and minority communities. The minorities in India insisted that their position under Swaraj should be safeguarded by allowing them special representation in the Legislatures. Mr. Gandhi as representative of the Congress was not prepared to recognize such a claim except in the case of the Muslims and the Sikhs. Even in the case of the Muslims and Sikhs, no agreement was reached either on the question of the number of seats or the nature of the electorates.

There was a complete deadlock. As there was no possibility of an agreement, the hope lay in arbitration. On this everybody was agreed except myself and it was left to Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, the Prime Minister to decide upon the issue.

When at the first Round Table Conference, the Indian delegates did not agree upon a solution of the Communal question, followers of Mr. Gandhi said that nothing better could be expected from them. It was said that they were unrepresentative and responsible to nobody and were deliberately creating disunity by playing into the hands of the British whose tools and nominees they were. The world was told to await the arrival of Mr. Gandhi, whose statesmanship it was promised would be quite adequate to settle the dispute. It was therefore a matter of great humiliation for the friends of Mr. Gandhi that he should have acknowledged his bankruptcy and joined in the request to the Prime Minister to arbitrate.

But if the Conference failed the fault is entirely of Mr. Gandhi. A more ignorant and more tactless representative could not have been sent to a Conference which was convened to forge a constitution which was to reconcile the diverse interests of India. Mr. Gandhi was thoroughly ignorant of Constitutional Law or Finance. He does not believe in intellectual equipment. Indeed he has a supreme contempt for it and his contributions to the solutions of the many difficulties is therefore nil. He was tactless because he annoyed almost all the delegates by constantly telling them that they were nonentities and he was the only man who counted and who could deliver the goods. At the first Round Table Conference the delegates did not agree upon a solution of the communal problem. But it is equally true that they were very near agreeing to it and when they departed they had not given up hope of agreeing. But at the end of the second Round Table Conference, so much bad blood was created by Mr. Gandhi that there was no chance of reconciliation left and there was no way except arbitration.

The Prime Minister's decision on the communal question was announced on 17th August 1932. The terms of the decision in so far as they related to the Untouchables were as follows^[f71]:

COMMUNAL DECISION BY HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT 1932

In the statement made by the Prime Minister on 1st December last on behalf of His Majesty's Government at the close of the second session of the Round Table Conference, which was immediately afterwards endorsed by both Houses of Parliament, it was made plain that if the communities in India were unable to reach a settlement acceptable to all parties on the communal questions which the Conference had failed to solve. His Majesty's Government were determined that India's constitutional advance should not on that account be frustrated, and that they would remove this obstacle by devising and applying themselves a provisional scheme.

2. On the 19th March last His Majesty's Government, having been informed that the continued failure of the communities to reach agreement was blocking the progress of the plans for the framing of a new Constitution, stated that they were engaged upon a careful re-examination of the difficult and controversial question which arise. They are now satisfied that without a decision of at least some aspects of the problems connected with the position of minorities under the new Constitution, no further progress

can be made with the framing of the Constitution.

3. His Majesty's Government have accordingly decided that they will include provisions to give effect to the scheme set out below in the proposals relating to the Indian Constitution to be laid in due course before Parliament. The scope of this scheme is purposely confined to the arrangements to be made for the representation of the British Indian communities in the Provincial Legislatures, consideration of representation in the Legislature at the Centre being deferred for the reason given in paragraph 20 below. The decision to limit the scope of the scheme implies no failure to realize that the framing of the Constitution will necessitate the decision of a number of other problems of great importance to minorities, but has been taken in the hope that once a pronouncement has been made upon the basic questions of method and proportions of representation the communities themselves may find it possible to arrive at *modus vivendi* on other communal problems, which have not received the examination they require.

4. His Majesty's Government wish it to be most clearly understood that they themselves can be no parties to any negotiations which may be initiated with a view to the revision of their decision, and will not be prepared to give consideration to any representation aimed at securing the modification of it which is not supported by all the parties affected. But they are most desirous to close no door to an agreed settlement should such happily be forthcoming. If, therefore, before a new Government of India Act has passed into law, they are satisfied that the communities who are concerned are mutually agreed upon a practicable alternative scheme, either in respect of any one or more of the Governors' Provinces or in respect of the whole of the British India, they will be prepared to recommend to Parliament that that alternative should be substituted for the provisions now outlined.

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| 8. * | * | * | * |

9. Members of the "depressed classes" qualified to vote will vote in a general constituency. In view of the fact that for a considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure any adequate representation in the Legislature, a number of special seats will be assigned to them as shown in the table. These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the "depressed classes" electorally qualified will be entitled to vote. Any person voting in such a special constituency will, as stated above, be also entitled to vote in a general constituency. It is intended that these constituencies should be formed in selected areas where the depressed classes are most numerous, and that, except in Madras, they

should not cover the whole area of the Province.

In Bengal it seems possible that in some general constituencies a majority of the voters will belong to the Depressed Classes. Accordingly, pending further investigation no number has been fixed for the members to be returned from the special Depressed Class constituencies in that Province. It is intended to secure that the Depressed, Classes should obtain not less than 10 seats in the Bengal Legislature.

The precise definition in each Province of those who (if electorally qualified) will be entitled to vote in the special Depressed Class constituencies has not yet been finally determined. It will be based as a rule on the general principles advocated in the Franchise Committee's Report. Modification may, however, be found necessary in some Provinces in Northern India where the application of the general criteria of untouchability might result in a definition unsuitable in some respects to the special conditions of the Province.

His Majesty's Government do not consider that these special Depressed Classes constituencies will be required for more than limited time. They intend that the Constitution shall provide that they shall come to an end after 20 years if they have not previously been abolished under the general powers of electoral revision referred to in paragraph 6.

So far as the other minority communities were concerned the Communal Award was accepted and the sore of disunity and discord was closed. But so far as the Untouchables were concerned it remained open. Mr. Gandhi would not allow it to be healed. On his return to India from the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi was put behind the bars by the British Government. But though in the Yeravada gaol Mr. Gandhi had not forgotten that he had to prevent the Untouchables from getting their claim to special representation recognized by the British Government. He feared that the British Government might grant them this right notwithstanding the threat he had held out while at the Round Table Conference to resist it with his own life. Consequently he took the earliest opportunity to be in communication with the very British Government which had incarcerated him.

On the 11th March 1932 Mr. Gandhi addressed the following letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, the then Secretary of State for India: Dear Sir Samuel,

You will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the Round Table Conference when the minorities' claim was presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes. This was not said in the heat of the moment nor by way of rhetoric. It was meant to be a serious statement. In pursuance of that statement I had hoped on my return to India to mobilize public opinion against separate electorate, at any rate for the Depressed Classes. But it was not to be.

From the newspapers I am permitted to read, I observe that any moment His Majesty's Government may declare their decision. At first I had thought, if the decision

was found to create separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, I should take such steps as I might then consider necessary to give effect to my vow. But I feel it would be unfair to the British Government for me to act without giving previous notice. Naturally, they could not attach the significance I give to my statement.

Separate Electorates harmful

I need hardly reiterate all the objections I have to the creation of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. I feel as if I was one of them. Their case stands on a wholly different footing from that of others. I am not against their representation in the legislatures. I should favour every one of their adults, male and female, being registered as voters irrespective of education or property qualification, even though the franchise test may be stricter for others. But I hold that separate electorates is harmful for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from the purely political standpoint. To appreciate the harm that separate electorates would do them one has to know how they are distributed amongst the so-called Caste Hindus and how dependent they are on the latter. So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorate would simply vivisect and disrupt it.

For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into significance compared to the moral and religious issue.

You will have to appreciate my feelings in this matter by remembering that I have been interested in the condition of these classes from my boyhood and have more than once staked my all for their sake. I say this not to pride myself in any way. For, I feel that no penance that the Hindus may do can in any way compensate for the calculated degradation to which they have consigned the Depressed Classes for centuries.

"Shall fast unto Death"

But I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, I must fast unto death.

I am painfully conscious of the fact that such a step whilst I am a prisoner, must cause grave embarrassment to His Majesty's Government, and that it will be regarded by many as highly improper on the part of one holding my position to introduce into the political field methods which they would describe as hysterical if not much worse. All I can urge in defence is that for me the contemplated step is not a method, it is part of my being. It is the call of conscience which I dare not disobey, even though it may cost whatever reputation for sanity I may possess. So far as I can see now, my discharge from imprisonment would not make the duty of fasting any the less imperative. I am hoping, however, all my fears are wholly unjustified and the British Government have no intention whatever of creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes.

The following reply was sent to Mr. Gandhi by the Secretary of State:

India Office, Whitehall,
April 13, 1932.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I write this in answer to your letter of 11th March, and I say at once I realize fully the strength of your feeling upon the question of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. I can only say that we intend to give any decision that may be necessary solely and only upon the merits of the case. As you are aware, Lord Lothian's Committee has not yet completed its tour and it must be some weeks before we can receive any conclusions at which it may have arrived. When we receive that report we shall have to give most careful consideration to its recommendations, and we shall not give a decision until we have taken into account, in addition to the view expressed by the Committee, the views that you and those who think with you have so forcibly expressed. I feel sure if you were in our position you would be taking exactly the same action we intend to take. You would await the Committee's report, you would then give it your fullest consideration, and before arriving at a final decision you would take into account the views that have been expressed on both sides of the controversy. More than this I cannot say. Indeed I do not imagine you would expect me to say more.

After giving this warning Mr. Gandhi slept over the matter thinking that a repetition of his threat to fast unto death was sufficient to paralyse the British Government and prevent them from accepting the claim of the untouchables for special representation. When on the 17th August 1932 the terms of the Communal Award were announced Mr. Gandhi found that his threat had failed to have any effect. He first tried to get the terms of the Communal Award revised. Accordingly he addressed the following letter to the Prime Minister:

Yervada Central Prison,
August 18, 1932.

Dear friend,

There can be no doubt that Sir Samuel Hoare has showed you and the Cabinet my letter to him of 11th March on the question of the representation of the Depressed Classes. That letter should be treated as part of this letter and be read together with this.

Decision to fast

I have read the British Government's decision on the representation of Minorities and

have slept over it. In pursuance of my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare and my declaration at the meeting of the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference on 13th November, 1931, at St. James' Palace, I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise no matter how wide it is.

The proposed fast will come into operation in the ordinary course from the noon of 20th September next, unless the said decision is meanwhile revised in the manner suggested above.

I am asking the authorities here to cable the text of this letter to you so as to give you ample notice. But in any case, I am leaving sufficient time for this letter to reach you in time by the slowest route.

I also ask that this letter and my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare already referred to be published at the earliest possible moment. On my part, I have scrupulously observed the rule of the jail and have communicated my desire or the contents of the two letters to no one, save my two companions, Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel and Mr. Mahadev Desai. But I want, if you make it possible, public opinion to be affected by my letters. Hence my request for their early publication.

Not to compass Release

I regret the decision I have taken. But as a man of religion that I hold myself to be, I have no other course left open to me. As I have said in my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, even if His Majesty's Government decided to release me in order to save themselves from embarrassment, my fast will have to continue. For, I cannot now hope to resist the decision by any other means; And I have no desire whatsoever to compass my release by any means other than honourable.

It may be that my judgement is warped and that I am wholly in error in regarding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes as harmful to them or to Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right with reference to other parts of my philosophy of life. In that case my death by fasting will be at once a penance for my error and a lifting of a weight from off these numberless men and women who have childlike faith in my wisdom. Whereas if my judgement is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but due to the fulfilment of the scheme of life which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century, apparently not without considerable success.

I remain,
Your faithful friend,

M. K. Gandhi.

The Prime Minister replied as under:

September 8th, 1932

10, Downing Street,

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have received your letter with much surprise and, let me add, with very sincere regret. Moreover, I cannot help thinking that you have written it under a misunderstanding as to what the decision of His Majesty's Government as regards the Depressed Classes really implies. We have always understood you were irrevocably opposed to the permanent segregation of the Depressed Classes from the Hindu community. You made your position very clear on the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference and you expressed it again in the letter you wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare on 11th March. We also knew your view was shared by the great body of Hindu opinion, and we, therefore, took it into most careful account when we were considering the question of representation of the Depressed Classes.

Government Decision Explained

Whilst, in view of the numerous appeals we have received from Depressed Class organisations and the generally admitted social disabilities under which they labour and which you have often recognized, we felt it our duty to safeguard what we believed to be the right of the Depressed Classes to a fair proportion of representation in the legislatures, we were equally careful to do nothing that would split off their community from the Hindu world. You yourself stated in your letter of March 11, that you were not against their representation in the legislatures.

Under the Government scheme the Depressed Classes will remain part of the Hindu community and will vote with the Hindu electorate on an equal footing, but for the first twenty years, while still remaining electorally part of the Hindu community, they will receive through a limited number of special constituencies, means of safeguarding their rights and interests that, we are convinced, is necessary under present conditions.

Where these constituencies are created, members of the Depressed Classes will not be deprived of their votes in the general Hindu constituencies, but will have two votes in order that their membership of the Hindu community should remain unimpaired.

We have deliberately decided against the creation of what you describe as a communal electorate for the Depressed Classes and included all Depressed Class voters in the general or Hindu constituencies so that the higher caste candidates should have to solicit their votes or Depressed Class candidates should have to solicit the votes of the higher castes at elections. Thus in every way was the unity of Hindu society preserved.

Safeguard Temporary

We felt, however, that during the early period of responsible government when power in the Provinces would pass to whoever possessed a majority in the legislatures, it was essential that the Depressed Classes, whom you have yourself described in your letter to Sir Samuel Hoare as having consigned by Caste Hindus to calculated degradation for centuries, should return a certain number of members of their own choosing to legislatures of seven of the nine provinces to voice their grievances and their ideals and prevent decisions going against them without the legislature and the Government listening to their case — in a word, to place them in a position to speak for themselves which every fair-minded person must agree to be necessary. We did not consider the method of electing special representatives by reservation of seats in the existing conditions, under any system of franchise which is practicable, members who could genuinely represent them and be responsible for them, because in practically all cases, such members would be elected by a majority consisting of higher caste Hindus.

The special advantage initially given under our scheme to the Depressed Classes by means of a limited number of special constituencies in addition to their normal electoral rights in the general Hindu constituencies is wholly different in conception and effect from the method of representation adopted for a minority such as the Moslems by means of separate communal electorates. For example, a Moslem cannot vote or be a candidate in a general constituency, whereas any electorally qualified member of the Depressed Classes can vote in and stand for the general constituency.

Reservation Minimum

The number of territorial seats allotted to Moslems is naturally conditioned by the fact that it is impossible for them to gain any further territorial seats and in most provinces they enjoy weightage in excess of their population ratio; the number of special seats to be filled from special Depressed Classes constituencies will be seen to be small and has been fixed not to provide a quota numerically appropriate for the total representation of the whole of the Depressed Class population, but solely to secure a minimum number of spokesmen for the Depressed Classes in the legislature who are chosen exclusively by the Depressed Classes. The proportion of their special seats is everywhere much below the population percentage of the Depressed Classes. As I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes should have joint electorates with other Hindus, because that it already provided, nor to maintain the unity of Hindus, which is also provided, but solely to prevent the Depressed Classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities today, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislatures which

will have a dominating influence over their future.

In the light of these very fair and cautious proposals, I am quite unable to understand the reason of the decision you have taken and can only think you have made it under a misapprehension of the actual facts.

Government Decision Stands

In response to a very general request from Indians after they had failed to produce a settlement themselves the Government much against its will, undertook to give a decision on the minorities question. They have now given it, and they cannot be expected to alter it except on the conditions they have stated. I am afraid, therefore, that my answer to you must be that the Government's decision stands and that only agreement of the communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangements for those that Government have devised in a sincere endeavour to weigh the conflicting claims on their just merits.

You ask that this correspondence, including your letter to Sir Samuel Hoare of March 11th, should be published. As it would seem to me unfair if your present internment were to deprive you of the opportunity of explaining to the public the reason why you intend to fast, I readily accede to the request if on reconsideration you repeat it. Let me, however, once again urge you to consider the actual details of Government's decision and ask yourself seriously the question whether it really justifies you in taking the action you contemplate.

I am,
Yours very sincerely,
J. Ramsay MacDonald.

Finding that the Prime Minister would not yield he sent him the following letter informing him that he was determined to carry out his threat of fast unto death:

Yeravada Central Prison,
September 9th, 1932.

Dear friend,

I have to thank you for your frank and full letter telegraphed and received this day. I am sorry, however, that you put upon the contemplated step an interpretation that never crossed my mind. I have claimed to speak on behalf of the very class, to sacrifice whose interests you impute to me a desire to fast myself to death. I had hoped that the extreme step itself would effectively prevent any such selfish interpretation without arguing, I affirm that for me this matter is one of pure religion. The mere fact of the

Depressed Classes having double votes does not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. In the establishment of separate electorate at all for the Depressed Classes I sense the injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the Depressed Classes. You will please permit me to say that no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned.

I should not be against even over-representation of the Depressed Classes. What I am against is their statutory separation even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. Do you realize that if your decision stands and the constitution comes into being, you arrest the marvellous growth of the work of Hindu reformers who have dedicated themselves to the uplift of their suppressed brethren in every walk of life ?

Decision Unchanged

I have, therefore, been compelled reluctantly to adhere to the decision conveyed to you.

As your letter may give rise to a misunderstanding, I wish to state that the fact of my having isolated for special treatment the Depressed Classes question from other parts of your decision does not in any way mean that I approve of or am reconciled to other parts of the decision. In my opinion, many other parts are open to very grave objection. Only I do not consider them to be any warrant for calling from me such self immolation as my conscience has prompted me to, in the matter of the Depressed Classes.

I remain, Your faithful friend,
M. K. Gandhi.

Accordingly on the 20th September 1932 Mr. Gandhi commenced his "fast unto death" as a protest against the grant of separate electorates to the Untouchables.

The story of this fast has been told by Mr. Pyarelal in a volume which bears the picturesque and flamboyant title of "The Epic Fast ". In the pages of this *lours Boswelliana* the curious will find all he wants to know about the happenings in India during these mad days and I need say nothing about it here. Suffice it to say that although Mr. Gandhi went on fast unto death he did not want to die. He very much wanted to live.

The fast therefore created a problem and that problem was how to save Mr. Gandhi's life. The only way to save his life was to alter the Communal Award so as not to hurt Mr. Gandhi's conscience. The Prime Minister had made it quite clear that the British Cabinet would not withdraw it or alter it of its own but that they were ready to substitute for it a formula that may be agreed upon by the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables. As I had the privilege of representing the Untouchables at the Round Table Conference it was assumed that the assent of the Untouchables would not be valid unless I was a party to it. At the moment my position as the representative of the Untouchables of India was not only not questioned but was accepted as a fact. All eyes naturally turned to me as the man or rather as the villain of the piece. Mr. Gandhi's life as he himself said was in my

hands.

It is no exaggeration to say that no man was placed in a greater and graver dilemma than I was then. It was a baffling situation. I had to make a choice between two different alternatives. There was before me the duty which I owed as a part of common humanity to save Gandhi from sure death. There was before me the problem of saving for the Untouchables the political rights which the Prime Minister had given them. I responded to the call of humanity and saved the life of Mr. Gandhi by agreeing to alter the Communal Award in a manner satisfactory to Mr. Gandhi. This agreement is known as the Poona Pact. The terms of the Poona Pact were as under:

1. There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of general electorates.

Seats in Provincial Legislatures shall be as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Madras | 30 |
| Bombay with Sind | 15 |
| Punjab | 8 |
| Bihar and Orissa | 18 |
| Central Provinces | 20 |
| Assam | 7 |
| Bengal | 30 |
| United Provinces | 20 |
| Total | 148 |

This number of 148 seats was raised to 151 in making adjustments on seats for Bihar and Orissa.

These figures are based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils announced in the Prime Minister's decision.

2. Election to these seats shall be by joint electorates subject, however, to the following procedure:

All members of the Depressed Classes registered in the general electoral roll of a constituency, will form an electoral college which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes, for each of such reserved seats by the method of single vote and four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election, shall be the candidates for election by the general electorates.

3. Representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in clause 2 above for their representation in Provincial Legislatures.

4. In the Central Legislature 18 per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes.

5. The system of primary election to panel of candidates for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as herein before mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of Clause

6 below.

6. The system of representation of the Depressed Classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislatures as provided for in clauses 1 and 4 shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in this settlement.

7. The franchise for the Central and Provincial Legislature for the Depressed Classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee Report.

8. There shall be no disabilities attaching to anyone on the ground of his being a member of the Depressed Classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to public service.

Every endeavour shall be made to secure a fair representation of the Depressed Classes in these respects subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to public services.

9. In every province out of the educational grant an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to members of the Depressed Classes.

The terms of the Pact were accepted by Mr. Gandhi and given effect to by Government by embodying them in the Government of India Act.

This fast unto death was a great gamble on the part of Mr. Gandhi. He perhaps felt that the mere threat to fast unto death would make me and other Depressed Classes who were with me just shiver and yield. But he soon found that he was mistaken and that the Untouchables were equally determined to fight to the last for their rights. No one except his own followers was convinced that Mr. Gandhi's fast had any moral basis and if Gandhi got a second lease of life, he owes it entirely to the generosity and goodwill shown towards him by the Untouchables.

Question however is what advantage the Untouchables have got by entering into the Poona Pact. To understand this one must examine the results of the elections to the Legislatures. The Government of India Act came into operation on 1st April 1937. In February 1937 the elections to the new legislatures as defined in the Act took place. So far as the Untouchables are concerned the elections which took place in February 1937 were elections in accordance with the Poona Pact. The following is the analysis of the results of that election to the seats reserved for the Untouchables in the different Provincial Assemblies.

TABLE [f72]

| Province | Total Seats Reserved for the Untouchables | Total Seats Captured by the Congress |
|-------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| United Provinces | 20 | 16 |
| Madras | 30 | 26 |
| Bengal | 30 | 6 |
| Central Provinces | 20 | 7 |

| | | | |
|--------|--|-----|-----|
| Bombay | | 15 | 4 |
| Bihar | | 15 | 11 |
| Punjab | | 8 | Nil |
| Assam | | 7 | 4 |
| Orissa | | 6 | 4 |
| Total | | 151 | 78 |

This analysis reveals certain facts which make one ask whether the Untouchables have got anything of any value by entering into the Poona Pact and saving the life of Mr. Gandhi and whether the Poona Pact has not made the Untouchables the Bondsmen of the Caste Hindus.

This analysis shows that a large majority of them have been elected as Congressmen. It is my firm conviction that for the Untouchables to merge in the Congress or for the matter of that in any large political party cannot but be fatal for them.

The Untouchables need a movement if they are to remain conscious of their wrongs and if the spirit of revolt is kept alive amongst them. They need a movement because the Caste Hindus have to be told that what is tragedy of the Untouchables is their crime. The Congress may not be a red-blooded Hindu body so far as the Musalmans are concerned. But it is certainly a full-blooded and blue-blooded Hindu body inasmuch as it consists of Caste Hindus. A movement of the Untouchables must mean an open war upon the Caste Hindus. A movement of the Untouchables within the Congress is quite impossible. It must mean an *inter necine* within the party. The Congress for its own safety cannot allow it.

The Congress has strictly forbidden the Untouchables who have joined the Congress to carry on any independent movement of the Untouchables not approved of by the High Command. The result is that in those Provinces where the Untouchables have joined the Congress the movement of the Untouchables as such is dead.

The Untouchables must retain their right to freedom of speech and freedom of action on the floor of the Legislature if they are to ventilate their grievances and obtain redress of their wrongs by political action. But this freedom of speech and action has been lost by the representatives of the Untouchables who have joined the Congress. They cannot vote as they like, they cannot speak what they think. They cannot ask a question, they cannot move a resolution and they cannot bring in a Bill. They are completely under the control of the Congress Party Executive. They have only such freedom as the Congress Executive may choose to allow them. The result is that though the tale of woes of the Untouchables is ever-increasing, the untouchable members of the Legislature are unable even to ask a question about them. So pitiable has their condition become that the Congress Party sometimes requires them to vote against a measure that may in the opinion of the Untouchable members of the Legislature be beneficial to the Untouchables. A recent instance of this occurred in Madras. Rao Bahadur Raja a

member of the Madras Legislature brought in a Bill to secure the entry of the Untouchables into Hindu Temples in the Madras Presidency. The Congress Government had promised to support it at first. Subsequently the Congress Government in Madras changed its opinion and opposed the measure. It was a dilemma for the Untouchable members of the Madras Legislature. But they had no choice. The whip was applied and they in a body voted against the measure. The representatives of the Untouchables were supposed to be the watch-dogs of the Untouchables. But by reason of having joined the Congress they are muzzled dogs. Far from biting they are not even able to bark. This loss of freedom of speech and action by these Untouchable members is entirely due to their having joined the Congress and subjected themselves to the discipline of the Congress.

The third disadvantage arising from the Untouchables joining the Congress lies in their being unable to secure any real benefit to the Untouchables. This is due to two reasons. First of all the Congress is not a radical party. The Congress has the reputation of being a revolutionary organization. Its idea of complete independence, the movement of civil disobedience and non-payment of land revenue which the Congress once launched have undoubtedly given that reputation. But many people forget that a revolutionary party is not necessarily a radical party. Whether a revolutionary party is also a radical party must depend upon the social and emotional realities which bring on or induce the revolutionary activity. The Barons of England who under Simon de Mandfort rose against King John in 1215 and compelled him to sign the *Magna Charta* must be classed as revolutionaries along with the Peasants of England who in 1381 rose in rebellion under Wat Tyler against their masters and who were all hanged for their rebellious acts. But who can say that the Barons because they were revolutionaries were also radical? The Barons rebelled because they wanted the rights of their class against the King and the peasants established. The Barons revolt was fed by the social emotion of those who were frustrated of power. The emotions behind the peasants revolt were those who were oppressed and who were hungering for food and freedom and that is why the peasants were both revolutionary as well as radical. The revolt of the Congress is more like the revolt of the Peasants. The Congress under Gandhi is as radical as the Barons were under Simon de Mandfort. Just as the Barons revolt was fed by the social emotions of those who were frustrated of power and not by the emotions of those who were toiling and hungering so was the Congress revolt against the British. It is true that the Congress gathered a large following from the masses but that was by appealing to their anti-British feeling which is natural to all Indians. It is also true that emotions of these were those who were frustrated of food and freedom. But their emotions were in conflict of those socially advanced and the propertied classes. And the latter had all along been the governing class in the Congress. The masses have been camp followers. It is their emotions which has all along determined the character of the Congress. Their emotions are of those who are frustrated of power. That is why the

Congress has been only revolutionary body and has not been a radical party. The truth of this can be seen by any one who cares to examine the record of the Congress Governments. Their achievement since they have taken over are just a miscellaneous collection of trifling trinkets. They have shot down the workers more readily than the British and have released criminals sentenced by the High Courts on no other ground than that they have the authority to do it. It is a surprize to me—it is not me—that the Congress has so soon shown that it is just a counter-part of the Tories in England. The governing class in the Congress has lost all its fervour for revolution, for driving the British out. Having now got a field to exploit the masses they want to stick on the power and authority to do the job thoroughly and do not wish to be disturbed by any thought of anti-imperialism at all.

Not being radical party the Congress cannot be trusted to undertake a radical programme of social and economic reconstruction without which the Untouchables can never succeed in improving their lot. For the Untouchables to join such a party is a futile and senseless thing. The Congress will not do anything for them but will only use them as they have done.

The Congress might do something for the Untouchables if it was compelled to do by force of circumstances. There is only one circumstance in which the Congress would feel such a compulsion—that is when the Congress finds itself dependent upon the representatives of the Untouchables for its majority in the Legislature. Then the Untouchables would be in a position to dictate their terms to the Congress and the Congress would be bound to accept them. In such a contingency it would be worth the while of the Untouchables to join the Congress in a coalition. It would be real bargain. But today the Congress has everywhere such large majorities that in the legislatures it is its own master. It is not dependent on any outside support. The Untouchables who are in it are at the end of the tail and the tail so lengthened that it cannot wag. This is the second reason why joining the Congress can be of no benefit to the Untouchables.

Such are the disadvantages that have arisen from the Untouchables having joined the Congress. They are not merely disadvantages. I call them dire consequences. All social movement has become dead. All political power has become migratory. It is understatement to say that under the new Constitution the Untouchables are marking time. The fact is that they have been put in chains.

But the question will undoubtedly be asked and it is this—If such are the consequences of joining the Congress why did these Untouchables join it? Why did they not fight their elections independently and in opposition to the Congress? Some of the Untouchables who stood on the Congress ticket were just careerists, men on the make who wanted to climb into the Legislature so as to be within call when the places of office or profit come for distribution. They did not care by whose ladder they climbed. The Congress being the biggest party and its pass the surest way of being admitted into the Legislature these careerists felt that to join the Congress was the easiest way of

electoral success. They did not want to take any chance. This however explains their object. It does not explain the cause which forced them to join the Congress. I am sure even these careerists would not have joined the Congress if it was possible for them to have got themselves elected independently of the Congress. They joined the Congress only because they found that that course was impossible. Why were they compelled to join the Congress? The answer is that it was due to the system of joint electorates which caused the mischief which was introduced by the Poona Pact.

A joint electorate for a small minority and a vast majority is bound to result in a disaster to the minority. A candidate put up by the minority cannot be successful even if the whole of the minority were solidly behind him. The fact that a seat is reserved for a minority merely gives a security that the minority candidate will be declared elected. But it cannot guarantee that the minority candidate declared elected will be a person of its choice if the election is to be by a joint electorate. Even if a seat is reserved for a minority, a majority can always pick up a person belonging to the minority and put him up as a candidate for the reserved seat as against a candidate put up by the minority and get him elected by helping its nominee with the superfluous voting strength which is at its command. The result is that the representative of the minority elected to the reserved seat instead of being a champion of the minority is really the slave of the majority.

In the system of electorates now formed for election to the Legislature, the Untouchable voters as against the caste Hindu voters are placed in a hopeless minority. A few instances will show how great is the discrepancy in the relative voting strength of the Untouchables and the caste Hindus in the different constituencies.

The power to do mischief in elections which a joint electorate gives to a majority is increased immensely if the electoral system is based on the principle of a single member constituency.

In a system of joint electorates with reserved seats for a minority a constituency must always be a plural member constituency i.e. there must be one seat for the minority and at least one seat for the majority. In other words it must be what is called a plural member constituency. This plural member constituency must be small one i.e. the majority community may have just two seats as against the one assigned to the minority. It may be a large one i.e. the majority may have a larger number of seats assigned to it. This is an important consideration because the smaller the number of seats the greater the power of mischief which the majority gets. This will be clear if it is borne in mind that when a majority has fewer seats it can release a large portion of its voting strength to get its own nominee from the minority elected to the reserved seats and defeat the nominee of the minority. On the other hand if the majority is assigned a larger number of seats, there a competition among the candidates is greater, the voters of the majority community are for the most part (busy) [\[f73\]](#) in fighting out the election to the seats assigned to the majority and very few at all can be released to help the

nominee of the majority for the minority seat. In a joint electorate the safety of the minority lies in the majority having a larger number of seats to contest. Otherwise it is sure to be overwhelmed by the majority.

In the electoral system now framed for the caste Hindus the principle that is adopted is that of the single member constituency. It is true that on the face of it the constituency taken as a whole appear to be a plural member constituency. But, in fact, the constituency so far as the caste Hindus are concerned are single member constituencies. The consequence of this single member constituency system for Caste Hindus is that the Hindus are able to release an enormous lot of their superfluous votes and flood the election for the seats reserved for the Untouchables and keep their nominee for the reserved seat afloat.

The Hindus were anxious to forge further means for nullifying the benefit of the Poona Pact. The Poona Pact having been concluded in a hurry, it left many things undefined. Of the things that were left undefined and about which there arose subsequently a keen controversy were the following: (1) Does the 'panel of four' to be elected at the primary election imply four as a maximum or a minimum? (2) What was to be the method of voting in the final joint electorate with the Hindus? The Hammond Committee which had to decide upon these issues found that there were two diametrically opposite views in regard to these two questions, one view held by the Caste Hindus and the other held by the Untouchables. It was contended on behalf of the Caste Hindus that the panel of four was intended to be a minimum. If four candidates are not forthcoming there could be no primary election and therefore there can be no election for the reserved seat, which they said must remain vacant and the Untouchables should go without representation. The Untouchables contended that four was the maximum. Four in the Poona Pact meant "not more than four". It did not mean "not less than four". On the question of voting the caste Hindus contended that the compulsory distributive vote was the most appropriate. The Untouchables on the other hand insisted that the cumulative system of voting was the proper system to be introduced.

The Hammond Committee accepted the view propounded by the Untouchables and rejected those of the Caste Hindus. All the same it is interesting to know why the caste Hindus put forth their contentions.

The reason why the Hindus wanted four in the panel and not less was quite obvious. The object of the Hindus is to get elected in the final election such a representative of the Untouchables as would be most ready and willing to compromise with Hindus and Hinduism. To get him elected in the final election he must first come in the Panel. A most compromising Untouchable can come in the Panel only when the panel is a large panel.

If there is only one candidate in the Panel then he would be the staunchest representative of the Untouchable and worst from the standpoint of the Hindus. If there are two, the second will be less staunch than the first and therefore good from the

standpoint of the Hindus. If there are three, the third will be less staunch than the second and therefore better from the standpoint of the Hindus. If there be four, the fourth will be less staunch than the third and therefore best from the point of view of the Hindus. The Panel of four gives the Hindus the best chance of getting into the Panel such representative of the Untouchables as is most compromising in his attitude towards Hindus and Hinduism and that is why they insisted that the Panel should be at least of four.

The object of insisting upon the system of compulsory distributive vote was just supplementary to the idea of having the Panel of not less than four. Under the cumulative vote the elector has as many votes as there are seats, but may plump them all for one candidate or distribute them over two or more candidates as he may desire. Under the distributive system of voting the elector has also as many votes as there are seats, but he can give only one vote to any one candidate.

Although the two look different yet in effect there may be no difference because even under the cumulative vote a voter is not prevented from distributing his votes. He is free to give one vote to one candidate. But the Hindus did not want to take any chance. Their main object was to flood the election to the seat reserved for the Untouchables in the joint electorate by using the surplus votes of the caste Hindus in favour of the Untouchable candidate who happens to be their nominee. The object was to outnumber the Untouchable voters and prevent them from electing their own nominee. This cannot be done unless the surplus votes of the caste Hindu voters were divested from the caste Hindu candidate towards the Untouchable candidates. There is a greater chance of the diversion of these surplus votes under the distributive system than there is under the cumulative system. Under the former the caste Hindu voter can give only one vote to the caste Hindu candidate. The other vote not being of use to the caste Hindu candidate is usable only for an Untouchable candidate. With the distributive system there was more chance of flooding the election to the seat reserved for the Untouchables and this is why they preferred it to the system of cumulative vote. But they want to take a chance. Even the distributive system from their point of view was not foolproof. Under the distributive system there was no compulsion upon the voter to use all his votes. He may use one vote for the caste Hindu candidate and not use the rest of his votes. If this happens the purpose of getting in their untouchable nominee would be defeated. Not to leave things to chance the Hindus wanted that the distributive system of voting should be made compulsory so that a caste Hindu voter whether he wants it or not can have no option but to vote for the untouchable candidate who may be the nominee of the Hindus.

The two proposals were thus a part of a deep conspiracy on the part of the Hindus. They were rejected by the Hammond Committee. But there are enough elements of mischief in the Poona Pact itself that the rejection of these two proposals has in no way weakened the power of the Hindus to render nugatory the right of special representation

granted to the Untouchables.

Notwithstanding the political disaster which has overtaken the Untouchables and which is the result of the Poona Pact, there are not wanting friends of Mr. Gandhi who hold out the Poona Pact as a great boon to the Untouchables.

Firstly it is alleged that the Poona Pact gave the Untouchables larger number of seats than was given to them by the Communal Award. It is true that the Poona Pact gave the Untouchables 151 seats while the Award had only given them 78. But to conclude from this that the Poona Pact gave them more than what was given by the Award is to ignore what the Award had in fact given to the Untouchables.

The Communal Award gave the Untouchables two benefits: (i) a fixed quota of seats to be elected by separate electorates for Untouchables and to be filled by persons belonging to the Untouchables, (ii) Double vote, one to be used through separate electorates and the other to be used in the general electorates.

Now if the Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats it also took away the right to the double vote. This increase in seats can never be deemed to be a compensation for the loss of the double vote. The second vote given by the Communal Award was a priceless privilege. Its value as a political weapon was beyond reckoning. The voting strength of the Untouchables in each constituency is one to ten. With this voting strength free to be used in the election of caste Hindu candidates, the Untouchables would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate, the issue of the General Election. No Caste Hindu candidate could have dared to neglect the Untouchables in his constituency or be hostile to their interest if he was made dependent upon the votes of the Untouchables. Today the Untouchables have a few more seats than were given to them by the Communal Award. But this is all that they have. Every other member is indifferent if not hostile. If the Communal Award with its system of double voting had remained, the Untouchables would have had a few seats less but every other member would have been a member for the Untouchables. The increase in the number of seats for the Untouchables is no increase at all.

Admitting for the sake of argument that the Poona Pact did give to the Untouchables a few more seats, the question still remains of what use are these additional seats. Ordinarily a right to vote is deemed to be sufficient as a means of political protection. But it was felt that in the case of the Untouchables mere right to vote would not be enough. It was feared that a member elected on the votes of the Untouchables, if he is himself not an Untouchable, might play false and might take no interest in them. It was held that the grievances of the Untouchables must be ventilated in the Legislature and that the surest way of ensuring it would be to provide that a certain number of seats shall be reserved for them so that the Untouchables shall be represented by Untouchables in the Legislature. It is now evident that this hope has not been fulfilled. The Communal Award no doubt gave fewer seats. But they would have been all of them freemen. The Poona Pact gave more but they are all filled by bondsmen. If to have a

platoon of bondsmen is an advantage then the Poona Pact may be said to be advantage.

The second argument in favour of the Poona Pact is that in abolishing separate electorates it saved the Untouchables from being eternally branded as Untouchables. In one of his speeches delivered in London Mr. Gandhi said:

"Muslims and Sikhs are all well organized. The 'untouchables' are not. There is very little political consciousness among them and they are so horribly treated that I want to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates their lives would be miserable in villages which are the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. It is the superior class of Hindus who have to do penance for having neglected the 'untouchables' for ages. That penance can be done by active social reform and by making the lot of the 'untouchables' more bearable by acts of service, but not by asking for separate electorates for them. By giving them separate electorates you will throw the apple of discord between the 'untouchables' and the orthodox. You must understand I can tolerate the proposal for special representation of the Musalmans and the Sikhs only as a necessary evil. It would be a positive danger for the 'untouchables'. I am certain that the question of separate electorates for the 'untouchables' is modern manufacture of Government. The only thing needed is to put them on the voters' list, and provide for fundamental rights for them in the constitution. In case they are unjustly treated and their representative is deliberately excluded, they would have the right to special election tribunal which would give them complete protection. It should be open to these tribunals to order the unseating of an elected candidate and the election of the excluded man."

"Separate electorates to the 'untouchables' will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Musalmans will never cease to be Musalmans by having separate electorates. Do you want the 'untouchables' to remain 'untouchables' for ever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of untouchability, and when you have done it, the bar sinister which has been imposed by an insolent 'superior' class upon an 'inferior' class will be destroyed. When you have destroyed the bar sinister, to whom will you give the separate electorates? Look at the history of Europe. Have you got separate electorates for the working classes or women? With adult franchise, you give the 'untouchables' complete security. Even the orthodox would have to approach them for votes."

"How then, you ask, does Dr. Ambedkar, their representative, insist on separate electorates for them? I have the highest regard for Dr. Ambedkar. He has every right to be bitter. That he does not break our heads is an act of self-restraint on his part. He is today so much saturated with suspicion that he cannot see anything else. He sees in every Hindu a determined opponent of the 'untouchables', and it is quite natural. The same thing happened to me in my early days in South Africa, where I was hounded out by the Europeans wherever I went. It is quite natural for him to vent his wrath. But the

separate electorates that he seeks will not give him social reform. He may himself mount to power and position but nothing good will accrue to the 'untouchables'. I can say all this with authority, having lived with the 'untouchables' and having shared their joys and sorrows all these years."

His argument it is true derives some support from the Simon Commission which also observed: (*The following extracts are not quoted in the MS. They are reproduced here from Dr. Ambedkar's 'What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables', Appendix VI, p. 327.—Ed.*)

(Extracts from the Report of the Simon Commission, Vol. II)

78. In no other province has it been possible to get an estimate of the number of the depressed classes who are qualified to vote. It is clear that even with a considerable lowering of the franchise—which would no doubt increase the proportion of the depressed class voters—there would be no hope of the depressed classes getting their own representatives elected in general constituencies without special provision being made to secure it. In the long run the progress of the depressed classes, so far as it can be secured by the exercise by them of political influence, will depend on their getting a position of sufficient importance for other elements to seek their support and to consider their needs.

* * *

80. ... It will be seen, therefore, that we do not recommend allocating seats to the depressed classes on the basis of their full population ratio. The scale of reserved representation suggested will secure a substantial increase in the number of the M.L.C.s drawn from the depressed classes. The poverty and want of education which so widely prevail amongst them make it extremely doubtful whether a large number of adequately equipped members could be at once provided, and it is far better that they should be represented by qualified spokesmen rather than by a larger number of ineffectives who are only too likely to be subservient to higher castes. The re-distribution of seats which is now being attempted among different kinds of representatives cannot be permanent, and provision must be made for its revision. But we think that our proposal is adequate for the present, especially as the representation of opinion by reservation of seats does not exclude the possibility of the capture of other seats *not* so reserved.

* * *

But that this argument is silly there can be no doubt about it. To put a man in a separate category from others is not necessarily an evil. Whether the affixing of a label is good or bad depends upon the underlying purpose. If the object is to deprive him of rights then such a labelling would no doubt be a grievous wrong. But if the purpose is to mark off as a recipient of a privilege then far from being a wrong it would be a most beneficial measure. To enrol an untouchable in a separate electoral roll would be

objectionable if the object was to deprive him of the right of franchise. To enrol him in a separate electoral roll for giving him the benefit of special representation would certainly be an advantage to him. Looked at from the point of view of ultimate purpose it is difficult to see how any person who claims to be the friend of the untouchables could object to separate electorates for them. Not only the argument of Gandhi against separate electorate was silly it was also insincere. Gandhi objected to separate electorates because it involved labelling of the Untouchables. But how is this labelling avoided in joint electorates it is difficult to understand. The reservation of a seat for the Untouchables in a joint electorate must and does involve such labelling for the candidate claiming the benefit of the reserved must in law declare that he is an untouchable. To that extent there is certainly a labelling involving in the Joint Electorate and Mr. Gandhi should have objected to joint electorates as violently as he did to separate electorates., Either Mr. Gandhi was insincere or that he did not know what he was talking about.

Friends of Mr. Gandhi do not stop to consider how far under the Poona Pact the Untouchables have been able to send independent men to represent them in the Legislature and whether these representatives have been putting up any fight and how well they are succeeding. If they stopped to do it they would be ashamed to sing the praises of the joint electorates and the Poona Pact. The Congress and the Hindus have shamefully abused their power and their resources as a majority community. Not only have they prevented the Untouchables from electing persons of their choice, not only have they got their own nominees elected by the use of their surplus votes, they have done something for which any decent party in any part of the world ashamed of itself. The selection of the candidates from the untouchables made by the Congress to fill the seats reserved for the Untouchables was a most cowardly and a blackguardly act.

It was open to the Congress—which is simply a political surname for Hindus—to allow the Untouchables the benefits of more seats than those fixed for them by the Poona Pact. They could have done that by adopting untouchable candidates to contest general seats. There was nothing in law to prevent them from doing so. The Congress did nothing of the kind. This shows that if no seat had been reserved to the Untouchables, the Hindus would never have cared to see that an untouchable was returned to the legislature. On the other hand when seats were reserved, the Hindus came forward to spoil the effect of the reservation by seeing to it that the seats went to such untouchables as agreed to be their slaves.

Thus there has been a tragic end to this fight of the untouchables for political rights. I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Gandhi is solely responsible for this tragedy.

Mr. Gandhi's cry against the Communal Award on the ground that it prescribed separate electorates was absolutely false and if the Hindus had not become maddened by his fast they would have seen that it was so. The Communal Award had also a provision for joint electorates in addition to separate electorates. The second vote given

to the Untouchables was to be exercised in a general electorate in the election of a Caste Hindu candidate. This was undoubtedly a system of joint electorates. The difference between the Communal Award and the Poona Pact does lie in the nature of electorates. Both provide for joint electorates. The difference lies in this, joint electorate of the Communal Award was intended to enable the Untouchables to take part and influence the election of the Caste Hindu candidate while the joint electorate of the Poona Pact is intended to enable the caste.

Hindus to take part and influence the election of the Untouchable candidates. This is the real difference between the two.

What would a friend of the Untouchables wish? Would he support the joint electorates of the Communal Award or the joint electorates of the Poona Pact ? There can be no doubt that the real salvation of the Untouchables lies in making the Hindus dependent upon the suffrages of the Untouchables. This is what the Communal Award did. To make the Untouchables depend upon the suffrages of the Hindus is to make them the slaves of the Hindus which they already are. This is what the Poona Pact does. The Communal Award was intended to free the Untouchables from the thralldom of the Hindus. The Poona Pact is designed to place them under the domination of the Hindus.

This 'Fast unto Death' of Mr. Gandhi was described in glorious terms by his friends and admirers both in India and outside. It was described as ' second crucifixion ', as ' martyrdom ' and as ' Triumphant struggle'. An American friend of Mr. Gandhi assured the Americans that in laying down his life Mr. Gandhi was neither a ' trickster ' nor a stick demagogue. Another American in his ecstasy went to the length of describing him as the incarnation of '*one against the world*'. Of course I was held out as the villain of the piece. I had of course my own view of Gandhi's fast. I described it as a political stunt. His utterances had to me always the ring of falsity and even of insincerity.

I had always the feeling that what actuated Mr. Gandhi to fast against the Communal Award was not any desire to liberate the Untouchables as to save the Hindus from disruption. He was prepared to do that at any cost, even at the cost of political enslavement of the Untouchables. His disapproval of the Poona Pact was very much like the disapproval of the enfranchisement of the Negro by the Southerners after the civil war. The ' Statesman ' and ' Nation ' came to the same conclusion. It said: (*Quotation not mentioned in the MS nor could it be traced elsewhere—Ed.*)

At the time there was this one solitary instance of a view agreeing with mine. Even some of the prominent untouchables backed Mr. Gandhi. A curious case was that of Mr. Raja whose grievance was that although he was a member of the Central Assembly nominated to represent the Depressed Classes he was not selected as a delegate for the Round Table Conference. He was fighting for separate electorates. Suddenly he changed sides and took up the cudgels on behalf of Mr. Gandhi and fulminated both against me for demanding and against the British Government for granting separate electorates. He developed such a strong love for Mr. Gandhi and such a strong faith in

the Hindus that no one could suspect that he was doing the work of a mere hireling. This is what Mr. Raja said in the course of a speech delivered by him on an adjournment motion moved in the Central Legislature on September 13th, 1932 relating to Gandhi's fast.

" Never in the annals of the history of India has the issue of the Depressed Classes assumed importance as it has today, and for this we of the Depressed Classes must for ever be grateful to Mahatma Gandhi. He has told the world, in words which cannot be mistaken, that our regeneration is the fundamental aim of his life. If world conscience cannot be roused even now to the realization of the position of the Depressed Classes, then we can only conclude that all instincts of humanity are dead in the world today."

* * *

"The question before the House is the situation created by Mahatma Gandhi opposing the grant of communal electorates to the Depressed Classes. I am sure there is no honourable member in this House who will not regret that circumstances should have forced such a great personality to take a vow to play on his life, but sir, the correspondence shows that Government had enough warning. If they did not attach full importance to our considered views expressed in our conferences and in the Rajah-Moonje Pact I had signed with the President of Hindu Mahasabha, they should have taken at least the grave warning given by Mahatma Gandhi and desisted from the course of creating separate electorates."

* * *

"Indeed this is my chief attack on the Premier's letter to Mahatma Gandhi. He tells us that he has given separate electorates for twenty years to enable us to get the minimum number of seats to place our views before the Government and legislature of the day. I contend that this privilege we have already enjoyed under the Montford reforms which have enabled us to get representation in numerous local bodies and in legislatures both provincial and central. We are sufficiently organized for that purpose and do not need either special pleading or special succour. In future what we do need as real remedy for our uplift is definite power to elect our representatives from the general constituencies and hold them responsible to us for their actions. I do not know why the Prime Minister calls the scheme of joint electorates with reservation of seats as impracticable. It is already in force in local bodies in Madras and some other provinces and has worked very satisfactorily. I contend, sir, that the scheme enunciated in the communal decision involves our segregation and makes us politically untouchables. I am surprised at the argument of the Prime Minister that there is no segregation because we can vote for Caste Hindus who will have to solicit our votes. But, sir, how can we bring about common ideal of citizenship when Depressed Class representatives are not to solicit votes of higher castes?"

* * *

"The sufferings which my community has undergone at the hands of Caste Hindus have been acknowledged by Caste Hindus themselves, and I am prepared to admit that there are a large number of reformers among them who are doing everything possible to improve our status and position. I am convinced that there is a change of heart and a change in the angle of vision of Caste Hindus. We, Depressed Classes, feel ourselves as true Hindus as any Caste Hindu can be, and we feel that the moral conscience of the Hindus has been roused to the extent that our salvation lies in bringing about a change from within the main body of Hindu society and not segregating ourselves from them. The course adopted by the Government would certainly arrest the progress of this most laudable movement. I must say, sir, that the Prime Minister's letter in its entire conception, and expression has disappointed me."

* * *

" The crisis that faces us today is very grave. There hangs in the balance the life of the greatest Indian of our time, and there hangs in the balance the future of millions of the down-trodden people of this country. Is Government going to take the responsibility for killing the one and reducing the other to perpetual servitude? Let it make its choice well and wisely."

* * *

Mr. Raja not only backed the Poona Pact and fought for distributive vote which as I pointed out was nothing but a part of the design of the Hindus to make the political enslavement of the Untouchables fool-proof and knave-proof. Mr. Raja was so much enamoured of his new faith in Gandhi and Hindus that he was not satisfied by the disposal of the matter by the Hammond Committee. He reopened the matter after election by moving a resolution in the Madras Assembly in favour of the distributive vote¹.

But today after seeing the results of the Poona Pact Mr. Raja seems to have been disillusioned. How long he will remain faithful to the truth he has discovered is more than I can say. But he has declared himself openly as a bitter opponent of the Poona Pact. In a letter to Mr. Gandhi, dated 25th August 1938, Mr. Raja says:

" You remember how, when most of my people were in favour of separate electorates so that they may express themselves faithfully and effectively in the legislatures, you staked your life on bringing them into the Hindu fold not only politically but socially and religiously. And I was in no small measure responsible for my people going in for a joint electorate with Caste Hindus on the express understanding that there was to be no interference with our choosing men who would faithfully represent our grievances and wishes. It was with this object that the panel election was instituted.

" All this you know as well as I do. But my object in recalling the fact is to show that while on our part we faithfully adhered to the Poona Pact, giving up agitating for a separate electorate, the Congress Party men in Madras representing the Caste Hindus deviated from the Pact, so much so, that our community in the Legislative Assembly

have to follow the Caste Hindus blindly in Madras Legislative Assembly Debates. Every measure the Ministry may bring and vote with them even in matters which deeply affect the interests of the community.

" You perhaps remember that at the beginning of the elections I protested against the Congress Committee setting up candidates for the panel election among the Depressed Classes. You were good enough to say that I might allow my community joining the Congress on certain conditions placed before us by Mr. S. Satyamurti. One of these conditions was that in matters affecting their community, the Depressed Class members of the Congress Party need not vote with the Congress members but vote according to their judgement.

"The recent debate on the Temple Entry Bill in the Madras Legislative Assembly has exposed the ugly fact that all Depressed Class Members driven by the discipline of the Congress Party in the Assembly voted solidly against my motion for referring the Bill to a Select Committee. Could anything be more unnatural and more humiliating, proving as it did the subjugation of my community by the Caste Hindus represented by Mr. Rajagopalachariar?

"You know the provisions of the Bill. It was only a piece of permissive legislation making it possible for a majority of worshippers of a temple to allow Harijans to worship in the temple. There was no element of compulsion or coercion in it. This Bill had your blessing. It was drafted by Mr. Rajagopalachariar himself and approved by you.

" At a previous session of the Assembly I introduced the Bill with the consent of Mr. Rajagopalachariar, who promised his full support to the measure. When I suggested that the Bill might be introduced by him as a Government measure, he wanted me to introduce it. When I met him last, on the 12th July 1938 and informed him that I was giving notice of a motion for referring the Bill to a Select Committee he did not object.

"I do not know what happened in the meantime but two days before my motion for referring the Bill to the Select Committee came up before the house, Mr. Rajagopalachariar sent for me and quietly asked me to withdraw the Bill, which I refused to do. When in due course, I moved for the consideration of the Bill, Mr. Rajagopalachariar stood up and opposed the Bill and requested me to withdraw it, saying that he would introduce a Temple Entry Bill on the same lines, only for Malabar and not for other Districts.

"The effect of Mr. Rajagopalachariar's speech was to defeat my motion with my own community men registering their votes against the measure, introduced to secure their social and religious elevation. One effect of Mr. Rajagopalachariar's opposition will be to strengthen the opposition in the country to temple entry as a whole.

" All this makes me uneasy about the wisdom of our having been parties to the Poona Pact in the full belief that the Congress would really help in our attempt to secure social and religious freedom. I am forced to think that our entering the joint electorate with the caste Hindus under the leadership of the Congress, far from helping us, has enabled

the Congress, led by Caste Hindu leaders to destroy our independence and to use us to cut our own throats.

"In the course of the debate, I asked Mr. Rajagopalachariar whether he had obtained your approval of the attitude which he so suddenly and unexpectedly assumed and the Speaker said that Mr. Rajagopalachariar will be given an opportunity to answer the question after I had done. Though he was given the privilege of speaking after me, he avoided the question and did not answer it at all.

" I trust that you will give your most serious consideration to this question of the attitude of the Congress Ministry in Madras towards Harijan uplift, especially with regard to temple entry and let me have your view before I answer my community men who are very much exercised over this question and are contemplating a repudiation of the Poona Pact and an agitation for a separate electorate accompanied by direct action of some kind." Mr. Rajah also wired to Mahatma Gandhi, Wardha on 12th September 1938 as follows:

"Agitation against Ministry rejection my bill growing difficult withstand pressure upon me—Anxiously awaiting reply."

Mr. Gandhi replied to Mr. Rajah on 14th September 1938: " Dear friend,

I must apologise for the delay in replying to your letter, I have been overwhelmed with work. Now I have your wire.

I wish you would trust C. Rajagopalachariar to do his best. He should be allowed to do the thing in his own way. If you cannot trust, naturally you will take the course which commends itself to you. All I know is that Harijans have no better friend than him. Go to him, reason with him and if you cannot persuade him, bear with him. That is my advice."

Mr. Rajah wrote a letter dated 21st September 1938 to Mr. Gandhi stating:

"I should request you on the other hand to give more serious consideration to the pledges given to my community during the Yeravada Fast and to the way in which they are carried out by your plenipotentiary in Madras. That fast was undertaken by you in order to change the Communal Award providing separate electorates for my people and to bring them into joint electorate with Caste Hindus by promising to spare no efforts to remove untouchability. And you have more than once said that temple entry is of the very essence of the removal of untouchability.

" So the question of our being in a joint electorate with Caste Hindus and the attitude of the Congress Ministry towards the raising of the social and religious status of the community are mutually and vitally connected.

"If we are not free to enter into Hindu Temples, we are no Hindus, and if we are not Hindus why should we be in a joint electorate with them? Is it for swelling their numbers as against Muslims and other communities?

" If you look at the situation in Madras from this point of view, you will realise that the rejection of the Temple Entry Bill is a gross betrayal of the Depressed Classes by the Congress Government in Madras.

" Any amount of money spent out of public funds or even from private resources for the amelioration of the economic condition of my community will be no substitute for the removal of untouchability through temple entry. As you yourself once said temple entry is the acid test of the sincerity of the caste Hindus in espousing the cause of the Depressed Classes.

"Mr. Rajagopalachariar's Temple Entry Bill, besides involving the tactical choice of a difficult district makes our community subservient to the will of Caste Hindus, a policy which is given a further effect to, in the appointment of Advisory Boards to assist the Labour Commissioner in which Caste Hindus of the Harijan Sevak Sanghs in this Province are given Government facilities for guiding the destinies of my people. I do not expect you to agree with my views on the measures recently introduced by Mr. Rajagopalachariar after rejecting the Madras Temple Entry Bill; but I expect you to give more serious consideration to the situation in Madras as regards the Depressed Classes in the light of the pledges given to the Depressed Classes during your memorable fast.

" You are morally bound to make this a matter of conscience and not merely one of political strategy. I assure that if you should seek ' inner light ' on this subject of untouchability and temple entry you will speak out more plainly and make the necessary sacrifice to educate your followers.

" I propose to send this correspondence to the press, but I shall wait for any further word from you till the end of this month."

Mr. Gandhi replied to the above on 5th October 1938: "Dear friend,

" I am working under great difficulty. Even this I am writing in the train taking me to Peshawar.

"Of course you will publish the correspondence between us whenever you think it necessary.

" Your last letter shows that you are in the wrong. I am not partial to Rajaji. But I know that he is as firm on untouchability as I am myself. I must, therefore, trust his judgement as to how to do the thing. From this distance, I can't judge his action. Do you not see that the whole of the movement is one of conversion of the Sanatani heart ? You cannot force the pace except to the extent that reforms immolate themselves. This process is going on vigorously.

" This temple entry question is a mighty-religious reform. I would like you to apply your religious mind to it. If you will, you will give your whole hearted support to Rajaji and make his move a thorough success."

The Untouchables of U.P. have also expressed their hostility to the Poona Pact. In a Memorandum submitted to Col. Muirhead the Under Secretary of State in India they said: (*Memorandum not typed in the MS.— Ed.*)

All over India the Untouchables have realized that the Poona Pact has been a trap and the change of the British Government's Communal Award by Gandhi's Poona Pact

is a change which in reality a change from freedom to bondage.

The Poona Pact was signed on the 24th September 1932. On the 25th September 1932 a public meeting of the Hindus was held in Bombay to accord to it their support. At that meeting the following resolution was passed:

"This Conference confirms the Poona agreement arrived at between the leaders of the Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes on September 24, 1932, and trusts that the British Government will withdraw its decision creating separate electorates within the Hindu community and accept the agreement in full. The Conference urges that immediate action be taken by Government so as to enable Mahatma Gandhi to break his fast within the terms of his vow and before it becomes too late. The Conference appeals to the leaders of the communities concerned to realize the implications of the agreement and of this resolution and to make earnest endeavour to fulfil them.

This Conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth, and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads, and all other public institutions. This right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest Acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.

It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples."

Mr. Gandhi felt that an organization which will devote itself exclusively to the problem of the Untouchables was necessary. Accordingly there was established on 28th September 1932 the All-India Anti-Untouchability League. The name, Gandhi thought, did not smell well. Therefore in December 1932 it was given a new name—The Servants of the Untouchables Society. That name again was not as sweet as Mr. Gandhi wished it to be. He changed and called it the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

The first change which Mr. Gandhi has brought about is this change in the name. Instead of being called Untouchables they are now called *Harijans*. To call, the Untouchables say that Mr. Gandhi is selfish and has given the name Harijan to the Untouchables to blaster up Vaishnavism. They want the Untouchables to be called Harijans the followers of Shiva. Mr. Gandhi replies that the term is used to mean God and not Vishnu and that Harijan simply means ' children of God '.

The Untouchables simply detest the name Harijan. Various grounds of objection are urged against the name. In the first place it has not bettered their position. It has not elevated them in the eyes of the Hindus. The new name has become completely identified with the subject matter of the old. Every body knows that Harijans are simply no other than the old Untouchables. The new name provides no escape to the Untouchables from the curse of untouchability. With the new name they are damned as

much as they were with the old. Secondly the Untouchables say that they prefer to be called Untouchables. They argue that it is better that the wrong should be called by its known name. It is better for the patient to know what he is suffering from. It is better for the wrong doer that the wrong is there still to be redressed. Any concealment will give a false sense of both as to existing facts. The new name in so far as it is a concealment is fraud upon the Untouchables and a false absolution to the Hindus. Thirdly there is also the feeling that the name Harijan is indicative of pity. If the name meant ' chosen people of God ' as the Jews claimed themselves to be it would have been a different matter. But to call them 'children of God' is to invite pity from their tyrants by pointing out their helplessness and their dependent condition. The more manly among the Untouchables resent the degrading implications of this new name. How great is the resentment of the Untouchables against this new name can be seen from the fact that whole body of the representatives of the Untouchables in the Bombay Legislative Assembly walked out of the House in protest when the Congress Government introduced a measure giving to the name Harijan the sanction of law.

This new name Harijan will remain until the downfall of Mr. Gandhi and the overthrow of the Congress Governments which are his creatures. That it was forced upon the Untouchables and that it has done no good are however facts which cannot be disputed.

Having discussed the blessings of this new name I must now proceed to examine the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The Sangh is spoken of as a memorial to Gandhi's labours in the cause of the Untouchables. What are the achievements of the Sangh.

The Sangh is an All-India Organization. It has a Central Board. Then there are Provincial Boards and under the Provincial Boards there are District and Local Committees. The number of Provincial Boards and Local Committees is given below:

| | 1932-33 | 1933-34 | 1934-35 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Provincial Boards | 26 | 26 | 29 |
| District & Local Committees | 213 | 313 | 372 |

The financial resources of the Sangh are mainly drawn from the collections made on an All-India tour specially undertaken for the purpose by Mr. Gandhi between November 1933 to July 1934. The total amount collected on this tour came to about 8 lacs of Rupees and is known as the Gandhi Purse Fund and forms the principal reserve for the Sangh to draw upon. The rest of the resources are made up of annual donations.

The total expenditure of the Sangh under all heads from year to year is as follows:

| 1932-33 | 1933-34 | 1934-35 | 1935-36 |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Rs. 2,31,039.00 | 3,31,791.00 | 4,48,422.00 | 3,99,354.00 |

In his report for 1934-35 the General Secretary reported that almost the whole of the Gandhi Purse Fund, which stood at over 8 lacs in July 1934, will be spent away by the

end of the current year, i.e. by the end of September 1936." In the fifth Annual Report the Secretary says, " As compared to the expenditure of the previous year, there has been a reduction of more than a lac in the total expenditure. This was partly owing to the gradual exhaustion of the Gandhi Purse Fund, dislocation in the realization of local collections owing to general elections and other contributory causes. The finances of the Central office were far from satisfactory. The total expenditure of the Central office (including grants made to branches) amounted to Rs. 86,610-14-8, as against an income of Rs. 42,485-4-9 thus leaving a deficit of Rs. 44,125-9-11 which was met from the general fund. Donations for general fund amounted to only Rs. 26,173-4."

It is obvious that the Harijan Sevak Sangh is a small affair and but for the running advertisement it gets from the Press it would not even be heard of. India is a vast continent with something like 6,96,831 [\[f74\]](#)villages. The Untouchables are spread out all throughout these 6,96,831 villages. There is no village without its untouchables. How many Untouchables can be reached by 372 Committees. It is a tiny peck in a vast ocean. Not only its capacity to cope with the problem is limited but its resources are too meagre to permit any relief being granted to the Untouchables on an adequate scale. The Sangh has now no permanent fund. What it had it has spent. It has to depend upon annual subscriptions. That source is also drying up leaving the Sangh with heavy deficit. The Sangh is in an exhausted condition. Its affairs in fact would have been wound up on account of its bankruptcy. If the Sangh is still existing, it is not because its endeavours are sustained by Hindu charity directed to the uplift of the Untouchables. It exists because the Congress Governments which are now established in the different Provinces have come to the rescue of the Sangh. They have handed over to the Sangh certain social welfare work which former Governments carried out through Government Departments or Government Officials with the money grants. Thus the Sangh is now living on Government funds. As an institution maintained by the Hindus with the help of Hindu Charity for the Untouchables the Sangh simply does not exist.

The din and noise which was created by Mr. Gandhi's fast was simply deafening. The readiness to make sacrifices to save his life was great and the eagerness shown to befriend the Untouchables was surprising and overwhelming. All this has vanished leaving the Untouchables high and dry. If the desire to contribute towards the maintenance of the Sangh—which the Hindus founded as an earnest of their acceptance of their obligation towards the Untouchables—is any measure of the reality of the change of heart then it must be admitted that the change has died with the occasion which caused it. Gandhi broke his fast and the Hindu lost his new-born love for the Untouchables.

The premature decay of the Sangh should make it unnecessary for me to consider the work it did. But the Sangh is held out as a great monument to Mr. Gandhi. It is therefore proper that I should examine the work done by the Sangh and the policy underlying that work. The work of the Sangh follows certain well defined lines. In the field of education

the Sangh has sought to encourage higher education among the Untouchables by instituting scholarships for the Arts, technical and professional courses. The Sangh also gives scholarships to High School students. The Sangh also maintained Hostels for Untouchable students attending colleges and High Schools. The great part of the educational activities of the Sangh is taken up in maintaining separate schools for primary stage children where there were no common schools in the vicinity or where common schools were closed to them.

Next comes the welfare activities of the Sangh. The medical aid which the Sangh undertakes to render to the Untouchables falls under this head. This is done by intendant workers of the Sangh who go in Harijan quarters to give medical aid to the sick and ailing among the Untouchables. The Sangh also maintains a few dispensaries for the use of the untouchables. This is a very small activity of the Sangh.

The more important part of the welfare activity of the Sangh relates to water supply. The Sangh does this by (1) sinking new wells or installing tube wells and pumps for the use of the untouchables, (2) repairing old ones and (3) persuading local Governments and bodies to sink and repair wells for the Untouchables.

The third line of activity undertaken by the Sangh is economic. The Sangh seems to run a few industrial schools and it is claimed that the industrial schools run by the Sangh produced a number of trained artisans who have taken to independent living. But according to the report, more successful and substantial work was done by way of organising and supervising cooperative societies among the Untouchables.

Such is in brief the record of the work done by the Sangh. It is largely directed by the Caste Hindus. There are very few Untouchables who have any voice in directing the activities of the Sangh. I have had no connection with the Sangh. But I might mention that when the Sangh was started I was invited to join. I had great desire to cooperate with the Hindus for the removal of untouchability. I had my own views regarding the policy and programme which the Sangh should adopt for accomplishing this task. Immediately after the Sangh was established I had to go to London to attend the Round Table Conference and had no opportunity to talk the matter over with the other members of the Sangh. But I posted a letter to the General Secretary of the Sangh Mr. Thakkar on the 14th November 1932 on Board the Ship *M. V. " Victoria "*. Excepting a short introductory para which I omit, the following is the full text of the letter:

" In my opinion there can be two distinct methods of approaching the task of uplifting the Depressed Classes. There is a school which proceeds on the assumption that the fate of the individual belonging to the Depressed Classes is bound up with his personal conduct. If he is suffering from want and misery it is because he must be vicious and sinful. Starting from this hypothesis, this school of social workers concentrates all its efforts and its resources on fostering personal virtue by adopting a programme which includes items such as temperance, gymnasium, co-operation, libraries, schools etc., which are calculated to make the individual a better and virtuous individual. In my

opinion there is also another method of approach to this problem. It starts with the hypothesis that the fate of the individual is governed by his environment and the circumstances he is obliged to live under and if an individual is suffering from want and misery it is because his environment is not propitious.

"I have no doubt that of the two views the latter is the more correct. The former may raise a few stray individuals above the level of the class to which they belong. It cannot lift the class as a whole. My view of the aim of the Anti-Untouchability League is that it has come into existence not for helping a few individuals at random or a few selected boys belonging to the Depressed Classes but for raising the whole class to a higher level. Consequently I would not like the League to dissipate its energies one programme calculated to foster private virtue. I would like the Board to concentrate all its energies on a programme that will effect a change in the social environment of the Depressed Classes. Having stated in general terms my views I venture to place some concrete proposals for work to be undertaken by the League.

"I think the first thing that the League should undertake is a campaign all over India to secure to the Depressed Classes the enjoyment of their civic rights such as taking water from the village wells, entry in village schools, admission to village chawdi, use of public conveyance etc.

"Such a programme if carried into village will bring about the necessary social revolution in the Hindu society without which it will never be possible for the Depressed Classes to get equal social status. The Board must however know what difficulties it will have to face if this campaign of civic rights is to be carried through. Here I can speak from experience because I as President know what happened when the Depressed Classes Institute and the Social Equality League launched such a plan in the Kolaba and Nasik Districts of the Bombay Presidency.

" First of all there will be riots between the Depressed Classes and the Caste Hindus which will result in breaking heads and in criminal prosecutions of one side or the other. In this struggle the Depressed Classes will suffer badly. There has not been a single case in the course of the social struggle carried on in these two districts in which the Police and the Magistracy have come to the rescue of the Depressed Classes even when justice was on their side. Secondly the villages will proclaim a complete boycott of the Depressed Classes the moment they see that the latter are trying to reach a status of equality along with them.

"I have mentioned only two of the many obstacles which the League will have to overcome if this campaign of civic rights is to be successful and the League will have to have an army of workers in the rural parts who will encourage the Depressed Classes to fight for their rights and who will help them in any legal proceedings arising therefrom to a successful issue. It is true that this programme involves social disturbances and violent scuffle. But I do not think that it can be avoided. I know the alternative policy of adopting the line of least resistance. I am convinced that it will be ineffective in the

matter of uprooting untouchability.

" The silent infiltration of rational ideas among the ignorant mass of Caste Hindus cannot, I am sure, work for the salvation of the Depressed Classes. First of all the Caste Hindu like all human beings follows his customary conduct in observing untouchability towards the Depressed Classes. Ordinarily, people do not give up their customary mode of behaviour because somebody is preaching against it.

" The salvation of the Depressed Classes will come only when the Caste Hindu is made to think and is forced to feel that he must alter his ways. For that you must create a crisis by direct action against his customary code of conduct. The crisis will compel him to think and once he begins to think he will be more ready to change than he is otherwise likely to be.

"The great defect in the policy of least resistance and silent infiltration of rational ideas lies in this that they do not ' compel ' for they do not produce crisis. The direct action in respect of the Chowdar tank in Mahad, the Kalaram temple in Nasik and the Guruvayur temple in Malabar have done in a few days what million days of preaching by reformers would never have done.

"The second thing I would like the Anti-Untouchability League to work for is to bring about equality of opportunity for the Depressed Classes. Much of the misery and poverty of the Depressed Classes is due to the absence of equality of opportunity which in its turn is due to Untouchability. I am sure you are aware that the Depressed Classes in villages and even in towns cannot sell vegetables, milk or butter — ways of earning a living which are open to all and sundry. A Caste Hindu, will buy these things from a Non-Hindu, but he will not buy them from the Depressed Classes. In the matter of employment his condition is the worst.

" Like the Negro in America he is the last to be employed in days of prosperity and the first to be fired in days of adversity. And even when he gets a foothold what are his prospects ? In the Cotton Mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad he is confined to the lowest paid department where he can earn only Rs. 25 per month. More paying departments like the weaving department are permanently closed to them. The place of the boss is reserved for the caste Hindu while the Depressed Class worker must slave as his underdog no matter how senior or how efficient.

" Depressed Class women working in the winding or reeling departments have come to me in hundreds complaining that the Naikins, instead of distributing the raw material to all women employees equally or in fair proportion, give all of it to the caste Hindu women and leave them in the cold."

"I think it would be fit and proper if the Anti-Untouchability League were to take up this question by creating public opinion in condemnation of it and establishing Bureaus to deal with urgent cases of inequality.

" Lastly I think the League should attempt to dissolve that nausea which the touchables feel towards the untouchables and which is the reason why the two sections

have remained so much apart as to constitute separate and distinct entities. In my opinion the best way of achieving it is to establish closer contact between the two. Only a common cycle of participation can help people to overcome that strangeness of feeling which one has when brought into contact with the other. Nothing can do this more effectively in my opinion than the admission of the Depressed Classes to the houses of the caste Hindus as guests or servants.

"The live contact thus established will familiarize both to a common and associated life and will pave the way for that unity which we are all striving after. I am sorry that many caste Hindus who have shown themselves responsive are not prepared for this.

"During those ten days of the Mahatma's fast that shook the Indian world there were cases in Ville Parle and in Mahad where the caste Hindu servants had struck work because their masters had abrogated the rules of untouchability by fraternising with the Untouchables. I expected that they would end the strike and teach a lesson to the erring masses by filling the vacancies by employing Depressed Classes in their places. Instead of doing that they capitulated with the forces of orthodoxy and strengthened them. I do not know how far such fair-weather friends of the Depressed Classes would be of help to them.

" People in distress can have very little consolation from the fact that they have sympathisers if those sympathisers will do nothing more than sympathise and I may as well tell the League that the Depressed Classes will never be satisfied of the bona fides of these caste Hindu sympathisers until it is proved that they are prepared to go to the same length of fighting against their own kith and kin in actual warfare if it came to that for the sake of the Depressed Classes as the Whites of the North did against their own kith and kin namely the Whites of the South for the sake of the emancipation of the Negro.

" The League will have to employ a very large army of workers to carry out its programme. The appointment of social workers might perhaps be looked upon as a minor question. Speaking for myself, I attach very great importance to the selection of a proper agency to be employed in this behalf. There can always be found workers to do a particular piece of work or any other for the matter of that if they are paid for it. I am sure such mercenary workers will not serve the purpose of the League. As Tolstoy said "Only those who love can serve ". In my opinion that test is more likely to be fulfilled by workers drawn from the Depressed Classes. I should therefore like the League to bear this aspect of the question in mind in deciding upon whom to appoint and whom not to appoint. I do not suggest that there are hot scoundrels among the Depressed Classes who have not made social service their last refuge. But largely speaking you can be more sure that a worker drawn from the Depressed Classes will regard the work as love's labour a thing which is so essential to the success of the League.

" Secondly there are agencies which are already engaged in some sort of social service without any confines as to class or purpose and may be prepared to supplement

their activity by taking up the work of the Anti-Untouchability League in consideration of a grant-in-aid. I am sure this hire-purchase system of work, if I may use that expression, can produce no lasting good. What is wanted in an agency is a single-minded devotion to one task only. We want bodies and organizations which have deliberately chosen to be narrow-minded in order to be enthusiastic about their cause. The work if it is to be assigned must be assigned to those who would undertake to devote themselves exclusively to the work of the Depressed Classes.

" Before closing this I wish to say just this. It was Balfour, I think, who said that what could hold the British Empire together was love and not law. I think that observation applies equally well to the Hindu society.

" The touchables and the untouchables cannot be held together by law, certainly not by any electoral law substituting joint electorates for separate electorates. The only thing that can hold them together is love.

"Outside the family, justice alone, in my opinion can open the possibility of love, and it should be the duty of the Anti-Untouchability League to see that the touchable does, or failing that, is made to do justice to the untouchable. Nothing else in my opinion can justify the project or the existence of the League." This letter was not even acknowledged by the Secretary. That not a single suggestion of mine was accepted goes without saying. Even my suggestion that the workers of the Sangh should be drawn largely from the Untouchables themselves was not accepted. Indeed when the attention of Mr. Gandhi was drawn to the fact that the Harijan Sevak Sangh had become the hive of mercenary Hindus, he defended it on the ground which are clever if not honest. [f75]He said to the deputation of the Untouchables;

" The welfare work of the Untouchables is a penance which the Hindus have to do for the sin of Untouchability. The money that has been collected has been contributed by the Hindus. From both points of view the Hindus alone must run the Sangh. Neither ethics nor right would justify Untouchables in claiming a seat on the Board of the Sangh."

Not only were all my proposals rejected by Mr. Gandhi and his advisers but in framing the constitution of the Sangh, aims and objects were adopted which are quite opposed to those which I had suggested. [f76]At the meeting held in Cowasjee Jehangir Hall in Bombay on the 30th September 1932 the aims of the organization were stated to be:

"Carrying propaganda against Untouchability and taking immediate steps 'to secure as early as practicable that all public wells, dharmashalas, roads, schools, crematoriums, burning ghats and all public temples be declared open to the Depressed Classes, provided that no compulsion or force shall be used and that only peaceful persuasion shall be adopted towards this end'."

But in the statement issued by Mr. G. D. Birla and Mr. A. V. Thakkar on the 3rd November, two months after its inauguration it was stated:

"The League believes that reasonable persons among the Sanatanists are not much

against the removal of Untouchability as such, as they are against inter-caste dinners and marriages. Since it is not the ambition of the League to undertake reforms beyond its own scope, it is desirable to make it clear that while the League will work by persuasion among the caste Hindus to remove every vestige of Untouchability, the main line of work will be constructive, such as the uplift of Depressed Classes educationally, economically and socially, which itself will go a great way to remove untouchability. With such a work even a staunch Sanatanist can have nothing but sympathy. And it is for such work mainly that the League has been established. Social reforms like the abolition of the caste system and inter-dinning are kept outside the scope of the League." These aims and objects are described in one of the Annual Reports of the Sangh. It says: [\[f77\]](#)

" According to its constitution the aim and object of the Society is the abolition of untouchability by reason of birth and the acquisition of equal rights of access of public temples, wells, schools and other public institutions for Harijans as enjoyed by other Hindus.

The achievement of this object has led the Society to undertake work of a two-fold kind. First, the Society has to bring about such a radical change in the sentiments and opinions of Caste Hindus that they may willingly, as a matter of course, allow the enjoyment of all civic rights to Harijans. Secondly, the society has to put forth its efforts and devote its funds for the educational, economic and social uplift of Harijans."

The work done and the aims formulated when put side by side raise two questions. Firstly is this record something of which the Sangh can be proud of? Secondly is its work consistent with the aims of the Sangh? The record is very poor. It is much cry and little wool. Certainly as compared with the record of work done by the Christian Missions with which the Sangh competes, it is not a record of which the Sangh can be proud of. But this is a mere matter for sorrow and nothing more. The second question is fundamental and therefore one for anxious consideration. It is well that the Sangh undertakes to labour in the interests of the Untouchables. But its labours must be so planned that out of it will come the destruction of untouchability.

Examined in the light of this consideration what is one to say of the work that is being done by the Sangh? The Sangh is openly and without abashment supporting *separate* schools, *separate* hostels, *separate* dispensaries, and *separate* wells for the Untouchables. I should have thought that that was the surest way of perpetuating untouchability. It is surprising that Mr. Gandhi who threatened to fast unto death against separate electorates on the ground that it involved segregation of the untouchables should himself sanction a line of activity which perpetuates this segregation. In undertaking to render this social service to the Untouchables, Mr. Gandhi and his Sangh should have forgotten what the Untouchables want. What the Untouchables want is not education, but the right to be admitted to common schools. The Untouchables do not want medical aid; what they want is the right to be admitted to the general dispensary

on equal terms. The Untouchable does not want water. What he wants is the right to draw water from a common well. The Untouchables do not want their suffering to be relieved. They want their personality to be respected and their stigma removed. Once their stigma is removed their sufferings will go. This the Harijan Sevak Sangh does not seem to have realized. The Sangh is said to be the friend of the Untouchables and the orthodox Hindu the enemy of the Untouchables. One fails to understand what the friend has done which the enemy would not do. The orthodox Hindu insists that the Untouchables shall have *separate* schools, *separate* dispensaries and *separate* wells, the Sangh says—*Thy will shall be done*. Except the fact the orthodox Hindu believes in untouchability and Harijan Sevak Sangh does not, what is the difference in practice between the friend and the foe? Under both, the untouchable is condemned to *separate* schools, *separate* hostels and *separate* wells. If this is so, it is difficult to understand why

Mr. Gandhi and the Harijan Sevak Sangh should pick up a quarrel with the orthodox Hindu if he and his Sangh are not prepared to force the issue. Whether the Hindu Shastras recognize untouchability or not is only an academic quarrel between Mr. Gandhi and the orthodox Hindu. It can do no practical good. On the contrary I am prepared to say that it had done positive harm to the Untouchables. In the first place it has created enmity between the Untouchables and the orthodox Hindus. Before Gandhi picked up this needless quarrel the relations between the Untouchables and the Hindus were non-social. The quarrel has made them anti-social. Secondly if there was no such quarrel, if instead of untouchability being made the issue—which Mr. Gandhi does not intend to fight it out—an appeal was made to the orthodox Hindu to remove the suffering of the Untouchables, many an orthodox Hindu I know would have come forward to help to remove the suffering. Mr. Gandhi has reaped the glory for having established the Sangh. But the Sangh has neither sought to remove untouchability nor has it helped to alleviate the sufferings of the Untouchables.

Why has the Sangh failed ? My answer is quite definite. I say the Sangh has failed because of its wrong politics.

It has often been said that the Harijan Sevak Sangh is a political organization. Mr. Gandhi has always resented such an allegation and repudiated it as being false. The General Secretary of the Sangh has also protested against it. To use his own words "the Sangh, though a sequel of a Political Pact, has no politics".

I do not see any reason for the resentment of Mr. Gandhi nor for the protests of his Secretary. I wish very much that the Sangh was a political organization. The untouchables have obtained a share of political power. But power which is not conscious of itself is no power. Again power which is not organized is no power. The Harijan Sevak Sangh would have been of great use if it had helped the Untouchables to organize independent political parties to fight the elections and make their political power effective. Nor can I accept the statement of Mr. Gandhi and his Secretary that the

Sangh has no politics. On the contrary I insist that not only the Sangh has a definite line of politics and that that line of politics is wrong because it is prejudicial to the cause of the Untouchables.

Since Mr. Gandhi does not admit that the Sangh has politics, one must go to circumstances for proof. Circumstantial proof is always better than oral testimony because as is well said man may lie but circumstances cannot. In this connection I want to rely upon a clause in the constitution of the Sangh as a piece of evidence in support of my contention. The clause relates to the means to be adopted by the Sangh for removing untouchability and for securing equal rights to the Untouchables along with the Caste Hindus. The clause reads as follows:

"That no compulsion is to be used for securing rights, but that peaceful persuasion is to be adopted as the *only* means." This is a basic principle of the Sangh. It has struck me as strange and I am sure it will strike all others as strange. I want to ask the question—Why has the Sangh limited itself to peaceful persuasion of the caste Hindus as the one and the only means of removing Untouchability ?

Most social reformers, whether religious or rational, seem to imagine that men of power will immediately check their pretensions and their exactions as soon as they have been told that their actions and attitudes are anti-social. But as Prof. Neibhur points out [f78] what these reformers overlook is an understanding of the brutal character of the behaviour of all human groups and the power of self interest and collective egoism which dominate all group relations. They also forget the fact that races, nations and classes are less moral than individuals which compose them and that justice between groups can therefore not be achieved purely by educational means. If conscience and reason can be insinuated into the resulting struggle they can only qualify, never abolish, the injustice. If injustice is to be abolished it must be resisted and when injustice proceeds from collective power, whether in the form of imperialism or class domination, it must be challenged by power. A class entrenched behind its established power can never be dislodged unless power is raised against it. That is the only way of stopping the exploitation of the weak by strong.

Why has Mr. Gandhi and the Harijan Sevak Sangh limited their means of resistance to the Caste Hindu domination to peaceful persuasion? Why do they not resist the injustice of the Caste Hindus by direct action? I can understand that in organising resistance to injustice, the problem is to find forms of resistance which will not destroy the meagre resources for rational and moral action which groups do possess. But there can be no difficulty on that account. Satyagraha or passive resistance has been found by Mr. Gandhi as a form of resistance which is morally beyond cavil. Why does not Mr. Gandhi ask the Sangh to launch Satyagraha by the Untouchables against the Caste Hindus for the abolition of the injustice against the Untouchables. He asked the people of India to offer Satyagraha against British Imperialism. Why does he not want to use the same means against the caste Hindus in the interests of the Untouchables ?

What is the answer of Mr. Gandhi to this question ? The only answer I can see is that it comes in the way of *his* politics. Mr. Gandhi must remain at the head of the nation. I wonder if life would be worthwhile to him if for some reason he ceased to be at the head of the nation. He is, I think, the most ambitious politician. I know, he regards as his rivals those whom he calls as friends. To be at the head of the nation means that he must preserve the integrity of the Congress. The Congress is ninety nine per cent composed of Hindus. How can Gandhi succeed in maintaining the integrity of the Congress if he were to direct the Sangh to carry on Satyagraha against the Hindus for the sake of the Untouchables. The Hindus would leave the Congress and the Congress would disrupt. This is detrimental to the interests of Mr. Gandhi . This is the explanation why Mr. Gandhi and the Sangh have adopted peaceful persuasion as the only means of removing untouchability. It is a means which is least likely to hurt the Hindus and the Congress. Not only in big matters but even in small matters the Sangh is careful to see that the Hindus are not hurt or annoyed. I am told that in distributing scholarships for instance the Sangh makes inquiries into the political affiliations of the applicant and if it is found that the applicant belongs to a community which is against the Congress or the Hindus, he gets no aid from the funds of the Sangh.

I wonder if any one will have any doubts left that Mr. Gandhi and the Sangh in limiting themselves to peaceful persuasions were controlled by political considerations of not annoying the Hindus and disrupting the Congress. This is what I meant when I said that the Sangha's politics and that its failure is due to wrong politics. I am sure I am using mild language when I describe it as wrong politics. It is treachery if the surrender of the interests of his ward by his guardian can be described as treachery.

Mr. Gandhi is often compared with Jesus Christ both by his Indian and European friends. What may be the justification for so strange a comparison? In one thing I see a complete contrast between the two. Both Jesus and Gandhi claimed to serve the lowly. This befriending attitude of both was resented by the upper classes. How did the two react? When Jesus was taunted by the Pharisees he retorted by saying—" They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick ". How sharp is the contrast between this attitude of Jesus and that of Mr. Gandhi. Jesus did not worry about those who were 'whole'. Gandhi is devoted to those who are 'whole' and who are sinning at the cost of those who are sick and who are sinned against. Gandhi is no physician to the untouchables. At best a sympathiser and nothing more.

Even as a sympathizer of the Untouchables his sympathy for them is limited by two considerations. It is limited by his social aims. Secondly it is also limited by his politics. Lest this statement should be doubted, I wish to give two instances, one of each which have occurred recently. They have occurred not far from Shegaon in Central provinces where Mr. Gandhi resides.

As an instance of the first I refer to what is known in India as the Khare episode. In 1938 last there was a ministerial crisis in the Central Provinces where the ministry was

a Congress Ministry. The Prime Minister Dr. Khare fell out with his colleagues. As Prime Minister he demanded the resignation of other ministers which they were not prepared to give without the consent of the Congress Parliamentary Board. But Dr. Khare forced them to give their resignations which they ultimately did. Thereupon Dr. Khare formed another Congress cabinet and filled the ministerial offices with men of his choice. In his new cabinet Dr. Khare included an untouchable as a minister. Dr. Khare's conduct in dissolving the old cabinet and forming a new one without consulting the Congress Parliamentary Board came up for investigation before the Congress Working Committee. Dr. Khare was found guilty of breach of party discipline and was deposed from his primiership. One of the accusations levelled against Dr. Khare by Mr. Gandhi was that he included an untouchable in his new Ministry. The following is the full text of what Mr. Gandhi said to Dr. Khare on this point and reduced to writing by Dr. Khare for my sake:

" Mahatmaji took me to task for including a Harijan in my second cabinet. I retorted by saying that it was a Congress programme of uplift of Harijans for which Mahatmaji fasted unto death and that I did what I could in furtherance of that programme when opportunity offered itself and I think I have done nothing wrong in doing so. Thereupon Mahatmaji charged me of doing this for my selfish ambition. I repudiated this charge saying that any selfish motive is disproved by my resignation. Then Mahatmaji said that by my action I have thrown an apple of discord among the members of that simple community and have rendered disservice to the Congress cause by throwing this temptation in their way." [\[f79\]](#)

That this is true and that Gandhi objected to the untouchable being included in the Cabinet is evidenced by the fact that when a new Congress Ministry was formed in Central Provinces this untouchable who functioned as a minister for a day was excluded. He should have been included as a matter of form, at least to keep up appearances. That he was not, shows that Gandhi was opposed to his inclusion on principle.

This is baffling because the Untouchable member of the Central Provinces Assembly who was chosen by Dr. Khare for ministership is a graduate, is a Congressman and is a strong party-man. Why should Mr. Gandhi have any objection to the inclusion of such a person in the Congress Cabinet. As a matter of fact if Mr. Gandhi was genuine in his professions regarding the untouchables he should have instructed all Congress Prime Ministers to include at least one untouchable in their Cabinets, if for nothing else, at least for its psychological effect upon the Untouchables and upon the Hindus. He should have done this irrespective of the party affiliations. Gandhi is not averse to congress making coalitions with other non-congress parties in provinces where it is not in a majority in order to secure offices. In such coalitions he has allowed Congress to include non-congressmen as ministers in their cabinets. If Gandhi can allow the congress to do this without losing its caste and its colour why Gandhi did not instruct the

Congress Prime Ministers to include untouchables in the Congress Ministries if he wanted that when he talks about his love for the Untouchables he should be believed. But the case in the Central Provinces stand on a different footing. Here the Untouchable who was taken as a minister was a Congressman and a graduate. There could be no objection on the ground of his want of qualification or want of political faith. Why did Mr. Gandhi object to his inclusion? A crowd of Untouchables went to Shegaon to Mr. Gandhi for an explanation. Anticipating this Mr. Gandhi had started observing silence, so that no explanation could be had. Then the untouchables started Satyagraha against Mr. Gandhi for not including an Untouchable in the Central Provinces Congress Cabinet. To escape that embarrassment Mr. Gandhi left Shegaon and went on a tour to the North Western Frontier Provinces for teaching non-violence to the Pathans. I am sure Gandhi's silence on this occasion was not to commune with God. It was taken on as a convenient excuse for not being driven under the fire of cross examination to disclose his inner-most thoughts about the Untouchables. In any case we have no answer to this question from Mr. Gandhi. To my mind there can be only one answer and that even if Gandhi had opened his mouth he could give no better. That answer is that Mr. Gandhi's ideal for the untouchable is a very low ideal and that all that he cares for is that the untouchable should be touched and that if he is touched without anybody taking a bath nothing further need be done about them. If Gandhi had tried and failed he would have been excused. But how can he be excused for entertaining so low an aim? Not failure but low aim is a crime.

As an instance of the second I refer to what is known as the Bachuma incident. If the first instance is baffling this second is gruesome. How gruesome it is can be seen from the brief summary of fact which I am giving. Bachuma, a small girl, 12 years old and belonged to an untouchable family which was living in *Wardha* (*This name is inserted as it was not mentioned in the MS.—Ed.*). One evening she was decoyed into the house of a Mahomedan who was the Sub-Inspector of Police. She was kept in his house and during the night this small child was raped by three Mahomedans, one was the Superintendent of Police himself, second a Sub-Inspector of Education and third a Lawyer. The three Mahomedans were tried in a Court of Law and two of them were sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment and the lawyer was acquitted as the girl was not able to identify him. The two who were convicted appealed to the High Court but the High Court rejected their appeals and confirmed their convictions and sentences. From gaol they sent to the Governor-in-Council petitions for mercy. But they were also rejected. This happened before the Congress came into office. After the Congress came into office they submitted fresh applications for mercy to the Minister-in-charge. The Minister-in-charge, who was also a Mahomedan thought that there was nothing wrong in a Mahomedan committing rape on an untouchable girl and decided to set the culprits free. He granted the application of one—that of the Inspector of Education who is now a free man and is employed on a big job in the Education

Department of a Mahomedan State. He was to release the other culprit also but in the meantime the agitation against him was so great that he had to resign his office. Every body expressed his resentment against the shameless act of the Minister but Mr. Gandhi has kept mum. So far he has not uttered a word of condemnation against this Minister. On the contrary he is even now engaged in the confabulations that are going on over the question of the reinstatement of this dismissed minister in his office which is still kept vacant. One likes to ask if Gandhi would have remained so silent and so unmoved if the little girl Bachuma who was raped by the three Mahomedans instead of being the daughter of an Untouchable had been Mr. Gandhi's own daughter. Why is Gandhi not able to make Bachuma's case his daughter's case? There are two answers. One is that Mr. Gandhi is not an untouchable. One must be born to it. Secondly Mr. Gandhi feels that by condemning the Muslim Minister for the sake of Bachuma he might destroy Hindu-Moslem Unity the maintenance of which is a fundamental creed of Congress politics. Does this now show that Mr. Gandhi's sympathies for the Untouchables are limited by his politics ?

What good is a man who is not even free to sympathize according to his conscience.

III

And now the temple entry. This is advertized as another of Mr. Gandhi's boons to the Untouchables.

This question of temple entry is the outcome of the resolution passed at the public meeting of the Hindus held on 25th September 1932 which also was the originating cause which gave birth to the Harijan Sevak Sangh. This resolution mentioned some of the liabilities of the Hindus towards the Untouchables. This list included the removal of the bar against the Untouchables in respect of admissions to Hindu temples.

Although the promise of temple entry was there in the Resolution the Untouchables did not insist upon its being fulfilled forthwith. The untouchables, at any rate a vast majority of them have not been keen for temple entry. When asked by Mr. Gandhi what I thought about temple entry I gave my opinion on it in the form of a statement which was issued to the Press on February 10 [\[f80\]](#), 1933, and which is reproduced below:

STATEMENT ON TEMPLE ENTRY

Although the controversy regarding the question of temple entry is confined to the Sanatanists and Mahatma Gandhi, the Depressed Classes have undoubtedly a very important part to play in it, in so far as their position is bound to weigh the scales one way or the other, when the issue comes for final settlement. It is, therefore necessary, that their view point should be defined and stated so as to leave no ambiguity about it.

To the Temple Entry Bill of Mr. Ranga Iyer as now drafted, the Depressed Classes cannot possibly give their support. The principle of the Bill is that if a majority of Municipal and Local Board voters in the vicinity of any particular temple on a Referendum decide by a majority that the Depressed Classes shall be allowed to enter the temple, the Trustees or the Manager of that temple shall give effect to that decision.

The principle is an ordinary principle of majority rule and there is nothing radical or revolutionary about the Bill and if the Sanatanists were a wise lot, they would accept it without demur.

The reasons why the Depressed Classes cannot support a Bill based upon this principle are two. One reason is that the Bill cannot hasten the day of Temple Entry for the Depressed Classes any nearer than would otherwise be the case. It is true that under the Bill the minority will not have the right to obtain an injunction against the Trustee or the Manager who throws open the temple to the Depressed Classes in accordance with the decision of the majority. But before one can draw any satisfaction from this clause and congratulate the author of the Bill, one must first of all feel assured that when the question is put to the vote there will be a majority in favour of the Temple Entry. If one is not suffering from illusions of any kind, one must accept that the hope of a majority voting in favour of Temple Entry will be rarely realised, if at all. Without doubt the majority is definitely opposed to day—a fact which is conceded by the Author of the Bill himself in his correspondence with the Shankaracharya. What is there in the situation as created after the passing of the Bill, which can lead one to hope that the majority will act differently? I find nothing. I shall, no doubt, be reminded of the results of the Referendum with regard to the Guruvayur Temple. But I refuse to accept a referendum so overweighed as it was by the Life of Mahatma Gandhi as the normal

result. In any such calculations, the life of the Mahatma must necessarily be deducted. Secondly, the Bill does not regard untouchability in temples as a sinful custom. It regards untouchability merely as a social evil not necessarily worse than social evils of other sorts. For, it does not declare untouchability as such to be illegal. Its binding force is taken away only if a majority decides to do so. Sin and immorality cannot become tolerable because a majority is addicted to them or because the majority chooses to practice them. If untouchability is a sinful and an immoral custom, then in the view of the Depressed Classes it must be destroyed without any hesitation, even if it was acceptable to the majority. This is the way in which all customs are dealt with by Courts of Law, if they find them to be immoral and against public policy. This is exactly what the Bill does not do. The author of the Bill takes no more serious view of the custom of untouchability than does the temperance reformer of the habit of drinking. Indeed, so much is he impressed by the assumed similarity between the two that the method he has adopted is a method which is advocated by temperance reformers to eradicate the evil habit of drinking, namely by local option. One cannot feel much grateful to a friend of the Depressed Classes who holds untouchability to be no worse than drinking. If Mr. Ranga Iyer had not forgotten that only a few months ago Mahatma Gandhi had prepared himself to fast unto death if untouchability was not removed, he would have taken a more serious view of this curse and proposed a most thorough-going reform to ensure its removal lock, stock and barrel. Whatever its shortcomings may be from the standpoint of efficacy, the least that the Depressed Classes could expect is for the Bill

to recognise the principle that untouchability is a sin. I really cannot understand how the Bill satisfies Mahatma Gandhi who has been insisting that untouchability is a sin. It certainly does not satisfy the Depressed Classes. The question whether this particular Bill is good or bad, sufficient or insufficient, is a subsidiary question. The main question is; do the Depressed Classes desire Temple Entry or do they not ? This main question is being viewed by the Depressed Classes by two points of view. One is the materialistic point of view. Starting from it, the Depressed Classes think that the surest way for their elevation lies in higher education, higher employment and better ways of earning a living. Once they become well placed in the scale of social life they would become respectable and once they become respectable the religious outlook of the orthodox towards them is sure to undergo change, and even if this did not happen it can do no injury to their material interest. Proceeding on these lines the Depressed Classes say that they will not spend their resources in such an empty thing as Temple Entry. There is also another reason why they do not care to fight for it. That argument is the argument of ' self respect '. Not very long ago there used to be boards in club doors and other social resorts maintained by Europeans in India, which said '*Dogs and Indians not allowed*'. The Temples of the Hindus carry similar boards today, the only difference is that the boards on the Hindu temples practically say " *All Hindus and all animals including dogs are admitted only Untouchables not admitted*". The situation in both cases is on a parity. But the Hindus never begged for admission in those places from which the Europeans in their arrogance had excluded them. Why should an untouchable beg for admission in a place from which he has been excluded by the arrogance of the Hindus ? This is the reasoning of the Depressed Class man who is interested in his material welfare. He is prepared to say to the Hindus, " To open or not to open your temples is a question for you to consider, and not for me to agitate. If you think, it is bad manners not to respect the sacredness of human personality, open your temples and be a gentleman. If you rather be a Hindu than be gentleman, then shut the doors and damn yourself, for I don't care to come."

" I found it necessary to put the argument in this form, because I want to disabuse the minds of men like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya of their belief that the Depressed Classes are looking forward expectantly for their patronage. The second point of view is the spiritual one. As religiously minded people, do the Depressed Classes desire temple entry or do they not? That is the question. From the spiritual point of view, they are not indifferent to temple entry as they would be, if the material point of view alone were to prevail. But their final answer must depend upon the reply which Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindus give to the following question:

What is the drive behind this offer of temple entry? Is temple entry to be the final goal of the advancement in the social status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold ? Or is it only the first step and if it is the first step, what is the ultimate goal ? Temple entry as a final goal the Depressed Classes can never support. Indeed they will not only

reject it, but they would then regard themselves as rejected by Hindu Society and free to find their own destiny elsewhere. On the other hand, if it is only to be a first step in the direction, they may be inclined to support it. The position would then be analogous to what is happening in the politics of India today. All Indians have claimed Dominion Status for India. The actual constitution will fall short of Dominion Status and many Indians will accept it. Why? The answer is that as the goal is defined, it does not matter much if it is to be reached by steps and not in one jump. But if the British had not accepted the goal of Dominion Status, no one would have accepted the partial reforms which many are now prepared to accept. In the same way if Mahatma Gandhi and the reformers were to proclaim what the goal which they set before themselves is for the advancement of the social status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold, it would be easier for the Depressed Classes to define their attitude towards temple entry. The goal of the Depressed Classes might as well be stated here for the information and consideration of all concerned. What the Depressed Classes want is a religion, which will give them equality of social status. To prevent any misunderstanding, I would like to elaborate the point by drawing a distinction between social evils which are the results of secular causes and social evils which are founded upon the doctrines of religion. Social evils can have no justification whatsoever in a civilised society. But nothing can be more odious and vile than that admitted social evils should be sought to be justified on the ground of religion. The Depressed Classes may not be able to overthrow inequities to which they are being subjected. But they have made up their mind not to tolerate a religion that will lend its support to the continuance of these inequities. If the Hindu religion is to be their religion then it must become a religion of Social Equality. The mere amendment of Hindu religious code by the mere inclusion in it of a provision to permit temple entry for all, cannot make it a religion of Equality of social status. All that it can do is to recognise them as nationals and not aliens, if I may use these terms which have become so familiar in politics. But that cannot mean that they would thereby reach a position where they would be free and equal without being above or below any one else, for the simple reason that the Hindu religion does not recognise the principle of equality of social status; on the other hand fosters inequality by insisting upon grading people as Brahmins, Kashatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras which now stand towards one another in an ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt. If the Hindu religion is to be a religion of social equality then an amendment of its code to provide temple entry is not enough. What is required is to purge it of the doctrine of Chaturvarna. That is the root cause of all inequality and also the parent of the caste system and untouchability which are merely forms of inequality. Unless it is done not only will the Depressed Classes reject temple entry, they will also reject the Hindu faith. Chaturvarna and the caste system are incompatible with the self respect of the Depressed Classes. So long it continues to be the cardinal doctrine, the Depressed Classes must continue to be looked upon as low. For the Depressed Classes to say that

they are Hindus is to admit their inferiority of status by their own mouth. They can call themselves as Hindus only when the theory of Chaturvarna and caste system is abandoned and expunged from the Shastras. Do the Mahatma and the Hindu reformers accept this as their goal and will they show the courage to work for it ? I shall look forward to their pronouncements on this issue as I have stated it with great concern. But whether Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindus are prepared for this or not, let it be known once for all that nothing short of this will satisfy the Depressed Classes and make them accept temple entry. To accept temple entry and be content with it, is to temporize with evil and barter away the sacredness of human personality that dwells in them.

There is however one argument which Mahatma Gandhi and the reforming Hindus may advance against the position I have taken. They may say, "acceptance by the Depressed Classes of Temple entry now, will not prevent them from agitating hereafter for the abolition of Chaturvarna and caste ". If that is their goal, I like to meet this argument right at this stage with a view to clinch the issue and clear the road for future developments. My reply is that it is true that my right to agitate for the abolition of Chaturvarna and caste system will not be lost, if I accept Temple Entry now. But the question is on what side will Mahatma Gandhi be at the time when the question is put. If he will be in the camp of my opponents I must tell him that I cannot be in his camp now. If he will be in my camp, he ought to be in it now".

My friend Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasan expressed himself almost in the same terms on the question of temple entry. He said:

" When a Depressed Classes member is permitted to enter into the Caste Hindu temples he would not be taken into any one of the four castes, but treated as man of fifth or the last or the lowest caste, a stigma worse than the one to be called an untouchable. At the same time he would be subjected to so many caste restrictions and humiliations. The Depressed Classes shun the one who enters like that and exclude him as Casteman. The crores of Depressed Classes would not submit to caste restrictions. They will be divided into sections if they do.

Temple entry cannot be forced by law. The village castemen openly or indirectly defy the law. To the village Depressed Classman it would be like a scrap of paper on which word "sugar" was written and placed in his hands for him to taste.

The above facts are placed before the public in time to save confusion and disturbance in the country."

But Mr. Gandhi felt otherwise that securing temple entry to the untouchables was a liability of the Hindus which ought to be liquidated first. Accordingly immediately after the Poona Pact he started a campaign among the Hindus for opening the doors of their temples to the Untouchables.

How far has Mr. Gandhi succeeded in this matter is a question that may legitimately be asked. But it is difficult to know the truth. As a result of the fast, many temples were reported to have been thrown open by the Hindus to the Untouchables. How far this

was true and how far it is a part of lying propaganda which the Congressman is so good at it is difficult to say. That many of the temples that were opened as a sequel to the fast were purified and closed to the Untouchables is beyond dispute. Again the opening of a temple may be quite a meaningless act. There are hundreds and thousands of temples in which there is no worship. They are occupied by only donkies. Instances of such temples can be seen at places of pilgrimage such as Nasik and Wai. If such a temple is declared to be open it is not only a meaningless act but it is an insult to the Untouchables. Again a temple may be opened to the Untouchable. But if it is abandoned by the Caste Hindus as a place of worship it cannot be said that it is open in the sense that they are welcomed to it by the Hindus. There is yet another possibility which must be taken into account in arriving at the truth.

A temple may be open to the untouchables in the same sense as the Ritz Hotel in London is open to all. We however know that the Ritz Hotel is not in fact open to all. It is open only to those who can afford. In the same way a temple may be open to the untouchables yet in fact it is open only to those untouchables who can afford to enter. If the cost of temple entry is assault or social boycott then the cost will be prohibitive and the temple though nominally open is really closed. Assault and social boycott are a matter of course with the Hindus and it would not be too much to assume that in some case the Hindus would resort to such means to prohibit the Untouchables who dare to enter a temple which is declared to be open to them. If the case is one like this then it is a fraud.

Which of the two classes of cases are more numerous, it is difficult to say accurately. But a guess may be made on the basis of certain facts. There are two classes of Hindus now in India — the orthodox Hindus who care more for religion than for politics and the Congress Hindus who care more for politics and less for religion. The former who have no political ends to subserve can be honest i.e. true to their convictions however wrong they may be. The latter who have to serve political ends cannot always take an honest view but are prone to adopt dishonest ways. The first method of abandonment though honest brings discredit upon the Hindu community in the eyes of the world and is therefore politically unsuitable. The second method of opening the temple nominally and closing it really by *Hindus* (*This word is inserted by us against the blank space of MS.—* Ed.) is politically highly advantageous. It has the merit of a system which shows to the world that credit is opened and which clandestinely but without the world knowing prevents its being drawn upon by the person in whose favour it is declared to be opened. The Congress Hindus are more numerous than the orthodox Hindus. That being the case I should think that the second classes of cases must be more numerous than the first.

That genuine cases of opening of temples are very few and that most of the published reports of opening of temples is just false propaganda is clear from the fate of the Temple Entry Bill of Mr. Ranga Iyer brought by him in the Central Legislature in 1934. Of

that Bill I will speak of at a later occasion.

With this I would have closed this discussion of the subject. But Mr. Gandhi insists that a spiritual awakening has taken place among the Hindus and relies upon the Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore. I am therefore obliged to deal with this claim.

The success of temple entry cannot be determined by the number of temples opened. It can be determined only by reference to the motive with which it is done. Is the motive spiritual? That can be the only test.

Now I say that temple entry is not a spiritual act. It is a political manouever.

Is Mr. Gandhi acting from spiritual motive? In appealing to the Hindus Mr. Gandhi said: "I have adressed this appeal to you, which proceeds out of my soul's agony. I ask you to share that agony and shame with me and cooperate with me, for I have no other end to serve than to see *Sanatana Dharma* revived and lived in its reality in the lives of millions who at present seem to me to deny it." This soul's agony was born after the Poona Pact. What did Mr. Gandhi think of the Problem of Temple Entry before the Poona Pact? Before the Poona Pact Mr. Gandhi was of different opinion. That opinion was expressed not very long before the Poona Pact and not long before this appeal was addressed to the Hindus from which I have..... It was expressed in Gandhi Shikshan, Vol. II, p. 132. Mr. Gandhi then held the opinion that separate temples should be built for the use of Untouchables.

Mr. Gandhi said: [\[f81\]](#)

" How is it possible that the Antyajias (Untouchables) should have the right to enter all the existing temples? As long as the law of caste and ashram has the chief place in Hindu Religion, to say that every Hindu can enter every temple is a thing that is not possible today."

It is obvious that Temple Entry is not original with him and therefore not spiritual. The agony is caused by the grave and sudden provocation brought about by the demand of the untouchables for separate electorates. Mr. Gandhi was afraid of the principle underlying separate electorates. He felt that this principle may be extended and may ultimately lead to separation and cessation of the Untouchables from the Hindu fold. It was to counter this move that he changed his opinion and started the temple entry move. The motive of Mr. Gandhi is political and there is nothing spiritual about it.

I do not wish this conclusion to rest merely upon this evidence of change of front on the part of Mr. Gandhi. There is abundance of other evidence in support of it.

I will refer first to the Guruvayur Temple Satyagraha which was started by a caste Hindu by name Kellappan to secure entry into the Guruvayur Temple for the Untouchables. A few facts regarding this episode may be interesting.

The point to note is the attitude that Mr. Gandhi finally adopted in this matter when he was challenged by the leaders of the orthodox Hindus. Mr. Gandhi became ready for a compromise with the orthodox. The terms of the compromise were as follows. I give them in Mr. Gandhi's own words as reported in the papers. [\[f82\]](#)

" During certain hours of the day the Guruvayur Temple should be thrown open to the Harijans and other Hindus, who have no objection to the presence of the Harijans and during certain other hours it should be reserved for those, who have scruples against the entry of the Harijans. There should be no difficulty whatsoever in the acceptance of this suggestion, seeing that in connection with the Krithikai Ekadashi festival in Guruvayur, the Harijans are allowed to enter side by side with the Hindus and then the temple or the idol undergoes purification."

Asked if his suggestion was that the temple might undergo purification daily after the entry of the Harijans, Mr. Gandhi replied:

" Personally, I am opposed to purification at all. But if that would satisfy the conscience of the objectors I would personally in this case, raise no objection to purification. If purification has any value, then there are so many possibilities of daily defilement from a variety of causes referred to in various texts that there should be a daily purification, whether the Harijans are allowed to enter or not." This attitude is not spiritual. It is purely commercial. This is almost admitted by Mr. Gandhi. Asked if the compromise suggested by him did not still maintain a distinction between the Untouchables and the Caste Hindus Mr. Gandhi is reported to have said:

"The Harijans' attitude should be this, 'if there is a person who objects to my presence, I would like to respect his objection so long as he (the objector) does not deprive me of the right that belongs to me and so long as I am permitted to have my legitimate share of the days of offering worship side by side with those, who have no objection to my presence, I would be satisfied'." I do not know if any self respecting Untouchable would adopt this attitude of Mr. Gandhi. On these terms even dogs and cats are admitted in all temples when there are no human beings present in them. To divide the House of God in time or in space for worship for reconciling the rival claims of two opposing classes is in itself a quaint or grotesque idea. Mr. Gandhi evidently forgot that worshipping in the same temple is quite different from worshipping in common. Temple entry if it is to be spiritual must mean the latter. The former accepts that the presence of one class is repugnant to the other and proceeds to reconcile the interests of the two. The latter presupposes that there is no repugnance between the two classes and that they accept the common denominator of humanity as being present in both.

This shows that Mr. Gandhi is least motivated by spiritual considerations. He is in a hurry to bring the Untouchables within the Hindu stables so as to prevent their running away.

Another piece of evidence which goes to disprove Mr. Gandhi's claim that he is acting from spiritual consideration is furnished by his conduct with reference to Mr. Ranga lyer's '*Temple Entry Bill*'. It shows that the soul's agony is only a picturesque phrase and not a fact.

Some history of this Bill is necessary to understand the tragedy which ultimately befell Mr. Ranga lyer the author of it.

Since the new constitution came into operation two Acts have been passed in two Provinces by the Congress Governments. One in Bombay and another in Madras. There is no substance in the Acts. They do not declare the Temples to be open. They permit the Trustees of the Temples under their management if they desire and as there is nothing to compel the Trustees to do so the Acts are just scraps of paper and nothing more. But the Madras Act has a history which is somewhat puzzling. The Madras Prime Minister who got the Act passed is Mr. Rajagopalachariar. He occupies a very high place in the Congress, so high indeed that he is called Deputy Mahatma. If one can solve the puzzle the solution will reveal the mind of the Author and therefore of Mr. Gandhi who is the living spirit behind all this.

Let me turn to the Travancore Temple Entry. The proclamation of 12th November 1936 issued by the Maharaja opening the Temple open to the Untouchables is a gorgeous document. It reads as follows:

" Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has throughout the centuries adapted itself to the need of the changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth, caste or community, be denied the consolation and solace of the Hindu faith, we have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at temples controlled by us and our Government." What spirituality underlies this proclamation?

The proclamation was issued by the Maharaja of Travancore in his name. But the real active force behind the scene was the Prime Minister Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. It is his motives that we must understand. In 1933 Sir C. P. R. Iyer was also the Prime Minister of Travancore. In 1933 Mr. Gandhi was fighting to get the Guruvayur Temple opened to all Untouchables. Among the many who took part in the controversy over the issue of Temple entry was Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. No body seems now to remember this fact. But it is important to recall it because it helps us to understand the motives which prompted him to press the Maharaja to issue this proclamation. What attitude did Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer have regarding this issue in 1933? It will be clear from the following statement which he issued to the press [\[f83\]](#):

" Personally I do not observe caste rules. I realise there are strong, though not very articulate, feelings in this matter in the minds of men who believe that the present system of temple worship and its details are based on divine ordinances. The problem can be permanently solved only by a process of mutual adjustment and by the awakening of religious and social leaders of Hindu society to the realities of the present situation and to the need for preserving the solidarity of the Hindu community.

" Shock tactics will not answer the purpose and direct action will be even more fatal in

this sphere than in the political. I have the misfortune to differ from Mr. Gandhi when he says that the problem of temple entry can be divorced from such topics as intermingling and I agree with Dr. Ambedkar that the social and economic uplift of the Depressed Classes should be our immediate and urgent programme."

This statement shows that in 1933 spiritual considerations did not move Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. Spiritual considerations have become operative after 1933. Is there any particular reason why these spiritual considerations should have been thought of in 1936?

This question can be answered only if one bears in mind the fact that in 1936 there was held in Travancore a Conference of the Yezawa Community to consider the issue of conversion which was raised by me at Yeola in 1935. The Yezawas are an untouchable community spread over Malabar. It is an educated community and economically quite strong. It is also a vocal community and has been carrying on agitation in the state for social, religious and political rights. The Yezawas form a very large community. The cessation of so large a community would be a deathknell to the Hindus and the Conference had made the danger real as well as immediate. It was this which brought about a change in the attitude of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. The spiritual considerations are just an excuse. They did not form the motives.

How far did this Proclamation change facts and how far it has remained a show? It is not possible to get real facts as they exist in Travancore. In the course of the discussion on the *Malabar Temple Entry Bill* in the Madras Legislative Assembly certain facts relating to Travancore were mentioned by Sir T. Pannirselvam, which if true would show that the whole thing is hollow. Sir T. Pannirselvam said:

" One of the arguments advanced by the Premier in support of the measure was that temples in Travancore had been thrown open to the " Untouchables ". A Maharaja vested with autocratic powers did so by an order. But how was it working there ? From representations received, he was led to believe that after the first flush of enthusiasm, Harijans had left off going to temples, and people who used to worship previously before Harijans were allowed to enter the temples, had stopped worshipping in temples. He would ask the Government to tell them if the measure was really a success in Travancore."

On the third reading of the Bill, Sir T. Pannirselvam made a statement which must have come as a surprise to many. He said:

" He wanted to know whether it was a fact that the private temples of the Senior Maharani were excluded from the proclamation. What was the reason for it? Again during the celebration of the marriage of the daughter of the Senior Maharani it was found necessary, so he was told, to perform purificatory ceremony of the temple. If such a purification of temples took place, what happened to the proclamation?"

These facts were not challenged by the Prime Minister. Evidently they cannot be challenged. If they are incontrovertible then the less said about the Malabar Temple

Entry proclamation as a spiritual testament the better.

It would not be proper to close this discussion without adverting to the fear which some Untouchables entertain regarding this Temple entry movement. It is just a movement of social reform or is it a strategy ?

The special privileges which the Untouchables have got in the matter of politics, in the matter of education, in the matter of services are founded upon the fact that they are Untouchables. If they cease to be Untouchables their claim to these special privileges could at once be challenged. If untouchability goes then they would be just poor and backward. But as poor and backward they would not be entitled to any special privileges which they have as untouchables. What is the plan of these protagonists of Temple Entry? Is it just to open temples or aim is ultimately to take away the privileges ? This fear is lurking in the minds of many a thinking Untouchables. That the fear is a real fear is clear from what is happening in Travancore itself. A correspondent of mine who represents the All Travancore Pulayar Cheramar Aykia Maha Sangham writes to me as follows in a letter, dated 24th November 1938. I give below the full text of the letter sent by him to me.

To

Camp Mayyanad, 24-11-1938 Dr. Ambedkar,
Quilon. Bombay.

Respected Sir,

I have unaffected pleasure to draw your attention to the following facts for obtaining the valuable advice from you. Being the leader of a Harijan Community of the Travancore State, I think, it is my paramount duty to suggest you definitely all the grievances that the Harijans of this state are enduring.

1. The Temple Entry Proclamation issued by the H. H. The Maharaja is indeed a boon to Harijans; but the Harijans are enjoying all the other social disabilities except the temple entry. The proclamation is a check to the further concessions to us. The Government do not take any step for the amelioration of the Harijans.

2. Among 15 lakhs of Harijans, there are a few graduates, half a dozen undergraduates and 50 school finals and more than two hundred vernacular certificate holders. Though the Government have appointed a Public Service Commission, appointments of the Harijans are very few. All the appointments are given to Savarnas. If a Harijan is appointed it will be for one week or two weeks. According to the rules of the recruitment in Public Service the applicant is allowed to apply only after a year again, while a Savarna will be appointed for a year or more. When the list of the appointments is brought before the assembly, the number of appointments will be equal to the communal representation; but the duration of the post of all the Harijans will be equal to one Savarna. This kind of fraud is associating with the officials. Thus the public service is a common property of the Savarnas. No Harijan is benefitted by it.

3. There was a proclamation from H. H. the Maharaja, a few years ago that three acres of ground should be given to each Harijan to live in; but the Officials are Savarnas who are always unwilling to carry out the proclamation. Even though the Government is willing to grant large extent of ground for pasturing near Towns not a piece of the ground is given to the Harijans. The Harijans are still living in the compounds of the Savarnas and are undergoing manifold difficulties. Though large extents of ground lay in " Reserve ", the applications of the Harijans for granting grounds are not at all regarded with importance or listen to. The most parts of the lands are benefited by the Savarnas.

4. The Government nominates every year of the election of members of the Assembly one member from each Harijan Community. Though they are elected to present the grievances of the Harijans before the Assembly, they are found to be the machinery of the Government viz., the toys of the Savarna officers, who are benefited by them. Thus the grievances of the Harijans cannot be redressed any way.

5. All the Harijans of Travancore are labourers in the fields and compounds. They are the servants of the Savarnas who behave them as beasts—no body to look after or protection—every Harijan gets only 2 chs (one anna) as the wage in the most parts of the State. The social disabilities are the same to them even after the temple entry. The workers in the factories in various parts of the State of Travancore and the Officers of the State are all Savarnas and they are at present agitating for responsible Government. Now the Harijans are demanding jobs in Government and in factories but the agitation in Travancore is a Savarna agitation by which the Savarnas are making arrangements to get rid of Harijans in Public Service and factories. They plead for higher salaries and more privileges. They pay the least care to the Harijan labourers while the people of Travancore are maddened with the agitation of the workers in the factories. The standard of salary of Harijan worker is very low while the standard of a factory worker is thrice the former.

6. Due to starvation and proper means of livelihood the heads of the children of Harijans are heated as a result of which they are likely to fail in school. Before proclamation the duration of concession in high schools was for 6 years, now, it has reduced to three years by which a good number of students stopped their education after their failure.

7. There is a department for the Depressed Classes and the head of which is Mr. C. O. Damodaran (the protector of the Backward Communities). Though every year a big amount is granted for the expenditure, at the end of the year, 2/3 of the sum is lapsed by its sagacity. He is used to submit reports to the Government that there is no way of spending the amount. 95 per cent of the sum allotted for the Depressed Class is spent as the salary of the officials who are always Savarna and 5 per cent is benefited. Now the Government is going to make some colonies in three parts of Travancore. The officers are Savarnas. This scheme is, in my opinion, not a success for the Government

do not pay greater to it. I regret that Travancore Government spends one anna for the Harijan cause, while Cochin State spends a rupee for the same.

The majority of the subjects of Travancore are now agitating strongly for Responsible Government under an organization "The State Congress ". The leaders of this popular organization belong to the four major communities of the State namely, the Nair, Mohamedan, Christian and Ezhava community. The President of the State Congress Mr. Thanu Pillai issued a statement in which he stressed that special concessions would be given to the Depressed Class. All the leaders of the Depressed Class have been waiting for a time to see the attitude of the State Congress. Now we come to understand that there is no reality in the promises of these leaders.

Now I am sure that the leaders have neglected the cause of the Depressed Class. The State Congress was started on the principles of nationalism and now it has become an institution of communalism. Communal spirit is now working among the leaders. In every public speech, statement or article, the leaders mention only these four major communities, while they have no thought on us. I fear, if this is the case of the leaders of the political agitation of Travancore, the situation of the Depressed Class will be more deplorable when the Responsible Government is achieved, for the entire possession of the Government will be then within the clutches of the above mentioned communities and the Depressed Classes' rights and privileges will be devoured by the former. In the meetings of the working committee of the State Congress 2/3 of the time had devoted in discussion concerning the strike of the Alleppey Coir Factories; but nothing was mentioned in the meeting about the Harijan workers who are undergoing manifold difficulties. The workers in Factories are Savarnas and the agitation for obtaining Responsible Government is a kind of anti Harijan movement. The motive of every leader of the State Congress is to improve the situation (circumstance) of the Savarna. The leaders of the major communities have some mercenary attitude who are going to sacrifice the Depressed Class for their progress.

These are the conditions of the Depressed Class of the State. What are the ways by which we have to establish our rights in the State? I humbly request you to be good enough to render me your advice at this occasion. I am awaiting for the reply. Excuse me for the trouble,

Yours faithfully,
Srinarayanswami."

If the plan of Temple Entry is ultimately to deprive the Untouchables of their statutory rights then the movement is not only not spiritual but it is positively mischievous and it would be the duty of all honest people to warn the Untouchables, "*Beware of Gandhi*".

CHAPTER 7

A WARNING TO THE UNTOUCHABLES

Revolt and rebellion against the Established order is a natural part of the history of the poor in all countries of the world. A student of their history cannot but be struck by the thought entertained by them, of the way victory would come. In the theological age, the poor lived by the hope that spiritual forces would ultimately make the meek inherit the earth. In the secular age, otherwise called modern times, the poor live by the hope that the forces of historical materialism will automatically rob the strong of their strength and make the weak take their place.

In the light of this psychology, when one begins to think of the Untouchables in their role of rebels against the Hindu Social Order one feels like congratulating them on their realization that neither spiritual forces nor historical forces are going to bring the millennium. They know full well that if the Hindu Social Order is to fall to the ground, it can happen only under two conditions. Firstly, the social order must be subjected to constant fire. Secondly, they can't subject it to constant fire unless they are independent of the Hindus in thought and in action. That is why the Untouchables are insistent upon separate electorates and separate settlements.

The Hindus on the other hand are telling the Untouchables to depend upon the Hindus for their emancipation. The Untouchables are told that the general spread of education will make the Hindus act in a rational manner. The Untouchables are told that the constant preaching of reformers against Untouchability is bound to bring about a moral transformation of the Hindus and the quickening of his conscience. The Untouchables should therefore rely on the good will and sense of duty of the Hindus. No Untouchable believes in this facile proposition. If there are any who do, they are hypocrites who are prepared to agree to whatever the Hindus have to say in order that by their grace they may be put in places reserved for the Untouchables. They are a predatory band of Untouchables who are out to feather their nests by any means open to them.

The Untouchables are not deceived by such false propaganda and false hopes. It is therefore unnecessary to comment on it. At the same time, the propaganda is so alluring that it may mislead the unwary Untouchables into being ensnared by it. A warning to the Untouchables is therefore necessary.

Two agencies are generally relied upon by the social idealists for producing social justice. One is reason, the other is religion.

The rationalist who uphold the mission of reason believe that injustice could be eliminated by the increasing power of intelligence. In the mediaeval age social injustice and superstition were intimately related to each other. It was natural for the rationalists to believe that the elimination of superstition must result in the abolition of injustice. This belief was encouraged by the results. Today it has become the creed of the educationists, philosophers, psychologists and social scientists who believe that universal education and the development of printing and press would result in an ideal

society, in which every individual would be so enlightened that there would be no place for social injustice.

History, whether Indian or European, gives no unqualified support to this dogma. In Europe, the old traditions and superstitions which seemed to the eighteenth century to be the very root of injustice, have been eliminated. Yet social injustice has been rampant and has been growing ever and anon. In India itself, the whole Brahmin community is educated, man, woman and child. How many Brahmins are free from their belief in untouchability? How many have come forward to undertake a crusade against untouchability? How many are prepared to stand by the side of the Untouchables in their fight against injustice? In short, how many are prepared to make the cause of the Untouchables their own cause? The number will be appallingly small.

Why does reason fail to bring about social justice? The answer is that reason works so long as it does not come into conflict with one's vested interest. Where it comes into conflict with vested interests, it fails. Many Hindus have a vested interest in untouchability. That, vested interest may take the shape of feeling of social superiority or it may take the shape of economic exploitation such as forced labour or cheap labour, the fact remains that Hindus have a vested interest in untouchability. It is only natural that that vested interest should not yield to the dictates of reason. The Untouchables should therefore know that there are limits to what reason can do.

The religious moralists who believe in the efficacy of religion urge that the moral insight which religion plants in man whereby it makes him conscious of the sinfulness of his preoccupation with self and thereby of the duty to do justice to his fellows. Nobody can deny that this is the function of religion and to some extent religion may succeed in this mission. But here again there are limits to what religion can do. Religion can help to produce justice *within a community*. Religion cannot produce justice *between communities*. At any rate, religion has failed to produce justice between Negroes and Whites, in the United States. It has failed to produce justice between Germans and French and between them and the other nations. The call of nation and the call of community has proved more powerful than the call of religion for justice.

The Untouchables should bear in mind two things. Firstly, that it is futile to expect the Hindu religion to perform the mission of bringing about social justice. Such a task may be performed by Islam, Christianity, or Buddhism. The Hindu religion is itself the embodiment of inequity and injustice to the Untouchables. For it, to preach the gospel of justice is to go against its own being. To hope for this is to hope for a miracle. Secondly, assuming that this was a task which Hinduism was fitted to perform, it would be impossible for it to perform. The social barrier between them and the Hindus is much greater than the barrier between the Hindus and their men. Religion, however efficacious it may be within a community or a nation, is quite powerless to break these barriers and (make)* [\[f84\]](#) them one whole.

Apart from these agencies of reason and religion the Untouchables are asked to trust

the enlightened self-interests of the Hindu privileged classes and the fraternity of the Hindu proletariat.

As to the privileged classes it be wrong to depend upon for anything more than their agreeing to be benevolent despots. They have their own class interests and they cannot be expected to sacrifice them for general interests or universal values. On the other hand, their constant endeavour is to identify their class interests with general interests and to assume that their privileges are the just payments with which society rewards specially useful and meritorious functions. They are a poor company to the Untouchables as the Untouchables have found in their conflict with the Hindus.

For Untouchables to expect to gain help from the Hindu proletariat is also a vain hope. The appeal of the Indian Communists to the Untouchables for solidarity with the Hindu proletariat is no doubt based on the assumption that the proletariat does not desire advantages for himself which he is not willing to share with others. Is this true? Even in Europe the proletariat are not a uniform class. It is marked by class composition, the higher and the lower. This is reflected in their attitudes towards social change, the higher are reformist and the lower are revolutionary. The assumption therefore is riot true. So far as India is concerned it is positively false. There is very little for a common front. Socially, there is bound to be antagonism between them. Economically, there cannot be much room for alliance.

What must the Untouchables strive for? Two things they must strive for is education and spread of knowledge. The power of the privileged classes rests upon lies which are sedulously propagated among the masses. No resistance to power is possible while the sanctioning lies, which justify that power are accepted as valid. While the lie which is the first and the chief line of defence remains unbroken there can be no revolt. Before any injustice, any abuse or oppression can be resisted, the lie upon which it is founded must be unmasked, must be clearly recognized for what it is. This can happen only with education.

The second thing they must strive for is power. It must not be forgotten that there is a real conflict of interests between the Hindus and the Untouchables and that while reason may mitigate the conflict it can never obviate the necessity of such a conflict. What makes one interest dominant over another is power. That being so, power is needed to destroy power. There may be the problem of how to make the use of power ethical, but there can be no question that without power on one side it is not possible to destroy power on the other side. Power is either economic or political. Military power is no power today. Because it is not free power. The economic power of the working class is the power inherent in the strike. The Untouchables as a part of the working class can have no other economic power. As it is, this power is not adequate for the defence of the interests of the working class. It is maimed by legislation and made subject to injunctions, arbitrations, martial law and use of troops. Much more inadequate is the Untouchables' power to strike.

The Untouchable is therefore under an absolute necessity of acquiring political power as much as possible. Having regard to his increasingly inadequate power in social and economic terms the Untouchable can never acquire too much political power. Whatever degree of political power he acquires, it will always be too little having regard to the vast amount of social, economic and political power of the Hindus.

The Untouchable must remember that his political power, no matter how large, will be of no use if he depends for representation in the Legislature on Hindus whose political life is rested in economic and social interests which are directly opposed to those of the Untouchables.