
CONCENTRATE ENERGY AND RESOURCES ON POLITICS AND EDUCATION

“In the history of India the year 1930 was a year of action and reaction. It brought forth a new line of thinking and a new angle of approach; new measures of repression and new methods of rapprochement. Better still, it was the age of *Satyagraha*. It was in this year that Mahatma Gandhi as the generalissimo of the Congress inaugurated his great movement for the liberation of the country on March 12, 1930, and transformed the whole country into a theatre of passive resistance, vast crowds facing battalions of mounted police, rounds of firing and terms of jail life.

Ten days before the Dandi March of Gandhi, Ambedkar, the father of Indian social unrest, launched his temple entry movement at Nasik. Preparations for this movement had been going on for over three months. Dr. Ambedkar was guiding, inspiring and organising it from Bombay through his letters and lieutenants. The Depressed Classes at Nasik had formed a *Satyagraha* Committee and through its Secretary, Bhaurao Gaikwad, informed the Trustees of the famous Kalaram Temple that they would launch *Satyagraha*, if the Trustees did not throw the temple open to the Untouchable Hindus before a particular date. Simultaneously, a clarion call was issued to the Depressed Classes to come to Nasik to assert their right of worshipping Shree Rama in the said temple. In response to this call of the *Satyagraha* Committee, about 15,000 volunteers and representatives assembled in a specially erected pandal in the Depressed Classes locality at Nasik. Notable among those present were Deorao Naik, Rajbhoj, Pradhan, Shivtarkar, Patitpavandas and B.G. Kher.

At last the day of action dawned. It was Sunday, March 2, 1930. In the morning at ten, a Conference was held under the Presidentship of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the pandal to consider the situation and adopt ways and means for launching the *Satyagraha*.”¹

“Dr. Ambedkar put forward a thought-provoking speech about the entry of Kalaram Temple. He said, today, we are about to

¹: Keer P. 136.

enter the Temple. But the entry in the Temple would not solve the whole problem. Our problem is comprehensive. It is political, social, religious, economic, educational etc. The issue of Kalaram Temple entry is a appeal to the Hindu mind. The high caste Hindus deprived us from the far ages. Whether the same Hindus are willing to grant our humanitarian rights will be the question raised from this Temple entry *Satyagraha*. Whether the Hindu mind is willing to accept us as human beings, this is the question to be tested through this *Satyagraha*. The high caste Hindus looked down upon us and treated us even worse than cats and dogs. We wish to know whether those very Hindus would give us the status of man or not. This *Satyagraha* will provide answer to this question. This *Satyagraha* is one of the efforts for bringing about a change of heart among the high Caste Hindus. Hence the success of this effort depends on the Hindu mind-set.

Our real problem is not going to be solved by the entry into the Ram Temple. It will not bring about any radical change in our life. But this is a test to judge the high caste Hindu mind. Whether the Hindu mind is willing to accept the elevated aspirations of the new era that “man must be treated as man ; he must be given humanitarian rights ; human dignity should be established “is going to be tested. In order to achieve this goal, we have launched this *Satyagraha*. The main question is whether the high caste Hindus are going to consider these aspects and act accordingly.

We know that in this temple resides God made of stone. By having a mere glance at him or by worshiping him, our problem will not be solved completely. Millions of people might have visited this temple and have had a glance at the god uptill now. But who would say that their basic problem was solved by this act? We know this. But our *Satyagraha* today is an effort to bring about a change of heart among the Hindus. With this principled position we are launching this *Satyagraha*.”¹

¹: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkaranchi Patre (Marathi); Shankarrao Kharat, Pp. 46, 47. English Translation by Editors.

“At noon the Conference adjourned and again met at half past one.

At three in the afternoon, the congregation divided itself into batches of four extending itself over a mile-long procession. It was the biggest procession in the history of Nasik. At the head played a band after the military style redolent of the association of many of the Depressed Class members with military life. Then followed a batch of scouts. Behind them walked about 500 women *Satyagrahis* showing a revolutionary change in their outlook; and they were followed by a multitude of processionists enthused with an exalted spirit, but walking with a full sense of discipline, order and determination. As soon as the procession came up to the eastern gate of the temple, the District Magistrate, the Police Superintendent and the City Magistrate moved towards the gate of the temple. As all the gates of the temple were closed, the processionists proceeded to the Godawari Ghat. There the procession transformed itself into a meeting.

At eleven O'clock that night the leaders again discussed the issue in all its aspects and decided to launch a non-violent struggle before the gates of the temple. This historic struggle thus commenced on the morning of March 3, 1930. The first batch of 125 men and 25 women was posted at the four gates of the temple, and over 8,000 enlisted *Satyagrahis* were awaiting their turn. But the gates of the temple were closed and barricaded. While the *Satyagrahis* squatted at the entrance, chanting hymns and singing bhajans, crowds of Untouchables numbering over 3,000 gathered in their vicinity; but the police were on the alert and kept them on the move. A strong force of armed police was posted at each gate. Two First Class Magistrates were on duty at the place since early morning to meet any emergency. Reynolds, the Police Superintendent, had shifted his office to a tent pitched right in front of the temple.

The touchables, too, were precluded from entering the temple as the gates remained closed, and their leaders were deliberating behind closed doors to find a way out of the impasse. A difficult situation would have developed had the gates been opened to the Caste Hindus.

At night, a public meeting of the citizens of Nasik was held under the Presidentship of Dr. Kurtakoti, the Shankaracharya, but it ended in pandemonium due to the predominance of the orthodox people. The *Sanatanists* by now had got panicky and rowdy. They pelted the meeting with stones and shoes. It was felt that even Rama himself would be thrown aside, if he were to fell the orthodox Hindus to throw open the temple to the Untouchables !

The *Satyagraha* struggle continued for about a month. April 9 dawned. It was the day of the chariot procession of the image of Rama. A compromise was patched up between the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables. It was decided that strong men from both sides should draw the chariot. Thousands of people assembled at noon near the main gate of the temple to see the sight. Dr. Ambedkar, with his choice gymnasts, stood near the gate. But before they could touch the chariot, they were engaged in broils by the riotous element of the Caste Hindus, and the Caste Hindus ran away with the chariot, as secretaly planned, through a street, narrow, thorny and inconvenient on either side, and the mouth of which was guarded by armed police. A daring Bhandari youth by name Kadrekar broke the cordon of the armed police who were awaiting orders to fire, and in a movement crowds of Untouchables pursued the chariot amidst showers of stones and captured it. Dangerously wounded, Kadrekar fell down in a pool of blood. Dr. Ambedkar was protected by his men and as the umbrellas that protected his person were shattered, he too, received minor injuries. There was free fighting between groups of Untouchables and Caste Hindus all over the city.

This *Satyagraha* provoked considerable ill-feeling in the minds of the orthodox Hindus throughout the District. As a result of this tension children of the Untouchables were thrown out schools, roads were closed to them, and necessaries of life were denied to them in the market because they claimed equal rights with all other Hindus. Untouchables in several villages were maltreated. Despite these sufferings, the struggle at Nasik was earned on. Attempts were being made to persuade both the parties to reach a compromise. Dr. Moonje and Dr. Kurtakoti the Shankaracharya,

were trying to reach a settlement. The great multi-millionaire Birla also saw Dr. Ambedkar in Bombay in the middle of April 1930. But so firm was the resolve of the Depressed Classes that orthodox Hindus had to keep the famous temple closed for a whole year and the agitation continued.”¹

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had written two letters to His Excellency Governor of Bombay regarding the problems created by the bureaucracy during Kala Ram Temple entry *Satyagrah* at Nasik.

The letters are as follows : Editors.

“BHIMRAO R. AMBEDKAR,
M.A., Ph. D., D. Sc,
Bar-at-law,

Damodar Hall Parel,
Bombay-12.
24th March 1930.

Member, Legislative Council,
Bombay.

May it please your Excellency,

I am extremely obliged to Your Excellency for the letter of the 13th of March 1930 in reply to my telegram giving an assurance that Government proposed to act impartially in the dispute between the touchables and the Untouchables, which is centered in the *Satyagraha* at the Kala Ram Temple at Nasik. I have honour to bring to Your Excellency's notice at recent development in the situation which seems to be fought with the greatest danger. On the day on which the *Satyagraha* was started, we purposely ommitted to blockade the entrance to the house of the *Pujari* of the temple assuming that it would not be used by the public for the purpose of going into the temple and obtain *Dev Darashan*. But of late this entrance has become a public passage and the public in Nasik is using it to go into the temple. If this is allowed, it will entirely frustrate the principal object of the *Satyagraha*. To prevent this, the District Superintendent of Police and the District Magistrate were approached by the *Satyagraha* Committee to discuss the question and to communicate to them the intention of the *Satyagraha* Committee to blockade that private entrance to the general public and permit only the members of family of the *Pujari*.

¹: Keer, Pp. 137, 138.

The District Magistrate, however, refused to see the members of *Satyagraha* Committee and turned them away with a chit stating that he will remove those who will start *Satyagraha* at the door of the *Pujari*. It is not for me to say whether such a conduct on the part of a District Officer is wise. What I wish to point out to Your Excellency is that if the attitude of the Collector is to prevail, it will immediately provoke a conflict between the Government and the Depressed Classes. Our real contest is with the touchable Hindus and I have been avoiding every circumstance which would leave the touchable Hindus out and make the *Satyagraha* a matter between Government and the Depressed Classes. Indeed this could have been done on the first day by our refusal to make *Satyagrahis* stand outside the barricades and insist on forcing through the Police guards for seating them next to the temple gates. This we did not do simply because we did not wish to make it a fight between ourselves and the Government. But it would be inevitable if the Government to depart from its original intention of remaining impartial by permitting the *Pujari* to permit to use his private entrance as a public passage and thereby be a party to the frustration of our object. Under no circumstances can we permit this new stunt of the *Pujari* and tolerate his rendering our *Satyagraha* futile even if it brought us into conflict with Government. I am writing this to inform Your Excellency of the situation as it is developing and to give a chance for the reconsideration of the attitude of the District Magistrate before of the *Satyagraha* Committee addressed to me and also a copy of the chit sent to them by the District Magistrate with which he turned them away when they called upon him,

I have seen the place myself last Saturday and I am quite convinced that the fear expressed and the danger to the *Satyagraha* which is apprehended are real.

I beg to remain,
Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant,
(Sd) B.R.Ambedkar.”¹

¹: Khairmode. Vol. 3; Pp. 321—323.

Second letter:—

“BHIMRAO R. AMBEDKAR,
M.A., Ph. D., D. Sc.,
Bar-at-law,
Member, Legislative Council,
Bombay.

Damodar Hall Parel,
Bombay-12.
11th April 1930.

To,

His Excellency the Rt. Honourable Sir,
Frederick Sykes, P. C, G. C. I. E.,
G. B.E.,K. C.B.,C.M.G.,
Governor of Bombay,
Bombay.

May it please Your Excellency,

The Government of Bombay must have received a report from the District Magistrate of Nasik on the riot that took place there between the touchables and the Untouchables on the 9th instant. I feel it necessary to submit to Your Excellency my reversion of the riot.

Origin of the Riot :—According to the practice of the Kala Ram Temple at Nasik, the *Rath* (carriage of the God Ram) was to be taken out in the procession through the city. I was asked by Inspector Karnik (one of the Police Officers on duty at the Kala Ram Temple) what attitude I proposed to adopt the connection with the *Rath* procession. I told him that if equal treatment was accorded to Untouchables I had no objection to the *Rath* being taken out and I also specified the nature of the equality of treatment. I had stipulated for stating that I would insist upon two things—

(1) That the Untouchables will participate in dragging the *Rath* alongwith the touchables, and (2) the Untouchables will offer *Puja* to the Idol in the *Rath*. Mr. Karnik then left and turned with the District Magistrate. The District Magistrate told me that my conditions were accepted by the touchable Hindus and that the touchables would bring the *Rath* to the main door of the temple

and after they had dragged it for 10 feet from the gate the Untouchables could join, and together with the touchables join carrying by holding the rope fastened to the *Rath*, and questioned me whether I had any objection to the *Rath* procession, to which I replied 'I had none' and in order to help the cause of peace I went out of my way to sort out about 50 out of a 5,000 Untouchables and told them that they alone want to take part in the dragging of the *Rath*. Accordingly the *Rath* was brought out to the temple gate by the touchables. But the touchables who wanted to deceive both the Untouchables and the Police Officers did two things— (1) the touchables held the rope so close to one another that no room was left for the Untouchables to join in, and (2) the touchables instead of stopping the *Rath* at the temple gate, as previously agreed to, began to run away with it so as to give no chance to Untouchables to catch the rope and participate in carrying the *Rath*. This menace to violate the most important condition in the agreement naturally enraged the feelings of the Untouchables. But the immediate cause of the fight was the action of the Police Sepoys a great majority of whom were Caste Hindus, they at once started to assault those Untouchables who were struggling to hold a bit of the rope. The fight was started by the Caste Hindu Police who openly took the side of the touchable Hindus.

The batch of 50 Untouchables was thus subjected to an assault from two-sides. The touchable Hindus who had held the rope were brushing them away and preventing them from taking a position near the rope and when the Untouchables were struggling to take a position the caste Hindu Police were charging with their batons and butt-ends of their rifles.

Seeing their men assaulted in this way the rest of the Untouchables followed the *Rath* with which the touchables were running away at a terrific speed. Seeing that the crowd of the Untouchables pursuing the *Rath* had come very near it, the touchables abandoned *Rath* on the road and went to adjoining field and began to throw a volley of stones on the crowd of Untouchables who were standing on the road.

The road was lined on one side by barbed wire and on the other side by cactus, and consequently the Untouchables could not

escape from the volley of stones as a result of which many of them were injured. The peaceful conduct of the Untouchables is evidenced from the fact that there is not a single casualty reported from among the touchable Hindus.

Extent of the mischief done :— The crowd of the touchable Hindus when they were dispersed from the Field wherefrom they were throwing stones went to the camp of the *Satyagraha* Committee, pulled down the tent, smashed bicycles of volunteers, stoned the motor belonging to one of the members of the Committee and stoned the women who were in the charge of the kitchen and caused injuries to small children straying about.

From there it went to the bank of the river where they found some Untouchable men, women and children who could not leave the bank of the river and join the main body of the Untouchables at the temple gate on account of the fact there was no one to take charge of their bullocks and carts, they were brutally assaulted, their belongings were burnt and some were thrown into water.

According to the information given to me this attack resulted in the death of one man. Very little help was given to these unfortunate Untouchables on the bank of the river. The main body of the Untouchables could not go to their rescue because they were stopped from moving from their place and the police cordon was placed around them and as most of the Police force was engaged in keeping custody of the main body of the Untouchables at the gate, very few were left to give aid to those Untouchables who became victims to the attack on the bank.

Attitude of the Police :—I must, however, guard myself against creating the impression that I have any complaint to make against the Police Officers. On the contrary, I have not the slightest hesitation to say that they have done their duty. I wish particularly to mention the names of Inspectors-Shelke, Nagarkar and Karaka for their splendid work in the most trying circumstances arising out of the *Satyagraha*.

My complaint is against the Sepoys who took sides and who exhibited their caste prejudice by assaulting respectable Untouchables in a most wanton fashion. Their names and numbers will be submitted to their superiors and I trust Your Excellency will direct disciplinary action against them.

Policy of District Magistrate :—I regret to say that I was not satisfied with the policy of the District Magistrate in connection with the *Satyagraha* of the Untouchables. In my last letter I had informed Your Excellency how a private door of the house of the *Pujari* was being used by the public as an entrance to the temple and how our *Satyagraha* was being frustrated thereby.

The District Magistrate did not pay any regard to our contention and on the Ramnavami Day not only allowed the public to use the private entrance of the *Pujari* in complete disregard of our contention but prohibited our *Satyagrahis* to sit as usual at the adjacent public way the barricade from which was removed to provide exit to the touchable Hindus entering by the private door. As a result 18 Untouchables out of 300 who offered *Satyagraha* were arrested on the Ramnavami Day.

After the riot of the 9th, the District Magistrate proposed to me that I must stop the *Satyagraha* or else he will withdraw the Police. His proposal was considered by the *Satyagraha* Committee and was rejected and I think rightly. Nothing could be a greater disaster to movement of the Untouchables than the stopping of the *Satyagraha* at this juncture. The touchable Hindus would gain the impression that any slight use of the force is sufficient to crush the movement of the Untouchables.

Under the circumstances I or *Satyagraha* Committee can allow such an impression to go round. Only on this, if on no other account, we must continue our *Satyagraha*. Regarding the withdrawal of the Police, I wish the Government of Bombay to realise fully the implications thereof.

To my mind it means that the Government is not willing to use the power it has under its command to help people who are struggling for their rights to win them. Such a power is good for nobody and the Depressed Classes may then be justified in joining hands with those who are speaking for a change. I hope that the Government of Bombay will give proper directions to the District Magistrate on this point.

I learn from the 'Times of India' of today's date that the District Magistrate has promulgated an order under Section 144 Cr. P. Code

and prohibited people coming from near the Kala Ram Temple. I do not know if this order contemplates the prevention of our *Satyagrahis* from sitting at the temple doors as they have been doing heretofore.

I most respectfully submit to Your Excellency that there is a chance (I use this word advisedly as I do not know the opinion of the *Satyagraha* Committee) of this order being respected only if the District Magistrate gives an assurance that the temple doors will remain closed during the period stated in his order and that the private door of the Priest will not remain open to the public.

As I have made clear in my last letter, the fight is between touchables and the Untouchables and I have no desire to bring the latter into the conflict with the Government.

I am anxious to have an interview with Your Excellency to discuss the situation personally and if Your Excellency is inclined to grant one I am available till 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Awaiting the favour of Your Excellency's early reply,

I remain,

Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant,

Sd/- B. R. Ambedkar."¹

"Win Freedom By Your Own Efforts"

Dr. Ambedkar's Advice to Trichur People

Calicut, June 17, 1931.

Dr. Ambedkar of Bombay in the course of a letter to the organiser of the Temple Entry *Satyagraha*, Trichur, says "Would advise you not to depend upon Congress help. It won't help you in this matter. Its help would not redound to your credit. Want our people win freedom by their own efforts."²

¹: Khairmode, Vol. 3; Pp. 323-328.

²: The Bombay Chronicle, dated 18th June 1931.

“Dr. AMBEDKAR’S ADVICE

Nothing could be more natural on the part of Doctor Ambedkar than to suggest that the organisers of the Temple Entry *Satyagraha* at Trichur should not take the help of the Congress in their campaign. For, otherwise, the task of misrepresenting the Congress would be rendered still more difficult. And then, secondly, one cannot be expected to surrender one’s “*raison d’etre*”. Doctor Ambedkar’s letter is nothing more than a very intelligible struggle for existence.

Blessings to Nasik Satyagrahis From London

Bombay, November 2, 1931

The General Secretary, Nasik Temple Entry *Satyagraha* Committee, has received the following message from Dr. Ambedkar from London :—

“I regret very much not to have been able to write to you in reply to the letter you sent me some time ago containing the interview you had with the Commissioner. I have been so much taken up with the question of minorities which as you know has become much more difficult owing to the attitude of Mr. Gandhi that I have had no minute to spare :—

As anticipated by you I did get a letter from the Commissioner C. D. asking me to advise you people to stop the Nasik *Satyagraha*. I have not replied to him but I am going to do so by this mail. I am going to tell him that we cannot stop. So you may tell our people to go on. We must not take our orders from the Government just as we must not take them from the Orthodox Hindus.

We have trusted Government long enough

We have trusted the Government long enough to remove “Untouchability”. But it has not lifted its finger to do anything in the matter and it has no right to ask us to stop. We must take the burden on our shoulders and do what we can to free ourselves from this course at any cost. If the Government does not help us, it must not at least hamper our just cause. It is no use telling us that we must not create ill-feeling between different classes and communities. This appeal by Government should be addressed to all the communities and not to us alone. It should specially be addressed to those communities who are in the wrong and who are sinning in the matter.

“My people don’t need me”

You may publish a translation of this in handbills and broadcast them among our people. I have been reading the telegrams regarding the struggle at Mukhed between our people and the castemen. I am glad to find that our people are prepared at all costs to carry on the fight to a success. I congratulate them on their splendid resolve. I see that you are starting *Satyagraha* on the 5th November. I hope you have made the best preparation. I am sorry. I am not there to help you. But I know that our people are now alive to their problem and that they do not need me every time.—A.P.”¹

The situation prevailing in Nasik during the *Satyagraha* was reported in the Times of India as follows: Editors.

“No Right to bathe in the Sacred Kunds,

Nasik enduring decisions against Untouchables.

(From our Correspondent.)

Nasik, June 6, 1932.

‘On the whole I believe that Untouchables have neither the right to approach the four *Kunds* (bathing pools) nor to bathe in them. Therefore, under Section 147 (3) of the Cr. P. Code, I hereby prohibit all Mahars, Mangs, Chamars, Dheds, Bhangis and other Untouchables from exercising their alleged right of proceeding to and bathing in Lakshmana, Dhanushya, Ram and Sita *Kunds*, until they obtain from a Civil Court an order entitling them to bathe there.’ Thus observes Mr. L. N. Brown, District Magistrate of Nasik in the order passed today in connection with the inquiry instituted into the dispute between the *Sanatanists* and Untouchables in which the latter claim the right to proceed to and bathe in the Sacred *Kunds*.

Dealing with the question of Irish Bridge Sandhwa located near the Ram *Kund*, the Magistrate says that it appeared that this Sandhwa is used by the pilgrims doing the Pradakshina (a religious ceremony) or the Sacred *Kunds*. Its use as a thoroughfare is secondary. It is, I think, a fair deduction from the evidence

¹: The Bombay Chronicle, dated 3rd November 1931.

that respectably dressed Christians and Mahomedans have been allowed to cross the Sandhwa. But this evidence is not strictly relevant to the present case which is concerned with the rights of Untouchable Hindus. It has not been proved that Hindu Untouchables have any right to use this Sandhwa.' ¹

When the *Temple-Entry-Satyagraha* was going on a move was forced to get the temple-entry legalised by the Government. The background of the issue is as follows :

The Temple-entry movement in India received a setback when the Courts of law held that entry in the temples by the Untouchables was illegal being against the established custom. Such judicial pronouncements turned out to be stumbling blocks in the way of social reform undertaken by Mahatma Gandhs. Against this backdrop efforts were afoot to bring about legislation to overcome that barrier. Therefore, several Bills were intended to be introduced in the Central Legislature as well as the Provincial Legislatures. Of the bills mentioned above, the most important were those of Dr. Subbaroyan's Temple-Entry Bill and Ranga Iyer's Untouchability Abolition Bill.

Dr. Subbaroyan's Temple-Entry Bill was intended to undo the wrong done by the Courts of Law and sought to amend the Madras Religious Endowments Act. The Bill, however, was approved by the *Sanatoria* Hindus prominent of them being Pandit Madan Malaviya, Konda Venkatappaiah and S.T. Ramanuja Iyengar, Srinivasa Iyengar. However, Dr. Subbaroyan's Temple-Entry Bill in the Madras Council was refused permission on the ground that it was far-reaching in implication for enactment by a Provincial Legislature. Afterwards Ranga Iyer drafted a second Bill based on Dr. Subbaroyan's which the Viceroy permitted to introduce it in the Central Assembly, subject to the same qualification as in the case of his forerun Bill.

His Excellency Lord Wellington the Viceroy, for its introduction in the Central Legislative Assembly subject to the condition that the Government of India did not commit themselves to accepting its principles and that the fullest opportunity would be given to every section of the Hindu Community to express an

¹: The Times of India. 7-6-1932, Reprinted, Khairmode, Vol. 3; Pp. 351-352.

opinion on its provisions. Mahatma Gandhi pleaded with the Viceroy by his letter dated February 1, 1933 that the Government of India was bound to support these two Legislative measures in view of the Resolution dated September 25, 1932 passed by the Caste Hindus at Bombay which formed part of the Poona Pact.

Mahatma Gandhi saw that the Ranga Iyer's Bill should be supported by everyone. He sent out an appeal to the Hindu Members of the Central Legislative Assembly. He utilised the services of C. Rajagopalachari, who, according to him, was 'a better lobbyist', to enlist support for the Bills. He advised him not to take to heart, "Dr. Ambedkar's explosion, the Government's decision and Malaviya's opposition." G. D. Birla and Devdas Gandhi were appointed to canvass support for the Bills. When the Bills had come to the stage of appointment of a Select Committee, the British Government had taken a decision to dissolve the Assembly and order election. Terrified at the thought of facing the electorate, there was a sudden *volte-face* on the part of the members who favoured the Bills. The mover of the Bills Ranga Iyer was deeply hurt and came up heavily on C. Rajagopalachari stating that he had gone back "like a crab". He added: "Had they gone on with the Temple-Entry Bill or the Untouchable question, they would have lost many votes, for it is not a popular issue and, therefore, "they have run away for their own convictions and playing every trick to come back to the Legislature with as large a number as possible."

Against this background, two great stalwarts-Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar-met at Yeravada Prison on February 4, 1933.

(For the details of the meeting between Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji see Section II under the title "Dr. Ambedkar-Mahatma Gandhi Meetings.—Editors.)

After this meeting Dr. B. R. Ambedkar issued a statement wherein he expressed his views regarding the Temple Entry Bill. Following is the statement:

Statement on Temple Entry Bill
14th February, 1933

"What was the attitude of the Untouchables to this movement for Temple entry? I was asked by Mr. Gandhi to lend my

support to the movement for Temple entry. I declined to do so and issued a statement on the subject to the Press. As it will help the reader to know the grounds for my attitude to this question I have thought it well to set it in full. Here it is !

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 up for a final settlement. It is, therefore, necessary that their viewpoint 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 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 very 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 Shankracharya.

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 over weighted 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. It's 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 practise 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 thoroughgoing reform to ensue its removal lock, stock and barrel. Whatever its shortcomings may be from the stand point 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 on such an empty things 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 on club doors and other social resorts maintained by Europeans in India, which said "Dogs and Indians" not allowed. The temples of 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 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 reason 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 question namely: 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 to-day. 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 have 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 doctrine 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 recognize them as national and not aliens, if I may use in this connection 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 it fosters inequality by insisting upon grading people as Brahmins, Kshatrias, 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 as they stand to be it cardinal doctrine the Depressed Classes must continue to be looked upon as low.

The Depressed Classes can say that they are Hindus only when the theory of *Chaturvarna* and Caste System is abandoned and expunged from the Hindu *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, before I decide upon my final attitude. But whether Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindus are prepared for this are 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 temporise 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 the view, I like to meet the argument right at this stage so as 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.

B. R. Ambedkar."

"Almost all the Depressed Class leaders of Dr. Ambedkar's persuasion, endorsed the views of their leader. Srinivasan, Premtai and Malik upheld the views of their leader.

Gandhi issued a statement in reply in which he stated: "I am a Hindu, not merely because I am born in the Hindu fold, but I am one by conviction and choice. There is no superiority or inferiority in the Hinduism of my conception. But when Dr. Ambedkar wants to fight *Varnashram* itself, I cannot be in his camp, because I believe *Varnashram* to be an integral part of Hinduism." ^{1*}

¹: Keer, P. 230.

* Comment on Temple Entry Campaign See Appendix-VI.

Regarding the above mentioned *Satyagraha* Dr. Ambedkar explained his stand in the following letter addressed to Bhaurao Gaikwad.

BHIMRAO R. AMBEDKAR,

Rajgriha Colony.

M. A., Ph. D., D. Sc,

Dadar, Bombay 14.

Barrister-at-law., J. P., M. L. C.

3-3-34

My dear Bhaurao,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 23rd Feb. It is very kind of you to have asked me for my views on the propriety of the Depressed Classes launching upon a *Satyagraha* at the Kala Ram Temple in Nasik on the coming Ram Navami Day. I have no position in saying that such a move would be quite uncalled for and should not merely be suspended but should be stopped altogether. This may appear strange and surprising coming as it does from one who was the author of the *Satyagraha*. But I am afraid to declare this change of front. I did not launch the temple entry movement because I wanted the Depressed Classes to become worshippers of idols which they were prevented from worshipping or because I believed that temple entry would make them equal members in and an integral part of the Hindu Society. So far as this aspect of the case is concerned I would advise the Depressed Classes to insist upon a complete overhauling of Hindu Society and Hindu theology before they consent to become an integral part of Hindu Society. I started temple entry *Satyagrha* only because I felt that was the best way of energising the Depressed Classes and making them conscious of their position. As I believe I have achieved that purpose I have no more use for temple entry. I want the Depressed Classes to concentrate their energy and resources on politics and education and I hope that they will realise the importance of both.

Your sincerely,

Sd/-B. R. Ambedkar.”¹

Accordingly the *Satyagraha* was stopped immediately.

—Editors

¹: Khairmode, Vol. 3; Pp. 357-358.