

## CHAPTER 25

### GANDHI AND HIS FAST

I. 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 :<sup>1</sup>

#### 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

*The following text of the Communal Award is not typed in the MS. This is reproduced from 'What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables' by the author. (Thacker and Co. Ltd. . 1st Ed. June 1945, pp. 80-82).—Ed.*

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.

5.	*	*	*	*	*
6.	*	*	*	*	*
7.	*	*	*	*	*
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.

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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 Vallabhbhai 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 judgment 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 judgment 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 :

10, Downing Street,  
September 8th, 1932

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	..	<u>148</u>

<sup>1</sup> 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 hereinbefore 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<sup>1</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> This Table is reprinted from Dr. Ambedkar's 'What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables' at page 94. This table was not typed in the M.S.—Ed.

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 of 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)\* 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

\*Inserted by Editors.

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.

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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.

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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 'Triumphal 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."

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"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."

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"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?"

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"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."

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"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."

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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 vote<sup>1</sup>.

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 judgment.

“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 judgment 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 Harjans 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 off. India is a vast continent with something like 6,96,831\* 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 surprizing and overwhelming. All this has vanished leaving the

\*Census Report, 1931. (*Inserted, as the figures are not shown in the MS.—Ed.*)

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 organizing 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 on 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 fraternizing 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 bonafides 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> This quotation is taken from Dr. Ambedkar's book 'What Congress & Gandhi have done to the Untouchables', p. 142. (*This extract are not mentioned in the MS.—Ed.*)

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.<sup>1</sup> 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:<sup>2</sup>

“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

<sup>1</sup> *Reprduced from ‘What Congress ..... etc.’ pp. 140-41 as the page in the MS is left blank.—Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> Report for 1932-33, p. 1.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 organizing 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 ?

<sup>1</sup> Moral Man and Immoral Society/*passim*.



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.”<sup>1</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> This statement was repeated by Dr. Khare at a meeting held in Servants of India Society's Hall in Bombay in support of his cause.

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 innermost 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\*, 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

*\*This statement is shown as of 14th February 1933 in Dr. Ambedkar's 'What Congress .....etc.' at pp. 108-13.-Ed.*

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 donkeys. 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 manouver.

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 *Sanatoria 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:<sup>1</sup>

“How is it possible that the Antyajas (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.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from ‘What Congress & Gandhi have done to the Untouchables’, p. 107 (Not in MS).

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.<sup>1</sup>

“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

<sup>1</sup> Times of India, 3rd January 1933.

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 Iyer'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 Iyer 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. Ramawasmi Iyer have regarding this issue in 1933? It will be clear from the following statement which he issued to the press<sup>1</sup> :

“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 interdining 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

<sup>1</sup> *The statement is reproduced from Dr. Ambedkar's, 'What Congress & Gandhi have done to the Untouchables', p. 318. This was not mentioned in the MS.—Ed.*

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 surprize 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 advertng 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  
Dr. Ambedkar,  
Bombay.

Camp Mayyanad, 24-11-1938  
Quilon.

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 abovementioned 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.

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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’*.

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