

### The Minority Problem

“The most important problem is, of course, the minority problem. Without a solution of this problem there can be no liberty for India. Unfortunately the Conference failed to solve this problem. But a solution must be found before any further steps can be taken in the direction of political reform. He does not seem to have been realised in India that the Conference has virtually made the grant of political power dependent upon an agreed solution of the majority problem. Regarding the question of the Depressed Classes whom Mr. R. M. Srinivasan and myself represented at the Conference, I am glad their place in the future Constitution of India is secure and their disabilities will be non-existent”<sup>1</sup>.

“Just at this time the names of the delegates to the second session of the Round Table Conference were announced in the third week of July. Dr. Ambedkar, Sastri, Saprti, Jayakar, Setalvad, Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Gandhi, Mirza Ismail, Jinnah, Ramaswami Mudaliar and others were invited to attend the Conference in London. Dr. Ambedkar was purposely dropped out from the Federal Structure Committee at the first session of the Round Table Conference. His patriotic mind and his fearless advocacy for the common man and democracy had given the Britishers an offence. But this time he was selected on the Federal Structure Committee, which was vitally connected with the drafting of the new Constitution for India.

Congratulations were showered from all quarters of India and even from England on Dr. Ambedkar. Newspapers from the opposite camp also began to appreciate his patriotism, his love for democracy and his anxiety for the welfare of the common man. The *Kolaba Samachar*, a district paper of note, which was hostile to him in matters of social reforms, expressed a debt of gratitude to Dr. Ambedkar for the patriotic service he had rendered to the country in the Chirner Trial. It recalled his services at the time of the visit of the Simon Commission and at the first session of the Round Table Conference ; and it added that Dr. Ambedkar was a true patriot and would fight to break the shackles of the country and help Others do so at the second session of the Round Table Conference.”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> : The Times of India, dated 28th February 1931.

<sup>2</sup> : Keen P. 163.

The *Indian Daily Mail*, in its issue dated 21st July 1931, congratulating the Doctor upon his nomination to the Federal Structure Committee, paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Ambedkar.

It said : "I congratulate Dr. Ambedkar upon his invitation. Dr. Ambedkar made a tremendous impression at the Round Table Conference and his speech at the opening session was one of the finest bits of oratory delivered during the whole Conference. His final attitude to the Sankey report was that of 'one who does not approve but also who does not object. ' He pointed out that he had a mandate to see that no responsible Government was established unless it was at the same time, accompanied by a truly representative Government. He voiced a fear that the proposed form of Government would be one of the masses by the classes, and his protest found much echoing sympathy in the Labour and Liberal Party of Great Britain. On the other hand Dr. Ambedkar will not play the old fashioned minority game. He is a patriot and is vitally interested in securing self-government. In the future discussions, which will centre round the franchise of the senate and" the Federal Assembly, this brilliant representative of the Depressed Classes is certain to play a most important part."<sup>1</sup>.

The Sunday Chronicle in its issue dated 26th July 1931. under the initials A.T.T., appreciating the services of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a true nationalist, said ; "One of the delegates nominated to the Federal Structure Committee is my friend Dr. Ambedkar. When he was in London last year attending the R.T.C. I saw a good deal of him. At heart a true nationalist he had to put up a stem fight against the persuasive coquetry of the British diehards who are anxious to win him over to their side and at the same time his task was made more difficult by his anxiety to retain his brother delegate Rao Bahadur Srinivasan within the Nationalist fold. At the Chesterfield Gardens, time and again, he complained that Sir Tej Bahadur was giving more to the Princes in the process of give and take. But he admitted that Sir Tej had to manouvre through a very difficult situation."<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>: Reprinted, Ganvir, Ambedkar-Gandhi : Teen Mulakhati, (Marathi) Pp.6-7.

<sup>2</sup>: Ibid. Pp. 7-8.

“The Kesari and several other news-papers expressed satisfaction at the nomination of Dr. Ambedkar. Congratulating the Doctor and N. M. Joshi, the Journal of the Servants of India Society observed : “Being drawn from the humble ranks of the society. one representing the labour classes and the other Depressed Classes, they are necessarily strangers to ‘high politics’ as they are understood in this country. They have the simple faith of the simple folk whose cause they have espoused, and they will not be deterred by the superior smile of the eminent personages surrounding them, from insisting on the literal application of certain principles which they have been taught to hold as inviolable.” A little before this the London representative of the *Free Press Journal*, a leading nationalist daily in Bombay, in his reply to Miss Mayo had eulogised the services which Dr. Ambedkar had rendered at the first session of the Round Table Conference, and said that Dr. Ambedkar was a fearless, independent and patriotic-minded leader whose fearlessness was unbearable to both Hindus and Muslims, and that his opening speech at the first session of the Round Table Conference was the best speech in the whole proceedings of the Conference.

It was not decided as yet whether Gandhi would attend the Round Table Conference. Naturally all eyes were focussed on Manibhuvan at the Malabar Hill in Bombay, owing to the mysterious suspense created by Gandhi’s stagecraft and statecraft. In the bustle and hurry Gandhi wanted to sound Ambedkar as to his demands. So Gandhi wrote to Ambedkar on August 6, 1931, informing him that he would come to see the latter at eight o’clock that night if Dr. Ambedkar could spare the time. Gandhi added that he would gladly come over to Dr. Ambedkar’s residence, if it was inconvenient to Dr. Ambedkar to come to him.”<sup>1</sup>.

Accordingly the meeting between Ambedkar and Gandhi was held on August 14, 1931, at Manibhuvan, at two in the afternoon.

#### “SEGREGATING UNTOUCHABLES

Dr. Ambedkar, the Depressed Classes leader, who saw Mr. Gandhi before he sailed by the *Mooltan* to take part in the Round Table Conference, is said to have told the Mahatma a few hometruths

<sup>1</sup>:Keer;Pp. 163-64.

about the insincere attitude of the Congress towards the grievances of Untouchables. What *can* the poor Mahatma do when the whole country simply believes in Untouchability ?”<sup>1</sup>

The next day was Saturday, August 15, 1931. Almost all the Round Table Conference delegates were to sail for London by the *S. S. Mooltan*. The Ballard Pier at Bombay presented a picturesque appearance on the day. From princes to paupers all soils of people were present at the Pier. Friends, admirers, followers and devotees assembled to wish *bon voyage* to their Princes and heroes. One leader who received a great ovation as soon as he got down from the car was Dr. Ambedkar. Over two thousand volunteers had collected on the road outside and greeted him as he arrived at the Mole Station with shouts of “Dr. Ambedkar ki jai” and “Long live Dr. Ambedkar ”.<sup>2</sup>

“On boardship Dr. Ambedkar came across Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, who asked him about the outcome of the latter’s interview with Gandhi. Sir Prabhashankar told Dr. Ambedkar that as he had left the hall in the middle of the interview, he was not in the know of its outcome or end. Dr. Ambedkar, who got the clue from the strange note in the voice of the Knight, asked him why he had left the hall in the middle. The Knight said bitingly that according to Hindu scriptures a gentleman should quit the place where a detractor reviled a good man, if the hearer could not cut out the tongue of the detractor on the spot. Dr. Ambedkar was all the more tickled by the growing insensible temper of the Knight and, without any sign of irritation on his face, asked him what punishment was prescribed by Pattani’s Hindu scriptures for a rank hypocrite and an abject flatterer. At this crack of the whip Pattani got wild and asked Dr. Ambedkar what he meant by such a brutal attack. Dr. Ambedkar replied that he meant what the knight understood and added that Gandhi should be freed from the grip of abject flatterers like him. The Police Commissioner, Wilson, intervened, and a further scene was averted. The Knight must have left a wiser man. Indeed, the world would be no less benefited, if all its great men turn introspective and get themselves rid of the flattering functions of men surrounding them !

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<sup>1</sup> : The Times of India, dated 18th August-1931.

<sup>2</sup> : Keer:Pp. 168-169.

Sarojini Naidu and Malaviya, who were to go by the same steamer, cancelled their passages, as Gandhi had not yet decided about his departure. In the interview which Dr. Ambedkar gave on the steamer he referred to Gandhi's refusal to go the Round Table Conference and said it was the height of folly to place the interests of Bardoli above those of India. "to bother about petty grievances and to be unmindful of bigger problem the settlement of which will enable him to exercise control over those very officers is a thing which I cannot understand."

Ambedkar was now deeply thinking of Gandhi's decision to oppose his demands. So he sent a message to his people in India through his secretary to hold meetings to denounce the attitude of Gandhi towards their claims. From Suez he wrote another letter to Shivtarkar asking him to send copies of the Memorandum which he had submitted to the Minorities Sub-Committee of the first session of the Round Table Conference. He also asked him to send with Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan the leather bag which he had left behind.

On the steamer, Jayakan the Maharaja of Rewa and other leaders expressed their satisfaction at the imposing sight of the Samata Seva Dal of the Depressed Classes. Shaukat Ali was glad; Dr. Moonje was pleased and even expressed his hidden joy that in spite of the failure of the Hindu Mahasabha to raise such a disciplined volunteer corps, there was one organization of the Untouchable Hindus to stand face to face with the Muslim volunteers ! Moonje even congratulated Dr. Ambedkar on his being the leader of the Untouchables, who were conscious enough to know Dr. Ambedkar's services to their cause, and added that they were not indifferent and ungrateful, like the Caste Hindus, who knew not their benefactors !

On reaching London on August 29, Dr. Ambedkar was down with influenza and suffered terribly from vomiting and diarrhoea. The illness sapped his energy, so much so that he wrote to Shivtarkar that his health was on the brink of a crisis. From Monday, September 7, he began to feel better but weakness still lingered. All the time he advised Shivtarkar not to utter a word about his illness to his wife. One thing weighed on his mind. Defeated at the Mahad Sub-judge's Court the Orthodox

Hindus had appealed to the District Court at Thana, and the judgment of the District Judge at Thana was due. He asked Shivtarkar to inform him about it as soon as it was delivered.

In the meanwhile, Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sir Prabhashankar Pattani met the Viceroy at Simla where the differences were patched up, and Gandhi left for Bombay to catch the earliest steamer to go to London. Gandhi, alongwith Sarojini Naidu, Pandit Mataviya, and his party, sailed for England on August 29, and reached London on September 12, 1931,

The second session of the Round Table Conference commenced on September 7, 1931. This time the personnel of the Conference was enlarged by including a few more delegates such as Sir Muhamed Iqbal, the Muslim League President : Dr. S. K. Dutta. the Christian representative ; G. D. Birla, the great financier ; Pandit Malaviya, a *Sanatani* reformer ; Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India ; and Sir Ali Imam. The outstanding feature of this session was the presence of Gandhi's enigmatic personality. The first session of the R. T. C. was 'Hamlet' without the Prince of Denmark !

Shortly before the Conference met, a change had come over-Britain. The Labour Government was replaced by a National Government, the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, remaining in the saddle as before. The Secretary of State for India, Wedgwood Benn, was replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare. Conservative leaders like Churchill vehemently opposed the proposed transfer of power to India.

The main work of the Round Table Conference was to be done in the Federal Structure Committee and the Minorities Committee. The Conference was to re-examine and amplify the reports prepared by the corresponding Committees of the first session of the Round Table Conference. Mahatma Gandhi made his first speech in the Conference on September 15, 1931, in the Federal Structure Committee. He claimed that the Congress represented all Indian interests and classes. He told the Conference that the Congress represented the Muslims because it had Muslims as Presidents and Muslims as members of its

Working Committee. It represented the Depressed Classes because removal of Untouchability was a plank on the political platform of the Congress. Gandhi told the Princes that Congress stood for States also inasmuch as “even now the Congress had endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs”. The Congress represented women, Gandhi observed, because Congress had Dr. Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu as Presidents. And because he was the sole representative of the Congress, it followed that he was the sole representative of the Indian nation !

Dr. Ambedkar sensed from this speech of Gandhi in what direction the wind was blowing. Dr. Ambedkar made his first speech in the Federal Structure Committee on the same day. He told the Princes that the Federal Structure Committee could not blindly give to the State what they wanted. This put the Maharaja of Bikaner on his legs, and he replied that nor could the States sign a blank cheque either. Dr. Ambedkar, emphasizing his point, said that before a State was allowed to join the Federation, it must prove that it had the necessary resources and the capacity to give its citizens a civilized life, and the main condition laid down by Dr. Ambedkar was that the States’ representatives to the Federal Assembly should be chosen by election and not by nomination. It was his confirmed opinion that nomination made the Executive irresponsible to the Legislature giving a false appearance to the outside world that the Legislature was working normally on the basis of a majority rule. He added that the principle of nomination was against the principle of responsible Government. As regards the demand of the landlords for special representation, he said that they should not be given special representation as they sided with the orthodox, and thereby defeated the ends of freedom and progress. Obviously, this was the first and best speech made in defence of the rights of the States’ people.

These strong views gave a shock to the Princely Order, the landlords and their benefactors, who favoured the view of the Princes that their representatives to the Federal Assembly should be selected by nomination. The result was that every speaker devoted some part or other of his speech to refuting or supporting Dr. Ambedkar’s speech as a majority of them thought that his views were radical and revolutionary.

The next day Gandhi expressed his views that the Round Table Conference delegates were not the chosen ones of the nation, but chosen ones of the British Government. Not that Gandhi was not aware of this before his departure to London. But he now began to twit the delegates. Regarding Dr. Ambedkar's views on States' representation on the Federal Legislatures, Gandhi said that while his sympathies were, broadly speaking, with Dr. Ambedkar, his reason was wholly with Gavin Jones and Sir Sultan Ahmed, who echoed the views of the Princely Order. Gandhi favoured the proposal for Federation, but supported the standpoint of the Princes as against the States' people, saying: "Here we have no right, in my humble way, to say to the States what they should do and what they shall not do!"

Gandhi then turned to the pivotal problem that was haunting the delegates. He referred to the problem of special representation claimed by the different communities, and said: "The Congress has reconciled itself to special treatment of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh tangle. There are sound historical reasons for it, but the Congress will not extend that doctrine in any shape or form. I listened to the list of special interests. So far as the Untouchables are concerned, I have not yet quite grasped what Dr. Ambedkar has to say, but of course, the Congress will share the onus with Dr. Ambedkar of representing the interests of the Untouchables. The interests of the Untouchables are as dear to the Congress as the interests of any other body or of any other individual throughout the length and breadth of India. Therefore, I would most strongly resist any further special representation."

This was nothing but a declaration of war, Ambedkar observed, by Gandhi and by the Congress against the Untouchables. "With this declaration by Mr. Gandhi," he added, "I knew what Mr. Gandhi would do in the Minorities Committee which was the main forum for the discussion of this question."

On September 18 Ambedkar rose and asked Gandhi in the Federal Structure Committee whether the views placed by Gandhi regarding the Federal Legislature and the formation of the Federal Executive were his own or those of the Congress. When Diwan Bahadur, Ramaswami Mudaliar stated that the public servants,



who constituted the Political Department, were as conscientious and fair as any other body of public servants anywhere in India or outside. Dr. Ambedkar at once asked him why then he wanted responsible Government at all if that was so. In his speech Pandit Malaviya pleaded for patience and courtesy to be shown to the Princes and observed that had Government utilized all resources and spent sufficient money on promoting primary education among the people, he was sure the words Depressed Classes would have been a matter of history by that time. Dr. Ambedkar at once pointed out his own case and said that in spite of his education he was still an Untouchable. In the course of his speech Sir Akbar Hydari, while replying to Dr. Ambedkar, said : "Speeches like those of Dr. Ambedkar, if I may say so, do not sufficiently appreciate the realities of the situation." Upon this Dr. Ambedkar answered back : "I have never been guilty of not appreciating realities."

While discussing the formation of the Federal Constitution, nobody referred to the time-limit for initiation of Federation. It was Dr. Ambedkar who lifted the veil by saying : "I do not know that there would be any British Indian who would like to put the establishment of responsible Government in cold storage until the Princes make up their minds to enter into the Federal Government of India."

During these discussions in the Federal Structure Committee there were flashes, exchanges of views, reviews of the constitutional history of the world and ideas about Free India. Dr. Ambedkar's speeches on those topics were full of information, interest and valuable suggestions. The politician, the barrister, the constitutionalist, the professor, the defender of the downtrodden millions and the friend of the States people profoundly impressed the Conference with different facets of his erudition.

By now the third week of September 1931 was over. The Minorities Committee was to commence its work on September 28. On the eve of this session, Gandhi's son, Devdas Gandhi, saw Dr. Ambedkar at his residence, and an interview was fixed between Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar at the residence of Sarojini Naidu between 9 and 12 p.m. Accordingly, Dr. Ambedkar saw

Gandhi and placed his cards on the table. But Gandhi did not open his mind and said that he would consent to Dr. Ambedkar's demands if others agreed.

The Minorities Committee met for the first time on September 28, 1931. The Premier admitted that the problem of minorities in India had baffled them all. He observed that some of the delegates had suggested that Government should arbitrate as the delegates themselves had failed to agree, but he opined that the arbitration would probably be unacceptable to some of them. Upon this the Aga Khan said that Mahatma Gandhi was going to see the Muslim delegates that night and so he asked for an adjournment. Seconding the Aga Khan, Malaviya wished that the general discussion might stand over.

Dr. Ambedkar was in the know of the secret talks that were going on between the Muslim leaders and Gandhi regarding the Hindu-Muslim agreement. So referring to the motion for adjournment, he said: "As far as the Depressed Classes are concerned, we have already presented our case to the Minorities Sub-Committee last time. The only thing which remains for me to do is to put before this Committee a short statement suggesting the quantum of representation which we want in different Legislatures."

He himself had heard with great pleasure, Dr. Ambedkar continued, that further negotiations were going to take place for the settlement of the communal issue. He further observed: "But I would like to make this matter absolutely plain at the start. Those who are negotiating ought to understand that they are not plenipotentiaries at all; that whatever may be the representative character of Mr. Gandhi or the Congress people, they certainly are not in a position to bind us—certainly not. I say that most emphatically in this meeting." And concluding his speech with a warning, he said: "I want to say most emphatically that whoever claims weightage and whoever is willing to give that weightage he must not give it—he cannot give it—out of my share." Upon this the Chairman, MacDonald said: "Dr. Ambedkar's position has been made absolutely clear, in his usual splendid way. He has left no doubt at all about it."\*

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\* Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee & Minorities Committee, p. 527.

On October 1 Mahatma Gandhi again asked for a week's adjournment. He told the Committee that he was being closeted with Muslim leaders of various groups. At this Dr. Ambedkar got up and said that he did not wish to create any difficulty in arriving at such a settlement, but wanted to know whether or not the Depressed Classes would be represented on that formal Committee. Gandhi replied in the affirmative. Dr. Ambedkar thanked Gandhi for this, and turning to the delegates, explained: "Mahatma Gandhi told us on the first day that he spoke in the Federal Structure Committee that as a representative of the Indian National Congress he was not prepared to give political recognition to any community other than the Muslims and the Sikhs. He was not prepared to recognize the Anglo-Indians, the Depressed Classes and the Indian Christians. I do not think that I am doing any violence to etiquette by stating in this Committee that when I had the pleasure of meeting Mahatma Gandhi a week ago and of discussing the question of the Depressed Classes with him and when we, as Members of the other minorities, had the chance of talking with him yesterday in his office, he told us in quite plain terms that the attitude that he had taken in the Federal Structure Committee was his full and well-considered attitude."

Dr. Ambedkar, then thundered that if the Depressed Classes were not going to be recognized in the future constitution of India, as was done by the Minorities Sub-Committee during the first session of the Round Table Conference, he would neither join that particular Committee nor whole-heartedly support the proposition for adjournment. Sir Herbert Carr, Dr. Dutt and others welcomed the adjournment.

The discussions between Gandhi and the Muslim leaders went on for a week. The newspapers declared that the discussions had reached an encouraging stage. It was reported that Gandhi had conceded to the Muslims their fourteen points, accepted that the residuary powers be vested in federating provinces, allowed the Muslims majority in the Punjab and in Bengal, and had offered the Muslims a blank cheque. The talks, however, failed on the Sikh-Muslim question.

On October 8 Gandhi announced, with deep sorrow to the Minorities Committee, his utter failure in securing an agreed solution of the communal question through informal conversations amongst and with the representatives of different groups. He said that the causes of failure were inherent in the composition of the Indian Delegation, and that they were almost all not elected representatives of the parties or groups whom they were presumed to represent nor were those whose presence was absolutely necessary for an agreed solution. He, therefore, moved for an adjournment of the meeting *sine die*. Dr. Ambedkar took up the challenge and stood to reply to Gandhi. He said that Gandhi was guilty of a breach of understanding according to which it was agreed the previous night that none of the delegates was to make any speech or any comment that would cause exasperation.

Dr. Ambedkar's vitriolic tone began to rise. He thundered: "What disturbs me, after hearing Mr. Gandhi, is that instead of confining himself to his proposition, namely, that the Minorities Committee should be adjourned *sine die*, he started casting reflections upon the representatives of the different communities who are sitting round this Table. He said that the delegates were the nominees of Government, and that they did not represent the views of their respective communities for whom they stood, we cannot deny the allegation that we are nominees of the Government, but speaking for myself, I have not the slightest doubt that even if the Depressed Classes of India were given the chance of electing their representatives to this Conference, I would all the same, find a place here. I say therefore, that whether I am a nominee or not, I fully represent the claims of my community. Let no man be under any mistaken impression as regards that."

The Mahatma has been claiming, "Dr. Ambedkar proceeded" that the Congress stands for the Depressed Classes, and that the Congress represents the Depressed Classes more than I or my colleagues can do. To that claim I can only say that it is one of the many false claims which irresponsible people keep on making although the persons concerned with regard to those claims have been invariably denying them.\* Dr. Ambedkar thereupon showed how he had

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\* Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee & Minorities Committee, p. 534.

received from the farthest Untouchable corner of India—from the places which he had never visited and from the men he had never seen—telegrams supporting the stand taken by him. He then told the Committee that either the Committee should solve the problem or the British Government should undertake its solution. In his utter disappointment and fear he said that the Depressed Classes were not anxious about the transfer of power under the present circumstances, but if the Government wanted to transfer power, it should be accompanied by such conditions and by such provisions that the power should not find itself into the hands of a clique, into the hands of the oligarchy, or into the hands of a group of people whether Mohammedans or Hindus; the solution should be such that the power should be shared by all communities in their respective proportions.

The Prime Minister appealed to the Delegates not to attribute causes to any method by which they had been elected or to their own personal shortcomings. He asked them to face the facts and asked them whether the problem existed in India or not. The speech of the Premier was rather pungent in tone and some called it ingrate, full of bitter sideshafts against Gandhi.

Dr. Ambedkar's vigorous propaganda did not stop here. He wrote from London, on October 12, a letter to *The Times of India* throwing light on the whole episode. "We are, however, reliably informed," he wrote, "that in carrying his negotiations with our Muslim friends, Mr. Gandhi demanded that as one of the conditions for his accepting their fourteen points, they should oppose the claims of the Depressed Classes, and the smaller minorities." "To say in public," Dr. Ambedkar observed with his caustic ruthlessness, "I will agree if all others agree, and then to set out to work in private to prevent others from so agreeing by buying off those who are willing to agree, is, in our opinion, a piece of conduct unbecoming a Mahatma and to be expected only from an inveterate opponent of the Depressed Classes. Mr. Gandhi is not only not playing the part of a friend of the Depressed Classes, but he is not even playing the part of an honest foe."

In his letter home Dr. Ambedkar foretold that the Round Table Conference would end in a fiasco, and in his opinion Gandhi was responsible for that failure. According to Dr. Ambedkar, Gandhi's partiality, discriminating conduct in solving the problem of the minorities, his equivocal manner of dealing, his absolute disregard for the other representatives, the insults he inflicted upon them—all these qualities did not help Gandhi to solve the problem tactfully, Dr. Ambedkar further observed that Gandhi's diabolical way of playing one community against another was now quite clear ! His undemocratic mental set-up, Dr. Ambedkar concluded, had given a rude shock to a man like Harold Laski, and Congress leaders, like Vithalbhai Patel. were murmuring disapproval of Gandhi's mishandling the situation !

Gandhi's hostility to the demands put forth by Dr. Ambedkar had wide repercussions and reaction in the quarters of the Untouchables all over India. The All-India Depressed Classes Conference. under the presidentship of Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, at its Gurgaon session, declared that Gandhi was misrepresenting the case of the Untouchables, and strongly denounced the claim made by Gandhi that the Congress had been taking care of the Untouchables from the beginning and had championed the cause of the Untouchables. "I say," said Rajah, the President of the Conference, "that these statements are untrue."

The Conference supported the demands put forth by Dr. Ambedkar and declared that no constitution would be acceptable to the Depressed Classes which did not include in it the system of Separate Electorates for the Depressed Classes. Messages requesting Dr. Ambedkar not to put faith in Gandhi and in the Congress were sent to Dr. Ambedkar in hundreds by the Depressed Classes leaders and associations from all parts of India, and by public meetings and conferences held at Tinnevely, Robertson (Madras), Lyallpur, Karnal, Chidambaram, Calicut, Banaras, Kolhapur, Yeotmal, Nagpur, Chanda, Kanpur, Kamptee, Belgaum, Dharwar, Nasik, Hubli, Ahmedabad, Tuticorin, Colombo and at several other places.

These vociferous cablegrams demonstrated who was the real representative of the Depressed Classes. Gandhi, no doubt received a few cables, but they were insufficient to meet the queries which Gandhi was pestered with in his talks and discourses at

different places in London. Such was the powerful effect of Dr. Ambedkar's fighting propaganda that Gandhi was really nonplussed, and his assumed guardianship of the Untouchables lay exposed !

This exposure became more pronounced at this juncture by the temple entry movement launched by the Depressed Classes in India, at Nasik and at Guruvayur. The revival of *Satyagraha* at Nasik gained a tremendous momentum. Five thousand volunteers poured in Nasik. Dr. Ambedkar's devoted lieutenant, Bhaurao Gaikwad, Depressed Classes leaders like Rankhambe, Patitpavandas and trusted lieutenant Deorao Naik, fought out the struggle, exposing the Orthodox Hindus and the pretended sincerity of the Hindu leaders in their true perspective. The shame was so carping that Dr. Moonje appealed from London to the Hindus not to deny these civic and religious rights to their kith and kin at their own peril. The gates of the Kalaram Temple were closed as was done during the previous *Satyagraha*.

Dr. Ambedkar was happy over this timely support from his people in exposing the caste Hindu behaviour. He sent a message to his people from London.\*

The Nasik *Satyagraha* was carried on with unique enthusiasm and determination. Mass meetings were held, and big procession were taken out. Several volunteers and leaders were arrested. They bravely courted imprisonment and faced jail. The News in the *London Times* about these arrests and the developments of the *Satyagraha* added to the weight of Dr. Ambedkar's say.

After the clash with Gandhi, Dr. Ambedkar took part in the discussions on the Fiscal system which was adumbrated by the Sub-Committee for the Federal Government. He made a very thought-provoking and illuminating speech on the composition of the Federal Court in which, Jinnahh, Jayakar, Lord Sankey and

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\* See Pp 192-193, of this part.

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Lord Lothian, too, took much interest, and he was asked to clarify some of his points.

In spite of this heavy work, Dr. Ambedkar was very busy giving private interviews and explanations, issuing statements and counter-statements and making speeches at different institutions in London in support of his stand at the Round Table Conference. His speech at the Institution of International Affairs proved very effective in demolishing Gandhi's platform. Those who were puzzled by Gandhi's extreme opposition to the demands of the Depressed Classes ran to Dr. Ambedkar to seek clarification of his stand. Miss Muriel Lester, with whom Gandhi was staying, saw Dr. Ambedkar who explained his standpoint to her. A common friend of Ambedkar and Gandhi invited both the leaders to tea and tried to reconcile them. Ambedkar admitted that Gandhi had done work for the uplift of the Untouchables in his humanitarian way and was striving to abolish Untouchability : but they differed fundamentally on the question.

By the end of October 1931 elections were held in Britain and the Tories came into power. As regards the defeat of the Labour Government, Dr. Ambedkar said that their programme was too scientific to be understood by the labourer and average Britisher. In one of his letters Dr. Ambedkar said that the Depressed Classes leaders, who supported Gandhi, did not understand that Gandhi was opposed not only to the Special Electorate but also to the Special Representation for the Depressed Classes : otherwise the problem would have been solved long before." <sup>1</sup>

In addition to the first memorandum submitted to the Minorities Sub-Committee at the first session of the Conference, the supplementary Memorandum dated 4th November 1931 was submitted Jointly by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur R. Shrinivasan. The Supplementary Memorandum reads as follows:—Editors.

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1: Keer, Pp. 169-181.



**“Supplementary Memorandum on the Claims of the  
Depressed Classes for Special Representation  
By Dr. Bhimrao R. Ambedkar and  
Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan**

In the Memorandum that was submitted by us last year dealing with the question of political safeguards for the protection of the Depressed Classes in the Constitution for a self-governing India, and which forms Appendix III to the printed volume of Proceedings of the Minorities Sub-Committee, we had demanded that Special Representation of the Depressed Classes must form one of such safeguards. But we did not then define the details of the Special Representation we claimed as being necessary for them. The reason was that the proceedings of the Minorities Sub-Committee came to an end before the question was reached. We now propose to make good the omission by this supplementary memorandum so that the Minorities Sub-Committee, if it comes to consider the question this year, should have the requisite details before it.

**I. EXTENT OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATION**

*A. Special Representation in Provincial Legislature—*

- (i) In Bengal, Central provinces, Assam, Bihar and Orissa, Punjab and the United Provinces, the Depressed Classes shall have representation in proportion to their population as estimated by the Simon Commission and the India Central Committee.
- (ii) In Madras, the Depressed Classes shall have twenty two percent representation.
- (iii) In Bombay—
  - (a) In the event of Sind continuing to be a part of the Bombay Presidency the Depressed Classes shall have sixteen per cent representation.
  - (b) In the event of Sind being separated from the Bombay Presidency the Depressed Classes shall enjoy the same degree of representation as the Presidency Muslims, both being equal in population.

*B. Special Representation in the Federal Legislature—*

In both Houses of the Federal Legislature the Depressed Classes shall have representation in proportion of their population in India.