

## CHAPTER 24

# UNDER THE PROVIDENCE OF MR. GANDHI

(I) His work through the Congress

I. A Strange Welcome. II. The Great Repudiation. III. A Charge Sheet. IV. The Basis of the Charge Sheet. V. The Tragedy of Gandhi. VI. His Legacy to India and the Untouchables.

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

“Gandhi in the St. James' Palace has not fulfilled the unwise expectation of those who saw him bestriding the Conference like a colossus

.....He was out of his elements.”

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“His first speech, with its sentimental appeal, its over-stressing of humility, its reiteration of single-minded concern for the dumb suffering millions, was a failure. No one questioned its sincerity. But somehow it rang false. It was the right thing, perhaps, but it was in the wrong place. Nor were his later interventions on the whole more successful. A rather querulous complaint that the British Government had not produced a plan for the new Indian Constitution shocked some of Gandhi's colleagues, who had hardly expected to see the representative of the National Congress appealing to British Ministers for guidance and initiative. The protest against the pegging of the rupee to the pound was

astonishingly ineffective. The contributions to the discussions on franchise and kindred matters were of little importance. Behind the scenes he was active enough in the Hindu-Moslem negotiations, but here, too, results were intangible. Not for a moment did Gandhi take the lead or materially influence the course of committee work. He sat there, sometimes speaking, sometimes silent, while the work went on, much as it would have gone on without him.”<sup>1</sup>

This is what Bolton has to say about Mr. Gandhi’s achievement at the Round Table Conference.

How did Mr. Gandhi fare as a statesman and a politician?

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

<sup>1</sup> “Gandhi in London” — Asia, February 1932.

were the minorities — the only party to whom he could have yielded with honour to himself and advantage to the country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Preceded by a pilot car and followed by others containing the Congress Working Committee members, the procession passed through the Ballard Pier Road, Hornby Road and Kalbadevi which had been decorated by the citizens at the instance of the Congress Committee and lined on either side by cheering crowds, five to ten deep till the party reached “*Mani Bhuvan, Gamdevi*”.

At no stage of this welcome did Mr. Gandhi open his lips to acknowledge it. This man of vows was under his Sunday vow of silence which had not run out till then and nor did he think that etiquette, good manners or respect for those who had assembled required that he should terminate his vow earlier.

The official historian of the Congress describes<sup>1</sup> this reception given to Mr. Gandhi in the following terms:

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

<sup>1</sup> Pattabhi Sitaramayya — History of the Congress, p. 857.

On reading this account one is reminded of the Irish Sein Fein Delegates who in 1921, just 10 years before, had gone to London at the invitation of Mr. Lloyd George for the settlement of the Irish Home Rule question. As is well known the Irish Delegates secured from the British Cabinet a treaty which was signed on the 8th December 1921. The Treaty was subsequently submitted for approval to the Dail, the Parliament of the Sein Fein Party which met from 14th December 1921 to 7th January 1922. On the 7th January a division was taken. There were 64 votes for ratifying the treaty and 57 against. And what was the reception given to the Irish delegates who secured this treaty? Arthur Griffith — who was the head of the Irish Delegation and Michael Collins who was his most prominent colleague, were both of them shot by the anti-treaty Sein Feiners, the former on the 12th and the latter on the 22nd August 1922. The reason for sending them to such cruel death was that the treaty which they signed did not secure the inclusion of Ulster and a republic for Ireland. It is true the treaty did not grant this. But if it is remembered that negotiations were opened on the express understanding on the part of both sides that these two questions were outside the scope of negotiations it will be granted that if the treaty did not include these it was no fault of the Irish Delegates. The fury and ferocity of the anti treaty Sein Feiners against the Irish Delegates had no moral foundation and the fate that befell Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins can by no stretch of imagination be said to be one which they deserved.

Be that as it may, this welcome to Mr. Gandhi will be regarded as a very strange event. Both went to win Swaraj, Griffith and Collins for Ireland, Gandhi for India, Griffith and Collins succeeded, almost triumphed; Gandhi failed and returned with nothing but defeat and humiliation. Yet Collins and Griffith were shot and Gandhi was given a reception which kings could have envied !! What a glaring and a cruel contrast between the fate that awaited Collins and Griffith and the reception arranged for Gandhi? Are the Indian Patriots different from the Irish Patriots? Did the masses render this welcome out of blind devotion or were they kept in darkness of the failure of Mr. Gandhi by a mercenary Press? This is more than I can answer.<sup>1</sup>

## II

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

<sup>1</sup> The official historian of the Congress perhaps realizing that this welcome to Mr. Gandhi on the ground of his political achievement says—(Sitaramayya's statement not given in the Ms. —Ed.).

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

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

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

For the first time Mr. Gandhi was made aware that there could be black flags even against him. This must have come to him as a shock. When he was asked about it later in the day, he said he was not angry, the Untouchables being the flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. This is of course the Mahatmaic way of concealing the truth. One would not mind this convenient and conventional lie if there were behind it a realization that the crowd could not always be trusted to be loyal to its hero. Congressmen in India sadly lack the realism of a man like Cromwell. It is related that when Cromwell returned after a great battle, an enormous crowd came out to greet him. A friend sought to impress upon him the immensity of the crowd. But Cromwell dismissed the subject with the laconic remark: “Oh yes, I know many more will come to see me hanged.”!! No Congress leader feels the realism of Cromwell. Either he believes that the day will never come when he will be hanged or he believes that the Indian crowd will never become a thinking crowd. That part of the Indian crowd does think was shown by the representatives of the Untouchables who assembled on the 28th to greet Mr. Gandhi with black flags.

Why did the Untouchables repudiate Mr. Gandhi? The answer to this question will be found in a statement issued by the organizers of these demonstrations which was printed and circulated on that day. The following are extracts from it.

**“Our Charge sheet against Gandhiji and Congress”**

**“Enough of patronising attitude and lip sympathy. We ask for justice and fair play.”**

1. In spite of the fact that the removal of untouchability has been included in the constructive programme of the Congress,

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

2. The attitude of Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference in London with regard to the demands of the Depressed Classes as put forward by their accredited and trusted leader Dr. Ambedkar, was most unreasonable, obstinate and inexplicable.
3. Gandhiji was prepared to concede on behalf of the Congress the special claims of the Mohamedans and the Sikhs including their demand for separate representation on "historic grounds", but he was not willing even to concede reserved seats in general electorates to the Depressed Classes, although he knew, or should have known, what sort of treatment they would get, should they be thrown upon at the mercy on caste Hindus.

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

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

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

General Secretary,  
Depressed Classes Institute.

### III

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

In the face of this, the charge appears to be quite unfounded. For, has not Mr. Gandhi made the Congress pledge itself to remove

untouchability? The Congress before it came into the hands of Mr. Gandhi had refused to allow any social problem to be placed before it for consideration. A clear cut distinction was made between political and social question, and scrupulous attempt was made to confine the deliberations and activities of the Congress to purely political questions. The old Congress refused to take notice of the Untouchables. It was with great difficulty that the Congress in 1917\* for the first time allowed the question of the Untouchables to be placed before it and condescended to pass the following resolution:

“The Congress urges upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the Depressed Classes, the disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppresssive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience.”<sup>1</sup>

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

#### INTERCOMMUNAL UNITY

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

Again did not Mr. Gandhi make the removal of untouchability a condition precedent for achieving Swaraj? In the *Young India* of December 29, 1920, Mr. Gandhi wrote:

“Non-cooperation against the Government means cooperation among the governed, and if Hindus do not remove the sin of

\* Year not mentioned in the Ms.—Ed.

<sup>1</sup> This quotation has been reproduced from page I of ‘What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables’ by the author. This was not typed in the MS of this essay.—Ed.



untouchability, there will be no Swaraj in one year or one hundred years....”

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

“Swaraj is easy of attainment before October next if certain simple conditions can be fulfilled. I ventured to mention one year in September last because I knew that the conditions were incredibly simple and I felt that the atmosphere in the country was responsive. The past five months experience has confirmed me in the opinion. I am convinced that the country has never been so ready for establishing Swaraj as now.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## FIRST PERIOD

### I

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

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

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

“Now this Congress while reaffirming the resolution on non-violent non-cooperation passed at the Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta declares that the entire or any part or parts of the scheme of non-violent non-cooperation, with the renunciation of voluntary association with the present Government at one end and the refusal to pay taxes at the other, should be put in force at a time to be determined by either the Indian National Congress or the All India Congress Committee and in the meanwhile to prepare the Country for it”,....

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

“This Congress is further of opinion that Civil Disobedience is the only civilized and effective substitute for an armed rebellion.... and therefore advises all Congress Workers and others.... to organize individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience”.....

It is to give effect to this policy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience and to prepare the people to take part in them that the Working Committee of the Congress met at Bardoli in February 1922 and drew up the following programme of action.

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

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

to send their children to national schools and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which the other citizens enjoy.

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

- (5) To organise the temperance campaign amongst the people addicted to the drink habit by house-to-house visits and to rely more upon appeal to the drinker in his home than upon picketing.
- (6) To organise village and town Panchayats for the private settlement of all disputes, reliance being placed solely upon the force of public opinion and the truthfulness of Panchayat decisions to ensure obedience to them.
- (7) In order to promote and emphasize unity among all classes and races and mutual goodwill, the establishment of which is the aim of the movement of non-cooperation, to organise a social service department that will render help to all, irrespective of differences, in times of illness or accident.
- (8) To continue the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund collections and call upon every Congressman or Congress sympathiser to pay at least a one-hundredth part of his annual income for 1921. Every province to send every month twenty-five per cent of its income from the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund to the All-India Congress Committee.

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

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

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

"This Committee hereby appoints a committee consisting of Swami Shraddhanandji, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Messrs. I. K. Yajnik and G. B. Deshpande to formulate a scheme embodying practical measures to be adopted for bettering the condition of the

so-called Untouchables throughout the country and to place it for consideration before the next meeting of this Committee, the amount to be raised for the scheme to be Rs. 2 lacs for the present.”

This resolution was placed before the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting in Lucknow in June 1922. It accepted the resolution with the amendment that “the amount to be raised for the scheme should be 5 lacs for the present”, instead of 2 lacs as put forth in the resolution of the Working Committee. How did this programme fare, what practical measures did the Committee suggest and how far were these measures given effect to? These questions one must ask in order to assess the work of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress for the Untouchables.

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

“Read letter from Swami Shradhanandji, dated 8th June 1922 for an advance for drawing up a scheme for depressed classes work. Resolved that Mr. Gangadharrao B. Deshpande be appointed convener of the sub-committee appointed for the purpose and he be requested to convene a meeting at an early date, and that Swami Shradhanand’s letter be referred to the sub-committee.”

The Working Committee met again in July 1922 in Bombay and passed the following Resolution :

“That the General Secretary be asked to request Swami Shradhanand to reconsider his resignation and withdraw it and a sum of Rs. 500/- be remitted to the Convener, Shri G. B. Deshpande, for the contingent expenses of the Depressed Classes Sub-Committee.”

The year 1922 thus passed away without anything being done to further that item of the Bardoli Programme which related to the Depressed Classes. The year 1923 came on. The Working Committee met at Gaya in January 1923 and passed the following resolution :

“With reference to Swami Shradhanand’s resignation, resolved that the remaining members of the Depressed Classes Sub-Committee do form the Committee and Mr. Yajnik be the convener.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

The work of the amelioration of the Untouchables could not have been left in worse hands. If there is any body which is quite unfit for addressing itself to the problem of the Untouchables, it is the Hindu Mahasabha. It is a militant Hindu organization. Its aim and object is to conserve in every way everything that is Hindu, religious and

culture. It is not a social reform association. It is a purely political organization whose main object and aim is to combat the influence of the Muslims in Indian politics. Just to preserve its political strength it wants to maintain its social solidarity and its way to maintain social solidarity is not to talk about caste or untouchability. How such a body could have been selected by the Congress for carrying on the work of the Untouchables passes my comprehension. This shows that the Congress wanted somehow to get rid of an inconvenient problem and wash its hands of it. The Hindu Mahasabha, of course, did not come forth to undertake the work and the Congress had merely passed a pious resolution recommending the work to them without making any promise for financial provision. So the project came to an inglorious and ignominious end. Yet there will not be wanting thousands of Congressmen who would not be ashamed to boast that the Congress has been fighting for the cause of the Untouchables and what is worse is that there will not be wanting hundreds of foreigners who are ready to believe it under the false propaganda carried on by men like Charles F. Andrews, who is the friend of Mr. Gandhi and who thinks that to popularize Gandhi in the Western World is his real mission in life.<sup>1</sup>

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

#### SWAMIJI'S LETTER

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Andrews once went to the length of defending the Caste system.

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

“My dear Mr. Patel, there was a time (vide *Young India* of 25th May, 1921) when Mahatmaji put the question of untouchability in the forefront of the Congress Programme. I find now that the question of raising the Depressed Classes has been relegated to an obscure corner. While Khadi claims the attention of some of our best workers and liberal sum has been earmarked for it, for the year, while a strong sub-committee has been appointed to look after national education and a special appeal for funds is to be made for the same, the question of the removal of untouchability has been shelved by making small grants to Ahmedabad, Ahmednagar and Madras. I am of opinion that with a majority of 6 crores of our brethren set against us by the beauracracy even the Khadi Scheme cannot succeed completely. The Members of the Working Committee, perhaps, do not know that on this side our suppressed brethren are leaving off Khadi and taking to buying cheap foreign cloth. I want to move the following resolution in the meeting of the A.I.C.C, which comes off on the 7th of June next at Lucknow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Kindly place the following proposal before the President and if he allows it to be placed before the next meeting of the A.I.C.C. I shall move it there—“Instead of the Note under item (4) of the Bardoli resolution, substitute the following Note : “The following demands of the Depressed Classes ought to be complied with at once namely that (a) they are allowed to sit on the same carpet with citizens of other classes, (b) they get the right to draw water from common wells and (c) their children get admission into National schools and Colleges and are allowed to mix freely with students drawn from the so-called higher castes. I want to impress upon the members of the A.I.C.C. the great importance of this item. I know of cases where the Depressed Classes are in open revolt against tyranny of the so-called upper castes and unless the above demands are conceded to them they will succumb to the machinations of the bureaucracy.” After my first proposals were passed in the A.I.C.C. Meeting on June 7th at Lucknow, I asked Mr. Patel to put my proposed amendmant of Note to item (4) of

Bardoli resolution before the meeting. He told me that the Working Committee would refer it to the Sub-committee and asked me not to press it there. I agreed. But I have not received copy of any resolution of the Working Committee referring my proposal to the Untouchability Sub-committee.

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

Delhi, Jan. 30.

Yours sincerely,  
Shradhanand Sanyasi.

#### SECRETARY'S REPLY

Dear Swamiji,

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

As you are aware, I have no personal knowledge of the facts which happened prior to my release from the jail. But I was present at the meeting of the Working Committee which passed the resolution dated 10th June 1922 appointing Mr. Deshpande as the Convener of the Sub-committee. It was not then mentioned that there was any understanding about any particular member acting as the Convener of the Sub-committee and the whole resolution was passed merely to complete the necessary formalities in regard to the payment of money. It was felt that a formal resolution of the Sub-committee was necessary before any expenditure could be sanctioned. Mr. Deshpande was accordingly appointed as the convener and a sum of Rs. 500/- was voted for the expenses of these preliminary steps. By an oversight the resolution as drafted omitted to mention the sanction of Rs. 500/-. You will thus observe that it was not due to the unwillingness of Working Committee to sanction Rs. 10,000/- for untouchability, but the true reason for framing the resolution in the manner it was framed was what I have explained above. Nothing could be farther from the intention of the Working Committee than a desire to understand the

importance of the work your Sub-committee was called upon to do or in any way to ignore the valuable advice tendered by you. On your letter being placed before the last meeting of the Working Committee the omission of the grant of Rs. 500/- was supplied, and I was instructed to communicate with you on the subject. It will be a great pity if the Sub-committee is deprived of the benefit of your experience and special knowledge of the whole question of untouchability and I will ask you therefore in the public interest to reconsider your decision and wire to my office at Allahabad withdrawing your resignation from the Sub-Committee. I need hardly add that any resolutions arrived at by your Sub-Committee will receive all the consideration they deserve at the hands of the Working Committee.

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

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

Yours sincerely,  
Motilal Nehru.  
General Secretary.

Bombay, July 23, 1922.

#### SWAMIJI'S REJOINDER

Dear Pandit Motilalji,

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

(1) Kindly enquire of Mr. Rajagopalchariar whether I did not first propose that at least one lakh should be given in cash out of the funds in the hands of the A.I.C.C, whether he did not move an amendment substituting words for the above which purported to promise that when the plan of work formulated by the Sub-Committee was accepted by the Working Committee, that Committee would allot as much money for the untouchability department as it could then spare

and whether I did not accept his amendment when the President called me aside and explained the exact financial position at the time. If this is the fact then why did the amendment not appear with the resolution?

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

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

Delhi, July 23, 1922.

Shradhananda Sanyasi.

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

## 2

So much for what Congressmen volunteered to do. How much did congressmen or Mr. Gandhi help the Untouchables who were working independently for the uplift of their own people. This was the period when the Untouchables themselves were on the warpath. They too were engaged in offering civil disobedience against the Hindus for the purpose of acquiring their civic and social rights. This was the period during which the Untouchables of Bombay Presidency had launched their Satyagraha at Mahad for establishing their right to take water

from the public tank and at Nasik for establishing their right to enter a Hindu temple. How did Mr. Gandhi look upon this Satyagraha movement started by the Untouchables against the caste Hindus? The attitude of Mr. Gandhi to say the least was extremely queer.

In the first place Mr. Gandhi condemned this Satyagraha by the Untouchables against the caste Hindus. He would not support it. In this controversy the Untouchables were perfectly logical. They argued that if Civil Disobedience was the weapon which, according to Mr. Gandhi, the Hindus could legitimately use against the British for securing their freedom, why were the Untouchables not justified in using the same weapon against the caste Hindus for securing their emancipation. However good this logic Mr. Gandhi would have none of it. He tried to meet their logic by his logic. He argued that Untouchability was the sin of the Hindus. It is the Hindus who must therefore do penance. It is they who must offer Satyagraha for the removal of untouchability. Satyagraha was not the business of the Untouchables because they were not sinners, far from being sinners they were sinned against. This was of course not Aristotelian logic. It is a Mahatmian logic which is another name for casuistry. But it was apparent that this Mahatmian logic was simply nonsense. The Untouchables replied that if that was the view of Mr. Gandhi—namely that Satyagraha is penance which is for the sinner to offer—then why should he call upon the Hindus to offer Satyagraha against the British. British Imperialism was the sin of the British and therefore according to his logic the Satyagraha must be offered by the British and not by the caste Hindus. The Untouchables had destroyed his logic. It was clear that there was either a fallacy or insincerity in this attitude of Mr. Gandhi to Satyagraha by the Untouchables against caste Hindus. But the Untouchables could not dislodge Mr. Gandhi from the position of hostility which he had adopted.

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

Perhaps Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to protect the lambs who would not accept him as their shepherd. When Mr. Gandhi refused to give his blessings to the Satyagraha by the Untouchables it was a foregone conclusion that no Congressmen would or could come and help the Untouchables in their struggle against the orthodox Hindus. Indeed this attitude of Mr. Gandhi enabled Congress Hindus to join the orthodox Hindus—they are kith and kin and the line that divides the two is very thin—and batter the heads of the Untouchables with a clear conscience. This was not the only mischief Mr. Gandhi did by his most illogical if not perverse attitude. He came out openly against all non-Hindus and prohibited them from helping the Untouchables in their Satyagraha struggle against the caste Hindus. He was not only against Mahomedans, Christians, Parsis and Jews rendering any help, but he went to the length of objecting to the Sikhs—who are no more than militant and protestant Hindus—coming to help the Untouchables. Here again his argument was queer. Untouchability is the sin of the caste Hindus. It is they who must do penance. Help to the Untouchables being a penance and penance being the obligation of the sinner, only the sinner could offer Satyagraha and help it. The Mahomedans, Christians, Parsis, Jews and Sikhs were not sinners in the matter of untouchability and therefore they could not help the Satyagraha for the removal of untouchability. Mr. Gandhi of course would not see it from the point of view of the Untouchables. He would not see that what was sin for the caste Hindus was slavery for the Untouchables. If the sinner was bound to do penance, the slave was entitled to break his bonds and every person who believed in freedom, no matter what his caste or his creed, was bound to help and free to join in the struggle. This is exactly the point of view which Mr. Gandhi had adopted with regard to the Khilafat question. The Musalman wanted Khilafat and the territorial integrity of Turkey. The demand for territorial integrity of Turkey was a most impossible demand because it involved the subjugation of the Arabs by the Turks. Still the Musalmans insisted upon it and Mr. Gandhi brought round the whole of the Congress and the Hindus to support this impossible and impious demand of the Musalmans. Mr. Gandhi then argued that if the Musalmans think it their religious duty to fight for the territorial integrity of Turkey, then it was the obligation of the Hindus to help the Muslims to fulfil their duty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in 1920 a resolution was passed of which the following is a part :

“In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Musalmans of India, and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Moslem India in every legitimate manner to assist his Musalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him.

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

### 3

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

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

#### **Adequate Representation in the Legislatures.**

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

- (1) Right to adequate representation in the Legislatures of the Country, Provincial and Central.

<sup>1</sup> Young India.

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

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

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

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

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

Our proposal, therefore, is that in all the eight Provinces there should be some reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes..... The result of our Scheme would be that spokesmen of the Depressed Classes would be returned as elected members in each of



the Provinces ..... As to the number of seats to be reserved, this should obviously bear some proportion to the total number of the Depressed Classes in the province ..... We propose that ..... the proportion of the number of such reserved seats to the total seats in all the Indian General constituencies should be three quarters of the proportion of the Depressed Classes population to the total population of the electoral area of the province.” .....<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact there was nothing new in this demand of the Depressed Classes for separate political representation for themselves by themselves and through themselves and the Simon Commission in conceding it cannot be said to have made a new departure.

This demand was put forth in 1919.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Report. Vol. II. pp. 65-66.

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

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

Thus the right of the Depressed Classes to special representation in the Legislature had become a principle which was not only accepted but adopted in the Constitution. So well was this principle recognized that it had been extended even to District Local Boards, School Boards and Municipalities.

A claim which had been given legal recognition in 1919 and which had thereby become a right and which had become perfected by use the representatives of the Depressed Classes felt could not be disputed by any body. There was no reason to fear that the Congress would come forward seriously to dispute this right of the Depressed Classes. Because although the Nehru Committee in 1929 in the Swaraj Constitution which it was asked to frame had denied this right to the Depressed Classes, the report of that Committee was not binding on the Congress. The Congress was bound by nothing except its own resolution which was passed in 1920, at its Nagpur Session to allay the fears of the Sikhs, and which had declared its policy to treat all minorities alike in the matter of representation in the Legislature<sup>1</sup>.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> The text of the resolution is as follows :

*The Sikhs*

“In view of the fact that misunderstanding exist among the Sikhs as to the position of their community in the future polity of India, this Congress assures the Sikhs that their interests will receive the same protection in any Scheme of Swaraj for India as is provided for Mahomedan and other minorities in provinces other than the Punjab.”

was presented to the General Conference. The following are the extracts from that report :

“There was general agreement with the recommendation of Sub-Committee No. II (Provincial Constitution) that the representation on the Provincial Executives of important minority communities was a matter of the greatest practical importance for the successful working of the new constitution, and it was also agreed that, on the same grounds, Mohammadans should be represented on the Federal Executive. On behalf of the smaller minorities a claim was put forward for their representation, either individually or collectively, on the Provincial and Federal Executives, or that, if this should be found impossible, in each Cabinet there should be a Minister specially charged with the duty of protecting minority interests. (Dr. Ambedkar and Sardar Ujjal Singh would add the words “and other important minorities” after the word Mohammadans in line 6).

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

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

“It has also been made clear that the British Government cannot, with any chance of agreement, impose upon the communities an electoral principle which, in some feature or other, would be met by their opposition. It was therefore plain, that, failing an agreement, separate electorates, with all their drawbacks and difficulties, would have to be retained as the basis of the electoral arrangements under the new constitution. From this the question of proportions would arise. Under these circumstances, the claims of the Depressed Classes will have to be considered adequately.”

“The Sub-Committee, therefore, recommend that the Conference should register an opinion that it was desirable that an agreement upon the claims made to it should be reached, and that the negotiations should be continued between the representatives concerned, with a request that the result of their efforts should be reported to those engaged in the next stage of these negotiations.”

Mr. Gandhi was not present at the first Round Table Conference because the Congress had boycotted it. He came for the Second Round Table Conference. What attitude did Mr. Gandhi take to this claim of the Depressed Classes ?

Every body expected that Mr. Gandhi would be more interested in seeing that the constitution that was likely to emerge from these deliberations and negotiations was a constitution which gave India *Purna Swaraj* i.e. complete independence and he would not interest himself in so unimportant a subject as the allocation of seats among the different minorities. But events completely falsified these hopes. Mr. Gandhi completely gave up his fight against British Imperialism altogether. He forgot that he had come with a mandate<sup>1</sup> to secure a constitution which contained *Purna Swaraj*. He left that issue and started fighting the minorities and what is so strange he concentrated all his fire upon the representatives of the Untouchables for daring to put forth the claim for special representation. Mr. Gandhi opposed tooth and nail the representatives of the Depressed Classes. He was not even prepared to look at their claim. He was annoyed at their impudence and the whole Conference was astonished by his opposition. They could not understand how a man like Mr. Gandhi who posed himself as the friend of the Untouchables could in fact be so great an enemy of their interests. His friends were completely baffled. Mr. Gandhi was prepared to recognize a similar right claimed by the Musalmans and to the Sikhs and although he was not prepared to recognize a similar claim by Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians he was not going to oppose their claim. Mr. Gandhi's friends could not understand how he could deny a similar right to the Untouchables. The Mohamedans, Sikhs, Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians were far better off than the Untouchables. The former were economically far better placed. The latter were poorest of the poor. The former were educationally advanced, the latter were educationally most backward. The former were socially well respected, the latter were socially despised. The former enjoyed a position of free citizens. The latter were suffering from certain disabilities. The former were not subjected to social tyranny and social boycott but social tyranny and social boycott were the every day lot of the latter. Having regard to this difference in status there could never be any doubt that if there was any section of the Indian people whose case called forth

<sup>1</sup> The following resolution embodies the mandate which the Congress imposed upon Mr. Gandhi when he was chosen by the Congress as its delegate. (This was a resolution passed at the Karachi Congress).

"This Congress, having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of *Purna Swaraj*, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal, and in particular so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, and to have a scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England and the right to either party to end the partnership at will; provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India."

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

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

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

At the minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi used another argument. He said :

“I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables is to me the “unkindest cut of all”. It means the perpetual barsinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself, in my own person, to represent the vast mass of the untouchables. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the untouchables, their vote, and that I would top the poll. And I would work from one end of India to the other to tell the untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar-sinister, which is the shame, not of them, but of orthodox Hinduism. Let this committee and let the whole world

know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who are pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. We do not want on our register and on our census, untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Moslems, so may Europeans. Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather than Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar, and for his desire to see the untouchables uplifted, with all my regard for his ability I must say, in all humility, that here is a great wrong under which he has laboured and, perhaps, the bitter experiences he has undergone have for the moment warped his judgment. It hurts me to have to say this but I would be untrue to the cause of untouchables, which is as dear to me as life itself, if I did not say it. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. I am speaking with a due sense of responsibility, when I say it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of untouchables in India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever, I do not mind the untouchables being converted into Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are these two divisions set forth in the villages. Those who speak of political rights of untouchables do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life."

At a meeting at the Friends House in London Mr. Gandhi relied upon quite a different argument. He is reported to have said<sup>1</sup>:

"I have told you what is agitating my mind. You may take the Congress to be incapable of bartering away the minorities rights. The untouchables, I know, as one can claim to know. It would be equal to killing them if separate electorates were given them. They are at present in the hands of the superior classes. They can suppress them completely and wreck vengeance upon the untouchables who are at their mercy and it is because I want to prevent that thing happening that I would fight the demand for separate electorates for them. Whilst I am saying this, I know, I am opening out my shame to you. But in the existing state of things how could I invite destruction for them? I would not be guilty of that crime.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Young India—Nov. 19, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> From this, one is likely to get the impression that Mr. Gandhi was opposed only to separate electorates and that Mr. Gandhi was prepared to give to the untouchables joint electorates AND RESERVED seats being granted to the untouchables was made clear by him at the Round Table Conference. I give below the following extract from his speech in the minorities sub-Committee :

"I would like to repeat what I have said before, that while the Congress will always accept any solution that may be acceptable to the Hindus, the Musalmans and the Sikhs, the Congress will be no party to special reservation or special electorates for any other minorities."

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

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

His first argument, that the Congress was pledged to look after the untouchables, to remove their untouchability—Was this argument founded in truth? Mr. Gandhi has been telling the world that the whole body of Congress has been pledged to remove untouchability and his friends have been giving him credit for getting the Congress to do what the Congress before him was not prepared to do. I am surprised how so false a view could have been given such a wide currency. I have read and re-read the Resolution passed by the Congress in 1920 at Nagpur which is the basis of such an assertion as is made by Mr. Gandhi and his friends, and I am sure every one who reads that resolution will agree that the text of the resolution gives no warrant for such an assertion. The resolution is a very clever piece of Gandhian tactics. Mr. Gandhi has been very anxious from the very beginning to keep the untouchables a close preserve of the Hindus. He did not want Musalmans or Christians to be interested in them. He wanted that the Untouchables who were attached to the British should be detached from them and attached to the Hindus. The second object could be achieved only if the resolution in favour of the removal of untouchability was passed from the Congress platform. To achieve this it was necessary to confine this duty only to the Hindus. This is what the resolution does. It is a clever move on the part of a cunning politician. The resolution does not put the Congress as a whole behind this resolution. Secondly, in what it does there is nothing that is obligatory in it. There is no pledge, there is no vow. There is only moral exhortation. It only recommends to the Hindus that removal of untouchability is their duty. Once Mr. Gandhi tried to alter the conditions for membership of the Congress. Instead of the payment of four annas per annum being the condition of membership Mr. Gandhi wanted to lay down two conditions : (1) removal of untouchability and (2) spinning yarns. Congressmen were prepared to accept spinning of yarn as a condition of membership. But they were not prepared to accept removal of untouchability as a condition. Congressmen told Mr. Gandhi that if he insisted upon it all Congress Committees will have to be closed down. So strong was the opposition that Mr. Gandhi had to withdraw his proposal. That being the case for Mr. Gandhi to have urged before the Round Table Conference that the Congress was pledged to remove untouchability and that the untouchables could safely be left to the mercy of the Hindus shows that even Mr. Gandhi is capable of economising truth to a vanishing point.

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

In 1920 a correspondent asked Mr. Gandhi the following question<sup>1</sup>:

“Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs?”

To this Mr. Gandhi gave the following reply :

“A correspondent indignantly asks me in a pathetic letter reproduced elsewhere what I am doing for the (untouchables). I have given the letter with the correspondent’s own heading. ‘Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs?’ This is a proper question reasonably put. And if a member of a slave nation could deliver the suppressed classes from their slavery without freeing myself from my own, I would so do today. But it is an impossible task .....

Does this show that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress were sincere when they said that removal of untouchability was a condition precedent to Swaraj? That this is not the argument of a sincere man is shown by the fact that at a later time Mr. Gandhi himself has ridiculed a correspondent who urged upon Mr. Gandhi the desirability of keeping aside the question of the Untouchables until the Hindus had won Swaraj.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Young India, 27th Oct. 1920.



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

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

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

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

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

Can it lie in the mouth of persons who want to maintain separate wells, separate schools to say that they object to separate representation because it will cause separation? It is only persons who are bent on breaking down barriers who can speak against separate representation and ask to be believed in the sincerity of their argument.

Mr. Gandhi's last argument was a fantastic argument. If the superior classes can suppress the untouchables and wreck vengeance upon them then there is all the greater reason why they should be given special representation so that they may protest themselves against the tyranny of the superior classes. Mr. Gandhi had become desperate and had lost his equanimity and balance to such an extent that he did not know where his arguments would lead him. In using this argument he

evidently forgot that he was arguing for the perpetual enslavement of the Untouchables by the Hindus. Mr. Gandhi's argument in short was "don't ask for freedom, because it will enrage your master and he will illtreat you". If such an argument had been advanced by any one else he would have been told that he was purile and insincere.

Having failed to demolish the justice of the claim of the Untouchables Mr. Gandhi decided to isolate the representatives of the Depressed Classes, to see that they got no support from any other quarter, Gandhi planned to break a possible compact between the Depressed Classes and the Muslims. A part of the plan was to win over the Musalmans to his side and for that purpose he offered to enter into a pact with them. A copy of this pact which was circulated among the Muslim delegates came into my hands and I reproduce the same here. (*This text is reproduced below from Dr. Ambedkar's "What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables", pp. 72-73 which is not typed in the MS.—Ed.*)

#### "DRAFT OF GANDHI-MUSLIM PACT"<sup>1</sup>

##### *Muslim Delegation to the Round Table Conference*<sup>2</sup>

Tel. : VICTORIA 2360

Telegrams "COURTLIKE" LONDON

QUEEN'S HOUSE,

57, ST. JAMES' COURT,

BUCKINGHAM GATE,

LONDON, S. W. 1

6th October 1931.

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

#### MUSLIM PROPOSALS

1. In the Punjab and Bengal bare majority of one per cent. of Musalmans but the question of whether it should be by means of joint electorates and reservation of 51 per cent. of the whole house should be referred to the Musalman voters before the new constitution comes into force and their verdict should be accepted.

#### MR. GANDHI'S PROPOSALS

1. That the Franchise should be on the basis of adult suffrage.

2. *No special reservations to any other community save Sikhs and Hindu Minorities. (Italics are not in the original).*

<sup>1</sup> This document was printed by me in my *Thoughts on Pakistan* as Appendix in 1939. It was the first time it saw the light of the day. Its genuineness has never been questioned. I was able to get a copy from a Hindu Delegate to the Round Table Conference who was privileged by the Muslim League to share the secret.

<sup>2</sup> 'This shows that the document was typed on the stationery of the Muslim League Delegation.'

## MUSLIM PROPOSALS

2. In other provinces where the Musalmans are in a minority the present weightage enjoyed by them to continue, but whether the seats should be reserved to a joint electorate, or whether they should have separate electorates should be determined by the Musalman voters by a referendum under the new constitution, and their verdict should be accepted.

3. That the Musalman representatives to the Central Legislature in both the houses should be 26 per cent. of the total number of the British India representatives, and 7 per cent. at least by convention should be Musalmans, out of the quota that may be assigned to Indian States, that is to say, one-third of the whole house when taken together.

4. That the residuary power should vest in the federating Provinces of British India.

5. That the other points as follows being agreed to :

1. Sindh.<sup>1</sup>
2. N.W.F.P.<sup>2</sup>
3. Services.<sup>3</sup>
4. Cabinet.<sup>4</sup>
5. Fundamental rights and safeguards for religion and culture.
6. Safeguards against legislation affecting any community.

## MR. GANDHI'S PROPOSALS

The Congress demands:

- A. Complete Independence.
- B. Complete control over the defence immediately.
- C. Complete control over external affairs.
- D. Complete control over Finance.
- E. Investigation of public debts and other obligations by an independent tribunal.
- F. As in the case of a partnership, right of either party to terminate it.

<sup>1</sup> Stands for separation of Sindh.

<sup>2</sup> Stands for Provincial Autonomy and Responsible Government for the N.W.F. Province.

<sup>3</sup> Stands for Representation in Services.

<sup>4</sup> Stands for Representation in the Cabinet.

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

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

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

This so-called agreement fell through because among other reasons it was impossible for the Mahomedans to agree to the exclusion of the Untouchables from the benefit of special representation. How could the Muslims agree to such a project ? They were fighting for special representation for Muslims. They were not only fighting for special representation, they were fighting for weightage in representation. They knew that the case for Muslims rested only on the ground that India was once ruled by the Musalmans, that they had political importance to maintain and as Hindus are likely to discriminate

against Muslims in elections to the Legislatures, there may not be sufficient Muslims returned to the Legislature, that the Muslims will sink politically and that to prevent such a calamity they must be given special representation. As against this one ground in favour of Muslims there were a hundred grounds in favour of the claim by the Untouchables. With what face could the Musalmans oppose this demand of the Untouchables ?

The Musalmans had not lost their balance or their sense of shame. They refused to be party to such a deal—a deal which they could not publicly defend. Mr. Gandhi still kept on pestering the Musalmans. When he could not induce them to accept the price he offered—namely the grant of fourteen points—because they felt that the world would not call it price but would call it the wages of sin, Mr. Gandhi sought to appeal to the religious scruples of the Musalmans. The day before the *13th November*<sup>1</sup> 1931 when the *minorities pact*<sup>2</sup> was presented to the Minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi took a copy of the Koran and went to the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly where the Rt. Hon. H. H. Aga Khan was staying to meet the Muslim delegates who had assembled there. To Muslim delegates he asked—“Why are you dividing the Hindu Community which you are doing by recognizing the claim of the Untouchables for separate representation ? Does the Koran sanction such a deed ? Show me where it does ? If you cannot, will you not stop perpetrating such a crime upon your sister Community ?” I do not know how the Muslim delegates answered this question of Mr. Gandhi. It must have been a very difficult question for them to answer. Such a contingency could not have been present to the mind of the Holy Prophet and he could not have provided for it specifically. His followers knew that contingencies would arise for which he had given no directions and they had therefore asked him what they should do, and the Prophet had given them this general direction. He said to them, “in such a case see what the Kaffirs are doing and do just the opposite of it”<sup>3</sup>. Whether the Muslim delegates relied upon this to answer Mr. Gandhi is more than I can say. What I have stated is what I have heard and my source is the most authentic source. Here again Mr. Gandhi failed because the next day in the open Committee when Mr. Gandhi let loose his fury against the Untouchables, the Mahomedans were silent.

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

<sup>1</sup> See Ambedkar, B. R., “What Congress and Gandhi have been done to the Untouchables”, p. 67.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* . Appendix III, pp. 307-11.

<sup>3</sup> See Koran.

Similarly Mr. Gandhi says he does everything on the principle of morality and good faith. Can the acts of Mr. Gandhi be justified by tests of justice and good faith? I wonder. Let me state a few facts. Before I left for London for the first Round Table Conference I had met Mr. Gandhi in Bombay. At that meeting I had informed Mr. Gandhi that at the Round Table Conference I would be asking for special representation for the Untouchables. Mr. Gandhi would not consent. But he also told me that he would not oppose. I felt that it was just a case of difference of opinion. At the second Round Table Conference I met Mr. Gandhi twice, once alone and second time along with the representatives of the smaller minorities. At the first meeting Mr. Gandhi was spinning and I was talking. I spoke for an hour during the whole of which he did not utter even a word. At the end he just said this much.

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

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

The proposal was seconded by the Aga Khan. I at once got up and objected to the motion and in support of my objection made the following statement\*<sup>1</sup> :

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

"But there is just this one difficulty with which I, as representing the Depressed Classes, am faced. I do not know what sort of committee Mahatma Gandhi proposes to appoint to consider this question during the period of adjournment, but I suppose that the Depressed Classes will be represented on this Committee.

*Mr. Gandhi* : Without doubt.

\*<sup>1</sup> Following extracts up to p. 305 ending with words 'informal meetings' are reproduced from "What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables". pp. 60-62. not typed in the MS.— Ed.

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

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

“If we understand perfectly well before we start that this committee will not merely concern itself with the question of the Hindus and the Muhammadans, of the Hindus and the Sikhs, but will also take upon itself the responsibility of considering the case of the Depressed Classes, the Anglo-Indians and the Christians, I am perfectly willing to allow this adjournment resolution to be passed without any objection. But I do want to say this, that if I am to be left out in the cold and if this interval is going to be utilised for the purposes of solving the Hindu-Muslim question, I would press that the Minorities Committee should itself grapple with the question and consider it, rather than allow the question to be dealt with by some other informal Committee for arriving at a solution of the communal question in respect of some minorities only.”

The Prime Minister as Chairman of the Committee called upon Mr. Gandhi to explain his position and Mr. Gandhi made the following statement in reply<sup>1</sup>:

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

“I do not think, therefore, that anybody need be afraid as to being able to express his opinion or carrying his opinion also. Mine will be there equal to that of every one of us; it will carry no greater weight; I have no authority behind me to carry my opinion against the opinion of anybody. I have simply given expression to my views in the national interest, and I shall give expression to these views whenever they are opportune. It will be for you, it is for you to reject or accept these opinions. Therefore please disburse your minds, to everyone of us, of the idea that there is going to be any

<sup>1</sup> See “What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables”, p. 62.  
(both the above extracts are not mentioned in the MS).—Ed.



steam-rolling in the Conference and the informal meetings that I have adumbrated. But if you think that this is one way of coming closer together than by sitting stiffly at this table, you will not carry this adjournment motion but give your whole-hearted co-operation to the proposal that I have made in connection with these informal meetings.”

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I then withdrew my objection.

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

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

“Coming to this document<sup>1</sup>, I accept the thanks that have been given to me by Sir Hubert Carr. Had it not been for the remarks that I made when I shouldered that burden, and had it not been for my utter failure to bring about a solution, Sir Hubert Carr rightly says he would not have found the very admirable solution that he has been able, in common with the other minorities, to present to this Committee for consideration and finally for the consideration and approval of His Majesty's Government.”

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

<sup>1</sup> Reference is to the Minorities Pact.

Had Mr. Gandhi any right to be indignant? Had he any right to feel morally offended? Was he entitled to throw stones at the Minorities? Mr. Gandhi forgot that he was as much a sinner as the Minorities and worse he was a sinner without a sense of justice. For if the Minorities were dividing the carcass what was Mr. Gandhi himself doing? He too was busy in dividing the carcass. The only difference between Mr. Gandhi and the Minorities was this—Mr. Gandhi wanted that the carcass should be divided among three only, Hindus, Musalmans and Sikhs. The Minorities wanted that others also should be given a share, and which of these two can claim to have justice on its side, Mr. Gandhi who wanted that the division of the carcass should be to strong sturdy well-nourished wolves or the minorities who pressed that the lean and hungry lambs should also be given a morsel? Surely in this controversy justice was not on the side of Mr. Gandhi.

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

