

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* See Pp 192-193, of this part.

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

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

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

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

1: Keer, Pp. 169-181.

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

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

I. EXTENT OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATION

A. Special Representation in Provincial Legislature—

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

B. Special Representation in the Federal Legislature—

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

RESERVATIONS

We have fixed this proportion of representation in the Legislatures on the following assumptions:—

(1) We have assumed that the figures for the population of the Depressed Classes given by the Simon Commission (Vol. I. P.40) and the Indian Central Committee (Report, P. 44) will be acceptable as sufficiently correct to form a basis for distributing seats.

(2) We have assumed that the Federal Legislature will comprise the whole of India, in which case the population of the Depressed Classes in Indian States, in Centrally Administered Areas, and in Excluded Territories, besides their population in Governor's Provinces, will form very properly an additional item in calculating the extent of representation of the Depressed Classes in the Federal Legislature.

(3) We have assumed that the administrative area of the Provinces of British India will continue to be what they are at present.

But if these assumptions regarding figures of population are challenged as some interested parties threaten to do, and if under a new census over which the Depressed Classes can have no control, the population of the Depressed Classes shows a lower proportion, or if the administrative areas of the Provinces are altered, resulting in disturbing the existing balance of population, the Depressed Classes reserve their right to revise their proportion of representation and even to claim weightage. In the same way, if the All-India Federation does not come into being, they will be willing to submit to readjustment in their proportion of representation calculated on that basis in the Federal Legislature.

II. METHOD OF REPRESENTATION

1. The Depressed Classes shall have the right to elect their representatives to the Provincial and Central Legislatures through Separate Electorates of their voters.

For their representation in the upper House of the Federal or Central Legislature, if it is decided to have indirect election by

members of the Provincial Legislatures, the Depressed Classes will agree to abandon their right to Separate Electorates so far as their representation to the Upper House is concerned subject to this: that in any system of proportional representation arrangement shall be made to guarantee to them their quota of seats.

2. Separate Electorates for the Depressed Classes shall not be liable to be replaced by a System of Joint Electorates and reserved seats, except when the following conditions are fulfilled:—

- (a) A referendum of the voters held at the demand of majority of their representatives in the Legislatures concerned and resulting in an absolute majority of the members of the Depressed Classes having the franchise.
- (b) No such referendum shall be resorted to until after twenty years and until universal adult suffrage has been established.

III. NECESSITY OF DEFINING THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

The representation of the Depressed Classes has been grossly abused in the past inasmuch as persons other than the Depressed Classes were nominated to represent them in the Provincial Legislatures, and cases are not wanting in which persons not belonging to the Depressed Classes got themselves nominated as representative of the Depressed Classes. This abuse was due to the fact that while the Governor was given the power to nominate persons to represent the Depressed Classes, he was not required to confine his nomination to persons belonging to the Depressed Classes, since nomination is to be substituted by election under the new constitution, there will be no room for this abuse. But in order to leave no loophole for defeating the purpose of their Special Representation we claim—

(i) That the Depressed Classes shall not only have the right to their own Separate Electorates, but they shall also have the right to be represented by their own men.

(ii) That in each Province the Depressed Classes shall be strictly defined as meaning persons belonging to communities which are subjected to the system of Untouchability of the sort

prevalent therein and which are enumerated by name in a schedule prepared for electoral purposes.

IV. NOMENCLATURE

In dealing with this part of the question we would like to point out that the existing nomenclature of Depressed Classes is objected to by members of the Depressed Classes who have given thought to it and also by outsiders who take interest in them. It is degrading and contemptuous, and advantage may be taken of this occasion for drafting the new constitution to alter for official purposes the existing nomenclature. We think that they should be called "Non-Caste Hindus", "Protestant Hindus", or "Non-Conformist Hindus" or some such designation, instead of "Depressed Classes". We have no authority to press for any particular nomenclature. We can only suggest them, and we believe that if properly explained the Depressed Classes will not hesitate to accept the one most suitable for them.

We have received a large number of telegrams from the Depressed Classes all over India supporting the demands contained in this Memorandum."*

"While the session was going on, His Majesty the King-Emperor gave a reception to the Indian Delegates on November 5. It was arranged that a few Members should speak at the party. Gandhi was present bareheaded. He was clad in his customary loin-cloth and wore sandals. The king-Emperor asked Dr. Ambedkar about the condition of the Untouchables in India, and when he heard the harrowing tales from Dr. Ambedkar who narrated them with his flowing heart, eloquent eyes and scintillating face, he shuddered. The king-Emperor then inquired of Dr. Ambedkar cordially about his father and the place of his education, and how he had achieved academic eminence." ¹

*: For previous memorandum see. Appendix to Proceedings of the Minorities Sub-Committee of the First Session of the Conference. This Supplementary Memorandum dated 4th November 1931 is printed as Appendix VII in the original proceedings at Pp. 1409-11.

¹: Keer, p. 181.

“When the British Premier saw that there was no unanimous solution to the Minorities problem, he asked all the Members of the Minorities Committee to sign a requisition authorising him to settle the communal problem and to pledge themselves to accept his decision. Gandhi signed this pledge along with other Members. Dr. Ambedkar did not sign this requisition as he believed in the justice of his demands. The Prime Minister then adjourned the Conference on December 1. Just before this requisition Dr. Ambedkar had a talk with Gandhi at the residence of Sir Mirza Ismail. Gandhi suggested a novel method to win the support of Dr. Ambedkar. He said that if the Untouchable candidates failed in the general election held on the basis of joint electorates without reservation of seats, the Depressed Classes should prove their *bona fides* in a Court of Law.”¹

After the adjournment of the 2nd Round Table Conference, various Comments were made by the different people and the press. The Comments are as follows :

“Mr. T. A. Raman a well known Journalist from India was travelling back to India. One of the fellow passenger told Mr. T. A. Raman that if he even murdered anybody it would be Dr. Ambedkar”² ‘Subodha Patrika’ weekly in its issue dated 15th November 1931 said :

“We fail to understand Mahatma Gandhi’s stand with respect to the demands of the Depressed Classes. To say the least, it is unreasonable and extremely irritating. If there is any community that needs the fullest protection it is that of the Untouchable classes. The Muslims and the Sikhs are well protected and ‘Their avowed fears as a contemporary puts it’ are but a mask for winning a privileged position in the commonwealth. Now we ask, is it right for Mahatmaji to yield to the false claims of the stronger communities and turn down the Untouchable ? It is no use quibbling ; if Mahatma Gandhi’s attempts to solve the communal problem have been futile so far, he is to blame also. Unpalatable though Dr. Ambedkar’s outbursts may be, they are intelligible, if not well-grounded. It is no use taking shelter behind the so-called Congress mandate which is to all practical purposes, as elastic as Gandhiji would like to have it. We feel that the Congress has been

¹ : Keer, Pp. 190-191.

² : *Ibid.* P. 183.

tinkering with the removal of Untouchability, Why, otherwise, we ask that the Nehru Committee was not made to include as much as a representative of the Depressed Classes ?”

“If any firm decision on the problem of minorities is going to take time and therefore freedom is also being delayed, then initially provincial autonomy would be acceptable. This was how Gandhiji without consultation of his friends conveyed his acceptance to the British Prime Minister. The disclosure of this private conversation raised a storm among Indian delegates. Dr. Sapru, Jaykar representing Progressive Hindus and Dr. Munje, Malviya etc. representnting Hindu Mahasabha were also terror-stricken. They tried to verify Gandhiji’s statements. Induial Yagnik, who was a Brahmin and had long association with Gandhiji, had gone to London as special reporter of Sunday Advocate’. He wrote in the ‘Sunday Advocate’ dated 6th December 1931 thus :

‘Gandhi Accepts provincial Autonomy. But I venture to state that Gandhi has already delivered himself bound hand and foot into the kindly arms of the British rulers. I referred somewhat casually last week to Gandhi’s secret pact with Lord Lothian to agree to provincial autonomy as a first instalment of the new scheme of self-government for India. Of course, Gandhi had shrewdly hedged this agreement with the condition that representative of the self-governing Provinces and States should eventually be invited to form a Constituent Assembly which would be authorised to draft the new Federal Constitution for India. I understand that Government naturally did not agree to this condition. But they shrewdly seized on this agreement of Gandhis’, and gave it as wide a currency as possible of course, in an unofficial manner. Of course moderate politicians like Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jaykar were awfully enraged on hearing of these conversations and engaged in a very hot tussle with Gandhi. Mr. Jaykar, I am told, was particularly wild with the Congress plenipotentiary, and Gandhi is reported to have hotly replied that he was quite free to do what he liked, and he was perfectly sure of getting the Congress to agree to what ever he pleased. When the matter leaked out, however into the press, Gandhi naturally did his best to wriggle out of this secret understanding as Government had of course not agreed to the condition which formed an integral part of his agreement. But if you read between the lines of the special interview that Gandhi

gave to the News Chronicle on this subject, you would be quite convinced that Gandhi, while expressing his desire for the immediate establishment of ‘independence’—which amounts of course to partnership with Britain and the maintenance of the imperialistic link with India, he practically gives himself away by admitting—though more by implication than explicitly in so many words—the substantial difficulties in the immediate inauguration of a Federal Constitution in India.”¹

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar left London, and embarking at Marseilles, on January 15, 1932, reached Bombay on January 29.

“Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has prepared a set of answers to the questionnaire issued by the Franchise Committee and copies of the same are being circulated among various individual members and mushroom associations of the Depressed Classes community. Space has been left at the beginning of every paragraph to fill up the blanks with the names of the Association, or individuals.

Stereotyped Replies

The hundreds of the Stereotyped replies to the questionnaire circulated repeat.

“The (the blank space is to be filled up by the name of the Association) is of opinion that the Depressed Classes cannot secure representation in the general electorates. Much less can they secure representatives of their own choice. Even if there was adult suffrage. The reasons are as follows :—

“(a) In every territorial constituency the Depressed Classes are in minority of the population and will be a minority of voters in the electorate much too small to win a seat for themselves.”

“(b) Owing to social prejudices no voter of the Higher Caste will vote for the Depressed Classes candidates.”

“(c) On the other hand owing to economic dependence on the higher castes and the religious and social influence of the Higher Classes voters may be led to vote for a high caste

¹ : Ganvir, Ambedkar Gandhi : Teen Mulakhathi, Pp. 22-23.

candidates as against a candidate of his own Class. No Depressed Class man has ever been elected to the Council, on the support of High Castes.”¹

“Dr. Ambedkar immediately left for Delhi to take part in the proceedings of the Franchise Committee headed by Lord Lothian. On his way to Delhi, he was enthusiastically received at every station by the Depressed classes; especially the functions held at Nasik, Igatpuri, Deolali, Manmad, Bhusaval and Jhansi stations were colourful and imposing.

In the early days of February the Franchise Committee visited Bihar. The Depressed Classes greeted Dr. Ambedkar with great enthusiasm at every place. The Committee then moved to Calcutta *via* Patna. Depressed Class leaders of his persuasion, while giving evidence before the Franchise Committee, supported the scheme of separate electorates as they feared that in the System of Joint Electorates with reserved seats the candidates of the Depressed Classes would be at the mercy of the majority of electorates, and in order to win their votes they would have to pander to their prejudices, or there would be every possibility of the seats being occupied by the stooges of the majority community. It was observed by many leaders of the Depressed Classes that if the Joint Electorates were to work successfully, that pre-supposed broad-mindedness on the part of the majority community. It was their view that such a favourable atmosphere did not exist then.”²

“Letter to Mr. Gavai

In the mean time, in this regard Dr. B. R. Ambedkar wrote a letter to Mr. G. A. Gavai, M.L.C., General Secretary, All-India Depressed Classes Association. The letter is as follow—

Patna, February 13

I was expecting you at Lucknow and also at Patna and was wondering why you had not turned up at either of these places till I got your letter. I am sorry to read that your illness preventing you from making the trip.

¹: The Bombay Chronicle, 23rd February 1932.

²: Keer, Pp. 194-195.

I am sending you a copy of the Memorandum containing my views which I am sending you for your information. You will notice from the last paragraph in the Memorandum that our Committee ‘cannot’ and therefore your Committee ‘cannot’ discuss the communal question. The Prime Minister’s letter and the Questionnaire issued by the Committee makes this clear and Chairman of our Committee has given a ruling on this question both at Delhi and Lucknow which is in accord with this view. Therefore you must tell your ‘Committee’ that they cannot discuss this question and if they insist, you should refuse to discuss it.”

“Change of Views

Your separate minute instead discussing Separate Vs. Joint Electorates should simply say that you refuse to discuss it because it is outside the terms of the Committee. I know your Association has got a Questionnaire. There is just one thing I must point out. I was shocked to find that Mr. Rajah has changed his opinion and is now advocating Joint Electorates. I hope your Association will not follow him in this policy which is suicidal in every way. But if it does then you must lake the consequences of a permanent breach between us and a war ‘amongst’ ourselves which I am trying to avoid at any cost. So don’t persist in it. I am glad to have the assurance that you won’t do anything without my knowledge and consent. I have written out a detailed set of answers to the Franchise Questionnaire. I will send you a copy as soon as they are typed.

I am sending a statement of my answers to the Questionnaire for your use and also a copy of the revised Questionnaire. You will see that the Communal question is altogether eliminated.” ¹

“Now another trouble brewed for Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Moonje made a pact with M. C. Rajah on the basis of reserved seats and joint electorates. Rajah submitted to the British Premier his memorandum telegraphically giving details of his pact with Dr. Moonje. This pact put Dr. Ambedkar in an awkward position. It may be recalled that it was Rajah who had cabled to

¹ : The Bombay Chronicle, dated 7th April 1932.

Dr. Ambedkar and supported his demand for Separate Electorates, saying that Gandhi evidently did not know their woes, and therefore he had tried to force Joint Electorates down the unwilling throats of the Depressed Classes. Originally, the Rajah Party stood for Joint Electorates with reserved seats. But he changed sides. Rajah was the only Depressed Class Member in the Central Assembly, and he was not invited to the Round Table Conference. Perhaps grieved at this omission from the Round Table Conference, or greatly perturbed by Gandhi's professed claim to represent the Depressed Classes, he had dropped the idea of Joint Electorates and insisted on Separate Electorates. And now he reverted to the original demand.”¹

“Misleading Information

Mr. Gavai has taken an early opportunity to issue the following statement to members of Depressed Classes. Certain misleading information is being circulated to you that the Indian Franchise Committee cannot discuss the question of the system of electorates with individuals or associations that submit memoranda to it on behalf of the Depressed Classes. This is very misleading. For in the questionnaire sent by the Committee under the item representation of Depressed Classes in paper 2, it is clearly stated what specific proposals would one make to secure representation of the community in the legislature.

Those Model Answers

Moreover, I would suggest that our associations would be well advised to send in their own views with reference to their own provinces irrespective of model answers prepared by others. In view of coming changes in the Constitution of India as declared by the Prime Minister on 1st of December 1931 that complete provincial autonomy will be given to provinces. It is very necessary that our community, should also keep pace with the times and so we should reconsider the decision which we had arrived at before the statement of the Prime Minister referred to above.”²

¹: Keer, Pp. 195-196.

²: The Bombay Chronicle, dated 27th February 1932.

“The Franchise Committee met at the Viceregal Lodge. Dr. Ambedkar, on behalf of the Depressed Classes, pleaded for the incorporation in the Indian Penal Code or in the future constitution, of a punishment for the instigation or promotion of boycott against the Depressed Classes which prevented them from the free enjoyment of the fundamental rights. The Franchise Committee accepted the suggestion.

When the news of the Rajah-Moonje pact was out, the Bengal and Assam Depressed Class leaders denounced Rajah for his swing to the System of Joint Electorates with reserved seats, and supported the demands put forth by Dr. Ambedkar. M. B. Malik, M.L.A., President, Bengal Depressed Class Association ; the President, U.P. Adi-Hindu Association ; the President, All-Assam Depressed Class Association ; the President, Adi-Dharma Mandal, Punjab ; the President, Depressed Class Aid Society, Delhi ; all denounced Rajah and endorsed the demands put forth by Dr. Ambedkar.

It was in April 1932 that the Nasik Satyagraha entered its third stage, and its leaders Bhaurao Gaikwad and Rankharnbe were arrested. News about their arrest was wired to Dr. Ambedkar the same day, *i.e.* the April 14, 1932. The extreme opposition of Chintamani, Bakhale and Tambe, the Hindu Members of the Franchise Committee, to the demand of the Depressed Classes for Separate Electorates had created bad blood between them and Dr. Ambedkar. They were not even on speaking terms with Dr. Ambedkar. Amid such tense atmosphere Dr. Ambedkar informed his secretary that he was sorry he could not deal with two situations at the same time. He was of the opinion that the problem of political rights was more important than the problem of temple entry ; and therefore it was unwise and dangerous to deviate from that work to which he had devoted himself heart and soul.

In a letter written from Simla, Dr. Ambedkar said that it was very imperative to see the British Premier in London before the latter gave his decision on the communal issue. He, therefore, asked his trusted lieutenants to see whether it was possible to collect money for the proposed voyage without disclosing the reasons. He had also written to the Aga Khan, who was then in London, seeking his

advice in the matter and asking him about the possibility and possible date of the Premier's decision on the communal issue. In another letter written during the same week, Dr. Ambedkar poured his disgust upon the Hindu Members of the Franchise Committee and said that he hated their frame of mind which allowed them to be self-centred and aggressive inside their own camp and cowardly and yielding outside. He wrote that he was utterly disgusted with their selfish and thoughtless attitude and that he would try to keep himself away from Hindu Society. He was working under mental and physical pressure. In addition, he was suffering from diarrhoea.

In April the Bengal Namashudra Association held its 14th Annual Session at the Albert Institute Hall, Calcutta, under the presidentship of Dr. Kalicharan Mandal. The session unanimously endorsed Dr. Ambedkar's demands. Denounced the newspapers which unjustly criticized Dr. Ambedkar's stand, and declared that the Congress attitude to their problem was unsympathetic and impractical.

The Franchise Committee finished its business on May 1, 1932; but, as Lord Lothian desired to have some discussion with him on some vital points, Dr. Ambedkar stayed for a day or two more. The Franchise Committee drafted its report giving detailed proposals on which to face the revision of Franchise, and distribution and demarcation of the constituencies for the new legislatures, Central and Provincial. As Dr. Ambedkar differed from the Hindu Members of the Committee, he submitted to the Committee a separate note. One of the most important decisions of the Committee was on the exact definition of the term Depressed Classes. The Indian Legislature Committee in its decision in 1916, Sir Henry Sharp, the Educational Commissioner under the Government of India, and the Southborough Franchise Committee had all grouped the Depressed Classes with the aboriginals or Hill Tribes, Criminals or with others, but now the Lothian Franchise Committee said that they were of the opinion that the term should be applied only to those who were Untouchables. This was clearly Dr. Ambedkar's victory as he had insisted in his note to the Committee that the test of Untouchability "must be applied in its notional sense as Untouchability in its literal sense has ceased to obtain."¹

¹: Keer Pp. 196-198

On May 26 Dr. Ambedkar left for England to see the British Prime Minister and other Cabinet Ministers before the decision on the communal issue was announced. He left by the Italian steamer, ss. *Conte Roso*. The news about his departure was kept a closely guarded secret as he had enjoined upon his men not to divulge it to anybody. Still a representative of the Bombay Chronicle screwed it out of some source and cast a revealing light upon Dr. Ambedkar's new move. Dr. Ambedkar travelled first class, carried very little luggage, and expected to return by the end of August 1932.

It was true that the sudden change in Rajah's attitude worried Dr. Ambedkar much, and the Lothian Committee's findings also were not much favourable to him. He thought that this was the moment which came once in an age. He therefore resolved to do his utmost and to stake his all. He was confident that his presence in London would add weight to his demands. In the letters written home, on his way to London, he expressed poignant anxiety for the safety of his press which, he feared, the thoughtless Caste Hindus from the Congress camp might burn down. He instructed Shrivastkar to procure a new room and to remove the boxes of new books or to keep them in safety elsewhere. All the while the thought of the safety of his books haunted his mind. Dr. Ambedkar reached London on June 7, 1932. In a week he saw every big British official and all Cabinet Ministers in connection with his mission and pleaded his case with heart and soul. He presented to the British Cabinet a representation consisting of twenty-two typed pages. But he could not say anything just then about the outcome of his efforts. He said that discussions were held and decisions were taken at a very high level; and it was in the air that the Depressed Classes in the Provinces of Bombay, Madras and C.P. would get Separate Electorates. By June 14 he had done everything possible to achieve his end and wanted to return. But, as some of his supporters wished him to prolong his stay, he decided to stay for a month more for convalescing in a German Sanatorium conducted by Dr. Moller at Dresden, so that he could run to London if necessary. Dr. Ambedkar was in need of money. The indefinite period of his stay was causing him worry in matters of health and expense. So he asked Shrivastkar to make some arrangements for a remittance, if possible.

By the middle of July, Dr. Ambedkar recovered his health, left Dresden, and stayed for a week in Berlin which was then witnessing the emergence of Hitler. From Berlin he wrote that he would travel to Vienna and catch the steamer Gange at Venice. But this time, he said, he should not be worried with the formalities of a reception and welcome. Such is human nature. One pines for what one has not got. When Dr. Ambedkar left for foreign lands, during his student days, no one took note of his departure and arrival. But since the days of the Round Table Conference his departure and arrival had been made the occasions for public send-offs and receptions by thousands of his devotees as well as by pressmen. Dr. Ambedkar arrived in Bombay on August 17.”¹

“On the 17th August 1932 the decision of the British Prime Minister on the communal question, was announced. That part of the decision which relates to the Untouchables is produced below :—

Communal Decision by His Majesty's Government 1932.

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

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

¹: Keer Pp. 202-204.

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

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

5. Members of the "Depressed Classes" qualified to vote will vote in a general constituency. In view of the fact that for a considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure any adequate representation in the Legislature, a number of special seats will be assigned to them as shown in the table. These seats will be filled by election from special