

GO ANYWHERE, WE HAVE TO FIGHT FOR OUR WELFARE

Yeola declaration of conversion created a wave of reactions amongst Hindus. There was increasing support from Hindu Untouchables for this declaration. To support this declaration from the Maharashtra Untouchable Youths Conference was arranged on 11th and 12th January 1936 at Pune. Prof. N. Shivraj, a wellknown leader from Madras, was the President of the Conference. About ten thousands ladies and gents had attended this Conference. Few Hindu touchables, Muslims and Sikhs were also present in this conference.¹

In his Presidential address Shivraj said: "The only way to get rid of Untouchability is that the Depressed Classes should leave Hindu religion not necessarily by conversion to another religion already existing but possibly by starting a new religion, or by reviving the ancient one practised among the Adi-Dravidas, long before the Aryans brought to India Hinduism with its various customs."

Dr. Ambedkar spoke after Dr. Solanki. In his speech Dr. Ambedkar, however, warned his people against the erroneous view that conversion would relieve them from hell and would lead them to the paradise of equality. He further told them that under any new religion they would be required to fight for liberty and equality. "We are fully conscious of the fact," he observed, "that go anywhere we will, we would have to fight for our welfare if we took to Christianity, Islam or Sikhism. It is foolish to suppose that in the event of our conversion to Islam everybody from amongst us would be a Nawab or would become the Pope if we went over to Christianity. Go we may anywhere, fight is inevitable in store for us." He added that his terms for a compromise with the Caste Hindus to keep the struggle for equality inside the Hindu fold would be never fulfilled by the Hindus because bread and butter was not the question at issue. That there was some definite divine purpose behind their

¹: Janata, dated 8th and 15th February 1936.

struggle was now beyond doubt; otherwise there could not have come forward proposals offering them money—it is said from the Nizam*—to the tune of rupees seven crores from conflicting quarters ! But for God this would not have been possible, he added. Referring to the Harijan Fund started by Gandhi, he said that its object was to enslave the Untouchables to the camp of Caste Hindus. He declared that he was now bent on conversion whether the Caste Hindus meant help or hindrance. Even if God were produced before him to dissuade him from leaving the Hindu fold, he would not go back on his resolve.”¹

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* Donde, M. V., The Janata, 14th April 1951.

¹: Keer, Pp. 261—263.