

REGAIN PAST POSITION IN ARMY

On January 28th* 1940, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar visited Ratnagiri where he was welcomed by the newly enrolled 'Mahar Army' recruits with military status. On this occasion he gave a brief speech to all touchable Kunbis as well as Untouchable soldiers.¹

An appeal to Kunbis and Mahars to come forward and join the Army was made by Dr. Ambedkar, when a number of Mahars recently enrolled as recruits came in a body last evening to pay their respect to him as their leader.

Dr. Ambedkar expressed appreciation of their decision to enrol. Military occupation, he said, was closed to them on account of caste prejudices, although they had rendered good service in the past. At one time practically 3/4th of the Bombay army was drawn from the Mahars and they had fought a great many battles on the side of the British, including the famous battle of Koregaon, when the Peshwa was defeated and the British established their supremacy.

After the mutiny of 1857, he went on, other classes joined the Army. Their prejudices had to be respected and the recruitment of Mahars was therefore stopped. The new recruits had thus the responsibility to regain their past position in the army.²

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¹: Janata, dated 10th February 1940.

²: The Times of India, dated 31st January 1940.

* As per 'Janata' the date is 28th January 1940. Whereas in the Press Report the date was shown as 29th.—Editors.