

IF DEMOCRACY DIES IT WILL BE OUR DOOM

The President-elect of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference, Third Session, Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj, M. L. A, (Central) and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar arrived at Nagpur at 9 a.m. on 18th July 1942. They were received at the Railway Station by the chairman and the members of the Reception Committee. Almost all the members of the Reception Committee and the delegates were also present on the platform and accorded a hearty welcome to the President-elect and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar amidst deafening cries of “Ambedkar Zindabad” (long live Ambedkar). The President-elect and Dr. Ambedkar were profusely garlanded. A procession was then formed and the honoured guests were conducted to the lawn in front of the Railway Station where over fifty thousand people had gathered for the Darshan (Glimpse) of Dr. Ambedkar and the President-elect. Their appearance on the lawn was greeted with applause and deafening cheers of “Ambedkar ki jai” (victory to Ambedkar). Along the lawn a Guard-of-Honour was provided by five thousand uniformed Sainiks of the Provincial Samata Sainik Dal. The band of the Sainik Dal played appropriate tunes. After inspecting the guard-of-honour, the President-elect and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar were taken in a procession to the Conference Pandal, preceded by a mile long squad of the Samata Sainik Dal, aided by their bands and followed by thousands of the visitors and delegates to the Conference. The procession is one that would be long remembered by the public of Nagpur as the like of it had not been seen before.

Triumphal Arches were erected *en route*, and were named as “Ambedkar Gate”, “Hardas Gate”, “Kalloo Ahirey Gate”, “Ramabai Ambedkar Gate”, etc. In front of the Mohan Park Hotel where the President-elect and Dr. Ambedkar alongwith other delegates were accommodated, the Sainiks formed themselves into lines on both sides of the road and formed an arch of lathis through which the Honoured Leader passed.

The three Conferences that were held in Nagpur from July the 18th to the July 20, 1942, namely-

- (1) The All-India Depressed Classes Conference, presided over by Rao Bahadur N. Shiva Raj B.A., B.L., M.L.A. (Central);
- (2) The Depressed Classes Women's Conference, presided over by Mrs. Dongre of Amraoti; and
- (3) The Samata Sainik Dal Conference, presided over by Mr. Gopal Singh, M. B. E., M. L. A. (Punjab).

The All-India Depressed Classes Conference was remarkable for three things. It was remarkable because of the record attendance of men and women. There were not less than 75,000 people present at the session, and there were not less than 20,000 women. In addition to this, this was a Conference which was fully representative of the Depressed Classes of almost all the Provinces of India.

The second thing for which this Conference will remain memorable is the Resolutions that were passed at this Conference. These Resolutions contained for the first time a clear and positive enunciation of the political demands of the Depressed Classes. Nobody who reads them can have any doubt as to what the political demands of the Untouchables are. As some newspaper reporters have said, the Resolutions passed by this Conference constitute the Pakistan of the Depressed Classes, both in the nature of the demands that were made and also by the definiteness in which they were worded.

The third thing for which this Conference will remain memorable is the Resolution passed by the Conference to establish an All-India Organization to be called the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation. In this Organization which will act as the one single mouth-piece of the Depressed Classes of India, and the Conference has taken a definite decision that all other petty and provincial Organizations shall be merged in this one single Organization which will have its provincial branches in the different Provinces of India.

Viewed in the light of the work accomplished by this Conference, there can be no doubt that this Conference opens out a new vision for the Depressed Classes and gives a new direction to the movement of the Untouchables.

In this record of proceedings the Reception Committee also decided to include the proceedings of the two other Conferences that were held in the same pandal and as part of this main political Conference, and they too will excite interest and enthusiasm in the Untouchables all over India when they realise how the Volunteer Organization and the Women's Organization have been progressively making their influence felt to strengthen the life of the Untouchables both in social as well as in political matters.

ALL - INDIA DEPRESSED CLASSES CONFERENCE HELD AT NAGPUR

on July 18 and 19, 1942

First day's proceedings

The Third Session of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference commenced at 3-30 p. m. on July 18, 1942 in a specially erected, spacious Pandal in the Mohan Park at Nagpur under the Presidentship of Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj, M. L. A. (Central). Delegates from all over India and over sixty thousand visitors, including distinguished visitors, and about twenty thousand lady visitors were present. The large number of lady visitors was spectacular feature of the Conference.

The President-elect and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar were conducted by the Chairman of the Reception Committee to their seats. After the President-elect, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and other delegates took their seats, the proceedings commenced with the singing of welcome songs.

After the singing of welcome songs, Mr. G. T. Meshram, Chairman of the Reception Committee delivered his address.

H. L. Kosare after reading the report on behalf of the General Secretary said, "We have received messages of sympathy from all over India. It will take long time to read them all. I, therefore, only read the names of those from whom the messages have been received."

- Bengal : - 1. Mr. U. N. Edbor, M. A. B. L., M. L. A.
 2. Mr. A. Maji, M. L. A.
 3. Mr. B. B. Mandal, B. L., M. L. A.
 4. Hon'ble Mr. N. Barman, Minister.
- Madras : - 1. Rao Saheb V. J. Munniswami Pillay, M. L. A.
 2. Mr. E. Kannan, M. L. A.
 3. Mr. R. Veerian, Coimbatore
 4. Swami Sahajananda, M. L. A. Chidamberam.
- Bombay : - 1. Mr. S. N. Mane, Barrister-at-Law, Belgaum.
 2. Poona Depressed Class College Students.
 3. Mr. Sawant, M. L. A. Satara District.
 4. Balbhim Sangh, Dhulia.
 5. Samatawadi Dalit Mandal, Dhulia.
 6. Mr. S. M. Dikhale, Poona.
 7. Mr. R. S. Salunke, Bhore State Dalit Praja.
 8. Mr. R. G. Khandale, Daund.
 9. Mr. T. S. Dhutre, Thana.
 10. Rajha-Bombay.
 11. The South Indian Adi Dravid Youth League.
 12. The Tirunelveli Dist. 5 B Adi Dravida Conference.

13. Mr. M. G. Parmer, B. A., D. P. A.,
F. R. C. S., Bijapur (N. G.)
14. Mr. Ramajibhai Bhanabhai, Ahmedabad.
15. Mr. Somabhai Sunderji, Ahmedabad.
16. Mr. Sadhu Premdas, Ahmedabad.
17. Mr. Atmaram Ichyaram Solanki,
Ahmedabad.
18. Mr. S. P. Chavan, Meghwal Independent
League (Bombay)

- Punjab :-
1. Mr. Bhagat Hansraj, M. L. A.
 2. Mr. Sukhlal, Lahore.
 3. Mr. R. L. Bhonodia, Lahore.

- U. P. :-
1. Mr. Ramchandra, Allahabad.
 2. Rai Bahadur Homiprasad Tamta, Almora
 3. Mr. Radhelal Vyas, Bareilly.
 4. Mr. Gangaram G. Dhanuk, Itawa.

- Hyderabad :-
1. Mr. B. S. More, Aurangabad.

Mr. G. T. Meshram said, Mr. D. G. Jadhav, B.A., LL.B., M.L.A., Jalgaon, East Khandesh (Bombay) will now propose that our President-elect to take the chair.

Accordingly D. G. Jadhav, R. L. Biswas, B.A., B.L., M.L.A., (Bengal), Rai Sahib Shamlal, Ex-M.L.C. (Allahabad, U.P.); K. H. Shendre, B.A., L.L.B., Nagpur, (Central Provinces); Gopal Singh, M.B.E., M.L.A; Parliamentary Secretary to the Punjab government, Kurmiah, B.A., B.L., M.L.A., (Madras, Andhra); A. D. Roy. M.L.C., (Bengal) and P.N. Rajbhoj, Poona (Bombay) proposed, seconded and supported the resolution. Thereafter G. T. Meshram

said, "This resolution that Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj, President-elect of the Third Session of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference do take the chair has been duly moved, regularly seconded and supported from all corners of this Conference. I put it now to vote. Those, in favour will signify their assent by raising their hands. (All, All). Any against, will now signify their disapproval by raising their hands. There is no opposition. The resolution is unanimously carried. I now request Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj to take the Chair. Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj amidst cheers occupied the Presidential Chair and was garlanded by the Chairman of the Reception Committee."

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj then rose in the midst of cheers to address the Conference.

After his Presidential address was over Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj announced : The subjects Committee will meet in the hall of the Mohan Park Hotel at 9 p. m. All the delegates who have come here will form the Subjects Committee. In view of your great desire to hear Dr. Ambedkar today, I ask Dr. Ambedkar to address you before the Subjects Committee meets. The Chairman of the Reception Committee will explain this to you in Marathi.

Mr. G. T. Meshram : As desired by the President I have great pleasure to announce that our Great Leader Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has consented to speak today first in English and then in Marathi, inspite of his whole night journey and bad throat. You must know that wherever his train stopped last night, our people had collected in such large numbers to receive him therefore he could not get any sleep *en route*. You must keep pin-drop silence so that he may not have to overstrain his throat.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was given prolonged ovation as he rose to speak.

Address by Dr. Ambedkar

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said :

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this Conference the first and initial difficulty with which one is faced is the question of language. In this vast gathering vast number of people are from the Marathi speaking area to whom one must speak in the Marathi language if they are to understand the proceedings of this Conference. Besides the vast Marathi-speaking audience we have also present in this Conference representatives of the Scheduled Castes from other than Marathi-speaking Provinces. We have in our midst representatives of the Scheduled Castes from other Provinces as well. I see some from Bengal, from Bihar, from Madras, from Andhra, from Punjab and from various other places. It is quite obvious that if they are to follow our proceedings it is necessary to speak in English. To avoid this difficulty I have decided to speak twice-once in English and again in Marathi, so that both sections may know what I have to say. Today I propose to speak in English. Tomorrow I will address you in Marathi.

I might as well tell you how the idea of the holding of this Conference originated. As you will recall, I was called in April last to be present in Delhi to meet Sir Strafford Cripps, who had come to India as an agent of His Majesty's Government with proposals for constitutional changes and who was charged with the duty of negotiating with the different political parties in India for the acceptance of those proposals. Before I went to Delhi I had invited representatives of the Scheduled Castes in different Provinces in India to meet me in Delhi for consultation. When I communicated to them the results of my talks with Sir Strafford Cripps we all felt that the proposals Sir Strafford Cripps had brought with him were a death-blow to the interests of the Scheduled Castes. I expressed my views on the Cripps proposals in a statement to the press which I hope you have all read. But it was felt that common and united action on the part of the Scheduled Castes from all over India was a great necessity-and that it was only common action that could save us from the impending political doom. This Conference has been the result of the wish expressed by the Scheduled Castes all over India through their

representatives who met at Delhi and has therefore the backing of the Untouchable India as a whole. That is why we have here present among us representatives of the Scheduled Castes all over India. There was a great rivalry among the different Provinces as to where it should be held. Bengal, Punjab, U.P., C.P. and Bombay each wanted to have the credit of holding the Conference. Ultimately all agreed to allow the Central Provinces to have the credit to hold the Conference. There was however one condition on which they had insisted, namely that I should preside over the Conference no matter where it was held. In deference to the wishes of all I had agreed to preside. The Conference is taking place according to that plan. I am sure we never had a conference so vast and so successful, and I am sure we are all grateful to our C. P. friends. It is their enthusiasm, it is their efforts which had made the Conference the success which it is. The only deviation which has taken place from the original plan is the change in the Presidentship. In my place we have our friend Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj presiding over this Conference. At the time when I agreed to preside I was a free man with the freedom of a politician, and could have presided over the Conference and said what I thought I should say. The limitations of office were then non-existent. But before the Conference could take place, there came the announcement that I was appointed a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. This brought in the limitations of office and I thought it would be better to have another person who could speak for the Scheduled Castes with freedom and authority. Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj can speak with freedom, and I have no doubt that he can also speak with authority. He has long laboured in the cause of our people. He represents our people in the Central Legislature. By his education there are very few who are as well qualified as he is. He is B. A., B. L. of the Madras University. He has been a practising lawyer and he has been a professor of Law in Madras for over ten years. Indeed, a better person than him could not have been found to preside over this Conference, and I am indeed very happy that he has been chosen to take my place.

While I am a Member of Government of India, you will have the responsibility of keeping up our movement and making it effective so that it may lead to the result we all hope to achieve. I shall help you, I shall advise you. But I shall not be able to participate in it. That is a fact you must all bear in mind. It is, therefore, all the more necessary that before I transfer the responsibility to others, I must render account of my stewardship of this movement of the Untouchables which has been associated with me and has been carried on under my guidance if not under my aegis during the last 20 years. It is necessary for me to do so in order that those on whom this responsibility will fall should know where the Scheduled Castes stand *vis-a-vis* other communities in this country, what has been done and what remains to be done for their emancipation.

It is a matter of immense satisfaction that the Untouchables have made great strides along all sides. I will particularise only three. They have acquired a degree of political consciousness which few communities in India have acquired. Secondly, they have made considerable progress in education. Thirdly, they are securing a foothold in the institutions and in the public service of the country.

The modern generation of Untouchables are not in a position to realize the immensity of the progress made by the Untouchables. For the simple reason that they do not know how things stood when the movement began 20 years ago. I well remember the first meeting addressed in Bombay after I returned from England as a Barrister-at-Law. Except the organisers of the meeting, there was not a single member in the audience-some persons were sitting on the doorsteps of houses smoking pipes and others were chatting in corners by themselves. No one thought of attending the meeting. See the difference. You have here an audience of 75000 people. Education has made a good progress as compared to that 20 years ago. In Poona alone there are 50 boys studying in colleges. There are altogether about 500 Untouchables who have graduated from the various universities. Some are doctors. Some have become barristers. Many of our brethren are members of Municipalities. District and Local Boards. Years ago our children were denied

education. Years ago Untouchables were not permitted to be Members of Local Boards and Municipalities for fear of causing pollution. All this has now changed. Our progress in public service has not been as rapid as we wish. In some respects the Untouchables have an entry. I must mention the Police and the Army. The Police Department was closed to the Untouchables and not even a constable's place was open to the Untouchables. This has changed in some Provinces at least. Our people are now recruited in the Police Service. I must also mention the Army. Upto 1892, Mahars were everywhere in the Army and there were Armies of Mahars. After 1892 the entry of the Mahars in the Army was stopped. During the great War of 1914, recruitment of the Mahars in the Army was restarted and one battalion of the Mahars was formed. After the last War that battalion was again disbanded. Now, however, our regiments are again being formed. Commissions are being granted to our young men and 5 or 6 of our young men have received King's Commission and are holding posts of responsibility and honour in the Army. The greatest progress that we have made is to be found among our women folk. Here you see in this Conference these 20000 to 25000 women present. See their dress, observe their manners, mark their speech. Can any one say that they are Untouchable women. The progress made by our women is the most astonishing and encouraging feature of our movement and it is of course the most gratifying feature.

This is a record of progress of which we may all be legitimately proud. It is a progress for which we have not to thank anybody. It is not the result of Hindu charity. It is an achievement which is entirely the result of our own labour. The question is how can we maintain this progress. That is a question we must never forget to ask ourselves. Progress in the competition of communities is the result of power. This power may be economic, it may be social or it may be political. Have we power to sustain our progress? Have we economic power? I am sure we have none. We are a class of serfs. Have we social power? I am sure we have none. We are a degraded portion of humanity. The only thing, therefore, we can depend upon for our continued progress is the capture of political

power. I have no doubt that is our only salvation, and that without it we will perish. It is on this question that we must concentrate all our attention. It is a question of life and death for us. What are our prospects in the matter of capturing political power? It is better if I sum up the forces which are helping us and the forces which are working against us. With the knowledge of such forces, you will be better able to frame your policy and forge your sanctions.

Let me begin by telling you what has been the key-note of my politics. You may be familiar with it but it is well to re-state it. My basis of my politics lies in the proposition that the Untouchables are not a sub-head or a sub-section of the Hindus, and that they are a separate and a distinct element in the national life of India, as separate and distinct as the Muslims and like the Muslims of India the Untouchables are entitled to separate political rights as against the Hindus of India. This is the key-note of my politics. No one will misunderstand me or my politics if he bears that in mind. Having stated the fundamental basis of my politics I will proceed to sum up the forces working for and against our claim for separate political rights. To begin with the Round Table Conference, the Round Table Conference was a very vast affair, and I do not wish to trouble you with all the details of what took place there. I will confine myself to what happened to the Untouchables. There was a contest between me and Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi contested that the Untouchables were a sub-section of the Hindus and consequently if any political power was to devolve from the hands of the British it should pass undivided into the hands of the Hindus who could be trusted to look after the interests of the Untouchables. The position taken up by me was totally different; I contended that the Untouchables formed separate and distinct element in the life of the country. The Hindus who are their hereditary enemies could not be trusted and far from using the political power for raising the Untouchables the fear was that they would use it for perpetuating their subjection, and it was, therefore, absolutely necessary that there should be political partition between the Untouchables and the Hindus so that the Untouchables

may get political power in their own hands to use it to promote their welfare or to use it to save themselves against the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus. I do not want to dilate upon what the Mahatma or other Hindus did by way of manoeuvring to defeat the claim. It is sufficient to say that at the Round Table Conference the Untouchables won and the Mahatma lost. The Communal Award was the result of this contest. Its great virtue lies in the fact that the Untouchables were recognised in the national life of India and entitled to claim separate political rights. That is the importance of the Communal Award.

Mr. Gandhi, at first, did not accept the Communal Award. He started a fast unto death to compel the British Government to unsettle a settled fact. He failed in the fast as he failed at the Round Table Conference in defeating the claim of the Untouchables to be treated as a distinct element separate from the Hindus and entitled to separate political recognition. In the Poona Pact which was the result of his fast, he had to admit the main contention I had put forth at the Round Table Conference.

In the first round, the victory had gone to the Untouchables. Our position remained intact even after the war had commenced and the Congress had come to occupy a dominant position in Indian politics. Indeed, our claim was reassured and sustained by the declaration of the Viceroy made on the 8th August 1940 in which it was made clear that the Muslims and the Untouchables were distinct and separate elements in the National life of India and that the British Government will not enforce a constitution which has not the support of the Muslims and the Depressed Classes.

I have spoken so far of the strength of our position. I must now speak to you of the forces that tend to weaken our position. One malignant factor which has been working to weaken our position is Gandhi and Gandhism. By signing the Poona Pact, I helped to save the life of Mr. Gandhi. But Mr. Gandhi accepted the Poona Pact not as a gentleman signing an agreement with the intention to

honour his word but as a crafty person seeking to find a way out of a difficulty. For, I want you to remember that Mr. Gandhi, notwithstanding the Poona Pact which saved him from death, never gave his true and honest consent to the principle underlying the Poona Pact. He remained a determined opponent of the claim of the Untouchables for a separate political recognition and has ever since done everything possible to oppose our claim and to undermine our position. I want you to bear in mind that Mr. Gandhi is our greatest opponent. I do not like to use the word enemy, though there is enough justification for it. There are some among us who are deluded by the artificiality of his phraseology. But, I must warn you that you would be making the greatest mistake if you forget to take note of the fact that among the adverse forces which are weakening your side and against which you have to concentrate your forces in winning your battle for political freedom, the most formidable force is Mr. Gandhi.

The second factor which has weakened your position must be ascribed to the change in the attitude of His Majesty's Government. Upto the declaration of 8th August 1940, His Majesty's Government's view was that the Untouchables were distinct and a separate element and that they constituted so important an element that their consent was necessary for any constitutional changes that may be desired. But in the proposals of His Majesty's Government which were sent down with Strafford Cripps, His Majesty's Government took a complete *volte-face*. For, Sir Strafford Cripps proclaimed without blush or without remorse that only the consent of the Hindus and the Muslims was enough for giving effect to the constitutional changes involved in the Cripps proposals; that the consent of the Untouchables was not necessary. In plain terms the Untouchables had ceased to be regarded as an important element in the National life of India. It passes one's comprehension how 60 to 70 millions of Untouchables have ceased to be an important element within a few months. It is a complete somersault on the part of His Majesty's Government. It is a great betrayal of the Untouchables. Whatever the reasons for this betrayal and however strong may be your feelings at so unjust and

indecent an act on the part of His Majesty's Government, the fact must be recognized that this has been the greatest breach in our war. There is a third circumstance of an adverse character to which I think I must not fail to draw your attention. There was a time when there was a solidarity of feeling based on community of interest among the different minority communities in India, among whom the Muslim Community was a premier community. That solidarity is now gone. This is principally due to the change in the vision of the Muslim community brought about by the Muslim League. The Muslim League when it was resuscitated by Mr. Jinnah after the 1937 election began with the ideology that the Musalmans were a minority, and as a minority they needed the strength of other minorities to support and sustain them. So firm was the faith of the Muslim League in the scheme of mutual strength that the Muslim League had taken up the cause of other minorities and passed resolutions pledging its support to their claims and had stood out not merely as an advocate of the Muslim cause but as a champion of all the other minorities in India. This attitude of the League has undoubtedly been of great help to the Untouchables as the attitude of the Untouchables had always been to the Muslims of India. But the League's attitude has undergone a complete change. The Muslim League ever since the Resolution on Pakistan was passed has ceased to regard the Muslims as a community. It holds that the Muslims are a nation. That is not all. The Muslim League further believes that it has nothing to do with the other communities, that it has nothing to do with the Hindu community but it has also nothing to do with other minority communities. The Muslim League alignment is simple. It is an alignment of Muslim as against all other Non-Muslim without distinction or discrimination. This change in the attitude of the League cannot but have serious consequences for the Untouchables. It means that the Untouchables have lost an ally. But it may mean more than the loss of an ally. The Muslim League has not only come to set up a new and a different alignment of Muslims *versus* Non-Muslims, it has set up a new equation of values. That equation is a simple equation. It says that the Muslims, whatever their numbers, are just equal to the Non-Muslims and therefore, in any political arrangement the Muslims must get fifty per cent. To this equation no one can

consent. Not only it is against arithmetic; it is also against the interests of all non-Muslim including the Untouchables. Having regard to these changes in the political standpoint of the Muslim League the Untouchables may be said not only to have lost an ally but also to have lost a friend. For, if the League insists on fifty per cent representation in everything, there can be no doubt that the Muslims and the Untouchables will come in conflict.

I have, so far, given you an idea as to what was our position in Indian politics and what forces have been working to undermine that position. Let me now give you an idea of what I think should be your political demands. It is very necessary that you should formulate them in clear terms. It will clarify the position. Our people will know what we stand for. Our opponents will have notice of our demands.

In the first place, you must insist upon being recognised as an independent and separate element in the national life of India. The theory that they are only a sub-section of the Hindus must be fought tooth and nail. Failure to get the Untouchables recognized as a distinct element, separate from the Hindus, will keep them submerged and lead to their suppression and degradation. Next, you must ask for provision being made in the constitution for a sum of money to be set apart annually in the budget of every Province for the education of the Untouchables. You must demand such a sum not only for primary education but also for higher education. Higher education is more important to us at this stage than primary education. From the standpoint of leadership, from the standpoint of filling in high administrative posts, higher education is to the Untouchables a great necessity. Thirdly, you should demand that a number of posts in the public services shall be reserved for the Untouchables subject, of course, to the rule of minimum qualification. This is very essential. We suffer from bad administration and not from bad laws. The administration is bad because it is in the hands of the Caste Hindus, who carry their social prejudices into administration and persistently deny to the Untouchables for one reason or another the principle of equal benefit to which they are entitled. Good laws can do you no good unless you have good

administration and you can have good administration when you have persons belonging to the Untouchables holding high administrative posts from which they could watch how other Hindu Civil Servants are behaving towards the Untouchables and to check them, control them and prevent them from doing mischief. It is, however, not enough to ask for mere reservation. It is necessary to insist that such reservation shall be given effect to within a stated period. This is far more essential than mere reservation. For, unless you fix a period, the reservation will not come. It will be evaded on one ground or another and of course on the usual but unfathomable ground that no suitable candidate was available. We all know that to a Hindu, if he is the appointing authority, no candidate from the Untouchables would be a suitable candidate. Fourthly, you must insist upon securing representation for the Untouchables in the Central and Provincial Executives. These are key positions. It is those who occupy these positions who have the power to give direction to the course of events. They alone can control any mischief that they may be threatened of and they alone can force new and salutary changes in social, political, and economic affairs. The Untouchables must insist that their representatives are placed in these key positions. This time it must not be left to understanding or convention. The Hindus cannot be trusted to abide by their plighted word. You must see that a provision in this behalf is made part of the constitution.

Then, there is the last demand which the Untouchables must insist upon. It is the last, but it is by no means the least in importance. Indeed, I am convinced that it is the most vital demand which to my mind must override every other demand. I refer to the project of having new settlements of the Untouchables, separate and independent, of the Hindu villages. Why have the Untouchables been the slaves and serfs of the Hindus for so many thousand years? To my mind the answer lies in the peculiar organization of Hindu villages. You have spread out all over India some 7,00,000 Hindu villages, Attached to every Hindu village there exists a small settlement of