

waiting to take their places in the enclosure. We went round the city and wherever we went we saw procession after procession wending its way to the place of meeting when we reached the place with difficulty that the large force of volunteers made a way for our car to reach the back of the platform. As I looked round from the platform, I saw nothing but a sea of human heads and the scene was indeed heart lifting. This was unique, for never in the living memory had such a mass conversion taken place. Dr. Ambedkar was not in the best of health and yet he spoke for over an hour giving his reasons for embracing Buddhism. He himself gave the five precepts to the assembled mass and they repeated the words in a chorus and the sound must have travelled a long distance. When I presented an image of Lord Buddha and garlanded Dr. Ambedkar on behalf of the Maha Bodhi Society which found in him the fulfillment of its 70 years effort, tears of joy ran down my cheeks.”¹

Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion is towards re-establishment of Buddha Sasan in India

“Likewise Justice U Chan Htoon, Supreme Court, Union of Burma, Rangoon, extended his heartfelt congratulations to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar for his historical conversion ceremony, also stated the efforts regarding publication of * Buddha and his Dhamma’. Letter is as follows :

Supreme Court of the Union of Burma.

Dated 22nd October, 1956.

My dear Dr. Ambedkar,

Please accept my heartiest congratulations on the greatest contribution you have made towards the re-establishment of Buddha Sasan in India. The hearts of all the Buddhists of Burma go out to you for your memorable achievement in this Jayanti

¹: Valisinha, D; “Dr. Ambedkar and His Contribution to Buddhism” in thoughts on Dr. Ambedkar, compiled by Hoti LAI Nim, Siddharth Education and Cultural Society, Agra, 1969, Pp. 94, 95.

Reprinted, Bushi Dr, P. 326.

Year. The Buddha Sasana Council and Buddhists of Burma are greatly overjoyed to know that millions of the country-men of the Buddha are now beginning to come back into the light enkindled by the Buddha with your leadership. We are confident that Buddha Sasan would be re-established in all parts of India.

I have, on my part, been able, in a small scale, to follow up what you have started, while in Burma during the third WFB Conference. On the 28th of last month about 5,000 Tamils formally accepted Buddhism in a very impressive ceremony held in the Chatta Sangayana Great Cave in the presence of *Mahatheras*. Cabinet Ministers and Buddhist leaders, many more of the Tamils in Rangoon and other parts of Burma are being aroused to follow your lead.

I owe you a good deal of explanation and thousands of apologies for not being able to write to you earlier. I have been very busy with the Chatta Sangayana work and other activities connected with the propagation of Buddhism abroad, particularly in Japan. You would perhaps be glad to learn I have been able to get a large number of influential Buddhist leaders in Japan to form a society for the establishment of Therawada Buddhism in Japan ; there centres are going to be set up by May 1957 with about 15 Mahatheras from Burma. Building constructions are already underway at Moji and Isoshira. A delegation from the Japanese Society is already here and is engaged in discussions with me from day-to-day since the 27th of last month.

As regards the contribution towards the cost of publication of your work on Buddhism, I did write to you earlier as I was not able to get aid from the Asia Foundation, because of the change of representative. The representative who had a talk with you while you were here was soon transferred to Manilla and the new representative does not seem to take much interest in matters of this kind. I was hoping that I would be able to do something about the matter, but I find there is no hope for it for some time to come.

As regards the scholarships for students by essay competition, I have been able to get the important members of the Buddha Sasana Council to agree to the idea in principle. So I would like you or Mrs. Ambedkar to send us a detailed scheme to be put up to the Council.

Nine persons, including U Nu, the Chief Justice U Thein Maung, and myself, are coming to join in the Jayanti celebrations at New Delhi on the invitation of the Indian Jayanti Celebrations Committee. I am leaving for Khatmandu, leading a delegation of about 10 persons from Burma, to attend the 4th WFB Conference. My wife will also be accompanying me. We shall proceed from Lumbini to New Delhi. We expect to be in New Delhi on or about the 22nd of this month.

Please convey my best regards to Mrs. Ambedkar and also to other colleagues of yours.

Yours in the Dhamma,
(Signed) U CHAN HTOON,
Judge, Supreme Court,
Union of Burma, Rangoon.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar,
M. A., Ph.D., D.Sc, LL.D., D.Litt.,
Barrister-at-Law,
Member, Council of States,
26, Alipur Road, Civil Lines,
New Delhi, India.” ¹

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¹: Khairmode, Vol. 12, Pp. 93-94.

BUDDHA OR KARL MARX

“An address by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was arranged on 20th Nov. 1956, just before the conclusion of the world Buddhists Council Conference at Kathmandu. This lecture was delivered in the palace of the King of Nepal. To propagate Buddhism with all its merits in such a country as Nepal, where the Hinduism based on Maws of Manu’ was prevailing officially, was a revolutionary incident. In this speech Dr. B. R. Ambedkar stressed the basic angle to look at Buddhism.

Dr. G. P. Malalshekar (Srilanka) President, World Buddhist Council, requested Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to talk on “Non-violence in Buddhism” to which he consented. However, the majority delegates of the conference insisted upon Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to talk on “Buddha or Karl Marx”. Mr. U. Chan Htoon, former President of World Buddhist Council and Hon’ble Judge of the Supreme Court of the Union of Burma alongwith his wife escorted Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to the dais and all the delegates of the conference showed due respect to him,

Mahendra Vir Vikram Sahdeo, the King of Nepal, occupied a specially decorated chair on the dais. Hon. Chandramani Mahasthavir, G. P. Malalsekhar, Hon. Amrutananand Mahasthavir and U. Chan Htoon also occupied the dais. Initially Hon. Chandramani gave Trisaran and Panchasheela to all. Dr. G. P. Malalsekhar introduced and welcomed Dr. B. R. Ambedkar—with a garland and requested him to address the gathering.”¹

Dr. Ambedkar said,

President, Your Reverences and Gentlemen,

I am sorry that, having come to Nepal to attend the Conference, I have not been able to participate in its proceedings in the way in which a delegate ought to participate. But I am sure, most of the delegates are aware that although I am here, I am physically a very ill man, and I am quite unable to bear the stress and strain of the Conference proceedings. It is, therefore, not out of any disrespect for the Conference that I have been usually

¹: Bhikshu Sumedha, Pp. 126-127.

absent, it is because of my personal condition that I could not do justice to the task of the Conference. It is perhaps because of my absence from the Conference, I was asked by way of compensation to address you this afternoon. I consented to do that, but even here there have been surprises flung on me. I had not enough notice that I was to speak here. And when I was asked what subject I would speak on, I mentioned the subject of, Ahimsa in Buddhism. But I find that a large majority of the people attending this Conference are desirous that I should speak on "Buddhism and Communism," a subject to which I, in a very passing sentence, referred at the first general meeting. I am quite prepared to agree to the suggestion of the change of subject, although, I must say that I am not quite on the spur of the moment prepared to deal with such a large, enormous, and if I may say so, a very massive subject. It is a subject which has had half the world in grips, and I find that it has held also in its grip a large number of the student population even of the Buddhist countries. I look upon the latter aspect of the matter with grave concern. If the younger generation of the Buddhist countries are not able to appreciate that Buddhism supplies a way of life which is better than what is supplied by the Communist way of life, Buddhism is doomed. It cannot last beyond a generation or two. It is, therefore, quite necessary for those who, believe in Buddhism to tackle the younger generation, and to tell them whether Buddhism can be a substitute for Communism. It is then only that Buddhism can hope to survive. We must all remember that today a large majority of the people in Europe and a large majority of the youngsters in Asia look upon Karl Marx as the only prophet who could be worshipped. And they regard, the largest part of the Buddhist *Sangha* as nothing but the yellow peril. That is an indication which the Bhikkhus must take up, must understand, to reform themselves in order that they could be compared with Karl Marx ; and Buddhism could compete with it.

Now with this introduction, I propose to give you a few salient points in Buddhism and in Marxism or Communism in order to show you where the similarity of ideals lies and where the differences arise between Buddhism and Marxism. And thirdly, whether the Buddhist way of life of reaching the goal is a lasting one, or whether the Communist way of bringing about the goal is the lasting one. Because there is no use in pursuing a certain path, if that path, is not going to be a lasting path, if it is going to lead you to the jungle, if it is going to lead you to anarchy, there is no use pursuing it. But, if you are assured that the path you are asked to follow is slow, may be devious, may be with long detours, yet if ultimately makes you reach a safe, sound ground so that the ideals you are pursuing are there to help you, to mould your life permanently, it is much better, in my judgment, to follow the slower path, and the devious path rather than to rush up and to take what we call short cuts. Short cuts in life are always dangerous, very dangerous.

Now let me go to the subject. What is the theory of Communism? What does it start with? Communism starts with the theory that there is exploitation in the world, that the poor are exploited by the rich because of the property that they hold, and they enslave the masses, that enslavement results in suffering, sorrow, and in poverty. This is the starting point of Karl Marx. He uses the word 'exploitation'. What is the remedy that Karl Marx provides? The remedy that Karl Marx provides is that in order to prevent poverty and the suffering of one class it is necessary to remove private property. Nobody should possess private property because it is the private owner who appropriates or misappropriates. To use the technical language of Karl Marx, the surplus value which the workers produce, the worker does not get the surplus value which he produces. It is appropriated by the owner. Karl Marx asked the question why should be the owner misappropriate the surplus value which is produced by the efforts of the working man? His answer is that the only owner is the State. And it is because of this that Marx propounded the theory that there must be the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is the third proposition that Marx

enunciated. That Government must be by the exploited classes and not by the exploiting classes, which is what is meant by dictatorship of the proletariat. These are fundamental propositions in Karl Marx, which have the basis of Communism in Russia. They have undoubtedly been expanded, it has been added too, and so on. But these are the fundamental propositions.

Now let me, for a moment, go to Buddhism and see what the Buddha has to say about the points made out by Karl Marx. As I told you, Karl Marx begins with what is called exploitation of the poor. What does the Buddha say? How does he begin? What is the foundation on which he has raised the structure of His religion? The Buddha, too, 2000 or at any rate 2400 years ago, said exactly the same thing. He said, "There is *Dukkha* in the world." He did not use the word 'exploitation' but He did lay the foundation of His religion on what He called *Dukkha*. There is *Dukkha* in the world. The word *Dukkha* no doubt has been interpreted in various ways. It has been interpreted to mean re-birth, the round of life, that is *Dukkha*. I do not agree with that. I think there are lots of places in the Buddhist literature where the Buddha has used the word *Dukkha* in the sense of poverty. Therefore, so far as the foundation is concerned, there is really no difference at all.

It is unnecessary for the Buddhist people to go to Karl Marx to get the foundation. That foundation is already there, well laid. It is where the Buddha begins his first sermon—the *Dharma Chakra Pravartana Sutta*. Therefore, to those who are attracted by Karl Marx, I say, study the *Dharmachakra Pravartana Sutta* and find out what the Buddha says. And you will find sufficient satisfaction on this question. The Buddha did not lay the foundation of his religion either on God, or on Soul, or anything Supernatural like these. He laid His finger on the fact of life—people are living in suffering. Therefore, so far as Marxism or Communism is concerned, Buddhism has enough of it. And the Buddha has said it 2000 years before Marx was born.

With regard to the question of property, you will again find some very close affinity to the doctrine of the Buddha and the doctrine preached by Karl Marx. Karl Marx said that in order

to prevent exploitation, the State must own the instrument of production, that is, property. Land must belong to the State, industry must belong to the State, so that no private owner might intervene and rob the worker of the profits of his labour. That is what Marxism said.

Now, let us go to the *Sangha*, the Buddhist *Sangh*, and examine the rules of life that the Buddha laid down for the monks. What are the rules that the Buddha laid down? Well, the Buddha said that no monk shall have private property. Ideally speaking, no monk can own property. And although there might be a few lapses here and there, and I have noticed that in some countries the monks own some property, yet in the large majority of the cases the monks have no property at all. In fact, the Buddhist rules for the *Sangha* are far more severe than any rule that the Communists have made in Russia. I take it as a mute subject, nobody has yet discussed it and come to any conclusion.

What object did the Buddha have in forming the *Sangha*? Why did he do it? Going back a little into the history, when the Buddha was engaged in propagating this religion, those we today call the "*Parivrajakas*" were existing there long before the Buddha was there. The word "*Parivrajaka*" means a displaced person, a person who has lost his home. Probably during the Aryan period the different tribes of the Aryans were warring against one another as all tribal people do. Some broken tribes left, lost their moorings and they were wandering about. And it is those wanderers that were called *Parivrajakas*. The great service that the Buddha did to these *Parivrajakas* was to organise them into a body, to give them rules of life - those that are contained in the '*Vinayapitika*'. In the rules, the Bhikkhu is not allowed to have property. The Bhikkhu is allowed to have only seven things - a razer, a lota for getting water, a *Bhikshyapatra* and three *Chivaras*, and the needle for sewing things. Well, I want to know if the essence of Communism is to deny the private property, can there be any greater and more severe rule so regards private property than is found in the '*Vinayapitika*'? I do not find one. Therefore, if any people or

any youngsters are attracted by the rule contained in the Communist system of rules that there shall be no private property, they can find it here. The only question is, to what extent can this rule of denial of private property be applied to society as a whole? That is a matter of expediency, time, circumstances, development of human society. But, so far as theory is concerned whether there is anything wrong in abolishing private property, Buddhism will not stand in the way of anybody who wants to do it; because it has already made this concession in the organisation of the Buddhist *Sangha*.

Now, we come to another aspect of the matter, and that aspect is - what is the ways and means which Karl Marx or the Communists wish to adopt in order to bring about Communism? This is the important question. The means that the Communists wish to adopt in order to bring about Communism, by which I mean the recognition of *Dukkha*, and abolition of property, is violence and killing of the opposed. There lies the fundamental difference between the Buddha and Karl Marx. The Buddha's means of persuading people to adopt the principles is by persuasion, by moral teaching, by love. He wants to conquer the opponent by inculcating in him the doctrine that love and not power can conquer anything. That is where the fundamental difference lies - that the Buddha would not allow violence, and the Communists do. No doubt the Communists get quick results; because when you adopt the means of annihilating men, they do not remain to oppose you.

You go on with your ideology, you go on with your ways of doing things. The Buddha's way, as I said, is a long way, perhaps some people may say, a tedious way. But I have no doubt about it that it is the surest way.

There are two or three questions which I have always asked my communist friends to answer and which, I must frankly say they have not been able to answer. They establish by means of violence what they call the dictatorship of the proletariat. They deprive all people who have property, of their political rights. They cannot have representation in the legislature. They cannot have right to vote, they must remain what they call second grade subjects of the State, the ruled, not

sharing authority or power. When I asked them, "Do you agree that dictatorship is a good method of governing people"? They say, "No, we don't, we don't like dictatorship". Then we say, "How do you allow it?" But they say, "This is an interim period in which dictatorship must be there." You proceed further and ask them, "What is the duration of this interim period? How long? Twenty years ? Forty years ? Fifty years ?" No answer. They only repeat that the proletarian dictatorship will vanish, somehow automatically.

Very well, let us take the thing as it is that dictatorship will vanish. Well, I ask a question, "What will happen when dictatorship disappears ? What will take its place ? Will men not need Government of some sort ?" They have no answer.

Then we go back to the Buddha and ask this question in relation to his Dhamma. What does he say ? The greatest thing that the Buddha has done is to tell the world that the world cannot be reformed except by the reformation of the mind of the man, and the mind of the world. If the mind is changed, if the mind accepts the Communist system and loves it loyally and carries it out, it is a permanent thing, it does not require a soldier or a police officer to keep a man in order. Why ? The answer is : The Buddha has energized your conscience itself that is acting as a sentinel in order to keep you on your path. There is no trouble when the mind is converted the thing is permanent.

The Communist system is based on force. Supposing tomorrow the dictatorship in Russia fails, and we see signs of its failure, what would happen ? I really like to know what would happen to the Communist system. As I see it, there would be bloody warfare among the Russian people for appropriating the property of the State. That would be the consequence of it. Why ? Because they have not accepted the Communist system voluntarily. They are obeying it because they are afraid of being hanged. Such a system can take no root, and therefore in my judgment unless the Communist are able to answer these questions, what would happen to their system ? When force disappears, there is no use pursuing it. Because, if the mind is not converted, force will always be necessary, and this is what

I want to say in conclusion that one of the greatest things I find in Buddhism is that its system is a democratic system. The Buddha told the Vajjis when the Prime Minister of Ajata Satru went to tell the Buddha, that Ajata Satru wanted to conquer the Vajjis, He said, the King won't be able to do it as long as the Vajjis follow their ways of their age-old system. The Buddha for unknown reasons did not explain in plain terms what he meant. But there is no doubt about it that what he was referring to was the democratic and the republican form of government, which the Vajjis had. He said : so long as the Vajjis were following their system, they would be unconquered. The Buddha, of course, was a great democrat.

Therefore, I say, and may I say so if the President will allow me, I have been a student of politics; I have been a student of economics, I was a professor of Economics, and I have spent a great deal of time in studying Karl Marx, Communism and all that, and I have also spent good deal of time in studying the Buddha's Dhamma. After comparing the two I came to the conclusion that Buddha's advice with regard to the great problem of the world, namely, that there is *Dukkha*, that *Dukkha* must be removed, that the Buddha's method was the safest and the soundest.

Thus, do I advice the younger generation of the Buddhist countries to pay more attention to the actual teachings of the Buddha. If I may say so in conclusion if any peril arises to the Dhamma, in a Buddhist country the blame shall have to be cast upon the *Bhikkhus*, because I personally think that they are not wholly discharging the duty which devolves on them. Where is the preaching? The *Bhikkhu* is living in his cloister taking his meal, one meal no doubt and sitting quietly : probably he is reading, and most probably I find them sleeping, and in the evening having a little music. That is not the way of propagating religion.

My friends, I want to tell you, I do not want to criticise anybody; but religion, if it is to be a moral force for the regeneration of society, you must constantly din it into the ears of the people. How many years has a child to spend in School?

You do not send the child to school on a day and then withdraw the child home and expect the child to grow into learning, to get education. The child has to go to School every day, sit there for five hours and study constantly. It is then, and then alone that the child gets somewhat saturated with what is called knowledge and what is called learning. Here the monastery is not a state. The *Bhikkhus* do not call the people to the monasteries on any single day and deliver sermon to them on some subject or moral education. I have never seen it.

I went to Ceylon and I told some people that was particularly anxious to see how the *Bhikkhus* preach. They told me that they have got '*Bona*', *Bana* some word they use which, I subsequently learnt meant, '*Vanaka*'. They took me at 11 O' clock to one place, to small little square thing as big as this, a table and I sat on the ground. A *Bhikkhu* was brought in. Several men and women brought water and washed his feet and he came up and sat there. He had a fan with him, you see, Gods only know what he said, of course, he must have preached in Singhalese. It was not more than two minutes, and after two minutes he departed.

You go to Christian Church, what happens ? Every week people assemble there. They worship, and some priest delivers a sermon on some subject from the Bible in order to remind the people what Jesus told them that they should do. You will be probably surprised, to know that 90 per cent of Christianity is copied from Buddhism both in substance and in form. You go to Rome, see the main Church and you will be reminded of the big temple which is known as '*Viswa Karma*' at Berut.

Vishabigne, who wrote a book on Buddhism, and was a missionary in China, had expressed his great surprise as to how this similarity occurs between Buddhism and Christianity. So far as the outlook, he dared not say that the Buddhist copied Christian, but he would not admit that the Christians copied Buddhism. There is so much of it, I think time has turned and we must now copy some of the ways of the Christians in order to propagate our religion among the Buddhist people. They must be made aware, every day and all time, that the Buddha's Dhamma is there, standing by them like a policeman to guard lest they

should go the wrong way. Without that this religion will remain probably in a very decadent state. Even now that I find it even in the Buddhist countries, its condition is very decadent. But its influence is there. No doubt about it.

I wanted to tell you one very interesting epilogue which I saw in Burma. I went to Burma. I was called for the Conference and they took me to show how they were going to reconstruct the villages. I was very happy. I went with them and the Committee had planned to reform the village. Their streets as usual were crooked, bent here and there, nothing systematic. So the Committee put down iron pillars and lined ropes that this street must go this way. In good many cases I found that the lines drawn by the Committee went across a piece of land which was owned by a private individual. When I went and saw and I asked them, "How are they going to manage ? Have you got money to pay for the property that you are going to take ?" They said, "Nobody wants money." Everybody said, "If you want it, take it." Why is this ? Why in my country there would have been bloodshed if you take a little piece of land from somebody without giving him compensation. But there it is, why ? Why were the Burmese so free with their property ? Why did they not care for it ? It is because the Buddha has taught "*Sarvam Anityam*." Everything you see, is impermanent. Why Tight for impermanent things ? It is all right if you want the land, take it.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I do not think I can continue any further, nor is it necessary for me to do that.

I just wanted to give you a point of view from which to look at. Do not be allured by Communist successes. I am quite confident that if we all become one tenth as enlightened as the Buddha was, we can bring about the same result by the methods of love, of justice, and good will. Thank you very much."¹



¹ : Report of the 4th Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Kathamandu, Nepal.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX—I

Gandhiji's articles on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's proclamation of Conversion

In an article published in the *Harijan*, dated October 26, 1935 under the title "On Its Last Legs" Bapuji observed :

"Some critics have not hesitated to observe that it was preposterous for me to claim, in answer to Dr. Ambedkar's threat to accept some other faith rather than die a Hindu, that Untouchability was on its last legs in spite of Kavitha. Indeed, Kavitha itself supports my claim. Kavitha had gone on ever since its birth living peacefully till an over-zealous worker, not knowing his own limitations, had put up Kavitha *Harijans* to dare to send their children to local school, though he knew that there was opposition from some Kavitha *Savarnas*. He had hoped, as had happened elsewhere, that *Harijans* had successfully asserted their right to send their children to public schools. But Kavitha *Savarnas* showed that they had not recognised the time spirit.

"Only a few years ago the Kavitha incident would have attracted no notice. There were very few reformers then. The few were to be found mostly in towns and cities. Now, thank God, their number is increasing and presently every village will have its quota. But a few years ago *Harijans* could not be induced to resist Untouchability on any account whatsoever. It was part of their faith as it was of *Savarnas*' faith. These columns contain sufficient evidence of the weekly progress made by the campaign against Untouchability. Phenomenal though the progress has been, Kavitha and the like show that it has not yet affected the majority of *Savarnas* in many places. The fact is a warning to the reformers and the *Harijans* that much has yet to be done before the hard hearts of *Savarnas* are melted.

"Let it be further observed that it was *Savarna* reformers who advertised the Kavitha tragedy and gave it an all-India importance. I have agitated *Savarna* conscience more than it was angered the *Harijans*. I have to note with shame and

sorrow that even Kavitha *Harijans* no longer want to agitate for their rights. They have meekly submitted to the *Savarna* impudence. In spite of all the help offered to them, they would not leave Kavitha. It is easy enough for the few that are there to earn their bread by honourable toil elsewhere. The attempt of the reformers to induce them to leave Kavitha under their protection has failed.

“Even if change of faith, not on account of its inherent inadequacy but because of the unreasoning prejudice of many of the followers, were justified, in the present instance it can but defeat the cause intended to be served. Secession of stalwarts like Dr. Ambedkar can but weaken the defences of *Harijans*. We know, as a matter of fact, that Non-Hindu *Harijans*, no matter how eminent they may be, are not able to help Hindu *Harijans*. Indeed, they are a class apart still in their adopted faiths. Such is the hold Untouchability of the Indian type has on the people of India.

“Let not Dr. Ambedkar’s just wrath deject the reformer, let it spur him to greater effort. For whilst it is true that the number of workers against Untouchability has greatly increased, there can be no doubt that the number is yet too small to overtake the prejudice of ages. Nevertheless (with) a movement which has attained the proportions that the Anti-Untouchability campaign has attained and in which the slightest untoward incident can attract world-wide attention, (Untouchability) cannot but be on its last legs. Humanity will not suffer it any longer.” ¹

II

In an article published in the *Harijan*, dated March 21, 1936, Bapuji observed:

“Ever since Dr. Ambedkar has thrown the bom-shell in the midst of Hindu society in the shape of threatened conversion frantic efforts have been made to wean him from the proposed step. Dr. Ambedkar’s threat has had its repercussions on

¹: Government of India, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi. Volume LXII, Pp. 64-65. Reprinted, Busi Dr. Pp. 299-301.

Harijans too, who are at all literate and are able to read newspapers. They have begun to approach Hindu institutions or reformers with a demand for posts, scholarships or the like, accompanying it with the statement that the writer might, in the event of refusal, be obliged to change to another faith, aid having been offered on behalf of the representatives of that faith.

“Without a doubt these threats are a portent and a matter of grave concern to those who care at all for the religion of their forefathers. But it will not be served by coming to terms with those who have lost faith in Hinduism or for that matter in any religion. Religion is not a matter of barter. It is a matter for every individual to decide for himself to which faith he will belong. It does not lend itself to purchase in any shape or form. Or if such an expression can be used in connection with things of the spirit, religion can only be purchased with one’s own blood. If, therefore, any *Harijan* wants to give up Hinduism, he should be entirely free to do so.

“There must be searching of heart for the reformer. Has his practice or that of his neighbours caused the detection ? If it has and if it is found to be improper, it must be changed.

“It is an admitted fact that the conduct of a vast number of Hindus who call themselves *Sanatanists* is such as to cause the greatest inconvenience and irritation to the *Harijans* all over India. The wonder is that many more *Harijans* than already have, have not left Hinduism. It speaks volumes for their loyalty or for the innate virtue of Hinduism that millions of *Harijans* have clung to it inspite of the inhumanities to which in the name of that very faith they have been subjected to.

“This wonderful loyalty of *Harijans* and their unexampled patience render it imperative for every *Savarna* Hindu to see that *Harijans* receive the same treatment that every other Hindu does. The course before *Savarnas* is, therefore, on the one hand not to interfere with *Harijans* wishing to leave the Hindu fold by trying to keep them within it by the offer of bribes in the shape of finding employment or scholarship and, on the other hand, to insist on full justice being done to *Harijans* in every

walk of life. Indeed reformers should anticipate the *Harijans'* requirements and not wait till they begin to complain. The *Harijan Sevak Sough* is the biggest institution for the removal of Untouchability. It has widely adopted a most liberal policy of giving scholarships to deserving students. It employs as many *Harijans* as possible. But it is in no sense a bureau for finding jobs for unemployed *Harijans*. Generally speaking, there is no dearth of jobs for *Harijans* who are fit for the jobs for which they offer themselves. The greatest hardship felt by thousands of *Harijans* is want of pure water for drinking and domestic use, denial of access to public schools and other institutions, constant pinpricks in villages and, last but not the least, denial of access to temples of worship. These disabilities are stern realities in the lives of the vast mass of *Harijans*. If they as a mass give up Hinduism, they will do so because of these common disabilities which brand them as lepers of Hindu society. *Hinduism is passing through a fiery ordeal. It will perish not through individual conversions, not even through mass conversions, but will perish because of the sinful denial by the so-called Savarna Hindus of elementary justice to Harijans. Every threat of conversion is, therefore, a warning to the Savarnas that if they do not wake up in time, it may be too late !* (Italics supplied).

“One word to the impatient and needy *Harijans*. They must not use threats when they approach Hindu institutions or individuals for help. They should relay upon the strength of their case commanding a hearing. The majority of *Harijans* do not know what change of religion can mean. They mutely suffer the continuing degradation to which *Savarnas* in their selfishness have consigned them. They must be the primary care of Hindu reformers whether they complain or do not. Those who are enlightened enough to know and feel the degradation and know also what change of religion means, are either too good Hindus to desert their ancestral faith and deserve every help they need, or being indifferent as to religion may not claim help from *Savarna* Hindus in exchange for their condescending to remain in the Hindu fold. I would, therefore, plead with enlightened *Harijans* for their own sakes not to

seek material betterment under threat of conversion. And whilst reformers must on no account yield to threats, they must ceaselessly strive to secure justice for Harijans at the hands of *Savarna* Hindus.”¹

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¹: Government of India, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, Volume LXII, P. 281. Reprinted, Busi Dr. Pp. 306-308.

APPENDIX—II

CONSTITUTION OF THE SAMATA SAINIK DAL

Sainik's Oath

I, a member of the Scheduled Caste Community, entering the ranks of the Samata Sainik Dal, do hereby take an Oath and solemnly swear to be an honourable, brave, disciplined and resolute fighter in the glorious cause of the emancipation of my class from all oppression, exploitation and slavery.

I shall ever be ready at the Command of the S. S. D. to go forward for the defence of the just and human rights of the people of my class and community.

Should it be out of weakness, cowardice, or evil design, I violate this oath and betray the interests of my people, I shall be ready to suffer the full measure of punishment at the hands of the Dal.

A Conference of the Samta Sainik Dal was held at Kanpur on 30th January 1944. Mr. B. K. Gaikwad was the President of the Conference. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was present and also addressed the Conference. In this Conference few resolutions were passed. According to resolution No. 6 a Committee to draft the Constitution of Samta Sainik Dal was Constituted under the Presidentship of Mr. B. K. *alias* Dadasaheb Gaikwad. Mr. M. M. Sasalekar, S. B. Jadhao, R. R. Patil, K. N. Walmiki, A. L. Kosare, P. L. Lalingkar were the members of the Committee. (Janata : dated 6th January 1945).

Accordingly Mr. B. K. Gaikwad sent the draft of the Constitution to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar for approval on 8th December 1944 (Khairmode, Vol. 9, P. 405.) which Dr. B. R. Ambedkar received on 13th December 1944. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar acknowledged the letter as "I have received your letter and also a copy of the Constitution of the Samta Sainik Dal." (*ibid*, P. 407.)

Constitution of the Samata Sainik Dal

I Name and Organization :

- (1) The name of the organization shall be 'Samata Sainik Dal' hereafter referred to as the S. S. D.
- (2) The Samata Sainik Dal shall be affiliated to the All India Scheduled Castes Federation. The President of the Federation on the advice of the Executive Council of the Federation shall appoint a nominee of the Federation to supervise the affairs of the Samata Sainik Dal in each town and in each Province and the Samata Sainik Dal in each town and Province shall work under the guidance of a Supervisor, so appointed.

II Aims and Objects :

- (1) The aim of the Samata Sainik Dal is to strive for the removal of all inequality based on race, religion, caste, sex or class and to unite all members of the Scheduled Caste Communities for a struggle to build a society based on the freedom and equality of all.
- (2) **To achieve this aim :**
 1. The Samata Sainik Dal shall unite and organize the Scheduled Caste youths under its banner.
 2. The Samata Sainik Dal shall promote all social, cultural and other activities among the Scheduled Castes particularly among the youth so as to cultivate self respect, self reliance, and a spirit of self sacrifice in their minds.
 3. The Samata Sainik Dal shall co-operate, with all such organizations and movements that help to further its aims and objects.

III Membership :

Any person belonging to the Scheduled Castes above the age of 18 who agrees with the above aims and objects can join the Samata Sainik Dal on payment of yearly subscription of twelve annas.

IV Training :

- (1) Samata Sainik Dal training shall consist of physical, intellectul and military type.
- (2) The Samata Sainik Dal shall organise training camps, Schools, Clubs, Classes, Lectures, Debates, Libraries etc., and such other forms of activities as it may consider expedient from time to time.
- (3) Branches of All India Samata Sainik Dal shall function in all India Provinces and branches shall also be set up, wherever possible in the Indian States.

Each Provincial branch will organize its District Committees and each District Committee in its town will organize Town and Village Committees.

- (4) The General Body of Samata Sainik Dal in a Town or a Village shall select, according to their ranks, a Town or Village Committee of 5 members, one President, two Secretaries and also select delegates from among themselves to the District Conference in the following manner:—

For 1 to 25 members-One Delegate.

For 25 to 50 members-Two Delegates and so on.

- (5) The District Conference shall select a District Committee of 10 members, one President and two Secretaries as also delegates to the Provincial Conference from amongst themselves according to their ranks in the following manner:—

For 5 delegates to the District Conference and one delegate to Provincial Conference.

For District delegates numbering above five and upto ten, two delegates to the Provincial Conference and so on.

- (6) The Provincial Conference shall select according to their ranks a Provincial Committee of 20 members, one President, two Secretaries and also delegates to the All India Conference. The number of such delegates to the All India Conference shall not exceed 5% of the total strength of membership in each Province.