

Perhaps Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to protect the lambs who would not accept him as their shepherd. When Mr. Gandhi refused to give his blessings to the Satyagraha by the Untouchables it was a foregone conclusion that no Congressmen would or could come and help the Untouchables in their struggle against the orthodox Hindus. Indeed this attitude of Mr. Gandhi enabled Congress Hindus to join the orthodox Hindus—they are kith and kin and the line that divides the two is very thin—and batter the heads of the Untouchables with a clear conscience. This was not the only mischief Mr. Gandhi did by his most illogical if not perverse attitude. He came out openly against all non-Hindus and prohibited them from helping the Untouchables in their Satyagraha struggle against the caste Hindus. He was not only against Mahomedans, Christians, Parsis and Jews rendering any help, but he went to the length of objecting to the Sikhs—who are no more than militant and protestant Hindus—coming to help the Untouchables. Here again his argument was queer. Untouchability is the sin of the caste Hindus. It is they who must do penance. Help to the Untouchables being a penance and penance being the obligation of the sinner, only the sinner could offer Satyagraha and help it. The Mahomedans, Christians, Parsis, Jews and Sikhs were not sinners in the matter of untouchability and therefore they could not help the Satyagraha for the removal of untouchability. Mr. Gandhi of course would not see it from the point of view of the Untouchables. He would not see that what was sin for the caste Hindus was slavery for the Untouchables. If the sinner was bound to do penance, the slave was entitled to break his bonds and every person who believed in freedom, no matter what his caste or his creed, was bound to help and free to join in the struggle. This is exactly the point of view which Mr. Gandhi had adopted with regard to the Khilafat question. The Musalman wanted Khilafat and the territorial integrity of Turkey. The demand for territorial integrity of Turkey was a most impossible demand because it involved the subjugation of the Arabs by the Turks. Still the Musalmans insisted upon it and Mr. Gandhi brought round the whole of the Congress and the Hindus to support this impossible and impious demand of the Musalmans. Mr. Gandhi then argued that if the Musalmans think it their religious duty to fight for the territorial integrity of Turkey, then it was the obligation of the Hindus to help the Muslims to fulfil their duty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in 1920 a resolution was passed of which the following is a part :

“In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Musalmans of India, and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Moslem India in every legitimate manner to assist his Musalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him.

The benefit of this logic Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to extend to the Untouchables. He was firm. Non-Hindus may help Hindus. Hindus may help non-Hindus. But none should help the Untouchables.<sup>1</sup> Friends of Mr. Gandhi were anxious to soften the rigour of his logic by pointing out that a distinction was necessary to be made on the basis of the nature of the disabilities of the Untouchables. They argued<sup>1</sup> that certain disabilities of the Untouchables were civic, certain were religious and that so far as the civic disabilities were concerned even non-Hindus should be allowed to help the Untouchables to carry on the Satyagraha. Even to this Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to listen. His interdict was applicable to all cases and there was no distinction possible. With this interdict on outside help Mr. Gandhi—the “friend of the Untouchables”—completely cut off the supplies of the Untouchables and left them without any sinews of war.

### 3

So far I have explained how the Congress without any qualm of conscience abandoned the idea of uplifting the Untouchables. It did not even undertake it. Secondly I have explained how Mr. Gandhi failed to support the Untouchables in their Satyagraha against the caste Hindus but by his queer logic found justification for not helping them and for preventing help reaching them. There now remains to record the third and the last event which belongs to this period. Though last in point of time it is undoubtedly the first in point of importance. That incident is the touchstone by which Mr. Gandhi's claim as a friend of the Untouchables must stand or fall.

The incident relates to the demand made by the Representatives of the Depressed Classes at the Indian Round Table Conference for political safeguards being embodied in the new Constitution and the attitude of Mr. Gandhi to these demands. The most important of these demands related to representation of the Depressed Classes in the Legislatures. The demand submitted by the representatives of the Depressed Classes was in the following terms—

#### **Adequate Representation in the Legislatures.**

The Depressed Classes must be given sufficient political power to influence legislative and executive action for the purpose of securing their welfare. In view of this they demand that provisions shall be made in the electoral law to give them :

- (1) Right to adequate representation in the Legislatures of the Country, Provincial and Central.

<sup>1</sup> Young India.

- (2) Right to elect their own men as their representatives,
- (a) by adult suffrage and
  - (b) by separate electorates for the first ten years and thereafter by joint electorates and reserved seats, it being understood that joint electorates shall not be forced upon the Depressed Classes against their will unless such joint electorates are accompanied by adult suffrage."

It is this particular demand by the Depressed Classes which raised such a storm and which became so serious an issue that the solution of it almost shook the foundation of Indian politics and of Hindu Society.

This demand of the Depressed Classes was founded on the recommendation of the Simon Commission. After a careful survey of the problem of the Depressed Classes, the Simon Commission had reported to the following effect regarding their place under the new Constitution :

"It is clear that even with a considerable lowering of the franchise .... there would be no hope of the Depressed Classes getting their own representatives elected in general constituencies without special provision being made to secure it .... Ultimately we should hope to see them maintaining their ground in joint electorates without special protection..... They will make no headway, however, in this direction as long as they are represented solely by nomination, for nomination provides no opportunities for training them in politics. There are, even with the present restricted franchise, a sufficient number of Depressed Class voters to make methods of election possible .....

Our object, therefore, is to make a beginning which will bring the Depressed Classes within the circle of elected representation. How is this to be done ? Most of the Depressed Class associations which appeared before us favoured separate electorates, with seats allocated on the basis of population ..... separate electorates would no doubt be the safest method of securing the return of an adequate number of persons who enjoy the confidence of the Depressed Classes; but we are averse from stereotyping the difference between the Depressed Classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step, which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to their ultimate political amalgamation with others .....

Our proposal, therefore, is that in all the eight Provinces there should be some reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes..... The result of our Scheme would be that spokesmen of the Depressed Classes would be returned as elected members in each of

the Provinces ..... As to the number of seats to be reserved, this should obviously bear some proportion to the total number of the Depressed Classes in the province ..... We propose that ..... the proportion of the number of such reserved seats to the total seats in all the Indian General constituencies should be three quarters of the proportion of the Depressed Classes population to the total population of the electoral area of the province.” .....<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact there was nothing new in this demand of the Depressed Classes for separate political representation for themselves by themselves and through themselves and the Simon Commission in conceding it cannot be said to have made a new departure.

This demand was put forth in 1919.

At the time when the reforms which subsequently became embodied in the Act of 1919 were being discussed, the authors of the Montague Chelmsford Report clearly recognized the problem of the Untouchables and the authors pledged themselves to make the best arrangement for their representation in the Legislatures. But the Committee that was appointed under the Chairmanship of Lord Southborough to devise the franchise and the electoral system ignored them altogether. The Government of India did not approve of this attitude and made the following comments :

“They (Untouchables) are one-fifth of the total population and have not been represented at all in the Morley-Minto Councils. The Committee’s report mentions the Untouchables twice, but only to explain that in the absence of satisfactory electorates they have been provided for by nomination. It does not discuss the position of these people, or their capacity for looking after themselves. Nor does it explain the amount of nomination which it suggests for them ..... The measure of representation which they propose ..... suggested that one-fifth of the entire population of British India should be allotted seven seats out of practically eight hundred. It is true that in all the Councils there will be, roughly speaking, a one-sixth proportion of officials who may be expected to bear in mind their interests; but that arrangement is not, in our opinion, what the Report on reforms aims at. The authors stated that the Untouchables also should learn the lesson of self-protection. It is surely fanciful to hope that this result can be expected from including a single member of the community in an assembly where there are sixty or seventy caste Hindus. To make good the principles of the Report we must treat the outcastes more generously.”

<sup>1</sup> Report. Vol. II. pp. 65-66.

The Government recommended that the seats allotted to the Untouchables by the Committee should be doubled. Accordingly in place of seven, they were given fourteen seats.

Again in 1923, the Secretary of State appointed a Committee which is known as the Muddiman Committee. The principal object of the Committee was to find out how far the constitution established by the Act of 1919 could be expanded by alterations in the Rules and without altering the Act. The Committee made certain recommendations and pointed out the necessity of increasing the representation of the Depressed Classes in the Legislatures. This recommendation was accepted by the Secretary of State who increased the number of seats.

Thus the right of the Depressed Classes to special representation in the Legislature had become a principle which was not only accepted but adopted in the Constitution. So well was this principle recognized that it had been extended even to District Local Boards, School Boards and Municipalities.

A claim which had been given legal recognition in 1919 and which had thereby become a right and which had become perfected by user the representatives of the Depressed Classes felt could not be disputed by any body. There was no reason to fear that the Congress would come forward seriously to dispute this right of the Depressed Classes. Because although the Nehru Committee in 1929 in the Swaraj Constitution which it was asked to frame had denied this right to the Depressed Classes, the report of that Committee was not binding on the Congress. The Congress was bound by nothing except its own resolution which was passed in 1920, at its Nagpur Session to allay the fears of the Sikhs, and which had declared its policy to treat all minorities alike in the matter of representation in the Legislature<sup>1</sup>.

The representatives of the Depressed Classes were therefore justified in hoping that their demand would go through without any difficulty whatsoever from any quarters.

At the first Round Table Conference things went very smoothly. There was no trouble of any kind and although there was no agreement on the minorities question, the right of the Depressed Classes to special representation was accepted by all sections that were represented at the Round Table Conference. The conclusions reached by the Minorities Sub-Committee were embodied in its report which

<sup>1</sup> The text of the resolution is as follows :

*The Sikhs*

“In view of the fact that misunderstanding exist among the Sikhs as to the position of their community in the future polity of India, this Congress assures the Sikhs that their interests will receive the same protection in any Scheme of Swaraj for India as is provided for Mahomedan and other minorities in provinces other than the Punjab.”

was presented to the General Conference. The following are the extracts from that report :

“There was general agreement with the recommendation of Sub-Committee No. II (Provincial Constitution) that the representation on the Provincial Executives of important minority communities was a matter of the greatest practical importance for the successful working of the new constitution, and it was also agreed that, on the same grounds, Mohammadans should be represented on the Federal Executive. On behalf of the smaller minorities a claim was put forward for their representation, either individually or collectively, on the Provincial and Federal Executives, or that, if this should be found impossible, in each Cabinet there should be a Minister specially charged with the duty of protecting minority interests. (Dr. Ambedkar and Sardar Ujjal Singh would add the words “and other important minorities” after the word Mohammadans in line 6).

The difficulty of working jointly responsible Executives under such a scheme as this was pointed out.”

“The discussion in the Sub-Committee has enabled the Delegates to face the difficulties involved in the schemes put up, and though no general agreement has been reached, its necessity has become more apparent than ever.”

“It has also been made clear that the British Government cannot, with any chance of agreement, impose upon the communities an electoral principle which, in some feature or other, would be met by their opposition. It was therefore plain, that, failing an agreement, separate electorates, with all their drawbacks and difficulties, would have to be retained as the basis of the electoral arrangements under the new constitution. From this the question of proportions would arise. Under these circumstances, the claims of the Depressed Classes will have to be considered adequately.”

“The Sub-Committee, therefore, recommend that the Conference should register an opinion that it was desirable that an agreement upon the claims made to it should be reached, and that the negotiations should be continued between the representatives concerned, with a request that the result of their efforts should be reported to those engaged in the next stage of these negotiations.”

Mr. Gandhi was not present at the first Round Table Conference because the Congress had boycotted it. He came for the Second Round Table Conference. What attitude did Mr. Gandhi take to this claim of the Depressed Classes ?

Every body expected that Mr. Gandhi would be more interested in seeing that the constitution that was likely to emerge from these deliberations and negotiations was a constitution which gave India *Purna Swaraj* i.e. complete independence and he would not interest himself in so unimportant a subject as the allocation of seats among the different minorities. But events completely falsified these hopes. Mr. Gandhi completely gave up his fight against British Imperialism altogether. He forgot that he had come with a mandate<sup>1</sup> to secure a constitution which contained *Purna Swaraj*. He left that issue and started fighting the minorities and what is so strange he concentrated all his fire upon the representatives of the Untouchables for daring to put forth the claim for special representation. Mr. Gandhi opposed tooth and nail the representatives of the Depressed Classes. He was not even prepared to look at their claim. He was annoyed at their impudence and the whole Conference was astonished by his opposition. They could not understand how a man like Mr. Gandhi who posed himself as the friend of the Untouchables could in fact be so great an enemy of their interests. His friends were completely baffled. Mr. Gandhi was prepared to recognize a similar right claimed by the Musalmans and to the Sikhs and although he was not prepared to recognize a similar claim by Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians he was not going to oppose their claim. Mr. Gandhi's friends could not understand how he could deny a similar right to the Untouchables. The Mohamedans, Sikhs, Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians were far better off than the Untouchables. The former were economically far better placed. The latter were poorest of the poor. The former were educationally advanced, the latter were educationally most backward. The former were socially well respected, the latter were socially despised. The former enjoyed a position of free citizens. The latter were suffering from certain disabilities. The former were not subjected to social tyranny and social boycott but social tyranny and social boycott were the every day lot of the latter. Having regard to this difference in status there could never be any doubt that if there was any section of the Indian people whose case called forth

<sup>1</sup> The following resolution embodies the mandate which the Congress imposed upon Mr. Gandhi when he was chosen by the Congress as its delegate. (This was a resolution passed at the Karachi Congress).

"This Congress, having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of *Purna Swaraj*, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal, and in particular so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, and to have a scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England and the right to either party to end the partnership at will; provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India."

special protection, they were the Untouchables. When his European friends tried thus to argue with Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Gandhi used to fly into temper and his relations with two of the best of them to my knowledge had become quite strained on this account.

Mr. Gandhi's anger was largely due to the fact he could give no rational answer which could convince his opponents that his opposition to the claim of the Depressed Classes was sincere and was founded upon the best interests of the Depressed Classes. He nowhere gave a consistent explanation of his opposition to the Depressed Classes. Reading his speeches in London while he was there one can see that he was using three arguments in support of his position. Speaking as a member of the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi said :

"The Congress has from its very commencement taken up the cause of the so-called "untouchables". There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade had dedicated his energies, among his many activities. Headed by him, you will find in the programme of the Social Conference, reform in connection with the Untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920, the Congress took a large step, and brought the question of the removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, and made it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim Unity, thereby meaning unity amongst all classes, to be indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of the curse of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom."

At the minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi used another argument. He said :

"I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables is to me the "unkindest cut of all". It means the perpetual barsinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself, in my own person, to represent the vast mass of the untouchables. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the untouchables, their vote, and that I would top the poll. And I would work from one end of India to the other to tell the untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar-sinister, which is the shame, not of them, but of orthodox Hinduism. Let this committee and let the whole world

know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who are pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. We do not want on our register and on our census, untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Moslems, so may Europeans. Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather than Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar, and for his desire to see the untouchables uplifted, with all my regard for his ability I must say, in all humility, that here is a great wrong under which he has laboured and, perhaps, the bitter experiences he has undergone have for the moment warped his judgment. It hurts me to have to say this but I would be untrue to the cause of untouchables, which is as dear to me as life itself, if I did not say it. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. I am speaking with a due sense of responsibility, when I say it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of untouchables in India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever, I do not mind the untouchables being converted into Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are these two divisions set forth in the villages. Those who speak of political rights of untouchables do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life."

At a meeting at the Friends House in London Mr. Gandhi relied upon quite a different argument. He is reported to have said<sup>1</sup>:

"I have told you what is agitating my mind. You may take the Congress to be incapable of bartering away the minorities rights. The untouchables, I know, as one can claim to know. It would be equal to killing them if separate electorates were given them. They are at present in the hands of the superior classes. They can suppress them completely and wreck vengeance upon the untouchables who are at their mercy and it is because I want to prevent that thing happening that I would fight the demand for separate electorates for them. Whilst I am saying this, I know, I am opening out my shame to you. But in the existing state of things how could I invite destruction for them? I would not be guilty of that crime."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Young India—Nov. 19, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> From this, one is likely to get the impression that Mr. Gandhi was opposed only to separate electorates and that Mr. Gandhi was prepared to give to the untouchables joint electorates AND RESERVED seats being granted to the untouchables was made clear by him at the Round Table Conference. I give below the following extract from his speech in the minorities sub-Committee :

"I would like to repeat what I have said before, that while the Congress will always accept any solution that may be acceptable to the Hindus, the Musalmans and the Sikhs, the Congress will be no party to special reservation or special electorates for any other minorities."

Dr. Ambedkar, as able as he is, has unhappily lost his head over this question. I repudiate his claim to represent them.”

None of his arguments carried any conviction. Indeed they could not. They were all spacious and they had the ring of special pleadings.

His first argument, that the Congress was pledged to look after the untouchables, to remove their untouchability—Was this argument founded in truth? Mr. Gandhi has been telling the world that the whole body of Congress has been pledged to remove untouchability and his friends have been giving him credit for getting the Congress to do what the Congress before him was not prepared to do. I am surprised how so false a view could have been given such a wide currency. I have read and re-read the Resolution passed by the Congress in 1920 at Nagpur which is the basis of such an assertion as is made by Mr. Gandhi and his friends, and I am sure every one who reads that resolution will agree that the text of the resolution gives no warrant for such an assertion. The resolution is a very clever piece of Gandhian tactics. Mr. Gandhi has been very anxious from the very beginning to keep the untouchables a close preserve of the Hindus. He did not want Musalmans or Christians to be interested in them. He wanted that the Untouchables who were attached to the British should be detached from them and attached to the Hindus. The second object could be achieved only if the resolution in favour of the removal of untouchability was passed from the Congress platform. To achieve this it was necessary to confine this duty only to the Hindus. This is what the resolution does. It is a clever move on the part of a cunning politician. The resolution does not put the Congress as a whole behind this resolution. Secondly, in what it does there is nothing that is obligatory in it. There is no pledge, there is no vow. There is only moral exhortation. It only recommends to the Hindus that removal of untouchability is their duty. Once Mr. Gandhi tried to alter the conditions for membership of the Congress. Instead of the payment of four annas per annum being the condition of membership Mr. Gandhi wanted to lay down two conditions : (1) removal of untouchability and (2) spinning yarns. Congressmen were prepared to accept spinning of yarn as a condition of membership. But they were not prepared to accept removal of untouchability as a condition. Congressmen told Mr. Gandhi that if he insisted upon it all Congress Committees will have to be closed down. So strong was the opposition that Mr. Gandhi had to withdraw his proposal. That being the case for Mr. Gandhi to have urged before the Round Table Conference that the Congress was pledged to remove untouchability and that the untouchables could safely be left to the mercy of the Hindus shows that even Mr. Gandhi is capable of economising truth to a vanishing point.

The next argument of Mr. Gandhi that the removal of untouchability was made by the Congress a condition precedent to Swaraj urged to prove the sincerity of the Congress could not be taken at its face value by the obvious insincerity of the Congress and Mr. Gandhi. Untouchability was as it had been, yet the Congress and Mr. Gandhi had come forth to demand independence. This was enough to show that Mr. Gandhi did not believe in what he said on this point. No one in India, at any rate no one from among the Untouchables believed in this declaration of Mr. Gandhi and his Congress that for them removal of untouchability was a condition precedent to Swaraj. Long before the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi was questioned to test his sincerity on two occasions and the answers he gave on both left no doubt that even he did not believe this declaration.

In 1920 a correspondent asked Mr. Gandhi the following question<sup>1</sup>:

“Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs?”

To this Mr. Gandhi gave the following reply :

“A correspondent indignantly asks me in a pathetic letter reproduced elsewhere what I am doing for the (untouchables). I have given the letter with the correspondent’s own heading. ‘Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs?’ This is a proper question reasonably put. And if a member of a slave nation could deliver the suppressed classes from their slavery without freeing myself from my own, I would so do today. But it is an impossible task .....”

Does this show that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress were sincere when they said that removal of untouchability was a condition precedent to Swaraj? That this is not the argument of a sincere man is shown by the fact that at a later time Mr. Gandhi himself has ridiculed a correspondent who urged upon Mr. Gandhi the desirability of keeping aside the question of the Untouchables until the Hindus had won Swaraj.

The second occasion on which Mr. Gandhi was questioned was when he went to Dandi in March in 1930 to make Salt Satyagraha contrary to law. Some Untouchables went to Dandi and questioned him. They asked him what happened to his declaration that removal of untouchability was condition precedent to Swaraj. Mr. Gandhi’s reply as reported to me was this :

“The Untouchables are a part of a whole. I am working for the whole and I therefore believe that I am therefore working for the Untouchables who are a part of the whole.”

<sup>1</sup> Young India, 27th Oct. 1920.

There is nothing to prove this except what was reported to me by those who had been to see Mr. Gandhi at Dandi. But I have no doubt that Mr. Gandhi must have said something to that effect. For what he is reported to have said tallies with what he has said in his reply in *Young India* referred to above in reply to the same correspondent. This is what Mr. Gandhi then said :

“..... though the *Panchama* Problem is as dear to me as life itself, I rest satisfied with the exclusive attention to non-cooperation. I feel sure that the greater includes the less.”

Are these the answers of a sincere man ? Can a sincere man believe that the untouchables are a part of a whole.

As to his argument that special representation to the untouchables would perpetuate the existing separation between the touchables and the untouchables was an argument which was absolutely hollow. The way to remove untouchability is to introduce intermarriage and interdining. The way to remove the disabilities of the untouchables is to admit them to the use of the common well and common school. It is difficult to understand that special representation can come in the way of intermarriage, interdining and the use of a common well and a common school. On the other hand the introduction of these would be only way of disproving the necessity of special representation. Had Mr. Gandhi and the Congress done anything in this direction ? The explanatory note added to the Bardoli resolution shows how far Gandhi and the Congress were prepared to go in this direction. The note says :

“Whilst therefore where the prejudice against the untouchables is still strong in places, separate schools and separate wells must be maintained out of Congress funds, every effort should be made to draw such children to national schools and to persuade the people to allow the untouchables to use the common wells.”

Can it lie in the mouth of persons who want to maintain separate wells, separate schools to say that they object to separate representation because it will cause separation ? It is only persons who are bent on breaking down barriers who can speak against separate representation and ask to be believed in the sincerity of their argument.

Mr. Gandhi's last argument was a fantastic argument. If the superior classes can suppress the untouchables and wreck vengeance upon them then there is all the greater reason why they should be given special representation so that they may protest themselves against the tyranny of the superior classes. Mr. Gandhi had become desperate and had lost his equanimity and balance to such an extent that he did not know where his arguments would lead him. In using this argument he

evidently forgot that he was arguing for the perpetual enslavement of the Untouchables by the Hindus. Mr. Gandhi's argument in short was "don't ask for freedom, because it will enrage your master and he will illtreat you". If such an argument had been advanced by any one else he would have been told that he was purile and insincere.

Having failed to demolish the justice of the claim of the Untouchables Mr. Gandhi decided to isolate the representatives of the Depressed Classes, to see that they got no support from any other quarter, Gandhi planned to break a possible compact between the Depressed Classes and the Muslims. A part of the plan was to win over the Musalmans to his side and for that purpose he offered to enter into a pact with them. A copy of this pact which was circulated among the Muslim delegates came into my hands and I reproduce the same here. (*This text is reproduced below from Dr. Ambedkar's "What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables", pp. 72-73 which is not typed in the MS.—Ed.*)

#### "DRAFT OF GANDHI-MUSLIM PACT"<sup>1</sup>

##### *Muslim Delegation to the Round Table Conference<sup>2</sup>*

Tel. : VICTORIA 2360

Telegrams "COURTLIKE" LONDON

QUEEN'S HOUSE,

57, ST. JAMES' COURT,

BUCKINGHAM GATE,

LONDON, S. W. 1

6th October 1931.

The following proposals were discussed by Mr. Gandhi and the Muslim Delegation at 10 p.m. last night. They are divided into two parts—The proposals made by the Muslims for safeguarding their rights and the proposals made by Mr. Gandhi regarding the Congress policy. They are given herewith as approved by Mr. Gandhi, and placed for submission to the Muslim Delegation for their opinion.

#### MUSLIM PROPOSALS

1. In the Punjab and Bengal bare majority of one per cent. of Musalmans but the question of whether it should be by means of joint electorates and reservation of 51 per cent. of the whole house should be referred to the Musalman voters before the new constitution comes into force and their verdict should be accepted.

#### MR. GANDHI'S PROPOSALS

1. That the Franchise should be on the basis of adult suffrage.

2. *No special reservations to any other community save Sikhs and Hindu Minorities. (Italics are not in the original).*

<sup>1</sup> This document was printed by me in my *Thoughts on Pakistan* as Appendix in 1939. It was the first time it saw the light of the day. Its genuineness has never been questioned. I was able to get a copy from a Hindu Delegate to the Round Table Conference who was privileged by the Muslim League to share the secret.

<sup>2</sup> 'This shows that the document was typed on the stationery of the Muslim League Delegation.'

MUSLIM PROPOSALS

2. In other provinces where the Musalmans are in a minority the present weightage enjoyed by them to continue, but whether the seats should be reserved to a joint electorate, or whether they should have separate electorates should be determined by the Musalman voters by a referendum under the new constitution, and their verdict should be accepted.

3. That the Musalman representatives to the Central Legislature in both the houses should be 26 per cent. of the total number of the British India representatives, and 7 per cent. at least by convention should be Musalmans, out of the quota that may be assigned to Indian States, that is to say, one-third of the whole house when taken together.

4. That the residuary power should vest in the federating Provinces of British India.

5. That the other points as follows being agreed to :

1. Sindh.<sup>1</sup>

2. N.W.F.P.<sup>2</sup>

3. Services.<sup>3</sup>

4. Cabinet.<sup>4</sup>

5. Fundamental rights and safeguards for religion and culture.

6. Safeguards against legislation affecting any community.

MR. GANDHI'S PROPOSALS

The Congress demands:

A. Complete Independence.

B. Complete control over the defence immediately.

C. Complete control over external affairs.

D. Complete control over Finance.

E. Investigation of public debts and other obligations by an independent tribunal.

F. As in the case of a partnership, right of either party to terminate it.

<sup>1</sup> Stands for separation of Sindh.

<sup>2</sup> Stands for Provincial Autonomy and Responsible Government for the N.W.F. Province.

<sup>3</sup> Stands for Representation in Services.

<sup>4</sup> Stands for Representation in the Cabinet.

This is the agreement which Mr. Gandhi was prepared to enter with the Musalmans. By this agreement Mr. Gandhi was prepared to give to the Musalmans the fourteen points they had been demanding. In return Mr. Gandhi wanted the Musalmans among other things to agree to continue the benefit of the principle of special representation to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Some one might ask what is wrong in such an agreement. Has not the Congress said that they will not agree to extend communal representation to others besides these three ? Such a view cannot but be treated as a superficial view. Those who see nothing wrong in it must answer two questions. First is this. Where was the necessity for Mr. Gandhi to get the Musalmans to agree to the Congress policy of not extending the benefit of special representation to other minorities and the untouchables. Mr. Gandhi could have said as the Congress had been saying to the other minorities he was not prepared to agree to their claim. Why did he want the Musalmans to join him in resisting their claim ? And if this was not his object why did he make it a term of the agreement which the Musalmans were to perform in return for what he agreed to do for them.

Secondly why did Mr. Gandhi come forward to give the Musalmans their fourteen demands at this particular juncture. These fourteen political demands of the Musalmans rightly or wrongly were rejected by all. They were rejected by the Hindu Maha-Sabha. They were rejected by the Simon Commission. They were rejected by the Congress. There was no support for these 14 demands of the Musalmans from any quarter whatsoever. Why did Mr. Gandhi become ready to grant them except with the object of buying the Musalmans so that with their help he could more effectively resist the demand of the other minorities and the untouchables ?

In my view Mr. Gandhi was not engaged in making any bona-fide agreement. He was inducing the Musalmans to join in a conspiracy with him to resist the claim of the smaller minorities and the untouchables. It was not an agreement with the Musalmans. It was a plot against the Untouchables. It was worse, it was a stab in the back.

This so-called agreement fell through because among other reasons it was impossible for the Mahomedans to agree to the exclusion of the Untouchables from the benefit of special representation. How could the Muslims agree to such a project ? They were fighting for special representation for Muslims. They were not only fighting for special representation, they were fighting for weightage in representation. They knew that the case for Muslims rested only on the ground that India was once ruled by the Musalmans, that they had political importance to maintain and as Hindus are likely to discriminate

against Muslims in elections to the Legislatures, there may not be sufficient Muslims returned to the Legislature, that the Muslims will sink politically and that to prevent such a calamity they must be given special representation. As against this one ground in favour of Muslims there were a hundred grounds in favour of the claim by the Untouchables. With what face could the Musalmans oppose this demand of the Untouchables ?

The Musalmans had not lost their balance or their sense of shame. They refused to be party to such a deal—a deal which they could not publicly defend. Mr. Gandhi still kept on pestering the Musalmans. When he could not induce them to accept the price he offered—namely the grant of fourteen points—because they felt that the world would not call it price but would call it the wages of sin, Mr. Gandhi sought to appeal to the religious scruples of the Musalmans. The day before the *13th November*<sup>1</sup> 1931 when the *minorities pact*<sup>2</sup> was presented to the Minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi took a copy of the Koran and went to the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly where the Rt. Hon. H. H. Aga Khan was staying to meet the Muslim delegates who had assembled there. To Muslim delegates he asked—“Why are you dividing the Hindu Community which you are doing by recognizing the claim of the Untouchables for separate representation ? Does the Koran sanction such a deed ? Show me where it does ? If you cannot, will you not stop perpetrating such a crime upon your sister Community ?” I do not know how the Muslim delegates answered this question of Mr. Gandhi. It must have been a very difficult question for them to answer. Such a contingency could not have been present to the mind of the Holy Prophet and he could not have provided for it specifically. His followers knew that contingencies would arise for which he had given no directions and they had therefore asked him what they should do, and the Prophet had given them this general direction. He said to them, “in such a case see what the Kaffirs are doing and do just the opposite of it”<sup>3</sup>. Whether the Muslim delegates relied upon this to answer Mr. Gandhi is more than I can say. What I have stated is what I have heard and my source is the most authentic source. Here again Mr. Gandhi failed because the next day in the open Committee when Mr. Gandhi let loose his fury against the Untouchables, the Mahomedans were silent.

What can one say of this conduct of Mr. Gandhi ? Mr. Bernard Shaw has said that the British do everything on principle.

<sup>1</sup> See Ambedkar, B. R., “What Congress and Gandhi have been done to the Untouchables”, p. 67.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* . Appendix III, pp. 307-11.

<sup>3</sup> See Koran.

Similarly Mr. Gandhi says he does everything on the principle of morality and good faith. Can the acts of Mr. Gandhi be justified by tests of justice and good faith? I wonder. Let me state a few facts. Before I left for London for the first Round Table Conference I had met Mr. Gandhi in Bombay. At that meeting I had informed Mr. Gandhi that at the Round Table Conference I would be asking for special representation for the Untouchables. Mr. Gandhi would not consent. But he also told me that he would not oppose. I felt that it was just a case of difference of opinion. At the second Round Table Conference I met Mr. Gandhi twice, once alone and second time along with the representatives of the smaller minorities. At the first meeting Mr. Gandhi was spinning and I was talking. I spoke for an hour during the whole of which he did not utter even a word. At the end he just said this much.

‘I have now heard you. I will think over what you have said.’ At the second interview he again heard me and the representatives of the smaller minorities and he told me that he was not prepared to agree to the claim I was making on behalf of the Untouchables. Thereafter the Minorities Sub-Committee was convened on 28th September 1931. At the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 1st October 1931, the following motion was made by Mr. Gandhi :

“‘Prime Minister, after consultation with His Highness the Aga Khan and other Muslim friends last night, we came to the conclusion that the purpose for which we meet here would be better served if a week’s adjournment was asked for. I have not had the opportunity of consulting my other colleagues, but I have no doubt that they will also agree in the proposal I am making.”

The proposal was seconded by the Aga Khan. I at once got up and objected to the motion and in support of my objection made the following statement\*<sup>1</sup> :

“‘*Dr. Ambedkar*: I do not wish to create any difficulty in our making every possible attempt to arrive at some solution of the problem with which this Committee has to deal, and if a solution can be arrived at by the means suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, I, for one, will have no objection to that proposal.

“‘But there is just this one difficulty with which I, as representing the Depressed Classes, am faced. I do not know what sort of committee Mahatma Gandhi proposes to appoint to consider this question during the period of adjournment, but I suppose that the Depressed Classes will be represented on this Committee.

*Mr. Gandhi* : Without doubt.

\*<sup>1</sup> Following extracts up to p. 305 ending with words ‘informal meetings’ are reproduced from “What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables”. pp. 60-62. not typed in the MS.— Ed.

*Dr. Ambedkar* : Thank you. But I do not know whether in the position in which I am today it would be of any use for me to work on the proposed Committee. And for this reason. 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 Muhammadans 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 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 a firm and well considered attitude. What I would like to say is that unless at the outset I know that the Depressed Classes are going to be recognised as a community entitled to political recognition in the future Constitution of India, I do not know whether it will serve any purpose for me to join the committee that is proposed by Mahatma Gandhi to be constituted to go into this matter. Unless, therefore, I have an assurance that this Committee will start with the assumption that all those communities which the Minorities Sub-Committee last year recommended as fit for recognition in the future constitution of India will be included, I do not know that I can wholeheartedly support the proposition for adjournment, or that I can whole-heartedly co-operate with the Committee that is going to be nominated. That is what I wish to be clear about.

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“*Dr. Ambedkar* : I should like to make my position further clear. It seems that there has been a certain misunderstanding regarding what I said. It is not that I object to adjournment; it is not that I object to serving on any Committee that might be appointed to consider the question. What I would like to know before I enter upon this Committee, if they give me the privilege of serving on it, is : What is the thing that this Committee is going to consider ? Is it only going to consider the question of the Muhammadans *vis-a-vis* the Hindus ? Is it going to consider the question of the Muhammadans *vis-a-vis* the Sikhs in the Punjab ? Or is it going to consider the question of the Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the Depressed Classes ?

“If we understand perfectly well before we start that this committee will not merely concern itself with the question of the Hindus and the Muhammadans, of the Hindus and the Sikhs, but will also take upon itself the responsibility of considering the case of the Depressed Classes, the Anglo-Indians and the Christians, I am perfectly willing to allow this adjournment resolution to be passed without any objection. But I do want to say this, that if I am to be left out in the cold and if this interval is going to be utilised for the purposes of solving the Hindu-Muslim question, I would press that the Minorities Committee should itself grapple with the question and consider it, rather than allow the question to be dealt with by some other informal Committee for arriving at a solution of the communal question in respect of some minorities only.”

The Prime Minister as Chairman of the Committee called upon Mr. Gandhi to explain his position and Mr. Gandhi made the following statement in reply<sup>1</sup>:

“Prime Minister and friends, I see that there is some kind of misunderstanding with reference to the scope of the work that some of us have set before ourselves. I fear that Dr. Ambedkar, Colonel Gidney and other friends are unnecessarily nervous about what is going to happen. Who am I to deny political status to any single interest or class or even individual in India? As a representative of the Congress I should be unworthy of the trust that has been reposed in me by the Congress if I were guilty of sacrificing a single national interest. I have undoubtedly given expression to my own views on these points. I must confess that I hold to those views also. But there are ways and ways of guaranteeing protection to every single interest. It will be for those of us who will be putting our heads together to try to evolve a scheme. Nobody would be hampered in pressing his own views on the members of this very informal conference or meeting.

“I do not think, therefore, that anybody need be afraid as to being able to express his opinion or carrying his opinion also. Mine will be there equal to that of every one of us; it will carry no greater weight; I have no authority behind me to carry my opinion against the opinion of anybody. I have simply given expression to my views in the national interest, and I shall give expression to these views whenever they are opportune. It will be for you, it is for you to reject or accept these opinions. Therefore please disburse your minds, to everyone of us, of the idea that there is going to be any

<sup>1</sup> See “What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables”, p. 62.

(both the above extracts are not mentioned in the MS).—Ed.

steam-rolling in the Conference and the informal meetings that I have adumbrated. But if you think that this is one way of coming closer together than by sitting stiffly at this table, you will not carry this adjournment motion but give your whole-hearted co-operation to the proposal that I have made in connection with these informal meetings.”

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I then withdrew my objection.

Now here is a definite word given by Mr. Gandhi in open Conference—namely that if all others agreed to recognize the claim of the Untouchables he would not object. And after having given this word Mr. Gandhi went about inducing the Musalmans not to recognize the claim of the Untouchables and to bribe them to resile and take back their plighted word!! Is this good faith or is this treachery? If this is not treachery I wonder what else could be called treachery.

I was pilloried because I signed what is called the Minorities Pact. I was depicted as a traitor. I have never been ashamed of my signature to the pact. I only pity the ignorance of my critics. They forget that the minorities could have taken the same attitude that Ulster took towards Irish Home Rule. Redmond was prepared to offer any safeguard to Ulstermen. The Ulstermen's reply was, “Damn your safeguards we don't wish to be ruled by you”. The Hindus ought to thank the minorities that they did not take any such attitude. All the Pact contained were safeguards and nothing more. Instead of thanking them Mr. Gandhi poured his vials of wrath upon the pact and its authors. He said :

“Coming to this document<sup>1</sup>, I accept the thanks that have been given to me by Sir Hubert Carr. Had it not been for the remarks that I made when I shouldered that burden, and had it not been for my utter failure to bring about a solution, Sir Hubert Carr rightly says he would not have found the very admirable solution that he has been able, in common with the other minorities, to present to this Committee for consideration and finally for the consideration and approval of His Majesty's Government.”

“I will not deprive Sir Hubert Carr and his associates of the feeling of satisfaction that evidently actuates them, but, in my opinion, what they have done is to sit by the carcass, and they have performed the laudable feat of dissecting that carcass.”

<sup>1</sup> Reference is to the Minorities Pact.

Had Mr. Gandhi any right to be indignant ? Had he any right to feel morally offended ? Was he entitled to throw stones at the Minorities ? Mr. Gandhi forgot that he was as much a sinner as the Minorities and worse he was a sinner without a sense of justice. For if the Minorities were dividing the carcass what was Mr. Gandhi himself doing ? He too was busy in dividing the carcass. The only difference between Mr. Gandhi and the Minorities was this—Mr. Gandhi wanted that the carcass should be divided among three only, Hindus, Musalmans and Sikhs. The Minorities wanted that others also should be given a share, and which of these two can claim to have justice on its side, Mr. Gandhi who wanted that the division of the carcass should be to strong sturdy well-nourished wolves or the minorities who pressed that the lean and hungry lambs should also be given a morsel ? Surely in this controversy justice was not on the side of Mr. Gandhi.

Mr. Gandhi was the man who claimed to be the Champion of the Untouchables better than those who belonged to the Untouchables themselves. Claiming to be their champion he refused without any regard to morality, justice and necessity, their claim to representation which could be their only way to protection against social tyranny and social oppression while he was prepared to give to the Musalmans, the Hindus and the Sikhs a goodly share of political power. When others far better placed were claiming for power, Mr. Gandhi wanted the Untouchables to live under his providence and that of the Congress without any means of protection knowing full well that their lives were exposed to danger and humiliation every moment and when he came to know that the Untouchables were seeking outside aid in support of their claim Mr. Gandhi resorted to a terrible act of treachery. Were the Untouchables unjustified in presenting to the world their charge sheet against Mr. Gandhi when he arrived in Bombay from the Round Table Conference ?