

CHAPTER IV

AN ABJECT SURRENDER

Congress Beats An Inglorious Retreat

I

THE Poona Pact was signed on the 24th September 1932. On 25th September 1932, a public meeting of the Hindus was held in Bombay to accord to it their support. At that meeting the following resolution was passed :—

“This Conference confirms the Poona agreement arrived at between the leaders of the Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes on September 24, 1932, and trusts that the British Government will withdraw its decision creating separate electorates within the Hindu community and accept the agreement in full. The Conference urges that immediate action be taken by Government so as to enable Mahatma Gandhi to break his fast within the terms of his vow and before it is too late. The Conference appeals to the leaders of the communities concerned to realize the implications of the agreement and of this resolution and to make earnest endeavour to fulfil them.

“This Conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an Untouchable by reason of his birth, and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads, and all other public institutions. This right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest Acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.

“It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called Untouchable Classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.”

This resolution was followed by a feverish activity on the part of the Hindus to throw open Temples to the Untouchables. No week passed in which the *Harijan* a weekly paper started by Mr. Gandhi which did not publish a long list of temples thrown open, wells thrown open and schools thrown open

to the Untouchables set out under special column headed "Week to Week" on the first page. As samples I produce below these "Week to Week" columns from two issues from the *Harijan*.

'Harijan' of 18th February 1933

WEEK TO WEEK

(During the Week ending 7th February 1933)

TEMPLES THROWN OPEN

One temple recently built at a cost of a lakh and half rupees in North Calcutta.

One temple in village Bhapur, district Ganjam, Madras.

One Thakurdwar temple at Naurania, in Jullundar, Punjab.

WELLS OPENED

One Municipal well, at Guriapur in Jaipur town, district Cuttack, Orissa.

Two wells in Wazirpura and Nikigali, Agra, U.P.

In Trichinopoly (Madras) an orthodox Brahmin has offered expenses necessary for digging three wells for the common use of Harijans and caste Hindus.

SCHOOLS STARTED

A free school in Bachrota, district Meerut, U.P.

One school at Metah district in Rajputana.

Three schools at Fatehpur, Chemun and Abhaypur in Jaipur State, Rajputana.

One school at Fatehghar, district Farukhabad, U.P.

Three night schools in Muttra, U.P.

Three night schools in

Gorakhpur Town, U.P.

One night school in Hata Tehsil, District Gorakhpur, U.P.

One night school at Sak-honia.

INDIAN STATES

1. The Palitana State (Kathiawar) Assembly has passed by a large majority three resolutions relating to the facilities to be given to the Harijans.

2. A standing committee has been appointed by the Government of Sandhur State, Madras, to concert measures calculated to ameliorate the condition of the Harijans in the State.

GENERAL

1. The Harijans in various villages near Kashia in Gorakhpur district have given up carrion eating.

2. On the occasion of the 'Basantpanchami' festival 'Basantotsava' was celebrated at Muzaffarpur (Bihar) under the auspices of the Harijan Seva Sangh in the temple of Sri Chaturbhujnathji in which all castes of Hindus took part.

A. V. THAKKAR,

General Secretary.

Sjt. V. R. Shinde, President, All-India Anti-Untouchability League and Founder-Trustee of the Depressed Mission Society of India, Poona, has addressed an open letter to the members of the Legislative Assembly on Sjt. Ranga Iyer's Untouchability Bills, strongly urging them to support the two measures.

In Taikalwadi in 'G' Ward of Bombay, there was an outbreak of fire recently which caused very serious damage to the huts and belongings of 48 Mahar families. The President of the Bombay Provincial Board of the Servants

of Untouchables Society sanctioned Rs. 500 for giving relief to these families, and the relief was organised by a sub-Committee of the 'G' Ward Committee of the Society. A sum of Rs. 402-8 was distributed as an urgent measure of help to the 48 families, containing in all 163 persons.

The Bombay Government has issued orders that requests from local bodies for assignment of Government lands for wells, tanks, dharamshalas, etc., should not be granted except on condition that all castes alike will have equal use of such wells, tanks, etc.

'Harijan' of July 15, 1933

WEEK TO WEEK

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Three reading rooms for Harijans have been opened in the North Arcot District by the S.U.S.

In the Madura District S.U. S. workers got Harijan children admitted into the Viraganur taluq board school.

Banians, towels, slates, etc. were distributed free to the children of the Melacheri school established by the Madura S.U.S.

Two Harijan students of Ramjas College, Delhi, have been allowed free scholarship and free lodging and one a free scholarship by Principal Thadani of the College.

One night school for adult Harijans was opened under

the auspices of the Lahore Harijan Seva Sangh in the Harijan quarters outside Mochi Gate. The opening ceremony was performed by Mrs. Brij Lal Nehru.

It has been decided to start one more hostel for Harijan students in Brahmana Kodur (Guntur).

The East Godavery District Harijan Seva Sangham has resolved to start a hostel for Harijan Girl Students studying in Coconada. A sum of Rs. 630, 20 bags of rice, fuel necessary for one year, have been already received as donations for the hostel, which will be started with 15 students.

The Anantapur District Harijan Seva Sangam has

decided to start a hostel for Harijau students in Uravakonda. Some provisions and money have already been collected and it is intended to start the hostel with 20 students.

Owing to the unremitting efforts of the District Harijan Seva Sangham, Guntur, Harijan boys have been allowed into the savarna schools in a manner of villages and towns.

WELLS

Three wells in Coimbatore District which were in a bad condition, were cleaned and made available for use.

The District Board President, South Arcot, has promised to dig four wells in *cheries* selected by the S.U.S.

During the fortnight ending 31-5-33, no less than 125 wells in all were opened to Harijans and 5 new ones constructed in Andhradesh.

GENERAL

A shop has been opened in a bustee near Hogg Market (Calcutta) where Doms live, for supplying them with articles of food at cheap rates.

Rs. 60 has been paid by the S.U.S. Bengal for paying up the debts of a Harijan family at Bibi Bagan bustee (Calcutta).

The Amrita Samaj (Calcutta) has given service to some Harijans.

450 Harijans of Bolpur (Birbhum) have given up drinking habits and 1,275 Muchis have taken a vow not to take beef.

Three new district centres of S.U.S. have been opened during the month in Bankura, Murshidabad, and 24 Parganas.

Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Tinnevelley, Salem. Dindigul, North Arcot and Madura have all taken up the idea of a Gandhi Harijan Service corps for direct and personal service in the cheris.

Alandural, a Harijan village 12 miles from Coimbatore was given Rs. 25 worth of grain, Rs. 100 worth of cloth and Rs. 5 worth of oil, as relief after a fire in the village.

A Harijau Youth League has been formed in Chidambaram.

A shop to supply provisions at cost price to the Harijans has been set up in Tenali and is being made use of by them.

A sum of Rs. 110 was spent in giving help for rebuilding houses of Harijans in Valanna Palem (East Kistna) recently destroyed by fire.

A sum of Rs. 100 was contributed by the Provincial Committee towards the relief of Harijans in Yellamanchili (Vizag) who lost their houses by a fire. The local Harijan Seva Sangham is endeavouring to erect new houses for the Harijans in a better locality and is collecting donations—in cash and building materials.

One Harijan has been employed as a servant by a savarna gentleman in Gollapalem.

When the owners or trustees of temples were not prepared to throw open their temples to the Untouchables, the Hindus actually started *satyagraha* against them to compel them to fall in line. The satyagraha by Mr. Kelappan for securing entry to the Untouchables in the temple at Guruvayur was a part of this agitation. To force the hands of the trustees of the temples who had the courage to stand against the current, many Hindu legislators came forward, tumbling over one another, with Bills requiring the trustees to throw open temples to the Untouchables if a referendum showed that the majority of the Hindu worshippers voted in favour. There was a spate of such Bills and a race among legislators to take the first place. There was a Temple Entry Bill by Dr. Subbaroyan of the Madras Legislative Council. There were four Bills introduced in the Central Assembly. One was by Mr. C. S. Ranga Iyer, another by Mr. Harabilas Sarda, a third by Mr. Lalchand Navalrai, and a fourth one by Mr. M. R. Jayakar.

In this agitation Mr. Gandhi also joined. Before 1932, Mr. Gandhi was opposed to allow Untouchables to enter Hindu Temples. To quote his own words Mr. Gandhi said¹:—

“How is it possible that the Antyajas (Untouchables) should have the right to enter all the existing temples ? As long as the law of caste and ashram has the chief place in Hindu Religion, to say that every Hindu can enter every temple is a thing that is not possible today.”

His joining the movement for Temple entry must therefore remain a matter of great surprise. Why Mr. Gandhi took this somersault it is difficult to imagine. Was it an honest act of change of heart, due to a conviction that he was in error in opposing the entry of the Untouchables in Hindu temples ? Was it due to a realization that the political separation between the Hindus and the Untouchables brought about by the Poona Pact might lead to a complete severance of the cultural and religious ties and that it was necessary to counteract the tendency by some such measure as Temple Entry as will bind the two together ? Or was his object in joining the Temple Entry movement to destroy the basis of the claim of the Untouchables for political rights by destroying the barrier between them and the Hindus which makes them separate from the Hindus ? Or was it because Mr. Gandhi saw before

¹ Gandhi Shikshan, Vol. II, p. 132.

him looming large a possibility of adding to his name and fame and rushed to make the most of it, as is his habit to do? The second or the third explanation may be nearer the truth.

II

What was the attitude of the Untouchables to this movement for Temple entry? I was asked by Mr. Gandhi to lend my support to the movement for Temple entry. I declined to do so and issued a statement on the subject to the Press. As it will help the reader to know the grounds for my attitude to this question I have thought it well to set it in full. Here it is !

Statement on Temple Entry Bill *14th February, 1933*

Although the controversy regarding the question of Temple Entry is confined to the Sanatanists and Mahatma Gandhi, the Depressed Classes have undoubtedly a very important part to play in it, in so far as their position is bound to weigh the scales one way or the other when the issue comes up for a final settlement. It is, therefore, necessary that their viewpoint should be defined and stated so as to leave no ambiguity about it.

To the Temple-Entry Bill of Mr. Ranga Iyer as now drafted, the Depressed Classes cannot possibly give their support. The principle of the Bill is that if a majority of Municipal and Local Board voters in the vicinity of any particular temple on a referendum decide by a majority that the Depressed Classes shall be allowed to enter the temple, the Trustees or the Manager of that temple shall give effect to that decision. The principle is an ordinary principle of Majority rule, and there is nothing radical or revolutionary about the Bill, and if the Sanatanists were a wise lot, they would accept it without demur.

The reasons why the Depressed Classes cannot support a Bill based upon this principle are two: One reason is that the Bill cannot hasten the day of temple-entry for the Depressed Classes any nearer than would otherwise be the case. It is true that under the Bill, the minority will not have the right to obtain an injunction against the Trustee, or the Manager who throws open the temple to the Depressed Classes in accordance with the decision of the majority. But before one can draw any satisfaction from this clause and congratulate the author of the Bill, one must first of all feel assured that when

the question is put to the vote there will be a majority in favour of Temple Entry. If one is not suffering from illusions of any kind one must accept that the hope of a majority voting in favour of Temple-Entry will be very rarely realised, if at all. Without doubt, the majority is definitely opposed to-day—a fact which is conceded by the author of the Bill himself in his correspondence with the Shankracharya.

What is there in the situation as created after the passing of the Bill, which can lead one to hope that the majority will act differently? I find nothing. I shall, no doubt, be reminded of the results of the referendum with regard to the Guruvayur Temple. But I refuse to accept a referendum so overweighted as it was by the life of Mahatma Gandhi as the normal result. In any such calculations, the life of the Mahatma must necessarily be deducted.

Secondly, the Bill does not regard Untouchability in temples as a sinful custom. It regards Untouchability merely as a social evil not necessarily worse than social evils of other sorts. For, it does not declare Untouchability as such to be illegal. Its binding force is taken away, only, if a majority decides to do so. Sin and immorality cannot become tolerable because a majority is addicted to them or because the majority chooses to practise them. If Untouchability is a sinful and an immoral custom, then in the view of the Depressed Classes it must be destroyed without any hesitation even if it was acceptable to the majority. This is the way in which all customs are dealt with by Courts of Law, if they find them to be immoral and against public policy.

This is exactly what the Bill does not do. The author of the Bill takes no more serious view of the custom of Untouchability than does the temperance reformer of the habit of drinking. Indeed, so much is he impressed by the assumed similarity between the two that the method he has adopted is a method which is advocated by temperance reformers to eradicate the evil habit of drinking, namely, by local option. One cannot feel much grateful to a friend of the Depressed Classes, who holds Untouchability to be no worse than drinking. If Mr. Ranga Iyer had not forgotten that only a few months ago Mahatma Gandhi had prepared himself to fast unto death if Untouchability was not removed, he would have taken a more serious view of this curse and proposed a most thoroughgoing reform to ensue its removal lock, stock and barrel. Whatever its shortcomings may be from the standpoint of efficacy, the least that the Depressed Classes could expect is for the Bill to recognise the principle that Untouchability is a sin.

I really cannot understand how the Bill satisfies Mahatma Gandhi, who has been insisting that Untouchability is a sin ! It certainly does not satisfy the Depressed Classes. The question whether this particular Bill is good or bad, sufficient or insufficient, is a subsidiary question.

The main question is: Do the Depressed Classes desire Temple Entry or do they not ? This main question is being viewed by the Depressed Classes by two points of view. One is the materialistic point of view. Starting from it, the Depressed Classes think that the surest way for their elevation lies in higher education, higher employment and better ways of earning a living. Once they become well placed in the scale of social life, they would become respectable and once they become respectable the religious outlook of the orthodox towards them is sure to undergo change, and even if this did not happen, it can do no injury to their material interest. Proceeding on these lines the Depressed Classes say that they will not spend their resources on such an empty thing as Temple Entry. There is also another reason why they do not care to fight for it. That argument is the argument of self-respect.

Not very long ago there used to be boards on club doors and other social resorts maintained by Europeans in India, which said "Dogs and Indians" not allowed. The temples of Hindus carry similar boards to-day, the only difference is that the boards on the Hindu temples practically say: "All Hindus and all animals including dogs are admitted, only Untouchables not admitted." The situation in both cases is on a parity. But Hindus never begged for admission in those places from which the Europeans in their arrogance had excluded them. Why should an Untouchable beg for admission in a place from which he has been excluded by the arrogance of the Hindus ? This is the reason of the Depressed Class man who is interested in his material welfare. He is prepared to say to the Hindus, "to open or not to open your temples is a question for you to consider and not for me to agitate. If you think, it is bad manners not to respect the sacredness of human personality, open your temples and be a gentleman. If you rather be a Hindu than be gentleman, then shut the doors and damn yourself for I don't care to come."

I found it necessary to put the argument in this form, because I want to disabuse the minds of men like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya of their belief that the Depressed Classes are looking forward expectantly for their patronage.

The second point of view is the spiritual one. As religiously minded people, do the Depressed Classes desire temple entry

or do they not? That is the question. From the spiritual point of view, they are not indifferent to temple entry as they would be, if the material point of view alone were to prevail. But their final answer must depend upon the reply which Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindus give to the question namely : What is the drive behind this offer of temple entry? Is temple entry to be the final goal of the advancement in the social status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold? Or is it only the first step and if it is the first step, what is the ultimate goal? Temple Entry as a final goal, the Depressed Classes can never support. Indeed they will not only reject it, but they would then regard themselves as rejected by Hindu Society and free to find their own destiny elsewhere. On the other hand, if it is only to be a first step in the direction they be may be inclined to support it. The position would then be analogous to what is happening in the politics of India to-day. All Indians have claimed Dominion Status for India. The actual constitution will fall short of Dominion Status and many Indians will accept it. Why? The answer is that as the goal is defined, it does not matter much if it is to be reached by steps and not in one jump. But if the British had not accepted the goal of Dominion Status, no one would have accepted the partial reforms which many are now prepared to accept. In the same way, if Mahatma Gandhi and the reformers were to proclaim what the goal which they have set before themselves is for the advancement of the Social Status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold, it would be easier for the Depressed Classes to define their attitude towards Temple Entry. The goal of the Depressed Classes might as well be stated here for the information and consideration of all concerned. What the Depressed Classes want is a religion, which will give them equality of social status. To prevent any misunderstanding, I would like to elaborate the point by drawing a distinction between social evils which are the results of secular causes and social evils which are founded upon the doctrine of religion. Social evils can have no justification whatsoever in a civilised society. But nothing can be more odious and vile than that admitted social evils should be sought to be justified on the ground of religion. The Depressed Classes may not be able to overthrow inequities to which they are being subjected. But they have made up their mind not to tolerate a religion that will lend its support to the continuance of these inequities.

If the Hindu religion is to be their religion, then it must become a religion of Social Equality. The mere amendment of Hindu religious code by the mere inclusion in it of a provision

to permit temple entry for all, cannot make it a religion of equality of social status. All that it can do is to recognize them as nationals and not aliens, if I may use in this connection terms which have become so familiar in politics. But that cannot mean that they would thereby reach a position where they would be free and equal, without being above or below any one else, for the simple reason that the Hindu religion does not recognise the principle of equality of social status; on the other hand it fosters inequality by insisting upon grading people as Brahmins, Kshatrias, Vaishyas and Shudras, which now stand towards one another in an ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt. If the Hindu religion is to be a religion of social equality then an amendment of its code to provide temple-entry is not enough. What is required is to purge it of the doctrine of Chaturvarna. That is the root cause of all inequality and also the parent of the caste system and Untouchability, which are merely forms of inequality. Unless it is done not only will the Depressed Classes reject Temple Entry, they will also reject the Hindu faith. Chaturvarna and the Caste system are incompatible with the self-respect of the Depressed Classes. So long as they stand to be its cardinal doctrine the Depressed Classes must continue to be looked upon as low. The Depressed Classes can say that they are Hindus only when the theory of Chaturvarna and caste system is abandoned and expunged from the Hindu Shastras. Do the Mahatma and the Hindu reformers accept this as their goal and will they show the courage to work for it? I shall look forward to their pronouncements on this issue, before I decide upon my final attitude. But whether Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindus are prepared for this or not, let it be known once for all that nothing short of this will satisfy the Depressed Classes and make them accept Temple Entry. To accept temple entry and be content with it, is to temporise with evil and barter away the sacredness of human personality that dwells in them.

There is, however, one argument which Mahatma Gandhi and the reforming Hindus may advance against the position I have taken. They may say: "acceptance by the Depressed Classes of Temple Entry now, will not prevent them from agitating hereafter for the abolition of Chaturvarna and Caste. If that is their view, I like to meet the argument right at this stage so as to clinch the issue and clear the road for future developments. My reply is that it is true that my right to agitate for the abolition of Chaturvarna and Caste System will not be lost, if I accept Temple Entry now. But the question is on what side will Mahatma Gandhi be at the time when the question

is put. If he will be in the camp of my opponents, I must tell him that I cannot be in his camp now. If he will be in my camp he ought to be in it now.

B. R. AMBEDKAR.

Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasan who along with me represented the Untouchables at the Round Table Conference also did not support the movement for Temple entry. In a statement to the Press, he said :—

“When a Depressed Classes member is permitted to enter into the caste Hindu temples he would not be taken into any one of the four castes, but treated as man of fifth or the last or the lower caste, a stigma worse than the one to be called an Untouchable. At the same time he would be subjected to so many caste restrictions and humiliations. The Depressed Classes shun the one who enters like that and exclude him as casteman. The crores of Depressed Classes would not submit to caste restrictions. They will be divided into sections if they do. “Temple entry cannot be forced by law. The village caste-men openly or indirectly defy the law. To the village Depressed Class man it would be like a scrap of paper on which the “sugar” was written and placed in hands for him to taste. The above facts are placed before the public in time to save confusion and disturbance in the country.”

To the question I put to Mr. Gandhi in my statement he gave a straight reply. He said that though he was against untouchability he was not against caste. If at all, he was in favour of it and that he would not therefore carry his social reform beyond removing untouchability. This was enough for me to settle my attitude. I decided to take no further part in it.

The only leading member from the Untouchable community was the late Dewan Bahadur Rajah. One cannot help saying that he played a very regrettable part in this business. The Dewan Bahadur was a nominated member of the Central Assembly from 1927. He had nothing to do with the Congress either inside or outside the Assembly. Neither by accident nor by mistake did he appear on the same side of the Congress. Indeed, he was not merely a critic of the Congress but its adversary. He was the staunchest friend of the Government and never hesitated to stand by the Government. He stood for separate electorates for the Untouchables to which the

Congress was bitterly opposed. In the crisis of 1932, the Dewan Bahadur suddenly decided to desert the Government and take sides with the Congress. He became the spearhead of the Congress movement for joint electorates and Temple entry. It is impossible to discover a parallel in the conduct of any other public cause. The worst part of the business was that it had none but personal motive behind. The Dewan Bahadur was deeply cut because the Government did not nominate him as a delegate to the Round Table Conference to represent the Untouchables and in his stead nominated Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasan. The Government of India had good ground for not nominating him. It was decided that neither the members of the Simon Commission nor the members of the Central Legislative Committee should have a place in the Round Table Conference. The Dewan Bahadur was a member of the Central Legislative Committee and had therefore to be dropped. This was quite a natural explanation. But the wounded pride of Dewan Bahadur Rajah could not let him see it. When the Congress Ministry took office in Madras, when he saw how the Poona Pact was being trampled upon, how his rival was made a Minister and how notwithstanding his services to the Congress he was left out, he bitterly regretted What he did! The fact, however, remains that in the critical year of 1932, Dewan Bahadur Rajah lent his full support to the Congress. He was not only running with the Congress crowd but he took care not to fall out in the race for legislation against untouchability. He too had sponsored two Bills. One of them was called the Removal of Untouchability Bill and the other was called the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill.

III

Mr. Gandhi did not mind any opposition and was indifferent as to whether it came from the orthodox Hindus or from the Untouchables. He went on in mad pursuit of his object. It is interesting to ask, what happened to this movement? Within the short compass of this book it is not possible to spread out this inquiry and cover everything that was done and claimed as evidence of the success of the movement.

To put it briefly, after a short spurt of activity in the direction of removing untouchability by throwing open temples and wells the Hindu mind returned to its original state. The

reports appearing in the "Week to Week" columns of the *Harijan* subsided, became few and far between and ultimately vanished. For myself I was not surprised to find that the Hindu heart was so soon stricken with palsy. For I never believed that there was so much milk of human kindness locked up in the Hindu breast as the "Week to Week" column in the *Harijan* would have the world believe. As a matter of fact a large part of the news that appeared in the "Week to Week" was faked and was nothing but a lying propaganda engineered by Congressmen to deceive the world that the Hindus were determined to fight untouchability. Few temples if any were really opened and those that were reported to have been opened most of them were dilapidated and deserted temples which were used by none but dogs and donkeys. One of the evil effects of the Congress agitation is that it has made the political minded Hindus a lying squad which will not hesitate to tell any lie if it can help the Congress. Thus ended the part which the Hindu public played or was made to appear to play in this Temple-Entry movement. The same fate overtook the Guruvayur Temple satyagraha and the legislation for securing Temple-Entry for the Untouchables. As these are matters which were pursued by Mr. Gandhi and Congressmen their history might be told in some detail inasmuch as it reveals the true mentality of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress towards the Untouchables.

IV

To begin with the Guruvayur Temple Satyagraha. A temple of Krishna is situated at Guruvayur in the Ponnani taluk in Malabar. The Zamorin of Calicut is the trustee of the temple. One Mr. Kelappan, a Hindu who was working for the cause of the Untouchables of Malabar, began an agitation for securing the Untouchables entry into the temple. The Zamorin of Calicut as the trustee of the temple refused to throw open the temple to the Untouchables and in support of his action cited Section 40 of the Hindu Religious Endowments Act which said that no trustee could do anything against the custom and usage of the temples entrusted to him. On the 20th September 1932, Mr. Kelappan commenced a fast in protest lying in front of the temple in the sun till the Zamorin revised his views in favour of the Untouchables. To get rid of this annoyance and embarrassment the Zamorin appealed to Mr. Gandhi to request

Mr. Kelappan to suspend his fast for a time. After a fast for ten days Mr. Kelappan at the request of Mr. Gandhi suspended the fast on 1st October 1932 for three months. The Zamorin did nothing. Mr. Gandhi sent him a wire telling him that he must move in the matter and get over all difficulties legal or otherwise. Mr. Gandhi also told the Zamorin that as Mr. Kelappan had suspended his fast on his advice he had become responsible for securing to the Untouchable entry into the temple to the extent of sharing the fast with Mr. Kelappan. On 5th November 1932, Mr. Gandhi issued the following statement to the press :—

“There is another fast which is a near possibility and that in connection with the opening of the Guruvayur temple in Kerala. It was at my urgent request that Mr. Kelappan suspended his fast for three months, a fast that had well nigh brought him to death's door. I would be in honour bound to fast with him if on or before *1st January 1933* that temple is not opened to the Untouchables precisely on the same terms as to the Touchables, and if it becomes necessary for Mr. Kelappan to resume his fast.”

The Zamorin refused to yield and issued a counter-statement to the press in which he said :—

“The various appeals that are being made for throwing open the temples to Avarnas proceed upon an inadequate appreciation of such difficulties. In these circumstances, there is hardly any justification for thinking that it is in my power to throw open the Guruvayur temple to the Avarnas as desired by the supporters of the temple-entry campaign.”

In these circumstances a fast by Mr. Gandhi became inevitable, and obligatory. But Mr. Gandhi did not go on fast. He modified his position and said that he would, refrain from fasting if a referendum was taken in Ponnani taluk in which the temple was situated and if the referendum showed that the majority was against the throwing open of the temple to the Untouchables. Accordingly, a referendum was taken. Voting was confined to those who were actual temple goers. Those who were not entitled to enter the temple and those who would not enter it were excluded from the voters' list. It was reported that 73 per cent, of eligible voters voted. The result of the poll was 56 per cent, were in favour of temple entry, 9 per cent, against, 8 per cent, were neutral and 27 per cent, abstained from recording their votes.

On this result of the referendum, Mr. Gandhi was bound to start the fast. But he did not. Instead, on the 29th of December 1932 Mr. Gandhi issued a statement to the press which he concluded by saying :—

“In view of the official announcement that the Viceregal decision as to sanction for the introduction, in the Madras Legislative Council, of Dr. Subbaroyan’s permissive Bill with reference to the temple-entry could not possibly be announced before the 15th January, the *fast* contemplated to take place on the second day of the New Year will be indefinitely postponed and in any case up to the date of the announcement of the Viceregal decision. Mr. Kelappan concurs in this postponement.”

The Viceregal pronouncement mentioned by Mr. Gandhi had reference to the Viceroy’s granting permission or refusing permission to the moving of the Temple Entry Bills in the Legislature. That permission was given by the Viceroy. Yet Mr. Gandhi did not fast. Not only did he not fast, he completely forgot the matter as though it was of no moment! Since then nothing has been heard about Guruvayur Temple Satyagraha though the Temple remains closed to the Untouchables even to-day.

V

Thus ended Guruvayur. Let me now turn to the other project namely legislation for Temple-Entry. Of the many bills the one in the name of Mr. Ranga Iyer in the Central Legislature was pursued. The rest were dropped. There was a storm at the very birth of the Bill. Under the Government of India Act as it then stood no legislative measure which affected religion and customs and usages based on religion could be introduced in the Assembly unless it had the previous sanction of the Governor-General. When the Bill was sent for such sanction another commotion was created by the reports that were circulated that the Governor-General was going to refuse his sanction. Mr. Gandhi was considerably excited over these reports. In a statement to the press issued on the 21st January 1933, Mr. Gandhi said :—

“If the report is an intelligent anticipation of the forthcoming Viceregal decision, can only say that it will be a tragedy... I emphatically repudiate the suggestion that there is

any political objective behind these measures. If court decisions had not hardened a doubtful custom into law, no legislation would be required. I would myself regard State interference in religious matters as an intolerable nuisance. But here legislation becomes an imperative necessity in order to remove the legal obstruction and based as it will be on popular will, as far as I can see, there can be no question of clash between parties representing rival opinions.”

The decision of the Government was announced on the 23rd of January 1933. Lord Willingdon refused sanction to Dr. Subbaroyan’s Temple-Entry Bill in the Madras Council, but His Excellency permitted the introduction, in the Legislative Assembly, of Mr. Ranga Iyer’s Untouchability Abolition Bill. The Government emphasised the need of ascertainment of Hindu opinion before they (Government) could decide what attitude to adopt. The announcement further stated that the Governor-General and the Government of India desired to make it plain that it was essential that consideration of any such measure should not proceed unless the proposals were subjected to the fullest examination in all their aspects, not merely in the Legislature but also outside it, by all who would be affected by them. This condition can only be satisfied if the Bill is circulated in the widest manner for the purpose of eliciting public opinion. It must also be understood that the grant of sanction to the introduction, in the Central Legislature, Bills relating to temple entry do not commit the Government in any way to the acceptance or support of the principles contained therein. On the next day, Mr. Gandhi issued a statement in which he said :—

“I must try to trace the hand of God in it. He wants to try me through and through. The sanction given to the All-India Bill was an unintentional challenge to Hinduism and the reformer. Hinduism will take care of itself if the reformer will be true to himself. Thus considered the Government of India’s decision must be regarded as God-send. It clears the issue. It makes it for India and the world to understand the tremendous importance of the moral struggle now going on in India. But whatever the Sanatanists may decide the movement for Temple-Entry now broadens from Guruvayur in the extreme south to Hardwar in the north and my fast, though it remains further postponed, depends not now upon Guruvayur only but extends automatically to temples in general.”

One can well realize under what fanfare the Bill began its legislative career. On the 24th of March 1933, Mr. Ranga Iyer formally introduced the Bill in the Assembly. As it was a Bill for Mr. Gandhi the Congress members of the Assembly were of course ready to give it their support. Mr. Gandhi had appointed Mr. Rajagopalachari and Mr. G. D. Birla to canvass support for the Bill among the Non-Congress members with a view to ensure safe passage for the Bill. He said they were better lobbyists than he was. The motion for introduction was opposed by the Rajah of Kollengode and Mr. Thampan raised a preliminary objection that the Bill was ultra vires of the legislature. The latter objection was overruled by the President and the House allowed the Bill to be introduced. Mr. Ranga Iyer next moved that the Temple-Entry Bill be circulated to elicit public opinion by the 30th July. Raja Bahadur Krishnamachari opposed the circulation motion and condemned the proposed legislation in strong terms. At last he urged that the date for circulation should be 31st December instead of 31st July. Mr. Gunjal opposed the circulation motion and asked the House not to support the Bill. As it was already 5 p.m. and as that was the last day of the session for non-official business, the President wanted to take the sense of the House for a late sitting. As there was no overwhelming majority for it, the President adjourned the House. So the Bill stood postponed to the Autumn session of the Assembly.

The discussion of the Bill was resumed on 24th August 1933 during the Autumn session of the Central Legislature. Sir Harry Haig on behalf of the Government explained that their support to the motion for circulation of the Bill should in no way be construed as implying support to its provisions. It was true that the Government sympathized for the Depressed Classes and were anxious to do what they could for their social and economic improvement. He quoted from the *communiqué* issued in January last, wherein the Government's view was fully explained. In his opinion, circulation by the end of June was a fair and reasonable time to secure the widest possible circulation. As regards the limit of circulation to temple going Hindus, Sir Harry Haig said from the practical viewpoint that it would really hardly be possible to impose the restriction as proposed. The Government wanted the matter to be fully discussed by all classes of Hindus and were therefore prepared

to give their support to the amendment of Mr. Sharma. Closure was moved and the House accepted Mr. Sharma's motion for circulation of the Bill by the end of June 1934. Opinions were duly received. They fill a whole volume of over a thousand foolscap pages. The Bill was ready for the next stage namely to move for the appointment of a Select Committee. Mr. Ranga Iyer had even given notice for such a motion. A strange thing happened. The Government of India decided to dissolve the Assembly and order new election. The result of this announcement was a sudden change in the attitude of the Congress members in the Central Legislature towards Mr. Ranga's Bill. One and all stood out against it and refused to give any further support to the Bill. They were terrified of the electorates. Mr. Ranga Iyer's position was very pitiable. He described it in very biting language, the venom of which could hardly be improved upon. So well did he describe the situation that I make no apology for reproducing the following extract from his speech Rising to move his motion Mr. Ranga Iyer said:

"Sir, I rise to move what is known as the Temple-Entry Bill, to remove the disabilities of the so-called Depressed Classes. Sir, I move :—

"That the Bill to remove the disabilities of the so-called Depressed Classes in regard to entry into Hindu temples be referred to a Select Committee consisting of the Honourable Sir Nripendra Sircar, the Honourable Sir Henry Craik, Bhai Parma Nand, Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, Mr. T. N. Ramakrishna Reddi, Rao Bahadur B. L. Patil and the Mover.'

"I will delete with your permission, the words 'with instructions to report within a fortnight' and then I will continue the remaining portion of the motion :

'and that the number of members whose presence shall be necessary to constitute a meeting of the Committee shall be five.'

"Sir, at the time I gave notice of this motion, I did not think that before a fortnight we would be going into the wilderness. Therefore, I recognise the limitations of this motion, for there will be no time even to go to a Select Committee. I recognise that it gives us an opportunity to express our opinion on the subject.

"I have already stated that I owed an apology to Mr. Satyamurthi for while interrupting Mr. Mudaliar, I was not in a

position naturally as he was rushing along with his speech to explain myself fully and he would have been at a disadvantage if I had done so. I recognise that Mr. Satyamurthi, who was at no time in favour of the Temple Entry Bill, has succeeded in making the Congress drop it. I read the following written statement of Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar in the *Hindu* of Madras, dated the 16th August. The *Hindu* is a very responsible newspaper, and as it is not a mere telegraphic interview but a written statement, I believe Mr. Rajagopalachariar's statement can be taken as accurate. Mr. Rajagopalachariar is apologising to the public for his betrayal of the cause of the Untouchables. As the principal lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi, his betrayal must be placed on record. He says :

'The question has been asked by some Sanatanists whether Congress candidates will give an undertaking that Congress will not support any legislative interference with religious observances. Similar questions may be asked on a variety of topics by persons and groups interested in each one of them. That such questions are asked only of the Congress candidates and similar elucidation is not attempted in respect of other parties and independent candidates is a very great compliment paid to the Congress.'

"So says, Sriman Rajagopalachariar. And, instead of following up the compliment and arousing public opinion on an unpopular measure, here is a great Congress leader who sat *dharna* at our house with his son-in-law, Devidas Gandhi, who repeatedly called on me at Delhi and said 'We seek joint support for this legislative measure,'—here is a man who goes back 'like a crab,' to borrow the language of Shakespeare. Political parties, explains this subtle brain from the South, have distinctive policies on various questions covering a wide field :

'Not all of them, however, are made into election issues at any one time.'

"Sir, this Congress leader is afraid of facing the public opinion which he has roused.

"Sir, are the Congress people slaves ?

'They are slaves who fear to speak,
For the fallen and the weak.'

"According to Milton, 'To say and straight unsay argues no liar but a coward traced.'...Mr. Rajagopalachariar unsays now what, he had been saying long before the General Election from every platform in the following words :

'The Congress candidates go to the electorate in this election on well-defined political issues.'

“That is to say, they go to the electorate with a view to pandering to the prejudice of the masses whom they have misled, so much so, that they have got themselves into a bog., Lord Willingdon came to their rescue, to take them out of the bog by announcing the dissolution of this Assembly and giving them an opportunity, as a Constitutional Viceroy, to return to the sheltered paths of constitutionalism. Therefore, they have run away from their own convictions and are playing every trick to come back to the Legislature with as large a number as possible. Had they gone on with the Temple Entry Bill or the Untouchability question, they would have lost many votes, for it is not a popular issue. I said so, though Mahatma Gandhi contradicted me publicly at the time, I said so when Shankaracharya was staying in Malabar in my brother's house at Palghat. My brother came on a deputation to the Viceroy to oppose the Bill. I said : ‘I know, the reformer is not in a majority in Malabar.’ Nowhere else are the reformers in a majority but the reformers believe in persuading the majority to their way of thinking. Then, I said—whatever the result of a referendum, the Congress people might have taken in Guruvayur in Malabar, might be, I could not for a moment believe that the majority of the temple-going people in Malabar were in favour of admitting the Untouchables into the temples: but I was prepared to fight the in, also to argue with them and to persuade them and to make them take an interest in the cause and the case of the Untouchables, for, I feel, the Untouchables are a part of my community. Sir, if one-third of my community is to remain submerged in exclusion in the name of religion, I feel, as I have always felt and said, that that community has no right to existence. It is with a view to the unification of the Hindu community, it is with a view to building up the greatness of the future of that community on the past of that community, when Untouchability was quite unknown as in the Vedic ages, that I have taken up their cause. And now, I find Congressmen, so keen about Untouchability yesterday, explaining why they are not taking it up today. Mr. Rajagopalachariar has driven the last nail into the coffin of the Temple Entry Bill as Raja Bahadur Krishnamachariar, the Raja Saheb of Kollengode or Sir Satya Charan Mukherji would perhaps like to say, representing as they do the various Sana-tanist groups of the country.

“Sir, Mr. Rajagopalachariar goes on to say that they asked to be returned ‘on no other issue,’ that is to say, not on Temple Entry issue, but merely on a political Anglo-phobia issue, an anti-British issue, because, having traded on public feeling,

having tried to give it as much racial antipathy as possible in the name of non-violence, in the name of religion itself, because non-violence was sometimes given a religious bias, having created that atmosphere of distrust in the country, finding that that atmosphere might not help them in the election if they fought it on a bigger, a cleaner and higher issue, namely, the removal of Untouchability itself, they side-track the issue, they run away from their conviction :

‘They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.’

“Then he, a principal lieutenant of Gandhiji goes on to say : ‘If successful at the polls, they cannot believe they will receive the mandate of the electorate on any other questions.’

“That is to say, they are not receiving the mandate of the electorate on the Temple Entry Bill. This man, who came screaming at our doors, begging us for support—these beggars in the cause of the Congress—who just begged of us to proceed with this Temple Entry Bill, are not only betraying the cause of the Untouchables, but they are betraying the principles of the Mahatma himself, for, we know, that Mahatma’s fast was directed toward the uplift of the Untouchables by giving them concession in regard to the Communal Award, which the Congress naturally has hesitated to repudiate, and we, therefore, know that that has a direct bearing on the Untouchability question to approach which, to solve which, the Mahatma, the great Mahatma, wanted to tour the country, but today the Congress, who betrayed him first in the betrayal of the Congress boycott of the Councils, have, by seeking to come to the Councils, further betrayed him with the assistance of his own *samandhi*, Rajagopalachariar, and they say that they are not going to proceed with the Untouchability question and the Temple Entry Bill without a mandate from the people !

“Sir, where is the difference, I ask, between Raja Bahadur Krishnamachariar and Sriman Rajagopalachariar ? Raja Bahadur Krishnamachariar has always conceded—‘take a mandate from the people and then come and legislate.’ Sir, he is not a coward; a great Sanatanist himself, he is willing to face the music. On the contrary, these people who pillory the Sanatanists up and down the country, forgetting that Sanatan Dharma is eternal truth itself, are behaving in a manner which even the Sanatanists will not appreciate, for Sanatan Dharma is eternal truth and the betrayal of truth is worthy only of untruthful people ! Having betrayed many

a principle which would lead us to our national goal, having taken up the case of the Untouchables only to save their faces, with no conviction behind them, as we now see, the great Congress leaders with the exception of Mahatma Gandhi, have said through Rajagopalachariar, the Organizer-in-chief of the coming elections on behalf of the Congress :

‘It will be open to all Congressmen to have the matter duly considered before it is ever made into an official Congress Bill.’

“For this betrayal of the cause of the Untouchables, I hope constitutionalists will organize themselves, whether Hindus or Mussalmans. They can agree to differ later on on communal issues, but they will unite and offer a great battle to the Congress and bring that organ of masqueraders down on its knees. Sir, I think here is a betrayal of the cause of the Untouchables and the Depressed Classes; and, if I did not believe in this movement before Mahatma Gandhi could take it up or Mr. Rajagopalachariar went from door to door in Delhi, I should not have been here to move this Bill.”

VI

Here was a case of retreat from glory! And what an inglorious retreat? How did Mr. Gandhi react to it? In a statement issued on 4th November 1982, Mr. Gandhi said :—

“Untouchables in the villages should be made to feel that their shackles have been broken, that they are in no way inferior to their fellow villagers, that they are worshippers of the same God as the other villagers and entitled to the same rights and privileges that the latter enjoy.

“But if these vital conditions of the Pact are not carried out by caste-Hindus, could I possibly live to face God and man ? I ventured even to tell Dr. Ambedkar, Rao Bahadur M. C. Raja and other friends belonging to the suppressed group that they should regard me as a hostage for the due fulfilment by caste-Hindus of the conditions of the Pact. The fast, if it is to come, will not be for coercion of those who are opponents of reform, but it will be intended to sting into action those who have been my comrades or who have taken pledges for the removal of Untouchability. If they belie their pledges or if they never meant to abide by them and their Hinduism was a mere camouflage, I should have no interest left in life.”

He was never tired of repeating this. Exclusion of the Untouchables from the Hindu Temples, he described, as the

agony of his soul. What did Mr. Gandhi do in this connection ? Did he resent this betrayal by Mr. Rajagopalachari of this project without which he said he had no interest left in life ? One would naturally expect Mr. Gandhi to denounce this betrayal by the Congress Party to achieve success at the polls ? Quite the contrary. Instead of blaming Mr. Rajagopalachari, he blamed Mr. Ranga Iyer for his violent denunciation of the Congress Party for withdrawing its support to the Bill. This is what Mr. Gandhi said in the issue of the *Harijan* dated August 31, 1934 :—

“The ill-fated Temple Entry Bill deserved a more decent burial, if it deserved it at all, than it received at the hands of the mover of the Bill. It was not a bill promoted by, and on behalf of, the reformers. The mover should, therefore, have consulted reformers and acted under instructions from them. So far as I am aware, there was hardly any occasion for the anger into which he allowed himself to be betrayed or the displeasure which he expressed towards Congressmen. On the face of it, it was, and was designed to be, a measure pertaining to religion, framed in pursuance of the solemn declaration publicly made in Bombay at a meeting of representative Hindus, who met under the chairmanship of Pandit Malaviyaji on 25th September, 1932. The curious may read the declaration printed almost every week on the front page of *Harijan*. Therefore, every Hindu, caste or Harijan, was interested in the measure. It was not a measure in which Congress Hindus were more interested than the other Hindus. To have, therefore, dragged the Congress name into the discussion was unfortunate. The Bill deserved a gentler handling.”

The Temple Entry, what one is to say of, except to describe it a strange game of political acrobatics! Mr. Gandhi begins as an opponent of Temple Entry. When the Untouchables put forth a demand for political rights, he changes his position and becomes a supporter of Temple Entry. When the Hindus threaten to defeat the Congress in the election, if it pursues the matter to a conclusion, Mr. Gandhi, in order to preserve political power in the hands of the Congress, gives up Temple Entry ! Is this sincerity ? Does this show conviction ? Was the “agony of soul” which Mr. Gandhi spoke of more than a phrase ?