

CHAPTER X

WHAT DO THE UNTOUCHABLES SAY?

Beware of Mr. Gandhi

CONGRESSMEN never hesitate to impress upon the Untouchables that Mr. Gandhi is their saviour. Not only do Congressmen all over India hold out Mr. Gandhi as a real saviour but they go forth to persuade the Untouchables to accept the fact that he is their only saviour. When pressed for evidence, they tell the Untouchables that if any one ever took a vow to go on a fast unto death for the sake of the Untouchables it was Mr. Gandhi and none else. Indeed, without any compunction they tell the Untouchables that whatever political rights the Untouchables have got under the Poona Pact, they are the result of Mr. Gandhi's efforts. As an illustration of such propaganda I refer to what one Rai Bahadur Mehrchand Khanna is reported¹ to have said at a meeting of the Untouchables held at Peshawar on April 12, 1945 under the auspices of the Depressed Classes League :

"Your best friend is Mahatma Gandhi who even resorted to a fast for your sake and brought about the Poona act under which you have been enfranchised and given representation on local bodies and legislatures. Some of you, I know, have been running after Dr. Ambedkar, who is just a creation of the British Imperialists and who uses you to strengthen the hands of the British Government in order that India may be divided and the Britishers continue to retain power. I appeal to you in your interests, to distinguish between self-styled leaders and your real friends."

If I refer to the statement of Rai Bahadur Mehrchand Khanna it is not because he is worth taking notice of. For there cannot be any one guilty of bigger blackguardism in Indian politics than this man. In the course of one year—not in very remote time but in 1944—he successfully played three different roles. He started as Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, turned agent of British Imperialism, went abroad to explain India's war effort to the British and American people and is now agent of the Congress in N.W.F. Province. The

¹ *Free Press Journal*, dated, 14-4-45,

opinion of a man like Rai Bahadur Khanna, who, to use Dryden's language, is so various as to be everything by starts, and nothing long, and who in the course of one revolving moon, can be a chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon, must be beneath contempt. If I refer to him it is only because I wish to illustrate what sort of propaganda¹ friends of Mr. Gandhi are carrying on in order to beguile the Untouchables.

I do not know how many Untouchables will be found prepared to swallow such a lie. But this much I think has been proved by the Nazis that if a lie is a big lie—too big for the common man's intelligence to scrutinize—and if it is repeated continuously, the lie has all the chances of being accepted as truth and if not accepted as truth has all the chances of growing upon the victims of propaganda and win their acquiescence. It is, therefore, necessary for me to expose the part played by Mr. Gandhi in the movement of the Untouchables and to warn the Untouchables against succumbing to this propaganda.

I

In making a survey of the part played by Mr. Gandhi it is well to begin by ascertaining when Mr. Gandhi for the first time realized that Untouchability was an evil. On this point, we have the direct testimony of Mr. Gandhi himself. In an address delivered as President of the Suppressed Classes Conference, held at Ahmedabad on the 14th and 15th April 1921, Mr. Gandhi said :—

“I was hardly yet twelve when this idea had dawned on me. A scavenger named Ukha, an Untouchable, used to attend our house for cleaning latrines. Often I would ask my mother why it was wrong to touch him, why I was forbidden to touch him. If I accidentally touched Ukha, I was asked to perform ablutions, and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion, that it was impossible that it should be so. I was a very dutiful and obedient child and so far as it was consistent with respect for parents. I often had tussles with them on

¹ Another illustration of such propaganda is that carried on by one Parsi gentleman by name Prof. A. R. Wadia. The views of Prof. Wadia have been critically examined and exposed by Mr. E. J. Sanjanna in a series of articles in the *Rast-Rahabar*—a Gujarathi Weekly published in Bombay from 29th October 1944 to 15th April 1945 under the heading of “Sense and Nonsense in Politics.”

this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Ukha as sinful.

“While at school I would often happen to touch the ‘Untouchables’ and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Musalman passing by. And simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so, but never did so believing it to be a religious obligation. After some time we shifted to Porebandar, where I made my first acquaintance with Sanskrit. I was not yet put to an English School, and my brother and I were placed in charge of a Brahmin, who taught us Ram Raksha and Vishnu Punjar. The texts ‘Jale Vishnuh’ ‘Sthale Vishnuh’ (there is he Lord (present) in water, there is the Lord (present) in earth, have never gone out of my memory. A motherly old dame used to live close by. Now it happened that I was very timid then, and would conjure up ghosts and goblins whenever the lights went out, and it was dark. The old mother, to disabuse me of fears, suggested that I should mutter the Ramraksha texts whenever I was afraid, and all evil spirits would fly away. This I did and, as I thought with good effect. I could never believe then that there was any text in the Ramraksha pointing to the contact of the ‘untouchables’ as a sin. I did not understand its meaning then, or understood it very imperfectly. But I was confident that Ramraksha which could destroy all fear of ghosts, could not be countenancing any such thing as fear of contact with the ‘untouchables.’

“The Ramayana used to be regularly read in our family. A Brahmin called Ladha Maharaj used to read it. He was stricken with leprosy, and he was confident that a regular reading of the Ramayana would cure him of leprosy, and indeed, he was cured of it. ‘How can the Ramayana,’ I thought to myself ‘in which one is regarded nowadays as an ‘untouchable,’ took Rama across the Ganges in his boat, countenance the idea of any human beings being ‘untouchables’ on the ground that they were polluted souls ? The fact that we addressed God as the ‘purifier of the polluted’ and by similar appellations, shows that it is a sin to regard any one born in Hinduism as polluted or untouchable—that it is satanic to do so. I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. I do not pretend that this thing had crystallised as a conviction in me at the age of twelve, but I do say that I did then regard untouchability as a sin. I narrate this story for the information of the Vaishnavas and orthodox Hindus,”

It is no doubt very interesting to know that in that age of blind orthodoxy Mr. Gandhi should have become aware that Untouchability was a sin and that too at so early an age as 12. What the Untouchables, however, want to know is what did Mr. Gandhi do to remove the evil. I give below an extract from a biographical note about Mr. Gandhi by the publishers, Tagore & Co., of Madras to their volume called *Young India*, issued in 1922, to show the principal activities, which Mr. Gandhi launched since the time he started his public career. This is what the note says :—

“Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 5, 1869. Caste Bania ; son of Karamchand Gandhi, Dewan of Porebunder, Rajkote and some other Kathiawar States; He was educated at the Kathiawad High School, later at London University and the Inner Temple. On return from London was enrolled as advocate of the Bombay High Court. Went to Natal and thence to the Transvaal on a legal mission. Was enrolled as advocate of the Natal Supreme Court. Decided to remain there. Founded the Natal Indian Congress, 1894. Returned to India, 1895. Agitation in India on behalf of the Natal and Transvaal Indians. Return to Durban. On landing attacked by the mob and narrowly escaped death; led an Indian Ambulance Corps in the Anglo-Boer War 1899 ; Returned to India in 1901 to recoup his health. Again returned to South Africa to lead the Indian deputation to place the Indian view of the South African Indian trouble before Mr. Chamberlain. Enrolled as attorney of the Supreme Court of Transvaal and founded the Transvaal British Indian Association and was its Honorary Secretary and Principal legal adviser. Founded the *Indian Opinion* in 1903 and the “Phoenix” Settlement. Led a Stretcher Bearer Corps in the native rebellion in 1906; Agitation against the Anti-Asiat e Act 1906 ; Deputation to England for the repeal of the Act; Passive Resistance movement begun against the Act; Negotiations between General Smuts and Mr. Gandhi and compromise. Smuts later denying the promise of repeal of the law, and again commenced passive resistance. Imprisoned twice for breaking the law. Again went to England in 1909 to lay the Indian case before the British public ; Provisional Settlement in 1911 Mr. Gokhale’s visit to South Africa. On the Government declining to fulfil the settlement of 1911 organized a revival of the passive resistance movement. Final settlement in 1914. Visit to England ; Raised an Indian Ambulance Corps in 1914.”

From this biographical note, it is clear that Mr. Gandhi began his public life in 1894 when he founded the Natal Indian Congress. From 1894 to 1915, he was in South Africa. During this period, he never thought of the Untouchables and never even inquired after Ukha.

Mr. Gandhi returned to India in 1915. Did he then take up the cause of the Untouchables ? Let me again quote from the same biographical note which says :—

“Returned to India 1915; Founded the Satyagrah Ashram at Ahmedabad. Took part in the Settlement of the Champaran Labour troubles in 1917 and Kaira famine and Ahmedabad mill strike, 1918 ; Recruiting Campaign 1918 ; Agitation against the Rowlatt Act and the inauguration of the Satyagraha movement, 1919; Arrested at Kosi on his way to Delhi and sent back to Bombay ; Punjab disorders and the official atrocities 1919 ; Was member of the Congress Committee of Enquiry into the Punjab atrocities ; Took part in the Khilafat Agitation. Inauguration of the Non-Co-operation campaign, 1920; Interview with Lord Reading May 1921 ; appointed sole executive authority of the Congress in 1921 Session of the Congress; Civil Disobedience Programme, February 1922; Suspension of Civil Disobedience campaign on account of Chauri Chaura riots, February 1922; Arrested on March 10, 1922 tried and sentenced to six years simple imprisonment.”

This note is obviously incorrect. It omits some very significant and quite well-known events in the life of Mr. Gandhi. To make it complete, the following items must be added :—

“1919 declared readiness to. welcome Afghan invasion of India to Free India from British Imperialism ; 1920 put before the country the Bardoli Programme of Constructive work ; 1921 started Tilak Swaraj Fund and collected one crore and 25 lakhs to be used for preparing the country for winning swaraj.”

In these five years, Mr. Gandhi was completely absorbed in transforming the Congress into a militant organization—a war machine fit to fight and shake British Imperialism. He took up the cause of the Khilafat with a view to bring the Muslims to join the Congress and did his level best to rally the Hindus for the support of the Khilafat.

What did Mr. Gandhi do for the Untouchables during this period ? Congressmen will of course refer to the Bardoli Programme. It is true that in the Bardoli Programme the

uplift of the Untouchables was an item. But what is important is to know what happened to it? To tell the story in a summary¹ form the Bardoli Programme was not a programme for the removal of Untouchability. It was a programme of amelioration which was defined by Disraeli as a combination of ancient institutions and modern improvements. The programme, openly recognized Untouchability and planned to do no more than provide separate wells and separate schools for the Untouchables. The Sub-Committee appointed to draw up a programme for the uplift of the Untouchables consisted of persons, who had never shown any interest in the Untouchables and some of them were even hostile to them. Swami Shraddhanand, the one and only person in the Sub-Committee who can be said to be charged with the desire to do something substantial for the Untouchables, was forced to resign. A paltry sum of money was allotted for carrying on the work of the Committee. The Committee was dissolved without meeting even once. The work of the uplift of the Untouchables was declared to be a work best suited to the Hindu Mahasabha. Mr. Gandhi took no interest in that part of the Bardoli Programme, which related to the Untouchables. On the contrary instead of siding with Swami Shraddhanand he sided with the reactionaries and opponents of Swami Shraddhanand, knowing full well that they did not want anything on a big scale done for the Untouchables.

So much for what Mr. Gandhi did in 1921 in connection with the Bardoli Programme.

What did Mr. Gandhi do after 1922? The publication from which the previous extract from the biographical note was taken is dated 1922. It is necessary to make the following additions to bring the biographical note up to date :—

“1924 was released from prison; Forged a compromise between the two wings of the Congress who in his absence were fighting over the issue of Council Entry *versus* Constructive programme; 1929 proclaimed complete independence as the political goal of India; 1930 launched Civil Disobedience movement; 1931 went to London to represent Congress at the Round Table Conference. 1932 was imprisoned. Declared fast unto death against the Communal Award of His Majesty's Government and saved his life agreeing to the Poona Pact 1933 planned a campaign in favour of temple-entry for Untouch-

¹ For details see Chapter II.

ables and established the Harijan Sevak Sangh; 1934 ceased to be a member of the Congress; 1942 planned 'Quit India' movement and was imprisoned ; 1934 went on fast and was released; 1944 engaged in correspondence with Lord Wavell and in issuing statements explaining away the 8th August 1942 Resolution ; 1945 occupied with Kasturba Fund."

The year 1924 gave Mr. Gandhi another opportunity to push forth his campaign, for the removal of Untouchability and make it effective. What did Mr. Gandhi do ?

The years between 1922 and 1944 have a special significance in the history of Congress politics. The Programme of non-cooperation was accepted by the Congress at a special session held in Calcutta in September 1920. The programme included the well known five boycotts : the boycott of the Legislature, boycott of foreign cloth, etc. The resolution on non-cooperation was opposed by the leaders of the intellectual classes, namely Bepin Chandra Pal, C. R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai to mention only a few names, but was passed notwithstanding their opposition. The regular Annual Session of the Congress was held in Nagpur in December 1920. The resolution on non-cooperation again came up for discussion. Strange as it may seem the same resolution was moved by Mr. C. R. Das¹ and seconded by Lala Lajpat Rai and confirmed. The result was that 1921 saw non-co-operation galore. On 19th March 1922, Mr. Gandhi was tried for sedition and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Immediately Mr. Gandhi was put behind the prison bars, Mr. C. R. Das seems to have recovered his balance and started a campaign to lift the boycott of the Legislature, In this he was joined by Vithalbhai Patel, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Malaviya. This move was opposed by the followers of Mr. Gandhi, who were not prepared to abate a jot or a tittle from the terms of the resolution on non-cooperation passed in Calcutta and confirmed in Nagpur. This led to a schism in the Congress. In 1924, Mr. Gandhi on account of his illness was released from gaol, before his time. When he came out, Mr. Gandhi found that the Congress was divided into two warring camps on the issue of the boycott

¹ This is notwithstanding the fact reported by Mr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the Official Historian of the Congress namely that:—

"Mr. C. B. Das brought a contingent of about 250 delegates from East Bengal and Assam, bore their expenses to and fro, and spent Rs. 36,000 from his pocket to undo what was done in Calcutta. There was even a small fight between his men and those of Jitendralal Banerjee, his opponent."

The History of the Congress, p. 347.

of the Legislature. The quarrel was a bitter one and both sides were engaged in slinging mud at each other. Mr. Gandhi knew that if the quarrel continued the Congress would be weakened and wanted to patch it up. Neither side was prepared to give in. There were statements and counter-statements. Ultimately, Mr. Gandhi made certain proposals for restoring peace between the two wings which were accepted by both sides. The proposals were intended to please both sides. To please the protagonists of Council Entry he proposed that the Congress should recognize entry in the Legislatures as legitimate part of Congress activity and the opponents of Council Entry should stop their propaganda against it. To please the opponents of Council -Entry he proposed that the Congress should accept a new basis for franchise namely : (i) the Congress franchise instead of being 4 annas per annum should be a tender of 2,000 yards of hand-spun and self-spun yarn with the penalty clause attached to it by which any default in this behalf would automatically, disqualify a person from being a member of the Congress and that (ii) the observance of five boycotts, of foreign cloth, Government Law Courts, schools and colleges, and of titles should be deemed as a qualification for a post within the Congress organization and any person who did not believe in the principle of boycott and who did not carry them out in his own person must be deemed to be disqualified as a candidate.

Here was an opportunity for Mr. Gandhi to advance his anti-Untouchability campaign. He could have proposed that if a Hindu wishes to enroll himself as a member of the Congress he should prove that he does not observe untouchability and that the employment of an Untouchable in his household should be adduced in support of his claim in this behalf and that no other evidence would be allowed to be tendered. Such a proposal could not have been impracticable for almost every Hindu, certainly those who call themselves high Caste Hindus, keeps more than one servant in, his household. If Mr. Gandhi could make the Hindu accept spinning and boycott as franchises for membership of the Congress he could also make acceptable the employment of an Untouchable in a Hindu household a franchise for membership of the Congress. But Mr. Gandhi did not do it.

After 1924 till 1930 there is a complete blank. Mr. Gandhi does not appear to have taken any active steps for the removal

of Untouchability or got himself interested in any activity beneficial to the Untouchables during this period. While Mr. Gandhi was inactive the Untouchables had started a movement called the *satyagraha* movement. The object of the movement was to establish their right to take water from public wells and public temples. The *satyagraha* at the Chowdar Tank situated in Mahad, a town in the Kolaba District of the Bombay Presidency, was organised to establish the right of the Untouchables to take water from public watering places. The *satyagraha* at the Kala Ram Temple situated in Nasik, a town in the Nasik District of the Bombay Presidency, was organised to establish the right of the Untouchables to enter Hindu temples. There were many minor *satyagrahas*. These were, however, the two principal ones over which the efforts of the Untouchables and their opponents, the Caste Hindus, were concentrated. The din and noise caused by them were heard all over India. Thousands of men and women from the Untouchables—took part in these *satyagrahas*. Both men and women belonging to the Untouchables were insulted and beaten by the Hindus. Many were injured and some were imprisoned by Government on the ground of causing breach of the peace. This *satyagraha* movement went on for full six years when it was brought to a close in 1935 at a Conference held in Yeola in Nasik District in which the Untouchables as a result of the adamant attitude of the Hindus in refusing to give them equal social rights resolved to go out of the Hindu fold. This *satyagraha* movement was no doubt independent of the Congress. It was organised by the Untouchables, led by the Untouchables and financed by the Untouchables. Yet the Untouchables were not without hope of getting the moral support of Mr. Gandhi. Indeed they had very good ground for getting it. For the weapon of *satyagraha*—the essence of which is to melt the heart of the opponent by suffering—was the weapon which was forged by Mr. Gandhi, and who had led the Congress to practise it against the British Government for winning Swaraj. Naturally the Untouchables expected full support from Mr. Gandhi to their *satyagraha* against the Hindus the object of which was to establish then-right to take water from public wells and to enter public Hindu temples. Mr. Gandhi however did not give his support to the *satyagraha*. Not only did he not give his support, he condemned it in strong terms.

In this connection reference may be made to two novel weapons for redressing human wrongs. Mr. Gandhi claims exclusive credit for forging and perfecting them. First is *satyagraha*. Mr. Gandhi has put into action this weapon of *satyagraha* many a times against the British Government for the removal of political wrongs. But Mr. Gandhi has never used the weapon of *satyagraha* against Hindus to get them to throw open wells and temples to the Untouchables. Fasting is another weapon of Mr. Gandhi. It is said that there have been altogether 21 fasts to the credit of Mr. Gandhi. Some were for the sake of Hindu-Muslim unity and quite a number as atonements for the immoralities committed by the inmates of his Ashram. One was against the order of the Government of Bombay refusing to give the work of a scavenger in the gaol to a prisoner by name Mr. Patwardhan although he demanded it. In these 21 fasts there is not one undertaken for the removal of Untouchability. These are very significant facts.

In 1930 came the Round Table Conference. Mr. Gandhi joined the deliberations of the Conference¹ in 1931. The Conference was concerned with a vital question of framing a constitution for a self-governing India. It was unanimously held that if India was to be a self-governing country then the government must be a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Everybody agreed that only when a government is in a real sense a government *by* the people that it could be a government of the people and for the people. The problem was how to make it a government *by* the people in a country rent into communities, majorities and minorities, who are charged not merely with social cleavages but also with social antagonisms. Having regard to these circumstances it was agreed that in India there was no possibility of government by the people unless Legislature and the Executive were framed on the basis of communal representation.

The problem of the Untouchables loomed large at the Conference. It assumed a new aspect. The question was : Should the Untouchables be left as they were to the tender mercies of the Hindus or should they be given the means to protect themselves by extending to them the principle of communal representation? The Untouchables strongly objected to be left to the pleasure of the Hindus and demanded the same

¹ For details see Chapter III.

protection as was given to the other minorities. The contention of the Untouchables was accepted by all. It was just and logical. They contended that the chasm between the Hindus and Muslims, between Hindus and Sikhs, between Hindus and Christians is nothing as compared with the chasm between the Hindus and the Untouchables. It is the widest and the deepest. The chasm between the Hindus and the Muslims is religious and not social. That between the Hindus and the Untouchables is both religious *and* social. The antagonism arising out of the chasm existing between Hindus and Muslims cannot spell political disaster to the Muslims because the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims is not that of master and slave. It is one of mere estrangement. On the other hand, the chasm between Hindus and the Untouchables must spell political disaster for the Untouchables because the relationship between the two is that of master and slave. The Untouchables contended that the attempts to close the gap between them and the Hindus by means of social process had been tried for ages. They had all failed. There was no hope of their success. Since power is being transferred into the hands of the Hindu majority they must have political safeguards of the same sort as, if not better, than those conceded to the Muslims and other minorities.

Here was an opportunity to Mr. Gandhi to show his sympathy to the Untouchables by lending his support to their demand and thereby strengthen their power of resistance against the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus. Instead of showing his sympathy, Mr. Gandhi used every means in his power to defeat them. He made a pact with the Muslims with a view to isolate the Untouchables. Failing to win the Musalmans to his side, he went on a fast unto death to compel the British Government to withdraw their decision to give to the Untouchables the same political rights as given to the Muslims and other minority communities. When the fast failed and Mr. Gandhi was obliged to sign a pact—called the Poona Pact—which conceded the political demands of the Untouchables he took his revenge by letting the Congress employ foul electioneering tactics to make their political rights of no avail.

In 1933, Mr. Gandhi took up two movements. First was the Temple-entry Movement.¹ He took personal responsibility

¹ For details see Chapter IV.

for seeing through these two measures. One was the opening of the Guruvayur temple. The other was the passing of the Temple-entry Bill sponsored by Mr. Ranga Iyer in the Central Legislature. Mr. Gandhi said that he would fast unto death if the trustee of the Guruvayur temple did not throw it open to the Untouchables by a certain date. The Guruvayur temple still remains closed to the Untouchables but Mr. Gandhi has not fulfilled his vow of going on fast. Surprising as it may be he has done nothing to get the temple declared open to the Untouchables although it is now thirteen years since he took the vow. Mr. Gandhi virtually coerced the Governor-General to give his sanction to the introduction of the Temple-entry Bill. The Congress party in the Central Legislature which was pledged to carry through the Bill refused to support it when the stage of referring it to a Select Committee came on the ground that the Bill gave offence to the Hindus and in the election that was pending the Hindus would seek revenge on the Congress and defeat it at the poll if the Congress supported the Bill. To the great chagrin of Mr. Ranga Iyer, the Congress party let him down by leaving the Bill to die. Mr. Gandhi did not mind this. He even went to the length of justifying the conduct of the Congress Party.

The other movement which Mr. Gandhi sponsored in 1933 was the establishment of the Harijan Sevak Sangh¹ with a net-work of branches all over India. There were three motives which lay behind the organization of the Sangh. First was to prove that Hindus had enough charitable spirit towards the Untouchables and that they would show it by their generous contributions towards their uplift. The second motive was to serve the Untouchables by helping them in the many difficulties with which they were faced in their daily life. The third motive was to create in the minds of the Untouchables a sense of confidence in the Hindus from whom they were estranged in matters political. None of the three objects has been realized. In the first flush the Hindus contributed a total of about 8 lakhs of rupees for the Sangh which is of course nothing as compared to the crores they have contributed for general political purposes. After that they have gone dry. The Sangh is now depending for its finances either on Government grants or on the income derived from the sale of Mr. Gandhi's autographs or on the munificence of some wealthy

merchant who makes a contribution to the Sangh, not because he loves the Untouchables but because he thinks it profitable to please Mr. Gandhi. The branches of the Sangh are being closed every year. The Sangh is contracting and contracting so rapidly that very soon it will have only a centre and no circumference. That the Hindus have lost interest in the Sangh is not the only regrettable aspect of this activity of Mr. Gandhi. The Sangh has not been able to secure the good will and the co-operation of the Untouchables for whose benefit it is supposed to have been started. This is due to various reasons. The work of the Sangh is of the most inconsequential kind. It does not catch anyone's imagination. It neglects most urgent purposes for which the Untouchables need help and assistance. The Sangh rigorously excludes the Untouchables from its management. The Untouchables are no more than beggars—mere recipients of charity. The result is that the Untouchables feel no concern for the Sangh. They look upon it as a foreign body set up by the Hindus with some ulterior motive. Here was an opportunity for Mr. Gandhi to make the Sangh a real bridge between the Hindus and the Untouchables. He could make it a virile institution by improving its programme of work and by allowing the Untouchables to participate in its working. Mr. Gandhi has done nothing of the kind. He has allowed the Sangh to languish. It is dying peacefully and may perish even during the life-time of Mr. Gandhi.

There need be no surprise if this survey of Mr. Gandhi's anti Untouchability campaign, of his sayings and his doings baffles and puzzles the reader. There need be no wonder if the reader were to pause and ask a few questions on the lines set out below to clear his own mind :

(1) In 1921, Mr. Gandhi collected 1 crore and 35 lakhs of rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Mr. Gandhi insisted that there was no possibility of winning swaraj unless Untouchability was removed. Why did he not protest when only a paltry sum of Rs. 43,000 was given to the cause of the Untouchables ?

(2) In 1922 there was drawn up the Bardoli Programme of constructive work. Uplift of the Untouchables was an important item in it. A Committee was appointed to work out the details. The Committee never functioned and was dissolved and the uplift of the Untouchables as an item in the

constructive programme was dropped. Only Rs. 500 were allotted to the Committee for working expenses. Why did Mr. Gandhi not protest against this niggardly and step-motherly treatment of the Committee by the Congress Working Committee ? Why did not Mr. Gandhi support Swami Shradhanand who was fighting with the Congress Working Committee for large funds being assigned to the Committee ? Why did not Mr. Gandhi protest against the dissolution of the Committee ? Why did not Mr. Gandhi appoint another Committee ? Why did he allow the work for the Untouchables to drop out as though it was of no importance ?

(3) Mr. Gandhi had at the very outset of his campaign for Swaraj insisted that there were five conditions precedent for winning swaraj : (i) Hindu-Moslem Unity; (ii) Removal of Untouchability; (iii) Universal adoption of hand-spun and hand-woven *khadi*; (iv) absolute non-violence and (v) complete non-co-operation. Mr. Gandhi had not only laid down these conditions but had told Indians that without the fulfilment of these conditions there could be no Swaraj. In 1922, he fasted for the sake of Hindu-Moslem unity. In 1924, he made production of hand-spun yarn the basis of franchise for Congress membership. Why did he not make non-observance of Untouchability the basis of Congress franchise in 1924 or at any time subsequent thereto ?

(4) Mr. Gandhi has gone on fast many a time to achieve a variety of objects which are dear to him. Why has Mr. Gandhi not fasted even once for the sake of the Untouchables ?

(5) Mr. Gandhi has devised satyagraha as a weapon to redress wrongs and to win freedom and has practised it against the British Government. Why has not Mr. Gandhi started satyagraha even once against the Hindus on behalf of the Untouchables for securing admission to wells, temples and other public places to which access is denied by the Hindus ?

(6) Following Mr. Gandhi's lead the Untouchables started satyagraha from 1929 onwards against the Hindus for admission to wells and temples. Why did Mr. Gandhi condemn their satyagraha ?

(7) Mr. Gandhi declared that he would fast if the Guruvayur temple was not thrown open to the Untouchables by the Zamorin. The temple has not been thrown open. Why did not Mr. Gandhi go on fast ?

(8) Mr. Gandhi in 1932 threatened the British Government with dire consequences if the Governor-General did not give permission to Mr. Ranga Iyer to introduce his Temple-entry Bill on behalf of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature. As fresh elections to the Central Legislature were announced the Congress Party withdrew its support to the Bill and Mr. Ranga Iyer had to drop it. If Mr. Gandhi was earnest and sincere about Temple-entry, why did Mr. Gandhi support the action of the Congress Party ? What was more important—Temple-entry for the Untouchables or Electoral victory to the Congress ?

(9) Mr. Gandhi knows that the difficulty of the Untouchables does not lie in their not having civic rights. Their difficulty lies in the conspiracy of the Hindus who threaten them with dire consequences if the Untouchables dare to exercise them. The real way of helping the Untouchables is to have some organization for the protection of civic rights which will undertake the duty of prosecuting Hindus who assault the Untouchables or proclaim social and economic boycott against them and thereby prevent them from exercising their civic rights. Why did not Mr. Gandhi include this as one of the objects of the Harijan Sevak Sangh ?

(10) Before Mr. Gandhi came on the scene the Depressed Classes Mission Society was formed by the caste Hindus for the uplift of the Untouchables. The moneys were subscribed by the Hindus. Yet the Society's affairs were conducted by Joint Boards consisting of Hindus and Untouchables. Why has Mr. Gandhi excluded the Untouchables from the management of the Harijan Sevak Sangh ? .

(11) If Mr. Gandhi is the real friend of the Untouchables, why did he not leave it to the Untouchables to decide whether political safeguards were the best means for their protection ? Why did he go to the length of making a pact with the Muslims in order to isolate and defeat the Untouchables ? Why did Mr. Gandhi declare a fast unto death the object of which was to deprive the Untouchables of the benefit of the Communal Award by this extreme form of coercion ?

(12) After having accepted the Poona Pact, why did not Mr. Gandhi keep faith with the Untouchables by telling the Congress not to despoil the politics of the Untouchables by contesting the seats reserved for the Untouchables by getting

such Untouchables elected as were prepared to become the tools of the Hindus ?

(13) After having accepted the Poona Pact why did not Mr. Gandhi keep up the gentleman's agreement and instruct the Congress High Command to include representatives of the Untouchables in the Congress Cabinets ?

(14) Why did Mr. Gandhi disapprove of the appointment by Dr. Khare of Mr. Agnibhoj—a member of the Scheduled Castes—as a minister in the Congress Cabinet in the C. P. when Mr. Agnibhoj was in every way qualified to be a Minister ? Did Mr. Gandhi say that he was opposed to the creation of such high ambitions among persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes ?

III

What is the explanation that Mr. Gandhi has to offer ? What is the explanation that Mr. Gandhi's friends have to offer ? Mr. Gandhi's anti-untouchability campaign is marked by so many twists and turns, inconsistencies and contradictions, attacks and surrenders, advances and retreats that the whole campaign has become a matter of mystery. Few have a belief in its efficacy and quite a large number hold that there is not enough earnestness and sincerity behind it. Some explanation is therefore necessary. It is more for the sake of Mr. Gandhi's reputation, for earnestness and sincerity than for the sake of giving a clear understanding of Mr. Gandhi's aims and methods to the reader that one would like Mr. Gandhi and his friends to explain the points raised in the foregoing questions.

It would no doubt be interesting to know what Mr. Gandhi and his friends may have to say in reply to these questions. Everybody interested in this question will naturally be looking forward to it. It will not however do for anyone else to anticipate the reply and then deal with it. They must be left to frame it in their own way and select their own time to do so. In the meantime one may well ask what the Untouchables have to say about Mr. Gandhi and his anti-untouchability campaign. It is not difficult to state what view the Untouchables take of Mr. Gandhi's anti-untouchability campaign.

Do the Untouchables regard Mr. Gandhi as being in earnest ? The answer is in the negative. They do not regard Mr. Gandhi as being in earnest. How can they ? How can they look

upon a man being in earnest who when in 1921 the whole country was aroused to put the Bardoli programme in action remained completely indifferent to the anti-untouchability part of it ? How could they look upon a man as being in earnest who, when out of 1 crore and 25 lakhs of Swaraj Fund, found that only 43 thousands rupees were allotted to the cause of the Untouchables did not raise any protest at this niggardly treatment of a long neglected cause ? How can they regard a man as being in earnest who when in 1924 he got an opportunity to impose upon the Hindus the obligation to remove Untouchability did not do so even though he had the power and the occasion to enforce it ? Such a step would have served three purposes. It would have put the nationalism of Congressmen to test. It would have helped to remove Untouchability, and it would have proved that Mr. Gandhi was sincere in his talks about the evil of Untouchability and its being a sin and a stigma on Hinduism. Why did not Mr. Gandhi do it ? Does this not show that Mr. Gandhi was more interested in the spread of spinning than in the removal of Untouchability ? Does this not show that removal of Untouchability was the least part of Mr. Gandhi's programme and that it was not even last ? Does it not show that the statements by Mr. Gandhi that Untouchability is a blot on Hinduism and that there will be no Swaraj without the removal of Untouchability were just empty phrases with no earnestness behind them ? How could they believe in the earnestness of a person who takes a vow to fast if the Guruvayur temple is not opened to the Untouchables but will not go on fast even when the temple remains closed ? How could they accept a man to be in earnest when he sponsors a Bill for securing Temple-entry and subsequently becomes a party to dropping it ? How could they accept the earnestness of a man who contents himself with saying that he will not go into a temple if it is not open to the Untouchables when what is required of him is to adopt every means to get the temples thrown open to the Untouchables ? How could they believe in the earnestness of a man who is ready to fast for everything but will not fast for the Untouchables ? How can they believe in the earnestness of a man who is prepared to practise satyagraha for everything and against everybody but who will not practise it against the Hindus for the sake of the Untouchables ? How can they believe in the earnestness of a man who

does nothing more than indulge in giving sermons on the evils of Untouchability ?

Do they regard Mr. Gandhi as honest and sincere ? The answer is that they do not regard Mr. Gandhi as honest and sincere. At the outset of his campaign for Swaraj Mr. Gandhi told the Untouchables not to side with the British. He told them not to embrace Christianity or any other religion. He told them that they could find salvation in Hinduism. He told Hindus that they must remove Untouchability as a condition precedent to Swaraj. Yet in 1921 when only a paltry sum out of the Tilak Swaraj Fund was allotted to the Untouchables, when the Committee to plan the uplift of the Untouchables was unceremoniously wound up Mr. Gandhi did not raise a word of protest.

Mr. Gandhi had under his command a sum of Rs. 1 crore and 25 lakhs belonging to the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Why did Mr. Gandhi not insist upon a substantial portion of this amount being ear-marked for the uplift of the Untouchables ? That Mr. Gandhi showed almost complete indifference to the cause of the Untouchables is beyond dispute. What is surprising is the explanation which Mr. Gandhi offered for his indifference. He said that he was busy in planning a campaign to win swaraj and that he had no time to spare for the cause of the Untouchables. He not only did not blush at his explanation but he offered a moral justification for his indifference to the cause of the Untouchables. He took the stand that there was nothing wrong in his devoting himself entirely to the political cause of India to the exclusion of the cause of the Untouchables for in his opinion the good of the whole includes the good of the part and that as the Hindus are slaves of, the British, slaves cannot emancipate slaves. Phrases such as 'slaves of slaves' and 'greater includes the less' may be admirable dialectics, though they cannot have more truth than the saying that because the country's wealth has increased, therefore everybody's wealth has increased. But we are not considering Mr. Gandhi's ability as a dialectician. We are testing his sincerity. Can we accept a man's sincerity who evades his responsibility and contents himself with an excuse ? Can the Untouchables believe that Mr. Gandhi is the champion of their cause?

How can they regard Mr. Gandhi as honest and sincere if they consider Mr. Gandhi's conduct towards them and towards