the Muslims and Sikhs in the matter of constitutional safeguards?

Mr. Gandhi used to justify his discrimination between the Scheduled Castes and other Minorities in the matter of constitutional safeguards by another plea. The plea was that there were historical reasons, which compel him to recognize the Muslims and the Sikhs. He has never explained what those reasons are. They cannot be other than those, which hold the Muslims and the Sikhs as the fragments of old ruling communities. One does not mind Mr. Gandhi having succumbed to such puerile and undemocratic arguments, though he could have insisted that he would treat all minorities on equal basis and would not give any weight to such illogical and irrelevant considerations. The question is : How could the admission of such a plea have prevented Mr. Gandhi from opposing the demand of the Scheduled Castes ? Why did Mr. Gandhi regard himself as bound by no other reasons except the historical reasons ? Why did not Mr. Gandhi think that if historical reasons were decisive in the case of Muslims and Sikhs, moral reasons were decisive in the case of the Untouchables ? The fact is that the plea of historical reasons is a hollow plea. It was not a plea at all. It was an excuse for not conceding the demand of the Untouchables.

Mr. Gandhi is never so much disgusted as he is when he is confronted with the question of Majority *versus* Minority. He would like to forget it and ignore it. But circumstances will not let him do either and he is often forced to deal with the issue. The last time he dealt with it was on the 21st October 1939 in the form of an Editorial in the *Harijan* under the heading "The Fiction of Majority." The article is full of venom and Mr. Gandhi has not hesitated to pour all the ridicule he could on those who were constantly raising the question. In the article he vehemently denied that the Muslims are a Minority. He denied that the Sikhs are a Minority and denied that the Indian Christians are a Minority. His contention was that they were not minorities in the technical sense of Oppressed Communities they were minorities they were to in the numerical sense only, which meant that they were no minorities at all. What did Mr. Gandhi have to say about the Scheduled Castes ? Could he deny their contention that they are a Minority ? Let me quote Mr. Gandhi's own words. Mr. Gandhi said :

> "I have endeavoured to show that there is no such things

as real minorities in India whose rights can be endangered by India becoming independent. With the exception of the Depressed Classes there is no minority which is not able to take care of itself."

Here is an admission on, the part of Mr. Gandhi that the Scheduled Castes are a minority in, the real sense of the word and that they are the only minority in India who will not be able to take care of themselves in a free India governed by a Hindu Communal Majority. Notwithstanding this inner conviction Mr. Gandhi maintained in a most vehement manner that he would not concede any political safeguards to the Untouchables. How can the Untouchables accept such a man as sincere and honest ?

Mr. Gandhi opposed the demands of the Untouchables for political safeguards at the Round Table Conference. He did everything to defeat the object of the Untouchables. To weaken the force behind their demand and isolate them he tried to buy over the Muslims by offering to concede the whole of their fourteen demands. Mr. Gandhi at the meeting of the Minorities Sub-Committee had said : "Who am I to oppose the demand of the Untouchables if the Committee gave it its approval." It was wrong for Mr. Gandhi to have tried to defeat the verdict of the Committee by offering to give the Muslims their full demand formulated in Mr. Jinnah's fourteen points in return for their agreeing to oppose the demands of the Scheduled Castes!! His was a most subtle piece of strategy. He offered the Musalmans a most difficult choice between having their 14 points and withdrawing their support to the demand of the Untouchables or siding with the Untouchables and losing their 14 points. In the end Mr. Gandhi's strategy failed and neither did the Musalmans lose their 14 points nor did the Untouchables lose their case. But the episode remains as a witness to Mr. Gandhi's perfidy. What else can be the appropriate description of the conduct of a man who offers criminal inducement to another for getting him to break his promise, who calls a person his friend and then contrives to stab him in the back ? How can such a man be regarded by the Untouchables as honest and sincere ?

Mr. Gandhi left the decision of the communal question to the arbitration of the British Prime Minister. Notwithstanding Mr. Gandhi's efforts to defeat the Untouchables His Majesty's Government conceded them their political demands. As a

party to the arbitration Mr. Gandhi was bound to abide by the decision. But Mr. Gandhi decided to defy it and he did it by going on a fast unto death. Mr. Gandhi shook India and the the world outside by his Fast unto Death. The object of the Fast was to compel the British Government to withdraw the Constitutional Safeguards which the British Prime Minister had proposed in his Award for the protection of the Untouchables under the new Constitution. One of Mr. Gandhi's disciples has described the fast as an Epic Fast. Why it should be described as an Epic Fast it is not easy to follow. There was nothing heroic about it. It was the opposite of heroic. It was an adventure. It was launched by Mr. Gandhi because he believed that both the Untouchables and the British Government would quake before his threat of fast unto death, and surrender to his demand. Both were prepared to call off his bluff and as a matter of fact did call it off. All his heroism vanished the moment Mr. Gandhi found that he had overdone the trick. The man who started by saying that he would fast unto death unless the safeguards to the Untouchables were completely withdrawn and the Untouchables reduced to the condition of utter helplessness without rights and without recognition was plaintively pleading "My life is in your hands, will you save me ? " Mr. Gandhi's over-impatience to sign the Poona Pact—though it did not cancel the Prime Minister's Award as he had demanded but only substituted another and a different system of constituent safeguards—is the strongest evidence that the hero had lost his courage and was anxious to save his face and anyhow save his life.

There was nothing noble in the fast. It was a foul and filthy act. The Fast was not for the benefit of the Untouchables. It was against them and was the worst form of coercion against a helpless people to give up the constitutional safeguards of which they had become possessed under the Prime Minister's Award and agree to live on the mercy of the Hindus. It was a vile and wicked act. How can the Untouchables regard such a man as honest and sincere ?

After having gone on a fast unto death, he signed the Poona Pact. People say that Mr. Gandhi sincerely believed that political safeguards were harmful to the Untouchables. But how could a honest and sincere man who opposed the political demands of the Untouchables who was prepared to use the

Muslims to defeat them, who went on a Fast unto Death, in the end accept the, very same demands—for there is no difference between the Poona Pact and the Communal Award—when he found that there was no use opposing, as Opposition would not succeed? How can an honest and sincere man accept as harmless the demands of the Untouchables which once he regarded as harmful ?

Do the Untouchables regard Mr. Gandhi as their friend and ally ? The answer is in the negative. They do not regard him as their friend. How can they ? It may be that Mr. Gandhi honestly believes that the problem of the Untouchables is a social problem. But how can they believe him to be their friend when he wishes to retain caste and abolish Untouchability it being quite clear that Untouchability is only an extended form of caste and that therefore without abolition of caste there is no hope of abolition of Untouchability ? It may be that Mr. Gandhi honestly believes that the problem of Untouchables can be solved by social processes. But how can the Untouchables regard a man as their friend who develops a fanatic and frantic opposition to political processes being employed when everyone was agreed that the use of political processes cannot mar the effect of social process and may be depended upon to help and accelerate the solution of the problem. How could a man be regarded as the friend of the Untouchables when he does not believe the Untouchables reaching to places of power and authority in the State. In this controversy over political safeguards Mr. Gandhi could have pursued any of the following courses. He could have been the champion of the Untouchables. As such, he should not only have welcomed their demand for safeguards but he should have proposed them himself without waiting for the Untouchables to do so. Not only should he have proposed them himself but he should have fought for them. For, what could give greater happiness to a genuine champion of the Untouchables than to see that provision was made to enable them to become members of the Legislature, Ministers of Executive, and occupants of high offices in the State ? Surely, if Mr. Gandhi is a champion of the Untouchables these are the very provisions he should have fought for. Secondly, if he did not wish to be the champion of the Untouchables, he could have been their ally. He could have helped them by giving them his moral and material support. Thirdly, if Mr. Gandhi

did not like to play the part of a champion and was averse to be even an ally of the Untouchables, the next thing he could have done, consistent with his proclaimed and much advertised sympathies for the Untouchables, was to be their friend. Again as a friend he could have taken up the attitude of benevolent neutrality—declining to fight but ready to render all help for getting the demand for safeguards accepted. Failing benevolent neutrality he could have taken the attitude of strict neutrality and could have told the Untouchables to get the safeguards if the Round Table Conference was prepared to give them and that he would neither help nor hinder. Abandoning all these sober considerations Mr. Gandhi came out as an open enemy of the Untouchables. How can the Untouchables regard such a man as their friend and ally ?

IV

That Mr. Gandhi's anti-untouchability campaign has failed is beyond cavil. Even the Congress papers admit it. I give below a few quotations from some of them :

On 17th August 1939 Mr. B. K. Gaikwad, a member of the Scheduled Castes in the Bombay Legislative Assembly, asked a question as to how many temples in the Bombay Presidency were thrown open to the Untouchables since 1932 when Mr. Gandhi started his Temple-entry movement. According to the figures given by the Congress Minister the total number of temples thrown open was 142. Of these 121 were ownerless temples standing on the wayside, which were under the care of nobody in particular and which nobody used as places of worship. Another fact revealed was that not a single temple was thrown open to the Untouchables in Gujarat, the district which is the home of Mr. Gandhi.

Writing on 10th March 1940 the *Harijan Bandu,* Mr. Gandhi's Gujarathi paper, said :

> "The Untouchability of the 'Harijans' in the matter of entry into schools persists nowhere so much still as in Gujarat."[1]

The *Bombay Chronicle* in its issue of 27th August 1940 re-produced an extract from a monthly letter of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. It

> "States that Harijans of Godhavi in Ahmedabad District

[1] Quoted from Sanjana's *Sense and Nonsense in Politics.*

were so persecuted by caste Hindus for sending their children to Local Board School that ultimately 42 Harijan families left that place...and went to the Taluka town of Sanand."

On 27th August 1943, Mr. M. M. Nandgaonkar, a leader of the Untouchables residing in Thana in the Bombay Presidency and ex-Vice President of Thana Municipality was refused tea in a Hindu hotel. The *Bombay Chronicle* commenting upon this incident in its issue dated 28th August 1943 said :

> "When Gandhiji fasted in 1932, some feverish attempts were made to have some temples and hotels opened to Harijans. Now the actual position is nearly what it used to be before with regard to temple entry and access to hotels. The cleanest Harijan is not admitted to temples and hotels. Yet many anti-Untouchability workers take a complacent view of these disabilities and patronisingly talk of 'uplift first' for Harijans, saying that when Harijans learn to be clean, their civic disabilities will fall off automatically. This is rank nonsense."

Writing on the proceedings of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation held in Cawnpore in January 1944 the *Bombay Chronicle* in its issue of 4th February 1944 said :

> "But such is the passivity of Hindu society that both caste and Untouchability still thrive. Nay, several Hindu leaders... misguided by the interested propaganda by certain Britishers, still plead that there is some mysterious virtue in caste because Hindu culture has remained today. Else, they argue, caste would not have survived the shocks of centuries... It is most tragic to find that, in spite of all that Gandhiji and other reformers...have done, Untouchability still persists to no small extent. It is most rampant in villages... Even in a city like Bombay, a person known to be a sweeper, let alone a scavenger, however clean dressed he may be, is not allowed to enter a caste Hindu restaurant, nay, even an Irani's restaurant for tea."

The Untouchables have always said that Mr. Gandhi's anti-Untouchability campaign has failed. After 25 years of labour, hotels have remained closed, wells have remained closed, temples have remained closed and in very many parts of India—particularly in Gujarat—even schools have remained closed. The extracts produced from the papers form therefore a very welcome testimony especially because the papers are Congress papers. As they fully corroborate what the Untouchables have been saying on the point, nothing further need be said on the subject except to ask one question.

Why has Mr. Gandhi failed ? According to me, there are three reasons which has brought about this failure.

The first reason is the Hindus to whom he makes his appeal for the removal of Untouchability do not respond. Why is this so ? It is a common experience that the words a man uses arid the effect they produce are not always commensurate. What he says has its momentum indefinitely multiplied, or reduced to nullity, by the impression that the hearer for good reason or bad happens to have formed of the spirit of the speaker. This gives a clue to know why Mr. Gandhi's sermons on Untouchability have completely failed to move the Hindus, why people hear his after-prayer sermons for few minutes and then go to the comic opera and why there is nothing more to it. The fault is not entirely of the Hindu public. The fault is of Mr. Gandhi himself. Mr. Gandhi has built up his reputation of being a Mahatma on his being an harbinger of political freedom and not on his being a spiritual teacher. Whatever may be his intentions, Mr. Gandhi is looked upon as an apostle of Swaraj. His anti-Untouchability campaign is looked upon as a fad if not a side-show. That is why the Hindus respond to his political biddings but never to his social or religious preaching. The momentum of his anti-Untouchability campaign must therefore remain a nullity. Mr. Gandhi is a political shoe-maker. He must stick to his political last. He thought he could take up the task of solving the social question. That was a mistake. A politician is not the man for it. That is why the hope held out to the Untouchables that Mr. Gandhi's sermons will do the trick has failed.

The second reason is that Mr. Gandhi does not wish to antagonize the Hindus even if such antagonism was necessary to carry out his anti-Untouchability programme. A few instances will illustrate Mr. Gandhi's mentality.

Most of Mr. Gandhi's friends give credit to Mr. Gandhi for sincerity and earnestness for the cause of the Untouchables and expect the Untouchables to believe in it on the mere ground that Mr. Gandhi is the one man who keeps on constantly preaching to the Hindus the necessity of removing Untouchability. They have lost sight of the old proverb that an ounce of practice is worth a ton of preaching and have never cared to ask Mr. Gandhi to explain why does he not cease to preach to the Hindus the necessity of removing Untouchability and launch a campaign of satyagraha or start

a fast. If they would ask for such an explanation they would know why Mr. Gandhi merely contents himself with sermons on Untouchability.

The true reasons why Mr. Gandhi will not go beyond sermons were revealed to the Untouchables for the first time[1] in 1929 when the Untouchables in the Bombay Presidency opened a campaign of satyagraha against the Hindus for establishing their civic rights in the matter of temple-entry and taking water from public wells. They hoped to get the blessings of Mr. Gandhi in as much as satyagraha was Mr. Gandhi's own weapon to get wrongs redressed. When appealed to for support, Mr. Gandhi surprised the Untouchables by issuing a statement condemning their campaign of satyagraha against the Hindus. The argument urged by Mr. Gandhi was very ingenious. He stated that satyagraha was to be used only against foreigners ; it must not be used against one's own kindred or countrymen and as the Hindus were the kindred and countrymen of the Untouchables by rules of satyagraha the latter were debarred from using the weapon against the former !! What a fall from the sublime to the ridiculous ! By this Mr. Gandhi made nonsense of satyagraha. Why did Mr. Gandhi do this ? Only because he did not want to annoy and exasperate the Hindus.

As a second piece of evidence, I would refer to what is known as the Kavitha incident. Kavitha is a village in the Ahmedabad District in Gujarat. In 1935, the Untouchables of the village demanded from the Hindus of the village that their children should be admitted in the common school of the village along with other Hindu children. The Hindus were enraged at this outrage and took their revenge by proclaiming a complete social boycott. The events connected with this boycott were reported by Mr. A. V. Thakkar, who went to Kavitha to intercede with the Hindus on behalf of the Untouchables. The story told by him runs as follows :—

> "The Associated Press announced on the 10th inst. that the Caste Hindus of Kavitha agreed to admit Harijan boys to the village school in Kavitha and that matters were amicably settled. This was contradicted on the 13th instant by the Secretary of the Ahmedabad Harijan Sevak Sangh, who said in his statement that the Harijans had undertaken (privately

[1] In 1924 in the Satyagraha at Vaikom the object of which was to get a public road in Travancore open to the Untouchables, Mr. Gandhi objected to the Sikhs opening a kitchen for the satyagrahis. The reason given by Mr. Gandhi was not stated quite so explicitly.

of course) not to send their children to the school. Such an undertaking was not given voluntarily, but was extorted from them by the Caste Hindus, in this case the Garasias of the village, who had proclaimed a social boycott against poor Harijans—weavers, chamars and others, who number over 100 families. They were deprived of agricultural labour, their animals of grazing in the pasture larid, and their children of buttermilk. Not only this, but a Harijan leader was compelled to take an oath by Mahadev that he and others would not hereafter even make an effort to reinstate their children in the school. The so-called settlement was brought about in this way.

"But even after the bogus settlement reported on the 10th and the complete surrender by poor Harijans, the boycott was not lifted up to the 19th and partly up to the 22nd from the weavers. It was lifted somewhat earlier from the head of the chamars, as Garasias themselves could not remove the carcasses of their dead animals, and thus had to come to terms with the Chamars earlier. As if the enormities perpetrated so far were not enough, kerosine was poured into the Harijans' well, once on the 15th instant and again on the 19th instant. One can imagine what terrorism was thus practised on poor Harijans because they had dared to send their children to sit alongside of the 'princely' Garasia boys.

"I met the leaders of the Garasias on the morning of the 22nd. They said they could not tolerate the idea of boys of Dheds and Chamars sitting by the side of their own boys. I met also the District Magistrate of Ahmedabad on the 23rd with a view to finding out if he would do something to ease the situation, but without any result.

"Harijan boys are thus practically banned from the village school with nobody to help them. This has caused despondency among the Harijans to such an extent that they are thinking of migrating in a body to some other village."

This was a report made to Mr. Gandhi. What did Mr. Gandhi do ? The following[1] is the advice Mr. Gandhi gave to the Untouchables of Kavitha :—

"There is no help like self-help. God helps those who help themselves. If the Harijans concerned will carry out their reported resolve to wipe the dust of Kavitha off their feet, they will not only be happy themselves but they will pave the way for others who may be similarly treated. If people migrate in search of employment how much more should they do so in

[1] *Harijan,* dated 5th October 1935.

search of self-respect ? I hope that well-wishers of Harijans will help these poor families to vacate inhospitable Kavitha."

Mr. Gandhi advised the Untouchables of Kavitha to vacate. But why did he not advise Mr. Thakkar to prosecute the Hindus of Kavitha and help the Untouchables to vindicate their rights ? Obviously, he would like to uplift the Untouchables if he can but not by offending the Hindus. What good can such a man do to promote the cause of the Untouchatbles ? All this shows that Mr. Gandhi is most anxious to be good to the Hindus. That is why he opposes satyagraha against the Hindus. That is why he opposed the political demands of the Untouchables as he believed that they were aimed against them. He is anxious to be so good to the Hindus that he does not care if he is thereby becoming good for nothing for the Untouchables. That is why Mr. Gandhi's whole programme for the removal of Untouchability is just words, words and words and why there is no action behind it.

The third reason is that Mr. Gandhi does not want the Untouchables to organize and be strong. For he fears that they might thereby become independent of the Hindus and weaken the ranks of Hindus. This is best illustrated by the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The whole object of the Sangh is to create a slave mentality among the Untouchables towards their Hindu masters. Examine the Sangh from any angle one may like and the creation of slave mentality will appear to be its dominant purpose.

The work of the Sangh reminds one of the mythological demoness *Putana* described in the Bhagvat—a companion to the Mahabharat. *Kamsa* the king of Mathurra, wanted to kill *Krishna,* as it was predicted that *Kamsa* will die at the hands of *Krishna.* Having come to know of the birth of *Krishna, Kamsa* asked *Putana* to undertake the mission to kill *Krishna* while he was yet a baby. *Putana* took the form of a beautiful woman and went to *Yashoda,* the foster mother of *Krishna* and having applied liquid poison to her breast pleaded to be employed as a wet nurse for suckling the baby *Krishna* and thus have the opportunity to kill it. The rest of the story it is unnecessary to pursue. The point of the story is that the real purpose is not always the same as the ostensible purpose and a nurse can be a murdress. The Sangh is to the Untouchables what *Putana* was to *Krishna.* The Sangh under the pretence of service is out to kill the spirit of independence from among the Un-

touchables. The Untouchables, in the early stages of their agitation, had taken the support of some well-meaning Hindus and had followed their leadership. By the time of the Round Table Conference, the Untouchables had become completely self-reliant and independent. They were no longer satisfied with charity from the Hindus. They demanded what they said was their right. There is no doubt that it is to kill this spirit of independence among the Untouchables that Mr. Gandhi started the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The Harijan Sevak Sangh by its petty services has collected a swarm of grateful Untouchables who are employed to preach that Mr. Gandhi and the Hindus are the saviours of the Untouchables. Daniel O'Connel the Irish leader once said that no man can be greateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no country can be grateful at the cost of its liberty. The Untouchables are too simple-minded to know that the cost of the service which the Harijan Sevak Sangh offers to render is loss of independence. This is exactly what Mr. Gandhi wants.

The worst part of the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh is the help rendered to the Untouchable students kept in the hostels maintained by the Sangh. These Untouchable students remind me of *Bhishma* and *Kacha,* two prominent characters which figure in the Mahabharata. *Bhishma* proclaimed with great show that the *Pandavas* were right and the *Kauravas* wrong. Yet when it came to a war between the two he fought on the side of the *Kauravas* and against the *Pandavas*. When asked to justify his conduct he was not ashamed to say that he fought for the *Kauravas* because they fed him. *Kacha* belonged to the community of the *Devas* who were engaged in a war against the *Rakshasas*. The spiritual head of the *Rakshasas* knew a *mantra* (incantation) by which he could revive a dead *Rakshasa*. The *Devas* were losing the battle since their head did not know the *mantra* and could not revive their dead. The *Devas* planned to send *Kacha* to the head of the *Rakshasas* with instructions somehow to learn the *mantra* and come back. *Kacha* in the beginning could not succeed. Ultimately he entered into an agreement with *Devayani* the daughter of the spiritual head of the *Rakshasas* that if she helped him to acquire the *mantra* he would be prepared to marry her. *Devayani* succeeded in fulfilling her part of the contract. But *Kacha* refused to perform his

part alleging that the interests of his community were more important than his promise to her.

Bhishma and *Kacha,* in my opinion, are typical of the morally depraved characters who know no other purpose but to serve their own interests for the time being. The Untouchable students in the Harijan hostels are acting the part of both *Bhishma* and *Kacha*. During their stay in the hostels they play the part of *Bhishma* by singing the praises of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress. When they come out of the hostels they play the part of *Kacha* and denounce Mr. Gandhi and the Congress. I am extremely pained to see this. Nothing worse could happen to the youth of the Untouchables than this moral degeneration. But this is the greatest disservice which his Harijan Sevak Sangh has done to the Untouchables. It has destroyed their character. It has destroyed their independence. This is what Mr. Gandhi wants to happen.

Take a fourth illustration. The Sangh is run by the Caste Hindus. There are some Untouchables who have demanded that the institution should be handed over to the Untouchables and should be run by them. Others have demanded that the Untouchables should have representation on the governing Board. Mr. Gandhi has flatly refused to do either on two very ingenious grounds which no man with the greatest cunning could improve. Mr. Gandhi's first argument is that the Harijan Sevak Sangh is an act of penance on the part of the Hindus for the sin of observing Untouchability. It is they who must do the penance. Therefore[1] the Untouchable can have no place in running the Sangh. Secondly Mr. Gandhi says the money collected by him is given by the Hindus and not by the Untouchables and as the money is not of the Untouchables, the Untouchables have no right to be on the Governing Body. The refusal of Mr. Gandhi may be tolerated but his arguments are most insulting and a respectable Untouchable will be forgiven if he refuses to have anything to do with the Sangh. One should have thought that the Harijan Sevak Sangh was a Trust and the Untouchables its beneficiaries. Any trio in law would admit that the beneficiaries have every right to know the aims and objects of the Trust, its funds and whether the objects are properly carried out or not. The beneficiaries have even the right to have the Trustees removed for breach of

trust. On that basis it would be impossible to deny the claim of the Untouchables for representation on the Managing Board. Evidently Mr. Gandhi does not wish to accept this position. A self-respecting Untouchable who has no desire to cringe and who does not believe in staking the future of the Untouchables on the philanthropy of strangers cannot have any quarrel with Mr. Gandhi. He is quite prepared to say that if meanness is a virtue then Mr. Gandhi's logic is superb and Mr. Gandhi is welcome to the benefit of it. Only he must not blame the Untouchables if they boycott the Sangh.

These however could not be the real reasons for not allowing the Untouchables to run the Sangh. The real reasons are different. In the first place, if the Sangh was handed over to the Untouchables Mr. Gandhi and the Congress will have no means of control over the Untouchables. The Untouchables will cease to be dependent on the Hindus. In the second place, the Untouchables having become independent will cease to be grateful to the Hindus. These consequences will be quite contrary to the aim and object, which have led Mr. Gandhi to found the Sangh. He wants to create among the Untouchables what is known among Indian Christians as the mission compound mentality. That is why Mr. Gandhi does not wish to hand over the Sangh to the control and management of the Untouchables. Is this consistent with a genuine desire for the emancipation of the Untouchables ? Can Mr. Gandhi be called a liberator of the Untouchables ? Does this not show that Mr. Gandhi is more anxious to tighten the tie which binds the Untouchables to the apron strings of the Hindus than to free them from the thraldom of the Hindus ?

These are the reasons why Mr. Gandhi's anti-Untouchability campaign has failed.

V

To sum up, can it be said that Mr. Gandhi has recovered the title deeds to humanity which the Untouchables have lost ? Obviously not. Those title deeds are still with the Hindus. He has done nothing to recover them. Nor has he helped the Untouchables to recover them. On the contrary, Mr. Gandhi has put every obstacle in their way. The Untouchables feel that their title deeds to humanity—which means their emancipation from their thraldom of the Hindus—can be secured by

them by political power, and by nothing else. Mr. Gandhi, on the other hand, believes that his preaching and the charity and zeal of the Hindus are sufficient panacea for all the ills of the Untouchables. Can the Untouchables rely on a sustained flow of Hindu charity and Hindu zeal ? Charity which has its fury is worth talking about. Zeal which has its vengeance is worth building upon. But which friend of the Untouchables can ask them to depend upon the miserable measure of Hindu charity and the Hindu zeal ? Untouchability has been in existence for the last two thousand years during which period the Hindus have day in and day out sucked the very blood of the Untouchables and have mutilated them and trodden upon them in every way. During these two thousand years what amount of charity have the Hindus done to the Untouchables ? Only 8 lakhs and that too when Mr. Gandhi personally went round the country with a begging bowl !!! Having put his programme to test, Mr. Gandhi might have shown his willingness to concede the Untouchables' demand for political power as their only means of salvation. Indeed so obvious is the justice of this demand that a man with no more than common sense could have understood that executive power in the hands of the Untouchables could do more in a year than the whole order of preaching friars could be relied upon to do in a century. But the very idea of political power to the Untouchables is hateful to Mr. Gandhi. Why should not the Untouchables say 'Beware of Mr. Gandhi' when they know that he would not allow the use of political processes for the emancipation of the Untouchables though Mr. Gandhi is fully alive to the fact that the social processes on which he laid so much store for helping them have completely failed.

In this connection one is reminded of the attitude of President Lincoln in the American Civil War towards the two questions of union and slavery. This attitude is well revealed by the correspondence[1] that passed in 1862 between Mr. Horace Greeley and President Lincoln. In a letter addressed to the President entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," Mr. Greeley said :

> "On the face of this wide earth, Mr. President, there is not one disinterested, determined, intelligent champion of the Union cause who does not feel that all attempts to put down the rebellion and at the same time uphold its inciting cause (namely slavery) are preposterous and futile."

[1] *Works of Abraham Lincoln,* Vol. XI, pp. xii-xiii

To this, President Lincoln's reply was :

> "If there be those who would no save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them.
>
> "If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them.
>
> "My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or to destroy slavery.
>
> "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it. If I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it— and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

These were the views of President Lincoln about Negro slavery and its relation to the question of Union. They certainly throw a very different light on one who is reputed to be the liberator of the Negroes. As a matter of fact he did not believe in the emancipation of the Negroes as a categorical imperative. Obviously the author of the famous Gettysberg oration about Government of the people, by the people and for the people would not have minded if his statement had taken the shape of government of the black people by the white people and for the white people provided there was union. Mr. Gandhi's attitude towards Swaraj and the Untouchables resembles very much the attitude of President Lincoln towards the two questions of the Negroes and the Union. Mr. Gandhi wants Swaraj as did President Lincoln want Union. But he does not want Swaraj at the cost of disrupting the structure of Hinduism which is what political emancipation of the Untouchables means as President Lincoln did not want to free the slaves if it was not necessary to do so for the sake of the Union. There is of course this difference between Mr. Gandhi and President Lincoln. President Lincoln was prepared to emancipate the Negro slaves if it was necessary to preserve the Union. Mr. Gandhi's attitude is in marked contrast. He is not prepared for the political emancipation of the Untouchables even if it was essential for winning Swaraj. Mr. Gandhi's attitude is let Swaraj perish if the cost of it is the political freedom of the Untouchables.

Some Untouchables are probably under the impression that all this is a matter of the dead past and that Mr. Gandhi having accepted the Poona Pact cannot now oppose the political

demands of the Untouchables for as a party to the Poona Pact Mr. Gandhi must be assumed to have conceded that the Untouchables are a separate element in the national life of India. This is a complete misunderstanding. For there are grounds to believe that the Poona Pact has made no difference in Mr. Gandhi's view and he still maintains the same attitude to the Untouchables' claim for political safeguards as he did at the Round Table Conference and before the Poona Pact. These grounds have their foundation in the fact that when His Majesty's Government declared in 1940 that the Untouchables are a separate element in the National life of India and that their consent to the Constitution is necessary Mr. Gandhi came out with a protest. When the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow referred to the Untouchables as a separate element and said that their consent to the Constitution was necessary, Mr. Gandhi said[1]:—

> "I felt that the putting up by the Viceroy, and then the Secretary of State of want of agreement by the Congress with the Princes, the Muslim League and even the Scheduled Classes as a barrier to the British recognition of India's right to freedom was more than unjust to the Congress and the people."
>
> * * *
>
> "The introduction of the Scheduled Classes in the controversy has made the unreality of the case of the British Government doubly unreal. They know that these are the special care of the Congress, and that the Congress is infinitely more capable of guarding their interests than the British Government. Moreover, the Scheduled Classes are divided into as many castes as the Caste Hindu Society. No single Scheduled classes member could possibly and truthfully represent the innumerable castes."

The argument advanced by Mr. Gandhi is puerile. It may be pointed out that in the hurry he made in stating his opposition to the position assigned to the Scheduled Castes by the Viceroy, Mr. Gandhi forgot that if the Scheduled Castes are divided into many castes and no single caste could represent them all, the case of the Muslims and the Indian Christians is in no way different. The Muslims are divided into three groups: (1) Sunnis; (2) Shias and (8) Momins each of which consists of many castes who interdine but do not intermarry. Indian Christians are divided into (1) Catholics, and (2) Pro-

1 *Harijan,* dated 13th Ootober 1940,

testants. Catholics are again sub-divided into (1) Caste Christians and (2) Non-caste Christians. Both Catholics and Protestants have castes which do not intermarry and caste Christians and Non-caste Christians do not even interdine or go to the same church. This shows that Mr. Gandhi notwithstanding his being a party to the Poona Pact is determined not to allow the Scheduled Castes being given the status of a separate element and that he is prepared to adopt any argument however desperate to justify his attitude of opposition.

In short Mr. Gandhi is still on the war path so far as the Untouchables are concerned. He may start the trouble over again. The time to trust him has not arrived. The Untouchables must still hold that the best way to safeguard themselves is to say 'Beware of Mr. Gandhi.'

●●