



that the measures proposed in the Bill should be applied only to the rioters. Moving an important amendment to the Bill Ambedkar agreed that the people were being molested by dangerous characters and consequently the danger to their lives was a real one. He told the House that he had lived for over twenty-two years in the underworld of Bombay and knew more than anybody in the House or even more than the Police Commissioner, how the poor people were molested by what were called the Mavalis and Dadas, and how utterly impossible it was for those victims to obtain any redress because they themselves, for fear of further molestation, would not go to a court of law and seek to get them convicted.

Referring to the history of communal riots, he said that all agreed that those annual bloodbaths must be stopped effectively, but at the same time, there should be some safeguards laid down in order to see that arbitrary power should not be misused by the Commissioner of Police. He, therefore, told the House that there should be no lacuna or loophole left for the executive to use the provisions of the section for any other purpose than those for which it was intended.

The Bill provided some interesting moments for the House. Jamnadas Mehta, who opposed the first reading of the Bill, said that even the gangster should be given the right of defending himself. Upon this Ambedkar asked him whether it was an ideal. Jamnadas remarked that even in the U.S.A. they had not thought it fit to curtail the liberty of the subject like this. A few minutes later Ambedkar said: "I am myself more anxious than Jamnadas Mehta is that this measure should not be extended to labour disputes."

JAMNADAS MEHTA: As anxious, not more.

AMBEDKAR: If you will allow me to say, I am more anxious.

Ambedkar then asked the Home Member to define the word 'community' in the Bill.

Early in May 1938, Ambedkar visited Nagpur to conduct a case concerning the affairs of the head of the Satnamis. At the Nagpur station he was accorded a grand reception. After the court business was over, at night people thronged to hear him in spite of a storm, rain and lightning. Next morning he addressed a students' meeting, visited Kamtee where he made a speech and returned to Bombay.



Although the Congress party ruled over the Province, Ambedkar still continued as the Principal of the Government Law College, Bombay. He resigned in May and, in the words of the College Magazine, the college "undoubtedly lost in him a Principal who was greatly respected by the students for his learning and ability. His lectures were always known to be prepared with great industry and care and were listened to with rapt attention." The Magazine mentioned gratefully the enrichment of the Library during his tenure and said he had radical views on legal education.

V

Immediately on May 13, he left for the tour of the Konkan District. He went to Kankavli via Kolhapur. He presided over a Conference of the Depressed Classes at Kankavli in a pandal named Ambedkar Nagar. Mr. A. V. Chitre, the driving force behind the agrarian movement in the Konkan, was present. Kowly, Pradhan and Tipnis were also present at the Conference. The little town first saw in its life the use of a loud-speaker at this Conference. Ambedkar in his exhortations to the Conference said that out of two million Mahars in Maharashtra a few should struggle endlessly to win their rights and a living of self-respect for their community. They should give up the nasty habit of begging and of living on the leavings. They should watch the work of their representatives in the Assembly. He declared that he was determined to end their serfdom by abolishing the Khoti system and if the Bill which he had introduced failed, they should be prepared to launch passive resistance.

The next day Ambedkar visited Devrukh and Aravali, making brief halts and short speeches before the crowds of Depressed Classes and reached Chiplun at night on May 16. Next morning he went to Guhagar, addressed a meeting and returned to Chiplun to address another meeting. He told his audience that Gandhiji's so-called mesmerism could not capture him. Nehru and Subhas yielded to Gandhi, but he would never do so, and if he ever entered the Congress he would shine out there by dint of his merits, he added. He further said that the Congress Party was postponing for the last ten months the Khoti Abolition Bill introduced by him, and if it failed for want of



support, they should start a no-tax campaign and he would be the first man to court jail on that issue. He told the farmers that he wanted to see a man from amongst the peasants, who formed 80 per cent of the population, occupying the Gadi of the Premier of the Province.

After addressing meetings at Khed and Dapoli, he reached Mahad the battlefield where he gave the first battle to the orthodox Hindus and the reactionary forces in the Konkan. He made a thrilling speech at Mahad before a vast audience expressing disappointment at the policy of the existing Government. He returned to Bombay on May 21, after touring about a thousand miles. The continuous strain of speeches affected his voice, and at the last meeting he could not utter even a single word.

On his arrival in Bombay, in the course of an interview, Ambedkar expressed great satisfaction at the growing support of the people to his Party and their grateful appreciation of his efforts towards abolishing their serfdom. He said in its own way his I.L.P. was striving to redeem its election pledges, but if the Congress Ministry refused to give relief through constitutional methods, and if people's faith in it was thus lost, the alternative was obvious. He, however, was surprised at the attitude of the Socialists, who, he said, were all those years shouting for the confiscation of all Zamindari lands and the abolition of the capitalist system, but were now inactive when a concrete Bill was brought forward to put an end to the Khoti system.

By now a crisis had brewed in the working of the Congress Ministry in C.P. The Congress bosses dethroned Dr. Khare, the Premier, for his revolting spirit. He then explained to the people his position at several places in regard to democracy.

One such meeting was held at the R. M. Bhat High School, Bombay, in the first week of August 1938. Three things drew a huge crowd. One was the Mahatma's denial of his having himself corrected the draft of Dr. Khare's resignation; the second was the exposure of that false denial by Dr. Khare; and the third was the Mahatma's opposition to Khare's taking up in his new Ministry a Harijan Member. These points gave a deep colour to the background of the whole tragedy. At that meeting Dr. Moonje, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta and Dr. Ambedkar made speeches upholding Dr. Khare's viewpoint that being the



leader of the House, Dr. Khare was justified in forming a new Ministry of his choice. Dr. Khare was a Member of the Working Committee of the Harijan Sevak Sangha and Gandhiji had made a tour of C.P. along with Dr. Khare to give an impetus to the uplift of the Harijans. And yet Gandhiji would not allow Dr. Khare to include a Harijan Member in his Ministry!

During those days if somebody praised Gandhiji as a holy man, Ambedkar replied that Gandhiji was owly and described his conduct at the R.T.C. as an act of treachery! In an interview for a Marathi Weekly he said that if a man with God's name on his tongue and a sword under his armpit deserved the appellation of a Mahatma, then Mohandas K. Gandhi was a Mahatma!¹ No other leader in Indian politics had a rougher tongue! No revolutionary speaks a soft language and marches without raising dust and smoke.

In the last week of October Ambedkar visited Bavla, a little town thirty miles from Ahmedabad where he was presented with an address in the Depressed Class locality. Moved at the pitiable sight of their faces, he asked them to take heart and develop confidence in themselves as their brethren in Maharashtra had done. On his return he addressed a meeting at the Premabhai Hall, in Ahmedabad. He admitted that he was opposed to Gandhiji in politics. It was because he had no faith in Gandhiji and he did not believe that he would do good to the Depressed Classes. He said if Gandhiji was sincere why should he not ask the Premiers of Bombay and C.P. to include representatives of the Depressed Classes in their ministries? He maintained that the Congress Government of Bombay was not reducing the land revenue, nor was it prepared to tax the rich. The former Government had recommended the grant of waste lands to the Depressed Classes for cultivation, recruitment of the Depressed Classes in the police services and a certain percentage of reservation in Government Departments for the Depressed Classes. But the Congress Government did not care for them. On the last day of the month he visited Nipani to preside over a Conference convened by the Belgaum District I.L.P. On his arrival at Nipani, a mammoth crowd gave him a thunderous applause, and he was taken out in a mile-long procession wherein he was made to sit in a chariot drawn by fifty bullocks.

¹ N. C. Kelkar, *Autobiography* (Marathi), p. 734.



VI

Meanwhile, the consideration of the Industrial Disputes Bill was taken up in September 1938 by the Bombay Legislative Assembly. Ambedkar and Jamnadas Mehta opposed the Bill tooth and nail. Ambedkar described the Bill as bad, bloody and bloodthirsty inasmuch as it made a strike under certain circumstances illegal and affected the right of the labourer to strike. Moreover it did not ask the employer to disclose his budget, and sought to use police force against the workers.

Ambedkar stated that according to him strike was a civil wrong and not a crime, and making a man serve against his will was nothing less than making him a slave. To penalise him was to make a worker slave and as defined, he proceeded, in the constitution of the United States, slavery was nothing less than involuntary servitude. He then observed that a strike was nothing else than the right to freedom of one's services on any terms that one wanted to obtain. If the Congressmen accepted that the right to freedom was a divine right, then, he contended that the right to strike was a divine right.

The Bill, he continued, ought to have been called 'the Workers' Civil Liberties Suspension Act'. Being retrograde and reactionary, it restricted the right of the labourer to strike and made strike illegal and impossible; and, therefore, its author, he said, was a far greater Tory than the author of the Trade Disputes Act of 1929. The last hit led to a wordy warfare between Munshi and Ambedkar and the last reply in the series was as follows:

MUNSHI: That would have been slavery for the wage earner.

AMBEDKAR: You have enough, and you should not have been abashed for going a step further in the Bill (interruption).

THE SPEAKER: "Order, Order."

Ambedkar then teased the Government by saying that it was a Government which claimed to be elected on labour votes but it did not stand by its election pledges. It was a democracy, he added, that was enslaving the working class and therefore it was a mockery of democracy. Ambedkar and Jamnadas, the two labour leaders, with their great power of debate and superior intellect so much belaboured and hammered the Bill



At the Treasury benches were pushed into hot water. But the Congress Ministry was determined to pass the Bill, which they ultimately did.

That indifferent attitude created a big tide of opposition outside the Legislative Assembly in the industrial towns and cities which voiced disapproval of the Bill. A one-day strike was declared by the I.L.P. and the B.P.T.U.C. for Monday, 7th November 1938. A whirlwind propaganda was carried on in the city of Bombay preparatory to the strike on the one hand, and for the prevention of the strike on the other hand.

Sixty different unions sent out their calls to workers. A meeting of the Council of Action of the T.U.C. was held under the Chairmanship of Jamnadas Mehta on November 6, at 8 a.m. to give final touches to their programme for November 7. Ambedkar, Parulekar, Mirajkar, Dange, Nimbkar and others were present. The Council planned a procession and decided to launch peaceful picketing in front of all mills and factories, and sent forth an appeal to workers in industrial towns to express their indignation at the Bill.

Ambedkar summoned his party M.L.As to a meeting of the Council of Action of his Party, and chalked out an elaborate programme for making the strike a success. Jamnadas Mehta, too, was present at this meeting. The Party men were assigned special localities to work and to enthuse the workers. The Congress Socialists, whom M. N. Roy then described as inverted Gandhites, refused their support as they thought that Ambedkar was using the strike to strengthen his Party. Mr. S. K. Patil, the steam-roller of the Congress, arranged for anti-strike meetings and addressed one himself at Cotton Green.

The Government of Bombay summoned about 300 armed Reserve Police with twelve officers from the bordering districts of Bombay and placed them at strategic points near the mill gates in the city. The mainspring of action was the I.L.P., which had distributed among the workers thousands of hand-bills through its volunteers. Thus the two sides stood for action.

A labour rally was held at Kamgar Maidan on the evening of November 6, and was attended, in the words of the Congress papers, by no less than 80,000 labourers. Jamnadas Mehta presided over the meeting. Jamnadas made a scathing attack on the Congress Ministry, and other labour leaders made vigorous



speeches condemning the Bill. Indulal Yajnik asked the workers to break the bonds of the Black Bill. Dange lashed at the ridiculous psychology of the Congress leaders. Ambedkar condemned the Congress Ministry on different counts, and said it was the duty of the workers to make the strike a success.

The rally over, a huge procession started from the Kamgar Maidan and wending its course through Parel, Lalbaug and DeLisle Road, it ended in the Jambori Maidan at Worli.

At night a chief supervising committee was formed with Jamnadas as its Chairman and Ambedkar, Dange, Nimbkar, Mirajkar and Pradhan as its Members. Out of twenty-five hundred volunteers engaged in this propaganda 90 per cent belonged to Ambedkar's Party.

Morning came. Police officials took their posts in the various nerve-centres of strike at 5-30 a.m. The Home Minister, Munshi, had apprehended the seriousness of the situation and instructed the Police Commissioner to leave no loopholes in the arrangement for prevention of any breach of peace. The strike commenced in an atmosphere which was quite peaceful. A spectacular feature of the propaganda was the tour in the mill areas by the two great labour leaders, Ambedkar and Jamnadas Mehta, sitting side by side, in a lorry decorated with red flags and carrying a loud-speaker equipment by means of which they exhorted the workers, who lined the streets to make the strike programme a success. Almost all the textile mills as also the Municipal workshops closed down. A few mills worked partially.

It was the first successful strike launched against a popular Government by labour leaders in the teeth of opposition from the interested parties. Manned and maintained by men of Congress persuasion and capitalists, most of the newspapers sided with the Government, and the Anglo-Indian newspapers, which wanted the Congress to remain in office, were hostile to the move for the strike. They all published fabricated reports with a view to minimising the importance of the strike and Ambedkar's growing influence upon the working classes.

DeLisle Road, the nerve-centre of the mill area, was the storm-centre. As the result of stone-throwing there, some people were injured. One police officer and some constables were injured and the police opened fire to disperse the crowd, when two persons were wounded. There was an unpleasant incident



at Patel Road about 11 a.m. when the car of Munshi was attacked by a man who smashed the window screen and the glass to pieces. Sardar Patel, Mr. Mathuradas Trikamji and Mr. Bhavanji Khimji, who were in the car of the Minister, were not hurt. In all seventy-two persons were injured, eleven severely wounded, and thirty-five were arrested during the day. The demonstration was in full swing all throughout the day.

In response to the labour leaders' call there was also a partial strike on that day in other districts where industrial concerns flourished. In those parts, too, processions were taken out, and pickets were active at many places in cities like Ahmedabad, Amalner, Jalgaon, Chalisgaon, Poona and Dhulia.

As a finale to the one-day strike, a gigantic rally of workers was held at Kamgar Maidan, Bombay, under the presidentship of Jamnadas Mehta in the evening, at which Ranadive, Pradhan, Nimkar, Dange and Mirajkar, the cream of Communist leaders, opened their batteries of attack on the Government for the Black Bill. An effigy of the Bill, and it is said of the Home Minister also, were set on fire at the end of the meeting. Ambedkar made a very fiery speech. At the outset he congratulated the workers upon their having staged a successful strike and denounced the evening papers, which had depicted the strike as a failure, as the hirelings of the Government and Millowners. He said that the strike was a grand success, but he told them that their duty did not end by simply attending meetings, crying themselves hoarse and expressing their opposition to the Bill. He stressed the need for capturing political power by electing their own representatives. Concluding, Ambedkar said that he would join the Congress if it really started a genuine fight against British Imperialism.

Sardar Patel issued a statement saying that the labour leaders had used coercive methods. In reply to this, Ambedkar said that Sardar Patel's statement was from beginning to end a e of untruths.

Two things emerged from this strike. It was proved on all counts that Ambedkar could dominate the labour field. His organisation played a very important role and proved supreme. His reputation as a labour leader was established and it prepared a background for his future relationship with the all-India Labour Problems. Ambedkar and the Communists made a united front on the issue of Labour welfare. Ambedkar, how-



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ever, had shrewdly kept his Party and organisation intact and aloof from those of the Communists and yet could effectively dominate the field.

So great was this event that Swami Sahajanand, the Peasant leader from U.P., saw Ambedkar at his residence in Bombay on December 25, 1938, and had a talk with him about the labour problem in Bombay and the agrarian reforms in general. He tried to persuade Ambedkar to join the Congress to form a united front against imperialism. Ambedkar replied that he would be glad to liquidate the I.L.P. and join the Congress Party if the Congress decided to fight imperialism. But he said that the Congress was using the constitutional machinery to advance the interests of the capitalists and other vested interests by sacrificing the interests of peasants and workers, and so he could not join such an organisation.¹

In the last week of December 1938, Ambedkar presided over the Aurangabad District Depressed Classes Conference at Aurangabad. It was the first Conference of the Untouchables in the State. The chairman of the reception committee gave a graphic description of how the people were persecuted and converted to Islam by force and how the Brahmins with the help of the Muslims flouted their attempts to take water from the public tanks and to enter temples. In his message to the Hyderabad Depressed Classes Ambedkar stressed the importance of the Self-respect Movement.

The Janata

¹ The *Janata* dated 31-12-1938.



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CHAPTER XVII

On Federation and Pakistan

I

ON January 6, 1939, Ambedkar addressed a big meeting of agriculturists at Mahad when he impressed upon the audience that the Congress Ministry had failed to mitigate their woes. He said that Premier Kher was simply a figurehead and described the other Ministers of the Provincial Government as dogs at the door of Sardar Patel. Referring to the boastful statement of Sardar Patel, which he had made at a reception given to Kher in Gujarat, to the effect that they welcomed Kher as a devotee of Gandhiji and not as Premier Kher otherwise they would have sent him back unceremoniously, Ambedkar said that he would wreak vengeance on Patel for this dire insult inflicted upon a Maharashtrian. If Patel dared insult him in this manner, he added, he would thrash him. This was not a soliloquy; this was a public speech! It was a natural outburst of anger sprung from a strong mind which was consistent with its contempt for the Congress Leaders' rude mentality, and determined to show its superiority.

On his return to Bombay, Ambedkar paid a glowing tribute to the quality of service and sense of responsibility of the volunteers of the I.L.P. at the annual parade held at Parel, on January 8, 1939. He recalled to them how both Sardar Patel and Premier Kher had extolled the Dal for its work and discipline.

By now the question of the inauguration of the proposed Federation had assumed a first class political importance in India. The Viceroy's return from London, after consultations with the British statesmen, was construed as a step for the early inauguration of Federation. The British statesmen now favoured participation of the Indian States in the Federation without democratization of their States Governments. Briefly told, the right wing of the Congress was struggling for a majority in the proposed Federal Assembly through the help of the States representatives, and hence it agitated for installing res-



possible Governments in the States. The Congress President, Subhas Bose, was against the acceptance of Federation. Muslims opposed it tooth and nail. The Hindu Mahasabha wanted to bring it into effect with a view to frustrating the fissiparous tendencies of the Muslims and to unify India.

Ambedkar was deadly against the kind of the proposed Federation and he had declared his views once or twice at public meetings in December 1938. He now decided to raise his voice as loudly as possible against the Federal scheme. Such an opportunity came when he was invited to Poona by the Gokhale Education Society's School of Politics and Economics to deliver an address. In his two-hour speech on January 29, 1939, he explained how Federation far from leading the country to Independence would block its way permanently. The reason, he said, was that the British Indian representatives would be free men while the States representatives would be bondmen in the hands of the British bureaucrats, who would dictate to the Princes the selection of their representatives.

The proposed Federation did not forge, continued he, a common citizenship as the people in the States remained States subjects and the Federal Government could not deal with them directly. Although he was not opposed, he stated, to the Federal scheme, he was in favour of Unitary Government as nationalism was compatible with the latter form of Government, which was the need of India. Further, he said that Federation would not help to unite India as it was not open to all States to join it; nor would it give responsible Government as the powers of the Federation did not extend to Defence and Foreign affairs. It would help to destroy democracy in British India, he concluded.

In the course of his speech Ambedkar compared the age of Ranade with the age of Gandhi. The age of Ranade was honest and more enlightened. In the age of Ranade the leaders struggled to modernize India. The leaders took care to be well-clad. A politician, who was not a student, was treated as an intolerable nuisance. In that age people engaged themselves in studying and examining the facts of life, and moulded their lives and character in accordance with the light they found as a result of their research. In the age of Gandhi leaders took pride in being half-clad and were making India a living specimen of antiquity. Learning was not deemed to be a necessary qualification for a politician, and people ceased to read and



examine the facts of life. So his verdict was that Gandhi age was the dark age of India!¹

In February Ambedkar squarely attacked the Budget in the Bombay Assembly. From the point of revenue he said that the budget was reckless and from the point of expenditure, it was senseless as it included an increase in stamp duty against the declared opposition of the Congress Party to it, increased the duty on the consumption of electricity and encouraged indirectly the consumption of kerosene oil which was injurious to public health.

Pointing to the other problems on which Government wasted Rs. 125 lakhs for no other purpose than to wipe out a deficit arising from what they called the Prohibition policy, he observed: "The issue is narrowed down and that issue is this. Is drink a problem and if drink is a problem, is it an urgent problem? There is no question that drinking is an evil and it does have a very bad consequence, but to admit that drink is an evil is not to admit that drink is a problem, much less is it an admission that it is an urgent problem." Then he quoted figures with regard to the total excise revenue derived in various countries such as Great Britain, Australia, Canada, Irish Free State, Denmark and Norway, and said that it was not a problem in the Bombay Province when the total excise revenue was Rs. 325 lakhs on a total population of 180 lakhs.

He further referred to the United States of America and quoted the opinions from the Book "Prohibition" by Feldman. His contention, therefore, was that it was wrong on the part of the Ministry to say that this was a problem which they ought to deal with. "It cannot be a problem," he proceeded, "in our part of the country and for two very good reasons. One good reason is that all religions in India agree in imposing an injunction upon the people that drink is a sin. Religion may have done many mischievous things, but certainly there can be no doubt that the one good thing that the Indian religions have done, Hindu, Mohammedan and the Zoroastrian religions, is that they do impose such an injunction, which has been so directly obeyed by a large part of our people." The second distinguishing feature which marked out, he explained, our country from other countries and which could not create a problem so far as drink was concerned was that drink traffic was in the

¹ Ambedkar, *Federation Versus Freedom*, p. 153.



hands of Government. In the end he asked Government whether it was such an urgent problem that they should keep aside everything else and deal with it first. In short, Ambedkar appealed to Government to abandon their prohibition policy in the larger interests of the province and evolve a proper order of priorities.

II

The echoes of the 7th November strike were still reverberating in the Assembly. Government had instituted a committee to inquire into the firing of the 7th November. In its report the Committee blamed the Communists and Ambedkar for the disorder, and justified the firing by the police. When the Committee's report came up before the Assembly for discussion, it produced unprecedented heat. Jamnadas Mehta described the report as one-sided and added that they were not findings but they were found for the Committee! Making a very fighting speech in self-defence, Ambedkar thundered: "Speaking for myself, inasmuch as I was connected with this Council of Action, I am prepared to take my trial. Let any man who has the courage, who has the confidence, who believes in this evidence, come forward and prosecute me. The Committee has said that the firing was justified, and that there were reasons for the firing." "The only question," he observed, is this, "whether, in maintaining peace and order, we shall not have regard for freedom, and for liberty. And if Home Rule means nothing else—as I think, it can mean nothing else—than that our Minister can shoot our own people and the rest of us merely laugh at the whole show or rise to support him because he happens to belong to a particular party, then I say Home Rule has been a curse and not a benefit to all India." (Applause.)

Replying to the debate, Munshi, the Home Minister of Bombay, said that Ambedkar had not come before the Committee to state the facts and added that at eleven o'clock on the day of the strike Ambedkar was conducting a case in the court and then joined the meeting in the evening. With an air of ridicule he then stated that they were familiar with the pompous, bombast and imprudent challenge which Ambedkar threw out in ten minutes of his fleeting presence with which



graced the debate. Munshi roared that he would prosecute him and make him a martyr if he made actionable speeches and did many more things to deserve the martyrdom. He, however, withdrew the word imprudent on a point of order from Sir A. M. K. Dehlavi. Ambedkar intervened and asked Munshi why he did not prosecute, on the basis of evidence at his disposal, the workers who were alleged to have battered on the strike day the heads of the millhands. Upon this Jamnadas Mehta said: "Do not believe it!"

If Ambedkar was over-powering and unyielding in his arguments, the Ministers used another weapon against him and that was reminding him of his late coming and fleeting visits to the Assembly. And yet Premier Kher paid tributes to Ambedkar some years after describing Ambedkar as a leader from the opposition who had made helpful, constructive criticism and suggestions, and pointed out defects. But to have a correct perspective of the condition under which Ambedkar performed his duty in the Assembly one should turn to a speech made by Jamnadas Mehta in the Assembly as regards the Congress Ministers' attitude to the Opposition in the Assembly. Mehta observed: "If we oppose Government point-blank, then it is complained that we are opposing for the sake of opposition; if we support the principle and then show the difficulties, then it is said that this is no support at all. I wish that that kind of attitude should be reduced to a minimum."

Since February 1939, trouble was brewing in the Rajkot State where a strong agitation was going on for political reforms. Defeated and disappointed by Subhas Bose's election to the Presidentship of the Congress, Gandhiji hurried to Rajkot apparently to settle the State problem, but with an inward desire to create a crisis just at the time of the Tripuri Congress Sessions over which Subhas Bose was to preside. Ambedkar was urgently called by the local Depressed Classes to intervene in the dispute regarding their non-inclusion in the Reforms Committee of the State. He, therefore, left by air for Rajkot and in the evening of April 18, saw the ruler, the Thakor Saheb, and at night addressed a meeting of the Depressed Classes, urging them to carry on their struggle for political rights.

The next morning he had a talk with Gandhiji for forty-five minutes on the question of representation for the Harijans on the Reforms Committee. He stated in an interview at Rajkot



that he could not discuss in detail all the points with Gandhiji as the Mahatma had got sudden temperature. He, however, revealed that the suggestion that his alternative proposal should be submitted to a constitutional expert like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was not acceptable to Gandhiji. At last Gandhiji failed in his attempt to effect a change of heart by his non-violent methods and resorted to coercive methods by appealing to the Viceroy to intervene. Gandhiji, the apostle of the principle of change of heart and non-violence, himself publicly confessed that his non-violence had not yet been developed to the fullest power, and so he left Rajkot, to quote his words, with hopes cremated and body shattered.

Accordingly, a few days thereafter Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Federal Court, gave an Award on the disputes in the State of Rajkot. Ambedkar challenged the interpretation of the word "recommend" given by Sir Maurice Gwyer. He stated that Gwyer had given his decision on the footing that "There is no conclusive precedent for the purposes of the present reference." Ambedkar quoted two authorities in support of his assertion, *Knolt vs. Cottee*, and *Johnson vs. Rowlands*.

In the first week of July 1939, Ambedkar attended a meeting organised by the Chamar community under the aegis of the Rohidas Education Committee at the R. M. Bhat High School Hall, Bombay. His presence at this meeting was significant since almost all the Chamar community leaders were estranged from him on the problem of conversion. They had broken off with him at the time of the recent general election as, according to them, Ambedkar had refused to set up candidates from their community on the ground that they had not supported his conversion policy. Addressing the meeting, Ambedkar said that he had started his uplift work for the whole of the Depressed Classes. He never favoured sectional or sectarian ideas or policy in his uplift work.

He told them that he favoured the abolition of sub-castes among the Depressed Classes and honestly worked to that end. He further told them that the question of marriage was not one that could be settled by force. It was not that a Mahar girl, he observed, and a Chamar boy or a Mang boy should be married perforce as if by waving a magic wand. It was upto them to encourage those men who showed courage to



form such marriages. Referring to the political problem, he said that the Congress leaders were shrewdly bringing about a rift among the Depressed Classes by encouraging some Depressed Class leaders against his Party. He appealed to them not to fall a prey to the Congress false propaganda. Congress leaders were cajoling the Harijan leaders, he added, because he was not there in the Congress camp. He stated that it was a fact that the I.L.P. drew its major following from the Mahars. But it was, he explained, not his fault that the Mahars had a majority in the Depressed Classes.¹ In his concluding remarks, however, he did not fail to reiterate his old slogan that to get rid of those sectional feelings the only way out was to embrace another religion.

A few days later, Ambedkar was entertained at a tea-party by the authorities of the Hansraj P. Thackersey College at Nasik. Replying to questions that were put to him in writing at that function, Ambedkar said that the money the Government was raising in the form of taxes must be utilised to relieve the farmers of their debts, to fight poverty and to impart education, but he said that it could not be done if prohibition was given a priority or a preference over these urgent problems. Asked whether he agreed to the zonal scheme sponsored by Sir Sikander Hyat Khan in respect of a division of India, he replied that he did not approve of the seven zones and suspected that it was a step in the direction of establishment of Pakistan. As regards British rule, he expressed his view that apart from all other defects or disabilities, it had conferred two benefits on Indians, namely, one common Central Government, and a feeling among the people belonging to different religions that they were part of one Government.

About this time Ambedkar chastised the Treasury Benches while speaking on the Finance Act Second Amendment Bill in the Bombay Legislative Assembly. He expressed his sense of surprise that a Government which included no less than five eminent lawyers should have thought it fit to bring a Bill with a penalty which had got a retrospective character.

III

Just then World War II broke out in Europe over the question of the safety of Poland. India was committed to the

¹ The *Janata* dated 8-7-1939.



war with Germany by a proclamation of the British Viceroy. Different Indian leaders viewed the global war differently. The Indian Liberal leaders favoured unconditional help to Government in their war efforts, but the chief Muslim organisation led by Jinnah stated that the British should create a sense of security and salvation in the minds of the Indian Muslims. At first the Congress leaders including Sardar Patel, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who was on his way back from his invigorating visit to Chiang Kai-shek's China, favoured unconditional help as they said they were not out to bargain at such a juncture.

Gandhiji broke down before the British Viceroy at the very thought of the destruction of the British House of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey. Savarkar declared that Britain's claim that she had entered the war to safeguard the vital principles affecting human freedom would be regarded as a political stunt so long as she continued to hold India in political bondage.

An event of great significance took place on September 11. The Viceroy announced that although Federation was the ultimate objective of the Government, under the existing conditions they had no choice but to hold it in suspension. Jinnah was beside himself with joy at this declaration.

Ambedkar, the leader of the I.L.P., issued a statement, declaring that there was not much virtue on the side of Poland, especially in her treatment of the Jews. He said that the Polish issue was only an incident in the war and Germany's claim to impose her will upon those who disagreed with her was a menace to all nations. He disagreed with those who held that England's difficulty was India's opportunity, and added that Indians should not go in for new masters.

He declared that it was unfair to India that it should have no voice in her foreign policy in declaring war and in the making of peace. India should remain within the British Commonwealth of nations and strive to achieve the status of equal partnership therein. Appealing then to Government to take steps to prepare Indians for defending their country, he reminded the British Government how they had agreed at the Round Table Conference that the defence of India was to be treated as the responsibility of India. Concluding, he stated that the duty of Britain towards India was to reassure her of the status she would occupy in the British Empire after the war was over, and that India could not willingly and heartily



not for principles if she was not assured that the benefits of these principles would be extended to her when the war was

On September 14 the Congress leaders changed their attitude. They declared that a free democratic India would gladly associate herself with the free nations for mutual defence and asked the British Government to declare their war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism, and particularly to India.

A few days later a joint statement was issued by seven leaders Savarkar, Kelkar, Jamnadas, Ambedkar, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Sir V. N. Chandavarkar, declaring that Gandhiji's claim that the Congress was an all-representative body, was a fascist one and would prove a death-blow to Indian democracy.

Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, had interviews in the first and second week of October with about fifty-two Indian leaders representing different interests and parties such as Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Savarkar, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Subhas Bose, Ambedkar and others. Ambedkar's interview took place on October 9. In the course of his interview Ambedkar impressed upon the Governor-General the viewpoint of his community *vis-a-vis* the constitutional advance of India and complained that the working of the Poona Pact had been far from satisfactory, and so he intended to raise the question at the next revision of the constitution.

After discussions with the Indian leaders, the Viceroy issued a statement clarifying the position of the British Government with regard to their hopes and objectives for India. The important part of the statement was that at the end of the war the Government of India Act would be revised in consultation with all the leading parties in India, and that no substantial political advance would be made without the consent of the minorities. He added that a consultative committee would be formed during the war on which all parties would be represented. The Working Committee of the Congress declared the Viceroy's statement, to be wholly unsatisfactory and as any help to Britain would amount to an endorsement of her imperial policy, they called upon all Provincial Ministries to tender their resignations thus, in fact, enabling the British Government to pursue more conveniently a policy which the Congress leaders themselves hated.



Ambedkar issued a statement from Delhi stating that the minorities problem would never be solved unless Gandhiji and the Congress gave up their egoistic and insolent attitude towards persons and parties outside the Congress, and added that patriotism was not a monopoly of Congressmen and, therefore, persons holding views divergent from the Congress had a perfectly legitimate right to exist and be recognised. Referring to the Muslim problem, he said that he did not believe in the allegations made by the Muslims that they were being tyrannised or terrorised in the Provinces ruled by the Congress. What they wanted along with other minorities, he affirmed, was a share in the Government. He warned that if the demand of the Muslim League for a division of India was allowed to hold the Muslim masses, there would be no hope for a united India and that the responsibility of driving the Depressed Classes to another fold would lie with the Congress.

It seems that the Congress leaders were disturbed by the aforesaid joint statement of the seven leaders and the joint statement of non-Congress leaders from Southern India both of which were signed by the leaders of the Depressed Classes. With a view to acquainting himself with the claims of the Depressed Classes, Pandit Nehru, the Chairman of the War Sub-Committee of the Congress, had talks for two days in the third week of October with Ambedkar in Bombay.¹ This was the first meeting of Ambedkar with Nehru whom the former had described as a fourth standard boy in his private talks. It was Kher who took Ambedkar to Nehru. Immediately after this talk, discussions were held between the Congress leaders and Ambedkar for three or four days at the residence of Bhulabhai Desai, President of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and Member of the Congress Working Committee. The talks were held in the presence of Gandhiji's secretary, Mr. Mahadeo Desai, who had specially come from Wardha for the purpose. He was to communicate the views of Ambedkar to Gandhiji and the Congress. The talks were confined to the relinquishment of office by the Congress ministry of Bombay.

The Congress ministries introduced the war resolution in all Provincial Assemblies on the eve of their resignations. The Bombay Ministry introduced the resolution amidst grave atmosphere. It declared that the British Government had made

¹ *The Times of India* dated 30-10-1939.



participant in the war between Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India, and "have further in complete disregard of Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments".

Moving an amendment to delete the words "and have further in . . . Provincial Governments", Ambedkar blamed the Prime Minister for not having tabled the demands in the name of the country but in obedience to the Congress High Command. He reiterated his statement on war policy and declared that the Untouchables would never accept a political status that would make them political Shudras. He said he would not tolerate it if to the social dominance, the economic dominance and the religious dominance which the Hindus exercised over them, was added the political dominance. He then reminded the House of the fate of the Spanish American colonies separated from the Spanish Empire which had referred to Jeremy Bentham of Britain to frame their own constitution, and how Bentham shipped documents from England and how the constitution had failed in those countries, and was publicly burnt. He said that a constitution, like a suit, must fit.

Ambedkar then described how the majority were denying liberty, equality and fraternity for the growth of the Untouchables. He told the House that out of one hundred Mamlatdars, only one was from the Depressed Classes; out of 34 Mahalkaries, none was from them; out of 246 Head Clerks none was from them; out of the total 2,444 revenue clerks, only 30 were from his class; out of 829 Public Works Department clerks, only 7 were from the scheduled classes; in the Excise Department 3 out of 189; out of 538 police inspectors only 2; out of 33 Deputy Collectors only one, was from the Scheduled Class.

In a very appealing and powerful tone Ambedkar further declared: "I know my position has not been understood properly in the country. It has often been misunderstood. Let me, therefore, take this opportunity to clarify my position. Sir, I say that whenever there has been a conflict between my personal interests and the interests of the country as a whole, I have always placed the claims of the country above my personal claims (Hear, hear). I have never pursued the path of private gain. If I had played my cards well, as others do, I might have been in some other place. I do not want to say about it,



but I did not do it. There were colleagues with me at the Round Table Conference who, I am sure, would support what I say—that so far as the demands of the country are concerned, I have never lagged behind. Many European Members who were at the Conference rather felt embarrassed that I was the *enfant terrible* of the Conference.”

“But I will also,” he thundered, “leave no doubt in the minds of the people of this country that I have another loyalty to which I am bound and which I can never forsake. That loyalty is the community of Untouchables, in which I am born, to which I belong, and which I hope I shall never desert. And I say this to this House as strongly as I possibly can, that whenever there is any conflict of interests between the country and the Untouchables, so far as I am concerned, the Untouchables’ interests will take precedence over the interests of the country. I am not going to support a tyrannising majority simply because it happens to speak in the name of the country. I am not going to support a party because it happens to speak in the name of the country. I shall not do that. Let everybody here and everywhere understand that that is my position. As between the country and myself, the country will have precedence, as between the country and the Depressed Classes, the Depressed Classes will have precedence—the country will have no precedence. That is all that I wanted to say with regard to these two amendments of mine.”

Concluding, Ambedkar asked the Premier of the Province why he required his sanction for his going out. He said it was for the party caucus to decide. Ambedkar took an hour and a half and the speaker said that the other Members would curtail their speeches. Upon this Ambedkar said: “I apologise, Sir.”

IV

The Congress Ministries eventually resigned in obedience to the mandate of their High Command in the first week of November 1939. So hilarious was Mr. Jinnah at this exit of the Congress that he announced that the Muslim India heaved a sigh of relief and appealed to his community to observe a “Day of Deliverance”. A large number of Parsees who were affected by the prohibition policy of the Congress expressed joy



er this exit, and they promised in their individual capacity to join it. Ambedkar declared that he would like to join Jinnah in celebrating the Deliverance Day and observed: "I read Mr. Jinnah's statement and I felt ashamed to have allowed him to steal a march over me and rob me of the language and the sentiment which I, more than Mr. Jinnah, was entitled to use." He said that if Mr. Jinnah proved 5 out of 100 cases of alleged oppression, he would prove 100 out of 100 cases before any impartial tribunal. He, however, explained that it was not an anti-Hindu move; it was anti-Congress and, therefore, purely political. He concluded by saying that if the Hindus construed it as an attack on themselves, it meant that the Congress was a Hindu body and that they should thank themselves for the consequences.

The most significant feature of the celebration of the "Deliverance Day" was that these two eminent opponents of Gandhiji and Congress shook hands at the "Deliverance Day" meeting at Bhendi Bazaar, Bombay, and belched fire on the Congress leadership!

One problem, in the meantime, was coming to a head which engaged Ambedkar's mind for a considerable period. The Bombay Government levied additional taxes on the Mahar Vatanis. Ambedkar had been fighting that problem since 1927. But now instead of relieving the poor from the serfdom, the Government added salt to their injuries by the levy of additional taxes. The Mahars, Mangs and Vethias, in Maharashtra and Karnatak met in a Conference at Haregaon in the middle of December 1939, to voice their grievances under the presidency of Ambedkar. Addressing a mammoth meeting of 20,000 Mahars, Mangs and Vethias, Ambedkar warned Government from the presidential chair that if Government did not stop harassing the vatandars, redress the grievances of those poor people by abrogating the harassing orders, and relieve those poor people within six months from the date of the Conference from the extortion of work which they were forced to do without any remuneration, there would be no alternative for those people but to refuse the services as a protest against the harassment. He appealed to Government to see that the vatandars were paid as were the State servants paid, and demanded abolition of their serfdom.

On March 19, which the Depressed Classes observe as their



Independence day—for on that day in 1927 at Mahad their struggle for emancipation began—Ambedkar addressed a rally of 10,000 people at Mahad. In the course of his speech he observed that it was entirely wrong for the Indians to concentrate all their attention on political independence of the country and forget the foremost social and economic problems. He said that it was high time that the Hindu society were organised on modern lines breaking down its age-long framework. At night an address of welcome was presented to Ambedkar by the Mahad Municipality. A few days afterwards Ambedkar also presided over the Youths Conference at Nasik Road.

In the meanwhile, the political situation assumed a very serious tempo. The Congress at its annual session held in April 1940 at Ramgarh repudiated any attempt to divide India or split up her manhood. Simultaneously the Muslim League at its annual session at Lahore passed a resolution demanding the creation of Independent States in the North-Western and Eastern parts of India where Muslims were in a majority. Jinnah, the angel of unity and peace, had now decided to be the destroyer of the unity of the land.

Ambedkar was watching and studying these developments in Indian politics. He was also guiding his people. He founded the Mahar Panchayat and addressed a Conference under the auspices of the Panchayat at Bandra, Bombay, in May 1940.

Just then Hitler overran the low countries and the war took a serious turn for Britain and her allies. Congress leaders abandoned Gandhiji's leadership, and offered co-operation in war efforts provided a fully representative National Government was formed at the centre. This offer was reiterated by them at Poona and came to be known as the Poona offer. Jinnah opposed it, saying that it would be a permanent Hindu majority at the centre. The Viceroy announced a new proposal for the expansion of his Executive Council and the establishment of a war advisory committee for the conduct of the war. The Congress rejected this proposal as being wholly opposed to the best interests of India.

At this time Subhas Bose who was dethroned from the Congress Presidentship was growing restless. He was trying to rally the Indian forces against the British power that was engaged in a life-and-death struggle in Europe. He came to Bombay and saw Jinnah, Ambedkar and Savarkar on July 22,



40. Subhas Bose was deadly against the acceptance of the proposed Federation and because Ambedkar was opposed to it he must have considered it a rallying point between them. After their discussion on the issue of Federation, Ambedkar asked Subhas Bose whether he would put up his candidates in the elections against the Congress. He replied in the negative. Ambedkar then asked Subhas Bose what the positive attitude of his party would be to the problem of Untouchables. Bose had no convincing reply and the interview ended. It seems Savarkar's inspiring talk changed Subhas Bose's mind and he began to ponder over the possibility of fighting a war of Independence against the British power from outside.

The Congress now switched over again to Gandhiji's dictatorship for a struggle. Gandhiji inaugurated individual civil disobedience movement in October 1940, preaching non-participation in the war on the grounds of non-violence. As a result, almost all Congress leaders were thrown behind the bars. Criticising this move of Gandhiji, Ambedkar said that Gandhi's new performance in preaching against supplying men or money to the war efforts meant civil disobedience of the Defence of India Act. "It can be beyond Gandhi," he observed, "to appreciate that while all thinking men must hate the use of force, a distinction has to be made between the use of force to put down force and to use the victory obtained by force to impose ignoble and unjust terms upon the vanquished." "It seems to me," he went on, "that the root of the evil is not in the use of force but in the misuse of victory. Mr. Gandhi and all pacifists and believers in non-violence will do a lasting service to humanity if they went on a fast unto death when peace is announced, if the terms of peace offered to the vanquished are ignoble and unjust. The pacifist, it seems to me, has misunderstood his mission. His fight must be against a base peace and not against force. By calling upon people to abjure the use of force, the pacifist is only helping those who will insist on using force to victory." Quoting then Rajagopalachari who was reported to have said in his speech that if he were a Viceroy he would continue the old order, Ambedkar declared: "That the Congress is fighting for the cause of the country is humbug. The Congress is fighting to obtain the keys of power in its hands. Why did Gandhi not start civil disobedience immediately after the Defence of India Act was passed a year ago?"



V

The year 1940 was coming to an end when Ambedkar's *magnum opus*, *Thoughts On Pakistan*, was published. Written at a psychological moment, it fell like a bombshell on the heated atmosphere of the day. India's man of great learning, great constitutional pundit and politician of varied experience gave out his reflections on the political problem of India. The refrain of the book is the division of India into Hindustan and Pakistan for the prosperity, peace and salvation of the Hindus to whom the book is mainly addressed.

That the Muslims, the book argues, are a nation must be accepted without cavil. It advises the Hindus to have no fear for want of a nationally safe frontier in the event of the birth of Pakistan because geographical conditions are not decisive in modern world and modern technique. As the resources of Hindustan are far greater than those of Pakistan, the creation of Pakistan will not leave Hindustan in a weakened condition. It also impresses upon the Hindus that it is better to have Muslims whose loyalty to India is always doubtful, without and against, rather than within and against. A safe army rid of the Muslim preponderance is better than a safe border.

The book is not without its antidote to the poison of Pakistan. It prescribes a sovereign remedy for securing peace and homogeneity by arranging for a total exchange of population, Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from Hindustan, as did Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria to solve their internecine wars.

But unlike M. N. Roy's *Historical Role of Islam*, this historic book castigates the anti-reformist tendency of the Muslims. It observes that the dominating influence with the Muslims is not democracy. The predominant interest of Muslims is religion, their politics being essentially clerical. The Muslims are opposed to social reform, and are an unprogressive people all over the world. To the Muslims, the book states, Islam is a world religion, suitable for all peoples for all times and for all conditions. The brotherhood of Islam is not the universal brotherhood of man. It is the brotherhood of Muslims for Muslims only. For non-Muslims there is nothing but contempt and enmity. The Muslim has allegiance to a nation which is ruled by a Muslim; a land not ruled by a Muslim is his enemy land. The book, therefore, concludes that Islam can never



Now a true Muslim to adopt India as his Motherland and regard a Hindu as his kith and kin. The spirit of aggression is a Muslim's natural endowment. He takes advantage of the weakness of the Hindus and follows gangsterism.

Some penetrating and caustic paragraphs describing the regressive bent of the Muslim mind, however, were deleted. It is said, at the instance of Ambedkar's close admirers. Otherwise the author of *Thoughts On Pakistan* would have experienced what H. G. Wells experienced at the hands of Muslims in London!

The book then asserts that the Muslims are now awakened to a new life. They will to be a nation. They were up till now calling themselves a minority, a community; but they have now discovered their destiny. The book thinks that a Muslim must be very stupid if he is not attracted by the glamour of this new destiny. According to the book, it is a new destiny, a new vision, the sun of their destiny in full glow!

After giving philosophic justification for Pakistan, interpreting to the Muslims their inspiring destiny and putting forth arguments before the Hindus, the book asks the Hindus whether integral India is an ideal worth fighting for. Coercion is no remedy. If you agree to partition, it will liberate both the Hindus and the Muslims from the fear of enslavement and of encroachment upon each other. You should profit by a deeper study of Turkey, Greece and other nations, and avert the catastrophe by agreeing to partition India into Hindustan and Pakistan. To avoid ship-wreck in mid-ocean, you must lighten the draught by throwing overboard all superfluous cargo. Divide India to have a strong central Government. Otherwise the consequences will be terrible. Forced union will hinder progress. There will be frustration of all her hopes of freedom; complete frustration of her destiny will be her fate if it is insisted that India shall remain an integral whole. United India will be never an organic whole. Nor will it solve the problem of the third party, the British rule. The virus of dualism will surge up. India will be an anaemic and sickly State, a living corpse, dead though not buried. Compare with the dark vista, the vista that opens out if India is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. The partition opens a way to the fulfilment of the destiny each may fix up for itself, whether dominion or independence, concludes the book.



SL

After the publication of this great book, the author of *Thoughts On Pakistan*, however, described Rajagopalachari in these words: "Mr. Rajagopalachari's political exploits are too fresh to be forgotten. Suddenly he enrolled himself as a soldier of the Muslim League and proclaimed a war on his own kin and former friends and for what? Not for their failure to grant the reasonable demands of the Muslim but for their not conceding the most extravagant one, namely Pakistan!!"¹ It may be recalled here that Ambedkar was highly praised for his patriotic and rationalistic report which he submitted to the Simon Commission. In it he had attacked, exposed and held to ridicule the demand of the Muslims for separate electorate; but now he supported and justified a separate nation for the same Muslims!

With the cool intelligence of a doctor he viewed and examined the malady of India. A book by a vigorous man is unlikely to be dispassionate. The subject is dealt with candour, competence, knowledge, courage and excellence. *Thoughts On Pakistan* is a masterpiece in which learning and thinking are blended and displayed at their highest order. It is entrancing in its magic, intriguing in its construction, terse in its style, and provocative in its manner. It is a model in scientific propagation!

Ambedkar's political favourite was Burke whose political philosophy echoed in his speeches and writings. Burke wrote his *Thoughts On The Cause Of The Present Discontents*. Burke supported enthusiastically in his speech on Conciliation with America the stand taken by the American colonies which were hundreds of miles away from England. It was not the question of Scotland's Home Rule. Ambedkar favoured the vivisection of one living entity. Burke committed a glaring miscalculation by throwing aspersions and making an onslaught upon the French Revolution in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Similarly, future historians may think about Ambedkar's *Thoughts On Pakistan*! Historians may borrow the remark Ambedkar passed on Rajagopalachari's role, and fling it at the author of *Thoughts On Pakistan*.

The effect of this book was terrible. It shattered the brains of many Hindu politicians. It rocked Indian politics

¹ Ambedkar, *Mr. Gandhi And The Emancipation Of The Untouchables*, pp. 60-61.



for over a decade. The Muslims rejoiced at this support to their ideal. The Congressmen, who were bred and brought up in the sordid philosophy of neither-reject-nor-accept, winked at one another. It gave an impetus to the Pakistan propaganda of Rajagopalachari. Some of the leaders of Hindu Mahasabha, who were the stoutest opponents of Pakistan on national and rational grounds, were confused; but their leader Savarkar staked his all at the altar of the integrity of India, and stoutly refuted the theory of vivisection of India. He said that it was not bravery or statesmanship to run away from danger, to abandon the fight, and yield to the aggressor. Aggressors were never pacified or appeased. He warned the Hindus that partition would strengthen the hands of the avowed enemies of India, and the hordes would invade India. Partition, said Savarkar, would be a standing menace to the peace, security, liberty and prosperity of India.

But it is also pathetically true that no front-rank Hindu leader issued a counter treatise refuting Ambedkar's arguments with equal force, scholarship, courage and brilliance. An author of Mahasabha persuasion from Poona and an editor of a Bombay Weekly of Congress persuasion replied to Ambedkar, but their books were written in Marathi and were mere commentaries evoked by *Thoughts On Pakistan*. Dr. Rajendra Prasad later published a volume full of moon light. But books are not read in the moon light! Restless at the arguments of Ambedkar, Dr. Moonje wrote to Mr. N. C. Kelkar, stressing the urgent need for a reply to Ambedkar.¹ Many will agree that Kelkar's judicious but wavering genius was quite unsuited to this purpose. It was the duty of the Hindu Mahasabha, the bulwark of fighters for undivided India to do so; but nothing ever came out in time from the Mahasabha!

¹ N. C. Kelkar's Correspondence, p. 33.



CHAPTER XVIII

CSL

From Dust to Doyen

I

DURING the first quarter of 1941 Ambedkar was busy with the problem of recruitment of the Untouchables, especially the Mahars who are famous for their fighting qualities. He saw the Governor of Bombay and voiced his grievances against the militarisation policy of the Government which excluded the Mahars on the basis of a senseless distinction between martial and non-martial classes. He explained to him the role played by the Mahars under the East India Company, how afterwards they were prohibited from admission into the military forces and how the Mahar battalion was revived at the end of World War I but was disbanded not long afterwards on the excuse of economy. He, therefore, appealed to the Government to raise a battalion of Mahars now for the combatant corps.

Thereupon Government decided to raise a Mahar battalion and Ambedkar issued an appeal to the Mahars to seize the opportunity both for their own sake and for the sake of the country. Soon after a battalion was established and several men from the Mahar community were enlisted while a number of them were appointed recruiting officers, one of them being Ambedkar's lieutenant, Mr. Jadhav *alias* Madakebuva who had a genius for organisation. Savarkar, who wished the Hindus to be reborn into a martial race, expressed his hope that under the able guidance of Ambedkar the Mahar brethren would be re-animated with the military qualities and their military uplift would contribute to the consolidation of the Hindus.

In the last week of July 1941 the Viceroy expanded his Executive Council by including eight representative Indians and established a Defence Advisory Committee. Ambedkar was appointed on the Defence Advisory Committee along with Jamnadas Mehta, Ramrao Deshmukh, M. C. Rajah and other well-known Indians and Indian Princes. The Sikhs and the Depressed Classes resented their non-inclusion in the Executive Council.

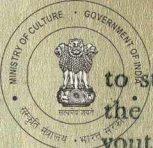


Ambedkar protested against the injustice done to the claims of the Depressed Classes. He sent a cablegram to Amery, the Secretary of State for India, informing him that the non-inclusion of their representative was regarded by them as an outrage and a breach of trust. Savarkar upheld Ambedkar's demand and wired to the Viceroy to include Ambedkar in the Executive Council.

As Government failed to respond to the appeal made by the Mahar Conference at Haregaon, another Conference was called at Sinnar in the middle of August 1941. Ambedkar told the Conference that he had addressed a Memorandum to the Government and complained how similar Vatan holders like Deshpandes and Deshmukhs were relieved of their duties and yet were enjoying their Vatan property even to that day. Exasperated by the adamant attitude of the Government, the Mahars were driven to adopt an extreme measure of no-tax campaign. The Conference gave a message to the aggrieved Mahars to resort to non-co-operation with Government till Government abandoned the demand for the additional levy.

Returning to Bombay, Ambedkar called on the Governor, Sir Lawrence Roger Lumley, in the morning at the Government House. Ambedkar's Sinnar speech was flashed in the evening newspapers by Mr. I. A. Ezekiel, a front-rank journalist, who unfailingly supported Ambedkar and his movement for years in the world of journalism. Lord Linlithgow, the Governor-General, who was then in Bombay, happened to read the speech in the newspapers. He remonstrated with the Governor of Bombay for having alienated the Depressed Classes and for having driven them in the opposite camp. Shortly after this, the Bombay Government revoked its unjust orders and Ambedkar won the day!

Two weeks later Ambedkar addressed some meetings, stressing the need for joining the military forces. In a stirring appeal at one such meeting in Bombay he said that although the Central Government had denied representation to the Depressed Classes in the Executive Council, he regretted that those who felt that the Government should not be helped, had lost the sense of proportion and relative value of things. He replied to them that if the Nazis overran the country, there would not be much of an Expanded Council left to fight for. He added that he was not prepared for a change of rulers and



to start the struggle once again for self-government right from the beginning. He concluded his speech by urging the Mahar youths to suspend their studies and qualify themselves for military commissions and preserve their high martial traditions.

Ambedkar took keen interest in the militarisation movement and he attended the second session of the National Defence Council in the first week of December 1941. The third session of the Defence Council was held in February 1942. He was present at the meeting.

About this time Ambedkar was working on a book entitled "What The Hindus Have Done To Us". It seems he began writing it on February 13, 1942, and an American firm had talks with him in the matter of its publication. It was then in the air that plans were under consideration for further re-shuffling and strengthening the personnel of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

The political deadlock was yet unresolved. Congress leaders were in jail. Their generalissimo, Gandhiji, was outside. Some politicians thought that Gandhiji would start a fast unto death for Hindu-Muslim unity; for the Muslims had started Pakistani riots and Mr. Jinnah said that only a change of heart would ease the tension. Gandhiji, however, clearly realised the historical mistake and futility of his slogan which had drummed into the people for over twenty years that freedom would not come without Hindu-Muslim unity. Without Muslim support he was now on the eve of a 'do or die struggle'!

II

In the middle of February 1942 there were discussions held at the spring lectures series at Wagle Hall, Bombay. Three days were reserved for the discussion on *Thoughts On Pakistan*. Ambedkar was present at the time of the discussion. Principal Donde presided over the meeting. At the express request by Donde, his friend, colleague and an eminent educationist in the Province, Ambedkar rose to reply to the debate. He said at the outset that he would not waste his words on those who thought that Pakistan was not a debatable subject at all. If it was thought that the demand was unjust, then the coming of Pakistan would be a terrible thing for them. It was wrong, he said, to tell the people to forget history. "They cannot make his-



he continued, "who forget history. To bring down the preponderance of the Muslims in the Indian army and to make the army safe, it is wise to let out the hostile element. We will defend our land. Do not be under the false impression that Pakistan would be able to spread its Muslim empire over India. The Hindus will make it lick the dust. I confess I have my quarrel with the caste Hindus over some points, but I take a vow before you that I shall lay down my life in defence of our land."¹ A thunder of applause greeted his speech.

About this time Sir Stafford Cripps returned to England from his successful mission to Russia, and it was declared that he would be entrusted with solving the deadlock in India. Ambedkar put forth his scheme on the eve of the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps. Referring to Chiang Kai-shek's recommendation that Britain should give India immediately real political power, Ambedkar said that the Chinese leader did not give a solution for the difficulties in the way of that consummation. He further stated that the British Government should promise to raise India to a Dominion Status within three years from the date of peace and if the Indian parties failed to produce an agreed solution within one year from the date of the signing of the armistice, the Indian dispute should be submitted to the International tribunal for decision; and Britain should declare that she would undertake to give effect to it as a part of the Dominion Constitution for India.

He, however, described Jinnah's demand for 50 per cent representation as monstrous, and, congratulating Lord Linlithgow for having turned down that demand, said that no National Government should be established as an interim measure, if it meant conceding to Mr. Jinnah his claim for 50 per cent seats for the Muslims.

Those who criticised this Scheme said that they were surprised that the historian and constitutionalist in Ambedkar should have expected the Muslim League to consent to a decision of the International tribunal.

Meanwhile, the British lost Singapore to Japan. The sun on the British Empire was now setting and the Empire was cracking. Impelled by these reverses in the eastern theatre of war and pressed by the U.S.A. and China, the British Government decided to end the Indian political deadlock. Sir Stafford

¹ The Lokamanya dated 20-2-1942.



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Cripps came plane-haste to India in the third week of March 1942 to settle the Indian political problem on the basis of a scheme. He held consultations with the representatives of the Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikhs' Organisation and the Princes' Chamber and put before them the proposals. Ambedkar, accompanied by M. C. Rajah, interviewed Cripps on March 30. According to the Cripps proposals a Constituent Assembly was to be convened immediately after the cessation of hostilities. It was to draft the constitution in co-operation with the Indian States but the right of joining or staying out of the Indian Union was given to Provinces and the Constituent Assembly was to enter into a treaty with the British Government.

Gandhiji described the Cripps offer as a post-dated cheque, Savarkar rejected it *in toto* condemning it as a scheme designed to balkanize India. The Liberals termed it a travesty of self-determination. The Muslim League rejected it as it did not contain a definite or unequivocal announcement in favour of Pakistan although it favoured its ideal by implication. The Congress leaders, who were more keen on the immediate transfer of power than the balkanisation of India, swallowed the pill of the division of India but were straining at the gnat of the Defence Portfolio.

After a full discussion with the other provincial leaders of the Depressed Classes, Ambedkar, too, rejected the scheme as it was calculated to do, according to the leaders of the Depressed Classes, the greatest harm to the Depressed Classes as it bound them hand and foot to the Hindu rule and would lead them, they feared, to the black days of their ancient past. They asked Sir Stafford Cripps to convey to His Majesty's Government that the Depressed Classes would look upon it as a breach of faith, if the British Government decided to force upon them a constitution to which they did not give their consent.

In another statement Ambedkar described the attitude of the British Government to the Depressed Classes as a Munich mentality the essence of which was to save oneself by sacrificing others. He further stated that the Cripps proposal had distinctly given to the League the right to create Pakistan. According to him the proposals were the result of a loss of nerve and of a sense of principle, a breach of faith and a sudden *volte-face*!



The new policy of Britain in regard to the Depressed Classes compelled Ambedkar to make a departure from his recent role as a labour leader. During the interview Cripps asked Ambedkar whether he represented the labour or the Depressed Classes and asked him also about the strength of his Party. That gave a turn to his role and once again Ambedkar thought it wise to resume the leadership of the Depressed Classes in the interest of his people for whom he had been fighting all along the past twenty-five years. He, therefore, convened on March 30 and 31, 1942, a Conference of the leaders of the Depressed Classes who were present in Delhi and held consultations with them on the Cripps proposals. M. C. Rajah, who had up to that time opposed Ambedkar, was now reconciled with Ambedkar. Rajbhoj had already joined him. It was decided, after a gap of ten years, to hold an All-India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur, in July 1942, with a view to creating an all-India organisation with distinct aims and purposes in co-operation with all the inter-provincial forces.

The fiftieth birthday of Ambedkar fell on April 14, 1942. To mark the occasion the I. L. Party and forty-five other public institutions in Bombay and suburbs organised a nine-day celebration consisting of flag salutations, processions and public meetings. The celebrations began on April 12 in all the wards of Bombay City and its suburbs.

At Poona, processions were taken out through prominent streets and Cantonment, and felicitations were showered on Ambedkar for his selfless services to the cause of the Untouchables at a public meeting, at the Shaniwarwada, addressed by Mr. M. C. Rajah and Mr. P. N. Rajbhoj under the presidentship of Prof. Mate. The meeting wished their leader a long and happy life. A big meeting was held in the Assembly Hall of the Poona Municipality under the chairmanship of Mr. Ganpatrao Nalavade, President of the Municipality, and tributes were paid to the great leader of the Untouchables. Dr. Mohile, Mr. Popatlal Shah, Mr. Chavan and Mr. R. R. Bhole spoke highly about the ability and achievements of the great leader. There was another important function held to celebrate the birthday of Ambedkar. Amidst great excitement and jubilation, Mr. Aute, the President of the



District Local Board, Poona, unveiled a portrait of Ambedkar and said that the Board was proud to have the portrait of Ambedkar who was not only a great leader of the Depressed Classes but also one of the great leaders of India, and added that Ambedkar by his selfless sacrifice had secured a place in the heart of the nation. Keshavrao Jedhe and Bapusaheb Gupte also made speeches paying their meed of tributes to Ambedkar.

On the morning of April 19, Ambedkar performed the opening ceremony of the women's branch of the Rohidas Tarun Sudharak Sangh. Addressing the meeting of the Sangh in the local cinema house at Kalyan, he exhorted the youths not to accept help from Hindu institutions and patrons so that they might not sacrifice their spirit of independence for caste Hindu patronage, and asked them to emulate the spirit of Kacha in not deviating from the purpose of life. It was characteristic of Ambedkar that whenever he spoke before his people he cited inspiring anecdotes from the *Mahabharata* such as the love of self-respect of Dronacharya, the story of Yayati and the devotion of Kacha.

The main function in the series of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations was held at Chowpatty, Bombay, on April 19, at which Dr. M. R. Jayakar presided. Processions from all quarters of the city ended in the mammoth meeting. Donde, Chairman of the Jubilee Committee, said that Ambedkar was one of the greatest men of India who had ushered epochs in history. Addressing the meeting, Dr. Jayakar paid a glowing tribute to the long years of service rendered by Ambedkar to the cause of the Depressed Classes. He told the vast audience how Dr. Ambedkar's independent line of thinking and action had brought about a phenomenal change in the status of Depressed Classes and how it had infused confidence in them and awakened the caste Hindus. Dr. Jayakar commended the work done by Ambedkar at the R.T.C. and also at the time of the Poona Pact, and appealed to the Depressed Classes to afford their loyal support to their great leader. Mr. M. R. A. Baig, Sheriff of Bombay, characterised Ambedkar as a great leader. N. M. Joshi, who also addressed the meeting, felt proud that his former pupil, whom he had taught in Standard IV, had attained such eminence, and added that Ambedkar had been a bright and forward student.¹

¹ *The Times of India* dated 20-4-1942.



On April 21 almost all leading newspapers, especially in Maharashtra, expressed their appreciation of the services and scholarship of Ambedkar, and offered him felicitations. Stating that the Depressed Classes owed much of the small amelioration in their existing status to Ambedkar's vigorous advocacy, *The Times of India*, Bombay, observed: "Without political and economic power, the Harijans will find it hard to attain social equality, and Dr. Ambedkar has done well in realising this fact." "He brings to his difficult task," concluded the editorial, "considerable acumen and a gift for pungent, often barbed utterance. Since the removal of untouchability must strengthen the Hindu social structure, and also make for the general advancement of Indian people, Dr. Ambedkar's efforts on behalf of the Harijans deserve wide support."

The *Bombay Chronicle* paid tributes to the worthy service of Ambedkar to his community and said that Ambedkar brooded day in and day out over the unending inhumanity to his community and it was no wonder therefore that his devotion to the Harijans was equalled, if not exceeded, by his bitterness against their tormentors. The *Maharashtra* of Nagpur said that Ambedkar was one of the few Maharashtrian leaders who came to the forefront in Indian politics by the sheer force of their personality, struggle, sacrifice and scholarship. It added that the Depressed Classes owed their present political status to his ceaseless struggle.

The *Dnyanaprakash* of Poona paid glowing tributes to his fearless and selfless mind with which he attacked both the Government and the political leaders. The Paper added that Ambedkar's life was an example to the downtrodden; he was an exemplary man who never sacrificed his conscience for success. The *Kal*, a Marathi Daily of Poona, said that Ambedkar was a representative leader of Maharashtra, and, like other great Maharashtrian leaders, he was not only a leader of ability and intelligence but also a man of letters, of selfless heart and of integrity. The *Prabhat*, a Marathi Daily of Bombay, hailed Ambedkar as a revolutionary leader of modern India, and added that without meaning any disrespect to Dayanand, Gandhiji and Savarkar, Ambedkar's services to the Untouchables ranked higher.

The most important tribute full of appreciation and estimation came from Savarkar. A political and social revolu-



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The revolutionary was estimating the work of another revolutionary. Offering his hearty felicitations to Ambedkar on his Golden Jubilee, Savarkar observed: "Ambedkar's personality, erudition and capacity to lead and organise would have by themselves marked him out as an outstanding asset to our Nation. But in addition to that the inestimable services he has rendered to our Motherland in trying to stamp out untouchability and the results he has achieved in instilling a manly spirit of self-confidence in millions of the Depressed Classes, constitute an abiding, patriotic as well as humanitarian achievement. The very fact of the birth of such a towering personality among the so-called untouchable castes could not but liberate their souls from self-depression and animate them to challenge the super-erogatory claim of the so-called touchables."¹ "With great admiration for the man and his work," Savarkar concluded, "I wish Dr. Ambedkar a long, healthy and eventful life."

The Bombay Provincial Hindu Sabha by a special resolution felicitated Ambedkar on his Golden Jubilee.

Mr. Horniman, the editor of the *Bombay Sentinel*, said that Ambedkar's great intellectual qualities and his service to the country and his community had put him in the front-rank of great men of India, and added that his work would command the respect and gratitude of all those concerned for the achievement of human freedom throughout the world generally and India particularly.

The last meeting organised by the Jubilee Committee was held at Kamgar Maidan, Parel, Bombay, under the presidentship of Mr. Donde, the chairman of the Celebration Committee, when Ambedkar was presented with a purse of Rs. 880. In reply Ambedkar asked the mammoth gathering to discontinue the habit of celebrating his birthday; for, according to him, a society which idolised and raised a mere man to the level of God was set well on the path of destruction. No one, he observed, was endowed with superhuman and divine attributes and one rose and fell through one's own efforts.

Reviewing the progress of the Depressed Classes, he said that there was considerable improvement in their political, social and economic conditions. He declared that willingly or unwillingly the Depressed Classes formed a limb of the Hindu Society and added that he had staged the Mahad and Nasik

¹ Quoted in full by Bhide Guruji in *Free Hindustan* dated 14-4-1946.



struggles to make the Hindus accept the Depressed Classes on terms of equality; but the desired effect was not achieved. He then sounded a note of warning to the British that any scheme which did not recognise their legitimate aspirations and rights would be resisted by them with every means in their power. To Hindus he said that if they accommodated them, the Depressed Classes would fight their battles shoulder to shoulder with them.

IV

News came in the third week of June 1942 that the Viceroy was about to expand his Executive Council. Among the probable names were Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Sir Muhammad Usman, Dr. Ambedkar, Sir J. P. Srivastava, Sir Jogendra Singh, Mr. M. N. Roy, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta and Sir Shanmukham Chetty. On July 2, names were announced and excepting the last three all were included in the Executive Council making the strength of Indians 14 as against 5 Europeans.

Ambedkar's appointment did not become the subject of hostile criticism. The Congress papers criticised it softly saying that it might bring in good for the labour. The *Sunday Standard* of Bombay said that it was an ideal portfolio for a man who had spent his lifetime championing the cause of the underdog and fighting for labour's rights. If the independent Dr. Ambedkar, added the paper, did not become a thorn in the side of the Government, he would not become a rubber-stamp either. *The Times of India*, Bombay, observed that it was the first time in the history of the country that an untouchable Hindu was appointed a Member in the Executive Council of the Government of India.

And indeed it was an unprecedented event. Never before in the history of India a member of the Depressed Classes held such a high office in the governance of the country except one untouchable who went over to Islam in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, assumed the name of Khoosro, became a Sardar of the Khilji King of Delhi, seized the throne of Delhi, returned to Hinduism, proclaimed a Hindu Raj, and harassed the Muslims. Yet Ambedkar's appointment was unique from another point of view. He was the first mass leader to be appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council. Another important



point was that the Depressed Classes had clamoured for the appointment and brought pressure upon Government. Besides he was equipped as few Indians of that rank were in the past. His study of the world labour movement and the problems and legislation about them in his own country, in Europe and in America, was profound. Above all he was the first social revolt to be enthroned in the office of the Chief Executive Council of India.

A little while ago Ambedkar had an opportunity to create a record by becoming a Judge of the High Court where he could have weighed the winning arguments from those persons who had turned up their noses at him in the High Court. But he let it off.

Steersman of his own destiny, Ambedkar thus raised himself from the dust to doyen. By his great gifts, force of character, long patient industry, the love of service, the spirit of sacrifice and the quality of moral heroism, a poor untouchable boy rose to the top of the ladder. He could build a dynamic personality that exercised a tremendous influence over the Indian social and political world of thought and wielded an irresistible power over a section of humanity in Hindustan.

Ambedkar received hundreds of congratulatory letters and wires from prominent and leading public men such as Swatantryaveer Savarkar, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Lokanayak Aney, Sir Sultan Ahmed, the Maharaja of Bikaner, the Chief Justice of Bombay, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah and several other admirers.

Ambedkar immediately left for Delhi on July 5, to attend a meeting of the National Defence Council, and returned to Bombay on July 11.

On his return a dinner was given in his honour by his friends and admirers at the Radio Club, Bombay. Speaking on the occasion, Principal Donde referred to the years of patient labour through which they stood by him, and hoped that the leader would end the slavery of his people and succeed in ameliorating the conditions of the labouring masses of India. Ambedkar said in reply that he was born of the poor, was brought up among them, lived among them, had slept like them on the damp floor covered with sack-cloth, and shared the sorrow of his people. He promised to remain absolutely unchanged in his attitude to his friends and to the rest of the



world and added that the doors of his house in New Delhi would always remain open to his friends.

The next day the Independent Labour Party and the Bombay Municipal Labour Union held a meeting to congratulate their leader. He told the labourers that although the main task before the Executive was the defence of the country, much of what he would accomplish would depend upon the colleagues in the Council. At another meeting held at the R. M. Bhat High School, Bombay, by the peasants of the Konkan Districts and States, Ambedkar declared that he would never surrender in the battle he would have to wage for protecting and advancing the interests of the working classes in India; but added that he would not at the same time threaten his colleagues in the Cabinet with his resignation at every point of minor difference. Replying to a charge that a separate organisation for the Depressed Classes was prejudicial to the interests and solidarity of the Labour Classes in general, he observed that the struggle which comprised the lowest strata of the society was bound to help in the amelioration of all other sections of the working class because when the bottom-most stone in a structure was shifted from its place, those above it were bound to be shaken out of their positions. He pointed out that the caste Hindu labourers had not outgrown their prejudice against the Depressed Class labourers. Mr. Anantrao Chitre, who presided over the function, urged Ambedkar to extend the field of his influence and activity of labour movement so as to include the non-Depressed Class labouring classes and assume the leadership of the entire toiling masses of India.

At a reception given by the Mahar Panchayat, Ambedkar related vividly how he had planned in his boyhood to run away from Satara to Bombay to become a mill-worker and how his plan to steal the purse of his aunt had failed. He then impressed upon his audience that it was true as some of the speakers before him had said that the pressure from the Depressed Classes compelled Government to take him up, but he asked them to bear in mind another fact that Government would not have been able to meet their demand if they had not among them one with the requisite training and qualifications for the post.

The All-India Depressed Classes Conference was scheduled to meet on July 18 and 19. Ambedkar along with Mr. N. Shivraj,



the President-elect of the All-India Conference of the Depressed Classes, reached Nagpur at 9 on the morning of July 18. A mammoth crowd of 40,000 people gave a thundering ovation to their chosen leader and to the President-elect. Leaders from the Punjab, Bengal and Madras had come to attend it. The Conference began its session at the Mohan Park in Nagpur in a very spacious pandal.

Mr. N. Shivraj, President of the Conference, at the outset congratulated Ambedkar on behalf of the Depressed Classes on his elevation to the Cabinet and said that this office opened a new avenue for service to the people.

As Ambedkar rose to speak, he was cheered vociferously by the vast Conference of 70,000 persons. He reviewed the situation in reference to the claims of the Depressed Classes from the days of the R.T.C. to the Cripps proposals and described the Cripps proposals as a great betrayal of the Depressed Classes.

Alluding to the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan, he said that when Mr. Jinnah called his community a minority, the other minorities derived strength from each other; but now that Jinnah called his community a nation, his break-away meant that they were left alone to carry on the fight. It might be, he added, that the Muslims might turn out to be the very people against whom they might have to raise the standard of revolt!

The Conference declared the formation of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation and put forth their demand for the establishment of separate village settlements at the cost of Government. At the end of the Conference Ambedkar made a moving speech protesting against the charges to the effect that he was indifferent to society and lived among books. He replied that he had no ill-feeling against anybody and he never meant any insult to anybody. He had to achieve maximum progress in minimum time. "Many Hindus regard me as their enemy. But I have personal friends from even the Brahmin community. Situated as I am, it has fallen to my lot to lash the anti-social actions of the Brahmins who treat my people worse than dogs and cats and impede their progress," he concluded. Appreciating the viewpoint of Ambedkar the *Hindu*, Madras, asked him to bestow thought on his demands for separate settlements and although it might be agreeable from the



of better housing and hygienic conditions, the paper added, it might perpetuate untouchability.

Ambedkar addressed two more Conferences at Nagpur in the same pandal. The one was the Depressed Classes Women's Conference which was held under the presidentship of Mrs. Sulochanabai Dongre of Amraoti. The Conference was an indication of the extent of awakening among the women of these downtrodden classes and was a tribute to its leaders like Mrs. Indirabai Patil and Mrs. Kirtibai Patil. The Women's Conference demanded abolition of polygamy and urged institution of pensions and leave with pay for women workers. Addressing the Samata Sainik Dal Conference which was held under the presidentship of Mr. Gopalsing, O. B., Ambedkar observed that he had love for the principle of non-violence but he differentiated non-violence from abject surrender. He told the volunteers that it did not befit a man to live a life of surrender, servitude and helplessness. He declared that he believed with the saint Tukaram that destruction of the wicked was also a form of non-violence.

During his stay in the city he was entertained at a tea party by Lala Jainarayan. At Nagpur a regal messenger from Delhi saw Ambedkar and according to the message, Ambedkar telegraphically took over the charge of the Labour Portfolio on the morning of July 20, 1942, from Nagpur. But such was the indifference and hatred cultivated by men of the so-called higher classes that when the messenger from Delhi inquired of the people at the Nagpur station and outside about the venue of the Depressed Classes Conference, the messenger was greeted with indifferent looks or words.

On his return from Nagpur, Ambedkar attended the last of the series of receptions held by the Depressed Class Women of Bombay under the presidentship of Mrs. Donde. He advised educated girls not to go in for marriage with the youths of higher classes. In the end, he expressed satisfaction that the women of the Depressed Classes, especially the Mahar ladies, were more advanced from the viewpoint of politics than the Maratha, Bhandari or Agari women.



CHAPTER XIX

Labour Member

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I

PRIOR to his departure for Delhi on the evening of July 27, 1942, Ambedkar gave an interview to a representative of *The Times of India*, Bombay, when he described Gandhiji's all-out open rebellion as both irresponsible and insane, a bankruptcy of statesmanship and a measure to retrieve the Congress prestige that had gone down since the war started. It would be madness, he proceeded, to weaken law and order at a time when the barbarians were at the gates of India for the mastery of India. The British *vis-a-vis* Indians were in the last ditch and if democracy won, no one could stand in the way of India's independence.

The Congress papers bitterly criticised this statement and added that Ambedkar was justifying the British Government's policy as a return gift for the Labour Membership!

Ambedkar, however, was not alone in opposing the move of Gandhiji. The Muslim League leaders warned the Muslims to keep aloof from the proposed struggle of the Congress. Savarkar declared that the Hindu Mahasabha would join it if the Congress, before its contemplated struggle, solemnly guaranteed that it would irrevocably stand by the unity and integrity of India. Savarkar, however, foretold that Gandhiji, as was his wont, would agree not only to one Pakistan but to many.

Ambedkar was now hardly a week in New Delhi in his new place when the Congress August struggle started. The Viceroy's Executive met immediately and resolved that the decision of the Congress was a challenge, plunging India into confusion and anarchy insensely paralysing her efforts in the cause of human freedom.

The Congress leaders all over the country were arrested and put in detention. As a result of their arrests, popular discontent, mass disturbances and their rigorous suppression by Government plunged the country into turmoil. The Muslims remained aloof from this struggle. So did the Hindusabhaitees.



The Ambedkarites kept aloof from the struggle and concentrated their efforts on militarisation.

Ambedkar gave expression to his pent-up thoughts in Delhi when he spoke at a reception given in his honour by the Depressed Classes Welfare Association on August 23. He declared that he had no love for office and would be glad to go back to his work if he found that his efforts to improve the lot of the masses were unsuccessful. He pointed out that in the Executive Council the representation given to the Muslims was three times greater than that given to the Depressed Classes, who were almost equal in population strength to the Muslims. He declared that the Depressed Classes resented this.

Though Ambedkar was now in power, he had his carking anxieties. He had no news from his son and nephew, who were in Bombay where violent political disturbances had taken place. He tried to contact them on the phone but in vain. So he wrote them an express letter asking them to take the utmost care of themselves as he feared that they would be marked out on his account as the targets.

Next month there was a discussion in the Central Assembly on the political situation in India since the August disturbances. Replying to the debate, Ambedkar said that from what he had studied during the last two or three years there was a landslide in the principle of non-violence. As regards the veto which was vested in the Secretary of State for India, he said that it should have been vested in the legislatures but since there were no fresh elections the existing legislatures could not be regarded as sufficiently representative. In December 1942 Ambedkar wrote in response to an invitation by the authorities of the Pacific Relations Committee a Paper on the problem of the Untouchables in India for the session of the Conference to be held in December 1942 at Quebec. Mr. N. Shivraj read it at the Conference. In it Ambedkar lamented that although slavery, serfdom and villanage had vanished in different countries, untouchability existed in India. The Paper appealed in the end to the American people not to be misled by the Congress Hindu propaganda and asked them to get themselves satisfied that the Hindu war of freedom would not be the enemy of the freedom of millions of men who were regarded as Untouchables in the land.

On January 17, 1943, Ambedkar paid a visit to Surat where



he addressed a Civil Pioneer Rally. Stressing the need for military training, he told the rally that when Indians would get Independence it would be the trained soldiers and civil pioneers who would help in defending the Independence against aggressors.

From Surat Ambedkar came down to Bombay and in the evening he was given a reception by the Maratha and allied communities at the R. M. Bhatt High School. In the course of his speech he traced the causes that led to the downfall of the Non-Brahmin Parties which were in power in Bombay and Madras for full twenty years. He said that the first cause was that the Non-Brahmin Parties prostituted their positions of power for providing jobs for their men and nothing more. They had no broad policy, no broad measures, that benefited the masses of their followers, the peasants and labourers who were their main support. What was equally tragic was that those men who were given jobs by the Non-Brahmin Parties, when put into the saddle, forgot the class from which they came and became as insolent and arrogant as any foreigner. Democracy failed in its full purpose, he proceeded, in the West because it was in Tory hands. The same would be the position in this country if the Brahmin minority came to power. He then told his audience that three things were essential to make a political party powerful. The first was that its leader must be so great as to be a match for the leaders of other parties. The second essential was a disciplined organisation; and the third was a clear-cut programme. These requisites should be fulfilled if democracy was to succeed in India and to be rescued from the hands of the Tories.

Ambedkar was invited to Poona to address a meeting on January 19, 1943, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Ranade, India's patriot and reformer. Ambedkar went to Poona and delivered one of the most important speeches in his life. At the outset he discussed three different theories of estimating the greatness of a man. He observed that the Augustine theory that history was only an unfolding of a divine plan in which mankind was to continue through war and suffering until that divine plan was completed on the day of judgment, was now a belief only with the theologians. The theory of Buckle that history was made by Geography and Physics, and the theory of Karl Marx that history was the result



economic forces, he observed, did not represent the whole truth. They were quite wrong in holding that impersonal forces were everything and that man was not a factor in the making of history. Man was necessary to rub two pieces of flint to make fire.

Military heroes left their nations smaller than they founded them and did not affect society. In defining the greatness of a man, Ambedkar proceeded, Carlyle laid emphasis on his sincerity. According to Rosebery a Great Man was launched into the world as a great natural or super-natural force, as a scourge and scavenger born to cleanse. Ambedkar remarked that all these tests were partial and none was complete. Summarising his discussion, he opined that a Great Man must be motivated by the dynamics of a social purpose and must act as the scourge and scavenger of society. Applying this test to Ranade, Ambedkar held that Ranade was a Great Man not only by the standards of his time, but was a Great Man according to any standard. Ranade's life was nothing but a relentless struggle against social injustice, social evils and for social reforms. Ranade struggled to create rights, to vitalise the conscience of the Hindu society which had become moribund and morbid, and to create a social democracy.

Ambedkar compared Ranade with Gandhiji and Jinnah, and opined that it would be difficult to find two persons who would rival Gandhiji and Jinnah for their colossal egotism. To them personal ascendancy was everything and the cause of the country a mere counter on the table; and fawned upon by flunkies, they claimed infallibility for themselves.

He then observed that Indian journalism was once a profession, but now had become a trade. He, therefore, denounced the writings of the Congress journals as the writings done by drum boys to glorify their heroes.

In the end he said that hero-worship in the sense of expressing one's unbounded admiration was one thing and to obey the hero blindly was a totally different thing.

This speech is published in a book form entitled *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*, and Ambedkar writes in the preface that no one can hope to make any effective mark upon his time and bring the aid that is worth bringing to great principles and struggling causes if he is not strong in his love and hatred. "I hate," he continues, "injustice, tyranny, pompousness and



humbug, and my hatred embraces all those who are guilty of them. I want to tell my critics that I regard my feelings of hatred as a real force. They are the reflex of the love I bear for the causes I believe in and I am in no wise ashamed of it." He hopes that his countrymen will some day learn that the country is greater than an individual.

The principle of hate Ambedkar has not imbibed from Buddhism. The phase of Buddhism was yet to come in his life. It was Buddha's eternal rule that hatred never ceases by hatred, but by love. Ambedkar loves the principle of absolute non-violence as an end and believes in relative violence as a means. He is of the opinion that Gandhiji's non-violence is derived from Jainism and not from Buddha, who never stretched it to the extreme view of Jainism.¹

II

The ill-prepared and ill-ordered August Revolution came to an end after a few weeks of violent disorder, mass lawlessness and mob violence.

Realising the fiasco, Gandhiji started a twenty-one-day fast on February 10, 1943, which was a tactical move to force his release from the Aga Khan Palace. The fast rocked the whole nation, and the Indian sky was filled with cries of "Release Gandhiji". Pressure was brought upon the Members of the Executive Council to resign. Ambedkar and Srivastava remained unmoved. Aney, Modi and Sarkar resigned under nervous pressure. Their resignations created a faint smile on the face of the fasting Mahatma. But this had nothing to do much with Ambedkar's popularity or prestige as a few days after the end of the fast Sir Chimanlal Setalvad paid Ambedkar a glowing tribute on his 51st birthday saying that Ambedkar was an outstanding example of natural intelligence, perseverance and courage.

Ambedkar was now deeply engrossed in the welfare of the labouring classes. He knew their wants, vices, virtues and sufferings. The third meeting of the Standing Labour Committee, set up during the term of his predecessor, Sir Firoz Khan Noon, by the Tripartite Labour Conference, met at the Bombay Secretariat on May 7, 1943, under the presidentship of

¹ H. V. Desai, *My Interviews with Eminent Personalities* (Marathi), p. 24.



Ambedkar. One of the important proposals that came up for consideration was the question of setting up Joint Labour Management Committees at least in factories and industrial units employed in war work. Such Committees were established in the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom. The second question was the establishment of an Employment Exchange. This was to be done in the interests of labourers, so that the skilled and semi-skilled labour technicians that were being trained out under different schemes should not be thrown out in the streets ; they should find avenues of employment.

On May 10, 1943, the Bombay Presidency Committee of the Indian Federation of Labour gave in Bombay a tea-party in honour of the Labour Member, Dr. Ambedkar. In a critical examination of the aims and diffused strength of the Labour organisations, he deplored the unfortunate split in the ranks of Labour movement and observed that in his opinion Indian Labour movement was hollow and most superfluous. He, therefore, appealed to them to seek out defects and to remedy them. In the end he said that his frank opinion was that Labour ought to work for the establishment of Labour Government in India. It was not enough, he concluded, that India should get Swaraj ; it was more important in whose hands that Swaraj would be.

On the same day he addressed the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Bombay. In the course of his address he said that the world was sick of war and suffered from three diseases. The first was imperialism of one nation over another ; the second was the colour bar which must be tackled and solved in some manner, so that peace might not be disturbed any more ; the third was poverty. The way out to equalise the position between nations was to make a weaker country strong. Recalling then how the representatives of the English and European nations humbled themselves before the Peshwas, he remarked that the reason why the European nations adopted an attitude of superiority towards the Oriental nations was, in his judgment, their potential economic and industrial strength. He, therefore, held that India's economic and industrial strength would resolve the problem of imperialism and the problem of colour.

As to the problem of poverty, he expressed horror at the thought of the sky-soaring daily expenditure the nations incurred in destroying the civilisation of Man. He said he could not understand why Britain who spent fourteen crores per day



and the U.S.A. who expended about the same amount as also India in her way enormously, should not spend half of it on liquidation of poverty in peace time, to better the lot of the suffering humanity. "The world will have," he concluded, "to make amends, will have to surrender and give up some of the cherished privileges in order that poverty may be abolished."

Just at this time discussions were going on in the newspapers on a scheme put forth by Ambedkar to solve the political deadlock. The scheme contemplated an Act of the British Parliament for the setting up of a Delimitation Committee and the holding of two plebiscites. According to the first Plebiscite the Muslims were to determine whether they wanted Pakistan and the second was to decide whether the non-Muslims in the proposed Pakistan wanted to stay in Pakistan or not. If the non-Muslims preferred to stay in Pakistan, the scheme suggested no change in the existing boundaries. If they declared their opposition to be in Pakistan, a boundary commission was to be appointed to demarcate the predominantly populated Muslim Districts, and at the end of two years it was to be decided whether the Muslims wanted separation or not.

The second session of the Tripartite Labour Conference under the presidentship of the Hon'ble Labour Minister, Dr. Ambedkar, was held at New Delhi on the 6th and 7th September 1943, when in a very impressive and appealing speech Ambedkar defined the demands of the labour for food, clothing, shelter, education, cultural amenities and health resources. A resolution to set up a machinery to investigate questions of wages and earnings and to collect material on which to plan a policy of social security for labour, was adopted.

In the same month Ambedkar gave an interview regarding the proposals put forth by Mr. Curtin for an Imperial Consultative Council. Ambedkar stated that it was in the interest of the Dominions to make India a willing partner in the British Commonwealth, but at the same time declared that Indians had no love for the empire because the empire recognised Indians as subjects and not as citizens of equal status.

In the next month the Central Assembly passed an important resolution moved by Mr. Pyarelal Kuril Talib, a Member for the Depressed Classes from U.P., for the removal of restrictions on the Depressed Class men in the military forces against holding posts of officers.



Ambedkar had now some satisfaction that he could add to the representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Assembly as well as in the Council of States. Enumerating the benefits he had secured since his taking office he told in November 1943, in New Delhi, the leaders and workers of the Depressed Classes that he had secured $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent appointments in Government posts, reserved seats for technical education of the Depressed Class students in London and one more seat in the Central Assembly and got one created in the Council of States.

Ambedkar's insistence on securing a fixed percentage of Government posts for Depressed Classes sprang from two reasons. He was absolutely convinced that but for caste Hindu predominance in Government services it would have been well-nigh impossible for the caste Hindus to perpetuate tyranny over the Depressed Classes. Secondly, Government jobs increased the possibility of their getting justice in Government dealings in addition to raising their economic status.

A South Indian officer serving in Delhi once taunted Ambedkar by saying that his politics was a hunt for jobs! Ambedkar answered back: "If it is so, why do you hold 90 per cent of the jobs? Why don't you get out from the jobs which you treat with contempt, and make room for us?"

The Standing Labour Committee met again at Lucknow on January 26, 1944, under the chairmanship of Ambedkar. From there Ambedkar proceeded to Kanpur where the annual session of the Scheduled Castes Federation was held on January 29.

Mr. N. Shivraj, the President, said that the Depressed Classes were not against the transfer of power provided the demands of the Depressed Classes set forth at the Nagpur Session in July 1942 were conceded.

In his address to the mammoth gathering Ambedkar declared that the Government of India must be shared by the Hindus, Muslims and Untouchables and if the Depressed Classes did not get a proper share in the conduct of the national Government, they would launch a struggle to achieve that object. He advised students to take the fullest advantage of the facilities offered by Government for studies in technical and higher fields, and appealed to the young leaders not to misunderstand the



old leaders who had been fighting with invincible courage and unflagging energy and unswerving faith.

In April 1944, Ambedkar took another step to better the lot of labourers. He moved an amending Bill proposing holidays with pay for industrial workers employed in perennial factories.

A few days after this Gandhiji was released on health grounds from internment in the Aga Khan Palace in Poona. He went to Panchgani from where Rajagopalachari declared that he had sent a new offer to Jinnah which had been approved of by Gandhiji during his fast in internment. The nationalist press kept a guilty silence over the treacherous offer. The Liberal leaders described the offer as a danger to India's security, and Savarkar declared that Rajagopalachari alone was not the villain of the tragedy.

III

Ambedkar, who looked at this grim tragedy with the eyes of a constitutional expert, regarded this action of Rajagopalachari as a return to sanity which action he had condemned a short while ago, in his paper to the Pacific Relation Committee! Ambedkar welcomed Gandhiji's acceptance of the principle of vivisection, but felt that it would have been better had the offer been made by Gandhiji himself and if it had been an unconditional one. He further said he could not understand why Jinnah turned down the offer; there were risks in a plebiscite, but at any rate people must be the final judges.

Ambedkar was sorry that Gandhiji took such a long time to come to the conclusion. In order to have a dig at the Congressites he said he was sorry that Gandhiji should have thrown overboard his friends, who, believing that Gandhiji was firmly opposed to Pakistan, went on opposing it and were now made to look small. Ambedkar added that the Hindu-owned press could be depended upon to suppress the voice of the Hindu Mahasabha. He was right. The Hindu Sabha was the last haven of those who were wedded to the integrity of India and what Ambedkar said about the press came out true. It suppressed the voice of the Hindu Mahasabha. But it is very strange that in his second edition of *Thoughts On Pakistan*



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Ambedkar described this very scheme as a snare which did not offer any solution!

Seeing Gandhiji's growing gestures to the League Lord, Ambedkar, too, held out the olive branch to Gandhiji and thought that the Mahatma would be in a mood to compromise with the leader of the Untouchables. In his letter to Gandhiji he observed that in addition to the settlement of the Hindu-Muslim problem, the settlement of the problem of the Hindu-Untouchables was necessary if the Indian political goal was to be achieved, and added that on his own part he was willing to formulate points on which a settlement was necessary. In his letter dated the 6th August 1944, Gandhiji replied that with him the question of the Depressed Classes was of a religious and social reform. Although he knew, he concluded, Ambedkar's ability, and "would love to own you as my colleague and co-worker, I know to my cost that you and I hold different views on this very important question". Licks to those who are aggressive and kicks to those who are feeble. As a politician, Gandhiji was no exception to this.

At the end of August 1944 Ambedkar visited Calcutta. There he was presented with an address by a number of Scheduled Castes organisations. Replying to the address, Ambedkar said that the new constitution would make India a Dominion. He told the audience that victory was in sight and what he wanted from them was unity. He declared that it was good on the part of the Viceroy to tell Gandhiji that for the transfer of power a tripartite agreement was necessary among the Hindus, Muslims and the Depressed Classes. In the end he said if the Hindu Mahasabha conceded his demands, he would join the Hindu Mahasabha and if the Congress did so, he would join the Congress.

Referring to his Calcutta speech, Dr. Moonje wrote a letter to the leader of the Depressed Classes just after his Calcutta speech and asked him to put forth his demands; but he received no reply. The Mahasabhaites had never opposed the demands of the Depressed Classes.

Ambedkar then visited Hyderabad, Deccan. Speaking at a meeting there, Ambedkar once again reiterated his new demand that the Depressed Classes were a separate element. He declared that the Depressed Classes also did not lag behind in their love for India's freedom, but they wanted the Inde-



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pendence of their community along with the independence of the country.

Ambedkar then proceeded to Madras. On his arrival he received a Memorandum from the Tamil Nad Depressed Class Christian Association. It stated that since they were drawn from the Depressed Classes, their social and economic position was the same as that of their brethren from the Hindu fold. It further observed that the caste Christians continued to retain their castes even after conversion and ill-treated the Depressed Class Christians. The Missionaries did not in any way try to curb the attitude of the caste Christians. The Memorandum, therefore, appealed to Ambedkar to redeem them from the slavery at the hands of caste Christians and other communities.

On September 22, 1944, Ambedkar was presented with an address by the Madras Municipal Corporation at the Rippon Building. Members of the Congress Municipal Party were conspicuous by their absence. Replying to the address, Ambedkar said that he was not opposed to a National Government or Swaraj or Independence. He, however, added that history did not warrant the assumption that once a Parliamentary Government was established on adult suffrage, it would end all human sufferings. If the National Government fell in the hands of the Governing class which believed in one community and one class being entitled to education and prosperity and that the people of other communities were born to live and die in servility, then a National Government in the hands of that class would not be better than the existing one.

In the evening Ambedkar was presented with an address by the Andhra Chamber of Commerce. The address was glad to note that Ambedkar had given a new orientation to the attitude of the Government towards labour and added that its main feature was the development of mutual understanding of the viewpoints of the employees and the workers and the Government. Immediately after this function, the Hon'ble Labour Member, Dr. Ambedkar, was entertained at a tea-party by Kumararaja Sir Muthiah Chettiar on the lawns of "Chettinad House".

Next evening the M. & S.M. Railway employees, belonging to both the Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Castes, presented the Labour Member with addresses. In reply Ambedkar said that he was happy to see that in Madras for the first time

workers of both the sections had joined together in a meeting and told them that they must stand together to put an end to their poverty. He further observed that the capture of political power was far more important than organising trade unions.

On the morning of September 24, he addressed a public meeting held under the auspices of the Madras Rational Society at the Prabhat Talkies. In the course of his speech he said that no country in the ancient past had such a tremendous and dynamic political life as the ancient Indians. India had been a land of revolutions in comparison to which the French Revolution would be only a 'Bagatelle' and nothing more. The fundamental fact, observed Ambedkar, was that there had been in ancient India a great struggle between Buddhism, which had ushered in a revolution, and Brahminism, which had launched a counter-revolution. The quarrel was on one issue and that was "what is truth"? Buddha said that truth was something to which any one of the 'Dasha Indriyas' could bear witness. The Brahmins said that it was something which was declared by the *Vedas*. And analysing some aspects of the *Vedas*, Ambedkar further said that certain portions of the *Vedas* were a forgery introduced at a later stage. He was surprised, he added, that so clever a people as the ancient Brahmins should have insisted upon fastening such tremendous sanctity and authority on such books as contained nothing but tomfoolery. "Today we are in the grip of counter-revolutionaries, and unless we do something very quickly," he concluded, "we may bring greater disaster to this country."¹

In the afternoon Ambedkar spoke at a luncheon party given in his honour by Mr. P. Balasubramanya Mudaliar at Hotel Connemara. Analysing the causes of the downfall of the Non-Brahmin Party, he said that many of them tried to become second class Brahmins and it occurred to him that they had not abandoned Brahminism which they were slavishly aping, and holding to its ideal. He stressed the need for a good leader, good organisation and a clear-cut ideology for the Non-Brahmin Party.

In the evening Ambedkar was presented with addresses at the Memorial Hall, Park Town, by different Scheduled Castes Federations and the South Indian Buddhists' Association. Replying to the addresses, he strongly defended the Viceroy's

¹ The Free Press Journal dated 26-9-1944.



declaration on the Communities' position in the national life of India. He then turned to certain remarks made by Srinivas Sastri that Ambedkar's presence at the international peace gathering would be inimical to the general interests of the country. Ambedkar frankly said that there was nothing disgraceful in the record of his own public life that would make it a shame for him to be seated at any international gathering on India's behalf. He added that Sastri was the lap dog of the British Government and if he had achieved anything great or international popularity, it was particularly due to the fact that the British Government was pleased to make him a show-boy.¹ And recalling some events from the proceedings of the R. T. Conferences, he declared that if India had been let down at the R.T.C., it was not by him or the Scheduled Castes but by Gandhi, Sastri and others. Although the Depressed Classes had, he proceeded, a thousand excuses to adopt the attitude that Sir Edward Carson had adopted saying "Damn your safeguards", they were large-hearted enough to support the demand for Home Rule with a small condition attached to it, namely reasonable safeguards. In spite of the Brahminical rule under which the Depressed Classes suffered for the past two thousand years, they were patriotic enough to ask for only just demands. He, therefore, appealed to the Hindu brethren to reverse their mentality and said: "Let us come to terms, and settle the question".

During his stay in Madras he had a long discussion with Mr. E. V. Ramaswami, leader of the Justice Party, on the political problems in Madras. Ambedkar then went to Ellore where he was presented with addresses by the District Scheduled Castes Federation, Christian Federation, the West Godavari District Board and the Ellore Municipal Council.

Replying to the Municipal address, Ambedkar said that one of the defects which he had noticed in Gandhiji was his complete lack of vision and the founders of the Congress must never have dreamt that just at the time when India was about to reach her destiny, she would be cut into parts. Turning to the problem of minorities, he said that Gandhiji's attitude to the problem was the same as Lincoln had adopted towards the Negro problem. Passionately devoted to the Union, Lincoln issued the Proclamation of Freedom for the slaves in 1862 to win the

¹ The Free Press Journal dated 26-9-1944.



of the Negroes¹ for the Northern States. Similarly, Gandhiji wanted freedom but also Chaturvarnya Dharma. He added that if a constitution accepted by all Parties could be drafted, Gandhiji could see the British Prime Minister as the single and solitary representative of India.

Since the departure of Cripps Ambedkar worked furiously to impress upon the country and the British Government that the Depressed Classes were an important element and demanded a recognised place in the social, economic and political structure of the Indian society. That was the long and short of his whirlwind propaganda, and his arguments won the Viceroy over.

Describing this growing struggle of the Depressed Classes, *The Times of India* in a balanced and brilliant editorial said: "Gandhi's country-wide demonstrations of friendliness with the Depressed Classes were more spectacular than real."² Experience unfortunately proved that the temporary flood of goodwill was more a demonstration of regard for the Congress leader than an expression of genuine concern." The editorial added that reforms like temple entry, opening of wells and common cremation grounds barely touched the fringe of the problem and any attempt to sidetrack the issue would in the long run prove disastrous to the country's interest.

In the last week of November Ambedkar attended in Poona a function held in his honour by Rajbhoj. Speaking at the function, Ambedkar said that every religious book written in olden times was also a political book; and the *Geeta* must be considered a political book aimed at upholding the teachings of the *Vedas* and raising Brahminism to a supreme position.

During this period the Sapru Committee was busy preparing proposals to solve the Indian deadlock. Ambedkar refused to co-operate with it as some of the members of the Committee did not inspire any confidence in him.

In the first week of January 1945, Ambedkar visited Calcutta. Performing there the inaugural ceremony of the *People's Herald*, a weekly organ of the Scheduled Castes, he said that the Congress after Gandhiji's death would be blown to pieces. He stressed the importance of the Scheduled Castes Federation and added that it would be an eternal party in the country from the political and moral point of view, and because

¹ *The Hindu* dated 29-9-1944.

² *The Times of India* dated 26-9-1944.



elevation of the Scheduled Castes was the noblest work a leader could find in India, he had devoted himself to it.

During his stay at Calcutta Ambedkar dined at D. G. Jadhav's place and the next morning the cook and all servants of this Railway Conciliation Officer refused to serve at his place as Ambedkar, an Untouchable, had dined with him! And yet Ambedkar was the Hon'ble Labour Member of the Chief Executive Council of India!

Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, flew to London in March 1945 to discuss the Parity proposals contained in the Pact made between Bhulabhai Desai and Liaquat Ali Khan. The Pact was later supported by the Sapru Committee whose findings were cabled to Lord Wavell in London.

IV

In the meanwhile Ambedkar took out the second edition of his book *Thoughts On Pakistan* under a new title *Pakistan or Partition of India*, adding one more chapter to the book. Although he admitted the cultural and geographical unity of India and stated how two or more than two nations lived under one constitution in Canada, Switzerland and South Africa, he said that Pakistan should be conceded for a sure defence of free India and for the sentiments of the Muslims who wanted to be a nation.

Vigorous attempts were now being made to solve the political deadlock. There were about nine schemes outlined by different leaders of note as alternatives to Pakistan. They were : the Cripps proposals, Prof. Reginald Coupland's regional scheme, Sir Ardeshir Dalal's plan, M. N. Roy's scheme, Dr. Radhakumud Mukherjee's plan and Sir Sultan Ahmed's scheme and others.

Ambedkar, too, unfolded his plan on Sunday May 6, 1945 when he addressed the annual session of the Scheduled Castes Federation at Parel in Bombay. Declaring that the majority rule was untenable in theory and unjustifiable in practice, he proposed weightages to be given to the minority communities in their representation in the legislatures and asked the Hindus to be satisfied with a relative majority. Although his plan ensured a united India, he appealed to the Muslims to accept his plan as it promised them better security, a continuance of



eightage and relieved them from the fear of Hindu domination. The most prominent feature of the plan was that the Depressed Classes were to hold the balance of power and the aboriginals were not to get any representation as according to Ambedkar they were devoid of political sense. The plan regarded the proposal for a Constituent Assembly as absolutely superfluous, an act of supererogation and a dangerous proposition that might involve the country in a civil war. Much of the Constitution was ready under the 1935 Act. The plan brushed aside the Sapru Committee's report.

The plan was severely criticised by the Press. *The Times of India*, notorious for its partiality for non-Hindus, said that although the plan might appear to be a poetical justice to an outsider, it suffered from extremism, and described it as one raising the Depressed Classes to the status almost of a new herrenvolk. Ambedkar's plan surpassed the Sapru proposals in its blow to the Hindus on one more count. It proposed that the Prime Minister and other caste Hindu Ministers should be elected by the representatives of the Minorities while the representatives of the Minorities in the Ministry were to be elected by Minorities themselves. The consensus of opinion among the Hindu journals was that Ambedkar aimed at a minority rule over India! Had Ambedkar been a caste Hindu leader, he would have blown up this scheme. But unfortunately he was on the other side. Nowhere in the history of the world a national majority had ever been subjected to such humiliation, they added.

Thakkar attacked Ambedkar for denying representation to the aboriginals and Ambedkar said in reply: "I have never claimed to be a universal leader of suffering humanity. The problem of Untouchables is quite enough for my slender strength. . . . I do not say that other causes are not equally noble. But knowing that life is short, one can only serve one cause and I have never aspired to do more than serve the Untouchables." He added that he did not include the aboriginals in the scheme because they had not as yet developed the political capacity which was necessary to exercise political power for one's own good. These very arguments were used by the higher classes when they opposed the enfranchisement of the lower and especially the Depressed Classes!

The Hon'ble Labour Member was entertained at a party



given in his honour by a group of friends at 'Cafe Model' Bombay, on May 20. Speaking on the occasion, he said that it was better for India to prefer Dominion Status to Independence if they could not retain it. Dominion Status, according to International Law, meant perfect sovereignty, he added.

In June 1945 another solid work by Ambedkar appeared in the market. Its title was *What Congress And Gandhi Have Done To The Untouchables*. Polemic in its violence, vigorous in its style, powerful in its appeal, replete with a wealth of convincing statistics and an array of forceful arguments, the book burst upon the Congress Party like a bombshell. The main thesis of the book is that the advertised Harijan uplift work of the Congress Party, since the Congress adopted it in 1917 as one of its planks, was actuated more by the desire to prevent the Depressed Classes from appearing as a separate element in the national life than by the desire for the actual removal of disabilities of the Untouchables. Criticising the work of Gandhiji, Ambedkar paid a rare tribute in this book to Swami Shraddhananda by praising him as the greatest champion of the Untouchables.

The most important part of the book begins when Ambedkar warns the Depressed Classes to beware of Gandhi and Gandhism. According to him Gandhism is nothing but a return to the village life, a return to nature, to animal life and an anathema to the modern age of machine. Having no passion for economic equality, it is a reactionary philosophy from both the social and economic points of view, blazing on its banner the call for return to antiquity. If there is any ism, he further observes, which has made full use of religion as an opium to lull the people into false beliefs and false security, it is Gandhism. So he warns the Untouchables to be on their guard against the inroads of Gandhism.

In the end the book utters a warning to the radicals in America and Britain to beware of the Indian Tories who were misusing the slogan of liberty to befool and befog the world. It declares that to Gandhiji removal of Untouchability was a platform and not a programme of action and so Gandhiji was not the liberator or emancipator of the Untouchables. The book is dedicated to an English lady with whom the author, Ambedkar, had studied the Bible during his London days.

The book evoked a bitter controversy. The Deputy



Gandhi, Rajagopalachari, tried his hand but his reply to the book was what penknife is to a hammer. A better reply came from Mr. Santhanam but without scholarship, originality and statistics and thus Ambedkar's book remained undemolished.

Ambedkar's violent opposition to Gandhism on rationalistic basis was not a new phase. Ten years ago he had told an American official who grew lyrical about Gandhism that the American was either a hypocrite or a lunatic and asked him why the Americans did not scrap their army and navy and pull down factories and skyscrapers, and go back to primitive times. He further told the American official that men like him did not believe in Gandhism and only succeeded in misleading both the Indians and the Americans.

After a stay of nine weeks in London, Lord Wavell returned to India in the first week of June with the so-called Wavell Plan. He released the Congress leaders from jails and convened a conference at Simla in the last week of June 1945.

The pity of it was that the Congress represented the caste Hindus through its Muslim President Maulana Azad, the Muslims were represented by Jinnah, the Scheduled Castes by Mr. N. Shivraj and the Sikhs by the Sikh representative, and all the ex-Premiers of Provincial Governments attended the Conference. The Hindu Mahasabha was dropped out as an inconvenient body. Ambedkar, being a Member of the Executive, could not take part in it. But he was preparing the case for the Scheduled Castes. His contention was that the Scheduled Castes should have three seats in the Central Executive on the basis of population if the Muslims had five. The Conference broke on the question of the personnel of the interim Ministry, the Congress insisting on Muslim nominees of its own.

V

In July Britain went to polls and there was a landslide against the Tories and Labour came into power. Japan also surrendered. Ambedkar appreciated the courage shown by the British electorates in destroying the lead of the governing classes.

The Labour Member was back in Bombay for a while. During his stay he addressed the Students' Union of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in the last week of July 1945. He declared that the compulsory conciliation or arbitration was a



great advantage to Labour and hoped to make that principle a permanent feature of the Labour Code. He added that he hoped to retain all the Technical Training Schools started by the Government of India as part of the educational system of the country.

In the last week of August the Standing Labour Committee met at New Delhi and discussed rules for the Industrial housing, employer's responsibility and holidays with pay. Ambedkar presided over the deliberations.

In the meanwhile Lord Wavell again went to London in the latter part of August 1945 to take counsel. He returned to India after the middle of September and announced general elections.

All the Parties entered the election arena. The Congress, backed by a gigantic purse and giant election machinery, entered with the "Quit India" slogan; Jinnah, backed by the Pakistan purse, entered with the "Pakistan or Perish" slogan; the Hindu Mahasabha with "Independence and Integrity of India"; and Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation with no electioneering machinery or funds. Ambedkar started the election propaganda at a meeting in Poona, on October 4, where he stressed three points. He emphasized that the Depressed Classes should not believe in the lead of the Congress which was full of surrenders and a tool in the hands of the capitalists and socially indifferent; it never strove to remove their disabilities and to redress their grievances. The remedy lay in their hands and therefore they should capture the political power which was their life-blood. They should develop into a ruling race and guard their rights; otherwise they would remain on paper. He enumerated the benefits and rights he had secured for them during his short term of office. In the end he said that the coming elections were a matter of life and death to them and more so because the Constitution-making body was likely to be elected by the provincial legislatures.

Ambedkar returned to New Delhi. There he presided over the Seventh Indian Labour Conference which met on November 27, 1945. In his Presidential Address he observed: "Labour may ask the moneyed classes a pertinent question saying 'if you do not mind paying taxes to meet the expenditure on war, why do you object to raising funds when their purpose is to raise labour standard?' How many uneducated persons could



have been educated and how many sick persons could have been restored to health, if the money spent on war had been spent on public welfare? ”

The election propaganda was now launched by the Scheduled Castes Federation with greater vigour. To give an impetus to their election work, they held a Provincial Conference at Ahmedabad on November 29 and 30, 1945. Mr. Parmar presided. Ambedkar went to attend the Conference. Leaders of the Roy Party, the Communists and the Hindu Sabha also met him at the station. All Mills were closed. Addressing the Conference in a spacious pandal called Buddhanagar on the bank of the Sabarmati, Ambedkar told the vast crowd that whatever benefits they were enjoying had been secured by him and not by Gandhiji who had sought the help of the Muslims to oppose their demands.

On November 30 the Ahmedabad Municipality presented him with an address. Replying to the address, he declared that if drastic action had not been taken by Government in August 1942, India would have been overrun by the Japanese and the Germans. He thanked the Municipality for the honour it had done him and said the treatment it had given him on the occasion stood in glaring contrast—he would not say cruel contrast—to that of his own Bombay City Corporation which had refused to include in its agenda a resolution for presenting an address to him.

Ambedkar inaugurated a Conference of the regional Labour Commissioners at the Bombay Secretariat in the first week of December 1945. In his inaugural address he said that three things were necessary to mitigate or prevent industrial disorder, namely, a machinery for conciliation; secondly, an amendment of the Trade Disputes Act; and thirdly, minimum wage legislation. He said that the first was already in operation and he hoped to put forth proposals for the remaining two before long.

Giving his views on the possibilities of achieving industrial peace, he observed that industrial peace on the basis of power was no longer a possibility. On the basis of law, it was possible, but not certain. Based on social justice, he continued, it was a hopeful proposition. It evolved a triangular approach which must start with the workers who must recognise on their part the duty to work, which was the same as elimination of shirking. The employer on his part must pay reasonable wages



which was another name for elimination of exploitation and provide comfortable conditions of work which was another name for labour welfare; and thirdly the State and the society must realise that the maintenance of proper industrial relations was a public affair and not a mere matter of a contract between the employer and the employee. Mr. S. C. Joshi, Chief Labour Commissioner, said in his welcome address that the industrial relations machinery was neither the advocate nor the opponent of any of the two parties to the Industry—the employer and the employees.

VI

Ambedkar immediately went to Manmad to address a Conference of the Scheduled Castes Federation. There he declared that his efforts in securing an agreement with the Congress for several years on the rights of his people had failed and there was no alternative but to capture all seats reserved for them. He then addressed a meeting at Akola and proceeded to Nagpur where at a public meeting, on December 13, he demanded a blueprint from the Congress about the self-government that was to be ushered in. He explained how the Congress campaign for the removal of Untouchability had proved an utter failure and cited how during his recent visit he could have only a distant view of the famous Jagannath temple at Puri from the terrace of a neighbouring house.

Ambedkar then made a tour of Southern India to give a fillip to the election work of his Party in that Province. At Madras he described the Congress election Manifesto as humbug as it said nothing about the future constitution. He next visited Madura and made an election speech. Proceeding to Coimbatore, he declared at a public meeting there that the coming elections would determine the constitution of the country, and reiterated his demands for guaranteed representation in the legislatures and executive services, for sufficient money for education and provision of lands in villages. Some newspapers and leaders criticised Ambedkar for abusing his position as Member of the Executive to further the cause of his Party at public expense.

On his way back Ambedkar addressed a gathering of the South Indian Liberal Federation at the Memorial Hall, Park Town, Madras. In the course of his speech he traced the growth



and power of the Congress Party and said that the Liberal Party led by Gokhale was regarded by the people as an ineffective organisation. The Revolutionary Party could capture the imagination of the people, but few people were prepared to sacrifice like them. The strength of the Congress Party lay in the fact that it had Gandhi as its leader, who appealed to the political-minded as well as to the religious-minded people. He advised the Justice Party to have a leader, a programme and discipline for the success of their Party.

He then inaugurated the Second Annual Conference of the Non-Brahmin Lawyers' Association in the same Hall. In the course of his speech he made a violent attack on the *Manusmriti* and other Hindu scriptures. This speech evoked a furious storm among the caste Hindus in Southern India and angry Hindus showered him with letters which were full of filthy abuse unmentionable and unprintable and full of dire threats to his life.

Immediately after his Madras speech, he returned to New Delhi. In the first week of January 1946 arrived in New Delhi the British Parliamentary delegation of ten members. During their stay in New Delhi they interviewed Ambedkar, Jinnah and Nehru on January 10. Their talks with Jinnah lasted for two hours. Two hours after their talk with Jinnah eight members of the delegation had a 90-minute talk with Ambedkar. Then came the turn of Pandit Nehru. The delegation had important talks with other leading politicians in the country. They visited some places, surveyed India in their own way for four weeks, and returned home on February 10, 1946.

Immediately after this interview with the British Delegation, Ambedkar returned to Bombay on January 13, 1946, and left for Sholapur. There he was presented with an address by the District Local Board and the Municipality. He thanked both the institutions for their good work for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes and made a touching reference to Dr. Muley, the ex-President of the Municipality, 'with whose co-operation he had started his public career twenty years ago'. It may be recalled here that Dr. Muley had helped him in conducting a hostel at Sholapur for the Depressed Class students. Addressing a public meeting at the place, Ambedkar declared that if the Scheduled Castes Federation candidates were not returned, he would surrender to the Congress, wear a white cap and work under the Congress!



At the end of January Ambedkar returned to his Delhi Headquarters. There he made, on February 4, a speech before the Delhi Scheduled Castes Provincial Federation and said that the constitution which did not receive their approval would not be binding on them. The Labour Member then left New Delhi, returned to Bombay and left for Satara. The election propaganda had now reached white heat. After urging the Scheduled Castes at Satara to elect the S.C.F. candidates, he visited Belgaum and there addressed a meeting.

On his return to Bombay, he was presented with a purse by the Scheduled Castes of Bombay. Admission to the meeting was by tickets. In the course of his speech he urged his people to see that in a free India they also were citizens. The Scheduled Castes, he stated, were not asking for a territorial division like the Muslims. What they wanted was equal rights and no patronage. If the Congress felt that their demands were not just then let the matter be referred to an impartial International Tribunal. He said he was prepared to abide by the verdict of the Tribunal.

Just before this speech of Ambedkar, Sardar Patel had declared that the first concern of the Congress Ministries would be to destroy the very roots of untouchability by force of law. He said that Ambedkar's aspirations for his community were legitimate but his ways were wrong. Though the Harijans, he concluded, had been benefited by the Poona Pact, Ambedkar continued abusing the Congress Party and Gandhiji.

There was a series of letters in the Press by educated men from the Scheduled Castes in reply to Sardar Patel, stating how the Poona Pact had proved a curse to them.

Ambedkar left for his official headquarters on February 18 by the evening train. From New Delhi he went to Agra to attend a conference convened by the U.P. Provincial Scheduled Castes Federation. It was held under the Presidentship of Mr. N. Shivraj on March 10. Rao Bahadur Dr. Manikchand welcomed the delegates. Ambedkar declared at the Conference that if Swaraj meant conducting Government by majority with the co-operation and consent of the minorities, he would welcome such a Swaraj.

The Provincial elections were held. The Scheduled Castes went on foot to the polling booths as advised by their Babasaheb. They stood in queues from early dawn and voted up to



the last minute. But the Congress easily outnumbered the votes of the Federation with the help of the vast number of caste Hindu votes. It was all over with Babasaheb's Scheduled Castes Federation. His party was utterly routed. Absence of and indifference to the co-operation of caste Hindu votes and lack of organisation made Ambedkar eat his words which he had uttered at Sholapur. This was a stunning blow to his prestige as a leader, which drove him to desperation and his bitter mind began to think of drastic methods. Congress defeated both Ambedkar and Hindu Mahasabha, but the Muslim voters pricked the bubble of the Congress prestige and their nationalism. They routed the Congress!

The patriotic upsurge emanated from the I.N.A. Revolt and their trials, the revolt raised by the Royal Indian Naval ratings and the Royal Indian Air Force seemed to break down the imperial structure. It was a clear indication that the Indian army was feeling and experiencing the pangs of freedom. Politics and nationalism had reached their ranks and magnetized their hearts. The Britishers knew that it was no longer possible for them to keep India in bondage. So on March 15, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, acknowledged India's right to attain full independence within or even without the British Commonwealth and said that they would not allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of the majority.

The British Premier sent out a delegation of three Cabinet Ministers, Sir Stafford Cripps, A. V. Alexander and Lord Pethick Lawrence who was then the Secretary of State for India, to discuss with Indian party leaders on the spot the question of resolving the political deadlock. The British Cabinet delegation reached New Delhi on March 24, 1946. Numerous interviews, high level discussions and delicate deliberations took place in the Viceregal Lodge. Nehru, Patel, Gandhi, Jinnah, and Dr. Mukherjee were interviewed. But the outstanding feature of the political scene was that Maulana Azad represented the Congress Party; Mr. Jinnah the Muslim League; and the Nawab of Bhopal, the Princely India. Thus the whole of India was represented by three Muslim leaders.

Amidst this atmosphere two representatives of the Minority communities were interviewed by the Mission on April 5. They were Ambedkar and Master Tara Singh. Elections had made Ambedkar's position shaky. He was almost throttled. Autho-



used by the Scheduled Castes Federation as its sole spokesman for the Scheduled Castes, he expounded in his interview the views and claims of the Scheduled Castes. It was reported that Ambedkar pleaded his case forcefully and repudiated the accusation that the Scheduled Castes were putting a veto on India's political advancement. He placed a memorandum before the Mission asking for a provision to be made in the constitution for the election of the Scheduled Castes through separate electorates, stressed the importance of a new settlement, emphasized the need for the appointment of a settlement commission, demanded adequate representation in the Central and Provincial Legislatures as also in the Central and Provincial Executives, in the public services and on the public service commissions, Federal as well as Provincial, and urged for earmarked sums for their education. The main feature of the memorandum was that it demanded the inclusion of these safeguards in the new constitution.

The Mission declared on May 16, 1946, their decision in the form of a State Paper according to which they contemplated a feeble and formal union with three groups of Provinces, the formation of a Constituent Assembly and an interim Government. There was no reference to the demands of the Scheduled Castes in the "State Paper".

As it was now almost decided by the British Government to set up a new Government with the representatives of the successful Parties, the Viceroy now made it clear to his Cabinet colleagues that they were to go. Ambedkar left New Delhi and came down to Bombay in the last week of May 1946.



CHAPTER XX

Spell on Constituent Assembly

I

On his arrival in Bombay, Ambedkar found the atmosphere tense with excitement. There were disturbances in the City between his adherents and the caste Hindus. As the result of this clash, the Bharat Bhushan Printing Press conducted by his son had been burnt down. He was apprised of the occurrences by the Secretary and other members of the Federation. Ambedkar called a meeting of the Working Committee of the S.C. Federation at Rajagriha, Bombay, in the first week of June 1946. By a resolution it denounced the British proposals of 16th May as mischievous and threatened to resort to direct action if the wrong done to the Scheduled Castes was not rectified. It condemned the heinous acts perpetrated by the goondas of the Congress persuasion on persons of Scheduled Castes as the result of which the Press of Ambedkar was burnt down. He then went back to New Delhi. The Viceroy was to set up a care-taker Government. So the Members of the Executive Council bade goodbye to the Viceroy in the third week of June 1946.

But amidst this uncertain atmosphere came to reality one of the dreams of Ambedkar, which he had cherished since September 13, 1945. It was his dream to found an ideal educational institution with modern scientific apparatus and with a staff of proved merit with a view to promoting higher education among the lower middle classes and especially among the Scheduled Castes. He founded the People's Education Society which started a college on June 20, 1946, and it has proved to be one of the leading colleges in India. The fears and prophecies of friends failed, and he succeeded in collecting funds and attracting a group of capable and willing workers on the staff. The name of the college is Siddharth which is one of the names of Lord Buddha.

Ambedkar returned to Bombay on June 25 when the Scheduled Castes gave a great ovation to their leader at the Bombay Central Station. Ambedkar now gave a clarion call to his



people to give battle for the cause of justice and humanity and to expose the machinations and conspiracy hatched against the rights of his people. He knew this was the last opportunity to assert the rights and the will of his people; for he feared that a free India might revert to the old traditions, and his people would be impoverished, neglected and ostracized from society and public services.

On June 29, a caretaker Government was announced, and the British Mission left for London, leaving other details to be settled by the Viceroy.

The Scheduled Castes agitation started with a march to the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee which was held in Bombay. The Scheduled Castes leaders and workers made a black flag demonstration in front of the Congress Pandal and demanded an explanation from the Congress leaders as to their rights and representation in a free India. Rajbhoj interviewed Gandhiji in Poona and told him that the Congress Harijan leaders were not the representatives of the Scheduled Castes. And the battle started on July 15, 1946, at Poona, synchronizing with the opening of the Poona Session of the Bombay Assembly.

The fight was evidently against the Congress which had usurped their claim to speak, voice and represent their grievances. Contingents of volunteers poured in Poona. They defied the order of the District Magistrate who had banned processions and meetings. They were arrested one batch after another before the Council Hall. Ambedkar was in Bombay when the non-violent battle began at Poona. In an interview before his departure for Poona, on July 17, he stated that they had launched the campaign against the Cabinet Mission's proposals and declared that, although it was not necessary for a general to be on the battle-field, if the developments necessitated his participation in the struggle, he would court imprisonment. Ambedkar received messages from some leaders supporting his stand, but the General Secretary of Gandhiji's Harijan Sevak Sangh threatened him with a counter satyagraha movement if he did not withdraw the struggle. The Federation simultaneously started satyagraha campaigns at Kanpur and Lucknow.

Just then Members were elected by the Provincial Legislatures to go to the Constituent Assembly which was to meet at New Delhi in accordance with the provisions of the Mission's Plan. The Congress elected its men. The majority



they were elected not because they knew much of constitution-making but because they had suffered imprisonment in the patriotic struggle. Ambedkar had no men in the Bombay Assembly to support his candidature and so his name was put up through the Scheduled Castes representatives in the Bengal Assembly. There with the backing of Muslim League he was elected to the Constituent Assembly. In his otherwise war-like career there was a certain unfailing chord of adaptability for catching the right moment to show his mettle, his worth, his power. His vision was ever fresh and his perception quite correct.

On July 19 Premier Kher, true to his Gandhian characteristic, declared that he did not know the root cause of the offer of satyagraha by the Scheduled Castes Federation. "One does not know," he added sarcastically, "whether their grievance is against the Cabinet Mission's failure to give them what they want or against the defeat of Dr. Ambedkar and his party in the recent election, or whether it is due to a general sense of frustration."

Replying to all these charges and threats, Ambedkar stated in a press interview on July 21, in Poona, that the British had decided to quit India and their powers were to be inherited by the caste Hindus and the Muslims, and hence the Scheduled Castes were entitled to demand a blueprint from the Congress regarding the rights and interests of 60,000,000 Untouchables in the future Constitution of India. He said that the satyagraha started in Poona was only the beginning of a country-wide struggle to secure for the Scheduled Castes their just political rights. He claimed that the Poona satyagraha was carried on on a higher moral plane and the non-violent behaviour of the whole mass of volunteers provided a lesson to Gandhiji who regarded himself as a graduate in satyagraha. Referring to the Poona Pact, he said that as it prevented the real representatives of the Scheduled Castes from being elected to the Legislatures, it must go. It was a virtual disfranchisement of the Scheduled Castes. In the end he issued a warning that if moral resources were exhausted, they would look for other means to register their protest.

At a big meeting in Poona he exhorted his men to carry on the struggle to the bitter end. The Congress Harijan leaders, who always reaped the fruit of Ambedkar's labour and



struggle, spoke against Ambedkar's agitation and supported those who always opposed Harijans' demands. It was like barking at one's own benefactor.

Referring to this satyagraha, Gandhiji wrote in *Harijan* that there was a parody of satyagraha in the show staged by Ambedkar and if the means were non-violent the cause was certainly vague.¹

The satyagraha movement went on unabated for a fortnight and its pressure forced the Government to abrogate their Poona Assembly session. The Congress leaders felt the necessity for a rapprochement with Ambedkar. So Patil, the Chief of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, saw Ambedkar at the Siddharth College and they both, accompanied by Mr. N. M. Joshi, met Sadar Patel on July 27. The talks continued for an hour or so in connection with the representation of the Scheduled Castes on the Constituent Assembly and the Poona satyagraha. It seems they could not come to a settlement as on August 8 a Scheduled Caste procession led by prominent leaders of the Scheduled Castes such as Gaikwad and Rajbhoj, marched to the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee which was holding its session at Wardha.

On August 24, the names of the Members of the Interim Ministry were announced. Along with Nehru, Patel, Azad, Rajagopalachari and Sarat Chandra Bose appeared the name of Jagjivan Ram, who was a leader of the Untouchables from Bihar. The Muslim League did not co-operate; the Muslim posts were filled by other Muslim leaders, one of whom was fatally stabbed by a Muslim fanatic.

That day Ambedkar was in Poona where the Working Committee of the Scheduled Castes Federation was reviewing the political situation. The announcement of the Viceroy was a terrific disappointment for Ambedkar and his Party. He expressed sharp dissatisfaction at the inadequate representation given to the Scheduled Castes in the newly constituted Cabinet at the Centre and demanded one more seat for the Scheduled Castes in the Cabinet. He was surprised to see Jagjivan Ram's name in the list as he had supported the claim of the Scheduled Castes for increased representation in the Executive when Ambedkar had sent a cablegram to the British Prime Minister protesting against the inadequacy of the representation. The

¹ *Harijan* dated 9-8-1946.



Working Committee of the Scheduled Castes Federation appealed to Jagjivan Ram not to accept the post, declared that the new Government was not entitled to their respect and asked the Scheduled Caste leaders to renounce the titles conferred upon them by the British Government.

In the first week of September the Scheduled Castes Federation started satyagraha at Nagpur and in a very short time nearly eight hundred persons were arrested.

II

Ambedkar realised now that although the protestations and demonstrations had their limited result, he must make a final attempt himself in Britain and effect a change if he could. So he started on his political mission on October 15 *via* Karachi. In a Press interview at Karachi he told the Press that he was going to London but he refused to be drawn into any discussion or to clarify the details of his mission. On his arrival in London, he declared that the Labour Party had let down the Untouchables and betrayed their cause. When asked about his reaction to the situation at Delhi since the Muslim League joined the Interim Government, Ambedkar said that it was a Government of one country by two nations. He plainly told the press that India was in the midst of a civil war. He, therefore, suggested to the British Government to enforce the 1935 Act and hand over to the Indian Parties a United India after a period of ten years.

He immediately got his Memorandum printed in London and approached the political bosses of England. Asked by Reuter's political correspondent, whether he had asked the Depressed Classes to go over to Islam, he said he had not given advice to that effect.

✓ Ambedkar was facing a political paralysis, and it was a very severe blow to the life-long efforts which he had made towards the cause of the Untouchables. His only point was that the Scheduled Castes should be given due representation in the Executives and Legislatures. He was working desperately to achieve that end. He admitted that he was depressed, and his friends, too, said he was terribly pulled down in health. One thing had taken the wind out of his sails. The Muslim League had taken up Jogendranath Mandal as Law Minister in the



Interim Government. The Scheduled Castes had now two seats in the Central Cabinet. Moreover, Jogendranath Mandal was a Member of the Working Committee of the Scheduled Castes Federation!

On the last day of October 1946, he had talks with some leading British politicians connected with India. He discussed his Memorandum with Mr. Attlee and the Secretary of State for India. He saw Churchill and Lord Templewood—formerly known as Sir Samuel Hoare—who was once the Secretary of State for India—and others. On November 5, he addressed a meeting of the Conservative-Indian Committee in the House of Commons which was attended by some Labour M.P.s also. The Press was not allowed. The meeting lasted for about an hour. Ambedkar placed facts and figures before them. But there seemed no hope for him to gain his points. There was lip sympathy and a nod of assent here and there. The close interruption of the Labour Members showed that they were not willing to rake up the communal question at the last stage. Ambedkar was advised to adjust himself to the changed situation and to try his luck in the Constituent Assembly. So in an utterly depressing mood he had to leave London.

Shortly after his arrival in Bombay, in an interview with the representative of the Globe Agency, he observed that although it was a vain hope, the Untouchables were ready for the assimilation or absorption of their classes into the Hindu Society in the real and substantial sense of the term on the basis of intermarriage and inter-dining. But another aspect of the same question, he added, was that their merger into the Hindu Society would become easier only when the Untouchables rose to the social status of the caste Hindus. He expressed a feeble hope that Hinduism in the course of time might so reform itself that it would become acceptable; and therefore they were prepared to stay on where they were as it was not possible to uproot humanity and transplant it from one soil to another.

As regards conversion of the Untouchables to Christianity as suggested by Rev. Livingston, he said: "Religion among Christians, as well as non-Christians, is a mere matter of inheritance. The Christian inherits his father's property and along with it his father's religion. He never stops to contrast Christianity with other religions and to make his own judgment as to its spiritual value."



At this juncture Ambedkar's book *Who Were The Shudras?* was published. The book is dedicated to Mahatma Jotiba Phoolay whom he regards as one of the greatest reformers. This is a book of great erudition. A work of long patient industry and research, it presents an impressive method of arranging a catalogue of facts, and a brilliant illuminating exposition. It is the thesis of Ambedkar that the Shudras were Kshatriyas. They were Dasas and Dasyus. They were one of the communities belonging to the solar race. But they were degraded as the result of a violent conflict between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. The Brahmins refused to perform thread ceremonies of these Kshatriyas and degraded them to the fourth Varna which previously did not exist.

During the last week of November, Jogendranath Mandal, Law Member in the Interim Government, visited Bombay. In an interview he said that he was satisfied with the result of Ambedkar's mission to London, and added that he had Ambedkar's full support for his joining the Interim Government! During his stay in Bombay he visited the office of the B.P. Muslim League where he was received by the Members of the Working Committee of the League.

Although it was boycotted by the Muslim League, the Constituent Assembly met on December 9, 1946, as scheduled. It elected Dr. Rajendra Prasad its President, appointed a Committee for framing the rules of procedure, and on December 13, Pandit Nehru laid the foundation of its work by moving a resolution on the Declaration of Objectives in a magnificent speech. Ordinarily a good speaker, and a serious, sincere and visionary leader, Nehru rose to his full stature at this momentous hour of the nation and of his life, and captivated the House by the panoramic sweep of his speech. Nehru declared India's objective as an Independent Sovereign Republic. Rajarshi Tandon, who seconded the resolution, delivered a powerful speech.

On December 15, 1946, India's legal luminary, Dr. M. R. Jayakar, known for his gift of peace-making, moved an amendment to Nehru's resolution, seeking postponement of the passing of the resolution until the Muslim League and Indian States representatives came into the Constituent Assembly. And he did it in good faith. But this irritated the Congress bosses and voices rose from the Congress groups heckling Dr. Jayakar as



in obstructionist. The sweet, flowing, persuasive Jayakar sat down never to rise again in that House. His amendment now became a battle royal. Mr. M. R. Masani supported Pandit Nehru's resolution as a democratic socialist. Mr. Frank Anthony supported Dr. Jayakar's amendment on legal and technical grounds although he accepted the solemn character of the main resolution. Dr. Mookerjee, Hindu Mahasabha leader, saw no point in deferring a decision as he feared that the postponement would encourage the Muslim League to stay out and block the progress.

And then the President of the Constituent Assembly unexpectedly called upon a Member to have his say. In response to the call a massive figure with a long head, a stubborn chin and an oval face rose from his seat to support Jayakar's amendment. It was Ambedkar, the avowed enemy of the Congress, who had lashed their ideology and scoffed at their leader privately and publicly. The House was all attention. Ambedkar took a view of the House. Everybody now thought that Ambedkar, by playing such a dangerous role, would go under with the mover of the amendment. To rise against the will and objectives of the Congress bosses, who were the nation's most powerful leaders, was to meet one's Waterloo! The Congress Members were ready with their hands raised to cripple their avowed enemy and throw him down.

Ambedkar saw himself surrounded by great political leaders. Majority of the white-clad elite had never heard him although they had heard big things about him. In a grave manner, with an unlimited command of language and supreme courage he began his speech. He said that he considered the first part of Pandit Nehru's resolution to be controversial and the later part, which set out the objectives of the future constitution, to be non-controversial, although that too was pedantic in that it enunciated only rights without prescribing remedies open to the injured parties. The Congress Members were now breathless. But to put himself with the psychology of the House he switched over, in the twinkling of an eye, to the important point, the crux of the amendment.

"I know," he said, "today we are divided politically, socially and economically. We are in warring camps and I am probably one of the leaders of a warring camp. But with all this I am convinced that, given time and circumstances, nothing



the world will prevent this country from becoming one, and with all our castes and creeds, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that we shall in some form be a united people."

"I have no hesitation in saying that, notwithstanding the agitation of the League for the partition of India, some day enough light will dawn upon the Muslims themselves, and they, too, will begin to think that a United India is better for everybody," he proceeded.

Blaming the Congress Party for having consented to the dismantling of a strong centre, Ambedkar said he would not ask whether the House had the right to pass such a resolution. It might be it had the right. "The question I am asking is," he asserted with a glow in his eyes, "is it prudent for you to do it? Is it wise to do it? Power is one thing and wisdom and prudence quite a different thing." He, therefore, made a fervent appeal to the Congress Members to make yet another attempt to bring about a conciliation and said: "In deciding the destinies of a people, the dignity of the leaders or men or parties ought to count for nothing."

In the end he referred to three ways by which the issue could be decided; the permanent surrender of one party to the other, a negotiated peace or war. He confessed that he was appalled at the idea of war, and uttered a warning that it would be a war on the Muslims or what was probably worse, a war on the combination of the British and the Muslims. Quoting Burke's famous passage in favour of reconciliation with America, Ambedkar observed in a moving tone: "If anybody has it in his mind that this problem can be solved by war, or that the Muslims may be subjugated and made to surrender to a constitution that might be prepared without their knowledge and consent, this country would be involved in perpetually conquering them. As Burke said: 'It is easy to give power, but difficult to give wisdom.' Let us prove by our conduct that we have not only the power but also the wisdom to carry with us all sections of the country and to make them march on that road which is bound to lead us to unity."

So forceful was the passionate appeal that it produced an excellent impression upon the Constituent Assembly. He was frequently cheered by the Congress Members. Dr. Jayakar's speech containing the same appeal aroused resentment while Ambedkar's fine oration evoked a sense of co-operation in their



...minds, and the hands that were itching to smash him rang with approbation! It was a red-letter day in the romantic life of Ambedkar. The sacrileger had become now a counsel, the scoffer had become a friend who cast a spell on the Congressmen. Few speeches have given such a turn to the life of a speaker. The consideration of the resolution was postponed to another session which was to meet in January, and it was passed on January 20, 1947.

Ambedkar returned to Bombay to look after the People's Education Society. The conflict between his men and the Congress-minded men had not yet ceased. Deorukhakar, a Bombay Depressed Class leader, was stabbed to death early in January 1947 and when someone told Ambedkar at the Siddharth College, Bombay, that he should not go to his house which was surrounded by hooligans, he furiously frowned upon him and said he would not save his own life when his son and nephew and his books that were as dear to him as life itself, were in danger. At the risk of his life he returned to his residence. On February 21, 1947, Ambedkar assisted by Mr. M. B. Samarth, Mr. G. J. Mane and Mr. P. T. Borale, defended 38 accused at a General Court martial held at Deolali. The accused were soldiers belonging to the untouchable communities from Bihar.

III

Meanwhile, the British Government announced that it would hand over by June 1948 the Government of India either to some form of Central Government for British India or to the existing Provincial Governments in India. It called back Lord Wavell who used his only eye to see things from the Muslim angle of vision.

Ambedkar, who read the times correctly, realised that the time was ripe for him to put before the Constituent Assembly his constitutional views. So he prepared a Memorandum in March 1947 in which he proposed that the Scheduled Castes should have a separate electorate only in those constituencies in which seats were reserved for them and in others they were to vote jointly.

The Memorandum was published in the form of a brochure under the title *States and Minorities*. It is a draft of the consti-



tion which he had prepared for the Indian Union. It is interesting and instructive to study his political philosophy and so it is given below in a nutshell.

To Ambedkar democracy is essentially a form of society. It involves unmistakably two things. The first is an attitude of mind, an attitude of respect and equality towards one's fellow-men. The second is a social organisation free from rigid social barriers. Democracy is incomplete and inconsistent with isolation and exclusiveness, resulting in the distinction between the privileged and unprivileged—privileges for a few and disabilities for the vast majority.¹

A democratic society must assure a life of leisure to each of the citizens. Therefore the slogan of a democratic society must be machinery, more machinery and civilization. He, therefore, welcomes the machine age. The fact that machinery and modern civilisation have produced many evils may be admitted. But these evils are no argument against them. They are due to a wrong social organisation which has made private property and pursuit of personal gain matters of absolute sanctity. If machinery and civilisation have not benefited everybody, the remedy is not to condemn machinery and civilisation but to alter the organisation of society, so that the benefits will not be usurped by the few but will accrue to all.

Man occupies the highest place in the scheme of animal existence. The ultimate goal of brute's life is reached once his physical appetites are satisfied. The goal of man's life is not reached unless and until he has fully cultivated his mind. In short, what divides the brute from man is culture. That being so the aim of human society must be to enable every person to lead a life of culture which means the cultivation of mind as distinguished from the satisfaction of mere physical wants. A life of culture can be made possible where there is sufficient leisure for a man to devote himself to a life of culture. Leisure is quite impossible unless some means are found whereby the toil required for producing goods necessary to satisfy human needs is lessened. That can happen only when machine takes the place of man.²

That is why he opposed Gandhism that hated the machine.

¹ Ambedkar, *Ranade, Gandhi And Jinnah*, pp. 36-37.

² Ambedkar, *What Congress And Gandhi Have Done To The Untouchables*, pp. 283-284.



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According to him Gandhism is the doom of the common man. Gandhism has no passion for economic equality.

Ambedkar hates the orthodox Marxist who quotes Marx and Engels on every occasion. He likes new ideas, new approaches. He says that you cannot lay down an ideal by a stroke of the pen. Society should always be in an experimental stage. According to him Marx's philosophy is the satisfying philosophy to the lower order.¹ It is a direction, not a dogma. Once he described Russian Communism as a fraud.²

He is a believer in State socialism. "State socialism is essential for the rapid industrialisation of India. Private enterprise cannot do it; and if it did, it would produce these inequalities of wealth which private capitalism has produced in Europe which should serve as a warning to Indians. Consolidation of holdings and tenancy legislation are worse than useless. They cannot bring about prosperity in agriculture. Neither consolidation nor tenancy legislation can be of any help to the 60 millions of Untouchables who are just landless labourers. Only collective farms can help them."

He says that basic industries should be owned by the State. Insurance shall be a monopoly of the State. Agriculture shall be a State industry. Land will belong to the State and shall be let out to villagers without distinction of caste or creed and in such a manner that there will be no landlord, no tenant and no landless labourer.

But he wants to establish State socialism by the law of the constitution and thus make it unalterable by any act of the legislature and the executive. State socialism should be practised through parliamentary democracy which is a proper form of Government for a free society. It is only by this method that one can achieve the triple object, namely, to establish socialism, retain parliamentary democracy and avoid dictatorship.

But if Democracy is to live up to its principle of one man, one value, the laws of the constitution should not only prescribe the shape and form of the political structure but also must prescribe the shape and form of the economic structure of society.

¹ H. V. Desai, *My Interviews With Eminent Personalities*, p. 26.

² *The Navayug's Ambedkar Special Number* dated 13-4-1947.



But does Ambedkar fall in with the Indian Socialists? He desires to invite the attention of the Indian Socialists to the social problem. He observes that economic motive is not the only motive by which man is actuated. That economic power is the only kind of power no student of human society can accept. That religion is the source of power is amply illustrated by the history of this country. He then cites an example from the history of the Plebians, who gave up material gain rather than their religion for which they had fought so hard.

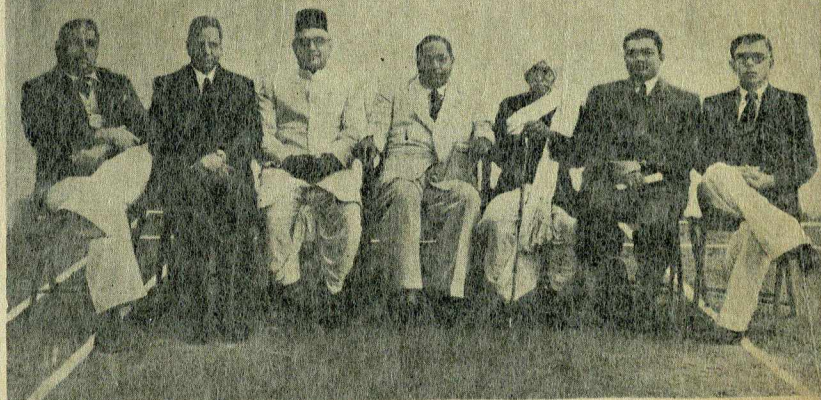
The fallacy of the Socialists, he asserts, lies in supposing that, because in the present stage of the European society property as a source of power is predominant, the same is true of India or that the same was true of Europe in the past. Religion, social status and property are all sources of power and authority.

He, therefore, disagrees with the Socialist view that equalisation of property is the only real reform and that it must precede everything else. He asks the Socialists whether they can have economic reform without first bringing about a reform of the social order. If Socialists are not to be content with the mouthing of fine phrases, if they wish to make Socialism a definite reality, then they must recognise that the problem of social reform is fundamental and that for them there is no escape from it. Unless they do so, they cannot achieve their revolution. They will be compelled to take account of caste after revolution, if they do not take account of it before revolution.¹)

IV

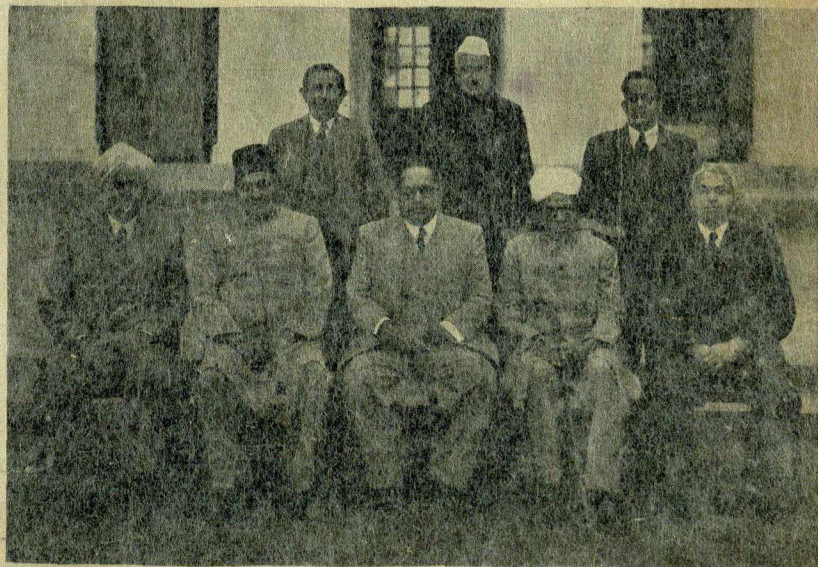
The nebulous British policy, the atrocities committed by the Muslims and the Congress leaders' incapacity to rise to the occasion threw the Hindus on the defensive, and now they thought it wise to demand a partition of the Punjab and Bengal. Speaking of this new move, Ambedkar said in an interview at New Delhi that he must know what the caste Hindus wanted to do with the Untouchable who would shift and how they would be rehabilitated. Ambedkar attended the third session of the Constituent Assembly which met in April 1947. The reports of the Advisory Committee and the Fundamental Rights Committee were adopted by the Constituent Assembly.

¹Ambedkar, *Annihilation Of Caste*, pp. 17-19.



Prof. V.G. Rao, Principal A.B. Gajendragadkar, Mr. M.V. Donde, Dr. Ambedkar
Mr. S. K. Bole, Mr. D. G. Jadhav, Mr. K. V. Chitre (Registrar)

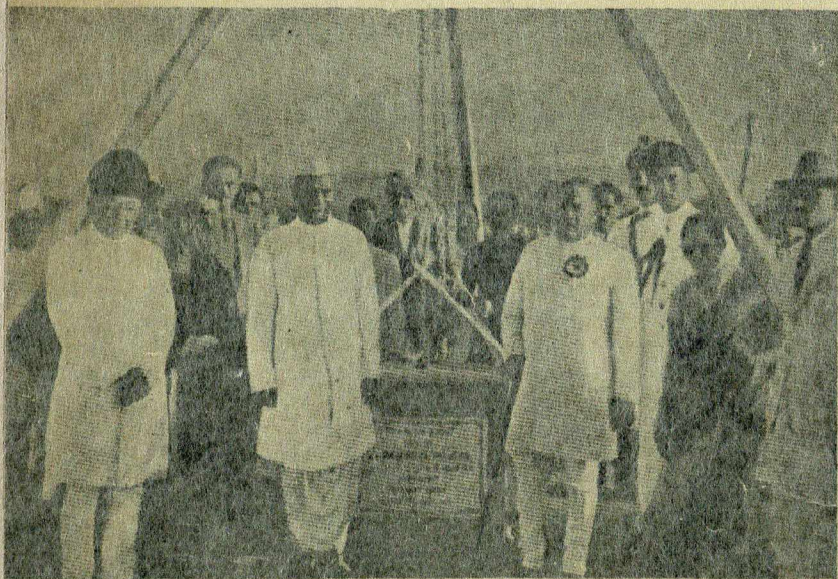
Dr. Ambedkar with some Members of the Drafting Committee and the Staff.



(Sitting - From left to right) Mr. N. Madhava Rao, Mr. Syed Sadulla,



Siddharth College gathering, 1949.
Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. S. K. Bole, Sir Maharaj Sing-Governor of Bombay
and Dr. Mrs. Ambedkar.



The laying of the Foundation Stone of the P. E. Society's College, Aurangabad.
H. F. H. the Nizam, President Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Ambedkar.



And on April 29, 1947, the Constituent Assembly declared to the world: "Untouchability in any form is abolished and the imposition of any disability on that account shall be an offence." It was the fortune of Sardar Patel to move the Clause. It was a glorious day in the history of India when the ruling power in India declared its will to wash out the stigma of Untouchability. The world Press described this event as the freedom of the Untouchables, the day of emancipation of the outcastes, a historic act outlawing untouchability and a victory for human freedom! The *New York Times* said: "The advance toward wiping out their ancient stigma has been matched in modern times only by our own abolition of slavery and the freeing of the Russian serfs." The *News Chronicle*, London, praised it as one of the greatest acts of history. The *New York Herald Tribune* described it as one of the fresh and clean beams of light in the post-war world.

The whole foreign Press rang with praise for Gandhiji for this great achievement of India. Apparently it was the Congress Party that was declaring the abolition of untouchability. And Gandhiji was the uncrowned King of the Congress Party. No foreign journal mentioned Ambedkar's name whose motive-power had driven the nation to perform the deed. They all described 'Hamlet' without a reference to the Prince of Denmark! When this was the case of Ambedkar, there was no possibility of the names of Phoolye, Dayananda, Shraddhananda and Savarkar being mentioned with any grateful appreciation.



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CHAPTER XXI

A Modern Manu

I

THE new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, studied the situation and went to London. He returned to India and declared his plan on June 3, 1947. The Plan announced two Central Governments, two Constituent Assemblies and plebiscites for Sylhet and the North-Western Province. Gandhiji and Nehru threw their whole weight and forced the All-India Congress Committee to accept the vivisection of the country. The truthseeker in Gandhiji, who had considered Pakistan a sin, a patent untruth and had solemnly asked the protagonists of partition to "vivisect me before you vivisect India", was dominated by the politician in him and he drove the last nail in the coffin of the integrity of India. The Socialists were culpably neutral. The Hindu Sabhaites rattled in vain.

At this juncture Travancore and Hyderabad States declared that they would be independent when India became a Dominion on August 15, 1947. Expressing his views on this move, Ambedkar advised the States to merge their sovereignty in the Indian Union and warned them that to be independent and to hope to get recognition and protection from the United Nations Organisation was to live in one's paradise.

In the first week of July, Ambedkar gave his opinion on the new India Bill and said that Berar would revert to the Nizam as the treaty by which it was ceded to the British would lapse.

Ambedkar returned to Bombay on July 3, 1947. As he was a Member of the Flag Committee of the Constituent Assembly, some Maratha leaders and leaders of the Bombay Provincial Hindu Sabha saw him at his residence. He promised that he would try to put in a word in favour of the Geruva flag if there was sufficient pressure and agitation from responsible quarters. On July 10 Ambedkar was given a send-off at the aerodrome by different leaders of the Marathas and the City Hindu Sabha leaders who handed over a Geruva flag to him



when he was about to take his seat in the aeroplane. Ambedkar promised support if there was agitation for the establishment of that flag and with a hearty laugh asked Mr. S. K. Bole, Mr. Anantrao Gadre and others whether they expected the son of a Mahar to unfurl the Geruva flag on the Constituent Assembly.

The Constituent Assembly adopted on July 22 the Tricolour flag with the Ashoka Chakra as the National Flag. It is said that Ambedkar put in a word but as there was no agitation from outside for the adoption of the Geruva flag he threw his weight in favour of the Ashoka Chakra. Savarkar also had appealed to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Chairman of the Flag Committee, to substitute Chakra for Charkha, the Gandhian emblem. The adoption of Chakra instead of Charkha terribly pained Gandhiji, who declared that he had nothing to do with the flag if the basic character of the flag had lost its Khaddar and the Charkha.

From New Delhi Ambedkar rivetted the attention of the Indian Government to the work of the boundary commission and said: "If my fears come true and the boundary drawn by the commission is not a natural one, it needs no prophet to say that its maintenance will cost the Government of India very dearly and it will put the safety and security of the people of India in great jeopardy. I hope, therefore, that late as it is, the Defence Department will bestir itself and do its duty before it is too late." This shows the heart of a patriot and the vigilance of a statesman. And yet the author of *Thoughts On Pakistan* had preached that geographical conditions were not decisive in modern world technique.

The British Parliament passed the Act of Indian Independence on July 15. Now the Constituent Assembly became a sovereign body. It was originally meant for the whole of India but now it was meant for a mutilated India.

In the last week of July the names of the Ministers of the first Cabinet of free India were in the air. In the list the name of Mannuswami Pillay of Madras appeared in the Press although Ambedkar's name was scented in it as early as June. Ambedkar was at that time in New Delhi. Destiny was working a miracle. Congress bosses had a talk on the phone about Ambedkar's inclusion in the Cabinet. The preliminaries over, Pandit Nehru called Ambedkar to his chambers and asked him whether he would join the new Cabinet of Free India as Minister



Law. He was promised that at a later stage he would be given the portfolio of Planning or Development. Ambedkar agreed. Pandit Nehru went to the Bhangi Colony to present the final list of nominees to Gandhiji. He, too, nodded his assent. The Congress Leaders, who were to inherit power from the Britishers, now desired rapprochement with Ambedkar and were in a conciliatory and appreciative mood. Hitherto they had neglected to utilize Ambedkar's gifts. Now they decided to utilize them for the solidification of freedom. Ambedkar, too, on his part forgot the past bickerings and agreed to welcome the olive branch. Dr. Mookerjee, the Mahasabha leader, too, was invited to join the cabinet.

On August 3 the names of the Cabinet Ministers were announced among which Ambedkar's name appeared. That day he was in Bombay and addressed a meeting at Chembur, Bombay, under the auspices of the Bombay Municipal Kamgar Sangh. He was presented with a purse of rupees two hundred for the construction of a central building which he had contemplated since 1932.

As soon as it was known that Ambedkar was to be the Law Minister of New India, his friends, admirers and the Press showered their good wishes and congratulations upon his success that was a feat from dust to doyen. For the first time in history an Untouchable Hindu became a popular Minister in the Central Cabinet of India and the man who was decried as a stooge of the Britishers was now eulogised as a statesman by his erstwhile opponents. He was honoured in Bombay on August 6 as a Member of the Cabinet of Free India on behalf of the Bar Association. Ambedkar had now jumped beyond their bar.

A great day dawned in the history of the world on August 15, 1947, when India became a free nation. A great force was released in Asia in the form of Indian Independence. But its happiness was marred in one respect. It was mutilated and bled, and out of its ribs was taken out Pakistan the greatest Muslim State under the sun.

In the wake of this success followed a development which led Ambedkar to the top of the ladder of eminence. On August 29, the Constituent Assembly appointed a Drafting Committee with Ambedkar as its Chairman. An Untouchable who was kicked out from carts and segregated in schools in his boyhood, who was insulted as a professor, and ousted from hotels, hostels,



saloons and temples in his youth as a despicable Mahar, and who was cursed as a British stooge, despised as a heartless politician and devil, hated as a reviler of the Mahatma and decried as an Executive Councillor, became now the first Law Minister of a free nation and the chief architect of the Constitution to define the will, aim and vision of India! It was a great achievement and a wonder in the history of India. India chose her Law-giver, new Manu, and new *Smritikar* from among a caste which had been dehumanized, demoralized and devitalised for ages. New India entrusted the work of framing her new laws to a man who had a few years ago burnt the *Manusmriti*, the Code of the Hindus! Was it the goddess of Nemesis that played the trick? Or was it a whirligig of time?

Although now a Law Member, Ambedkar kept a close contact with the development of the Siddharth College, his child educational institution. On September 25, he inaugurated the Parliamentary Institution of his college. In his thought-provoking speech he impressed upon the budding youths the need for cultivating the art of speaking. In a Parliamentary Institution, he observed, success went to the man who had the capacity to possess the house in a gentle or strong logical and instructive manner. In order to develop that power students must equip themselves with many things. They must enlarge their minds, their vision, their capacity to think and their ability to solve the actual problems which the people had to face. He then dealt with the various aspects of parliamentary democracy and said that Government meant decision. Government by compromise was no Government, because they got a decision which was neither fish nor fowl, he concluded.

On September 1 the Congress Party, which was in power in the Bombay Municipal Corporation, resolved to present addresses to Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Azad who were due to visit Bombay. Members from the Opposition demanded that addresses should be given to the entire Union Cabinet including Members from Bombay like Ambedkar, Gadgil and Bhaba. But Patil, the Chief of the Bombay Congress Party, said that the four leaders whom they were seeking to honour were men of outstanding calibre and stood as a class by themselves. The Bombay Congressmen, it seems, were not yet fully reconciled to regard Ambedkar as the equal of their political bosses. Old prejudices die hard. Later



Bombay Corporation resolved to give an address to Ambedkar; but he did not even reply to the letter of the Mayor!

In the first week of October Ambedkar addressed a meeting of the Scheduled Castes youths in Bombay. He told them that independence had come so suddenly that he had not got any clear line of action before him for the present. He stressed the need for keeping the S.C. Federation intact under whatever circumstances and appealed to them to take to organization seriously.

II

Meanwhile, the horrible results of the partition of India gave terrible shocks to the whole nation. Ambedkar had proposed partition with complete transfer of population of the Muslims and Hindus from their respective zones in order to avert civil war and its attendant massacres. Like Lincoln, Savarkar was prepared to face a civil war, for a while, to preserve the unity of India. But the Congress leaders in whose hands the destiny of the country had fallen ultimately accepted partition plus massacres and with secular zest ridiculed the idea of transfer of population as they had done with the idea of Pakistan till the dawn of Pakistan. Their policy only worsened, as usual, the fate of the Hindus who were in the zone of Pakistan. Thus Ambedkar's prophecy and fears were both borne out to a letter!

Millions were uprooted in the holocaust; lakhs were butchered. Children and women were molested, kidnapped or forcibly converted to Islam. Streets were flooded with broken skulls and mutilated corpses, and they echoed with the agonies of dying men, children and women. The Untouchables being Hindus had to share the same fate. Mr. Jogendranath Mandal, Law and Labour Member of Pakistan, who had asked the Scheduled Castes in Pakistan to look upon Jinnah as their saviour and had even asked them to wear a badge blatantly suggestive of Islamic associations, was now rudely shaken from his dream. He grieved at the way things had shaped in Pakistan. Ambedkar was terribly upset and he issued a statement denouncing the Pakistan Government. He complained that the Scheduled Castes were not allowed to come to Hindustan and that they were being forcibly converted to Islam. He further said that in the Hyderabad State, too, they were being forcibly converted



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to Islam in order to increase the strength of the Muslim population in the Hyderabad State. He, therefore, advised his people. I would like to tell the Scheduled Castes who happen today to be impounded inside Pakistan to come over to India by such means as may be available to them. The second thing I want to say is that it would be fatal for the Scheduled Castes, whether in Pakistan or in Hyderabad, to put their faith in Muslims or the Muslim League. It has become a habit with the Scheduled Castes to look upon the Muslims as their friends simply because they dislike the Hindus. This is a mistaken view."

Ambedkar further asked the Scheduled Castes in Pakistan and Hyderabad not to succumb to conversion to Islam as an easy way of escape; and to all those who were forcibly converted to Islam he pledged his word that he would see that they were received back into the fold and treated as brethren in the same manner in which they were treated before their conversion. Whatever the tyranny and oppression which the Hindus practised on them, he asserted, it should not warp their vision and swerve them from their duty. He warned the Scheduled Castes in Hyderabad not to side with the Nizam and bring disgrace upon the community by siding with one who was the enemy of India.¹

The whole nationalist press rang with praise for Ambedkar. The change in his attitude was highly appreciated by all. The *Hindu*, Madras, said that it was glad that Ambedkar no longer thought that the Harijans would be justified in abjuring Hinduism because they had been treated badly by caste Hindus in the past. That showed the passionate attachment of the Harijans to the faith of their forefathers and the tenacity with which they clung to it despite all forcible attempts to wean them from the Hindu Society, it added.

During the past two months the Congress Ministry of Bombay made a considerable headway in removing social injustice respecting the temple entry of the Harijans. It passed the Temple Entry Bill in September and as the result of this Act and the popular pressure, the famous temple of Vithoba at Pandharpur, the Dnyaneshwar temple at Alandi, and the Kalam temple at Nasik were thrown open to the Scheduled Caste Hindus. This was no mean achievement for which the Depressed Classes had launched a struggle fifteen years ago. It

¹ The *Free Press Journal* dated 28-11-1947.



wiped away the ugly blot and cleared and purified the atmosphere declaring the arrival of a new era.

By this time the Constituent Assembly had begun to operate as the legislature, and it is important to note that in one of her speeches the Health Minister, Miss Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, admitted that although there were acts in almost every State for the removal of disabilities of the Scheduled Castes, it was common knowledge that those were observed more in the breach than in practice!

Ambedkar was now engrossed in the work of drafting the constitution. He was working almost singly and furiously, concentrating his hand, heart and head on the work entrusted to him in spite of his deteriorating health. How he worked and why he was called the chief architect of the constitution can be seen from the speech of Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari which he made on November 5, 1948, in the Constituent Assembly. He invited the attention of the House saying: "The House is perhaps aware that of the seven Members nominated by you, one had resigned from the House and was replaced. One died and was not replaced. One was away in America and his place was not filled up and another person was engaged in State affairs and there was void to that extent. One or two people were far away from Delhi and perhaps reasons of health did not permit them to attend. So it happened ultimately that the burden of drafting the Constitution fell on Dr. Ambedkar and I have no doubt that we are grateful to him for having achieved this task in a manner which is undoubtedly commendable." The picture will be complete when it is noted that only Ambedkar and his Secretary were present at some of the meetings of the Drafting Committee! And the historic work was now nearing completion.

In the middle of January 1948 Ambedkar returned to Bombay. During his stay he addressed a meeting of the Elocution Prize Distribution Ceremony of the Dhobi Talao Night School, which held its function at the Siddharth College premises. He impressed upon the boys that the art of speaking in public could be developed with great efforts. He told them how the great speaker G. K. Gokhale was disconcerted while making his maiden speech, how Phirozeshah Mehta developed his powers by reciting his speeches in a room fitted with mirrors where he could watch how his expressions changed and how



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his hands moved. He said that Mehta took great care to see that his dress and appearance were neat and impressive. He added that Churchill, the great orator, never delivered any speech without preparation.

The terrific shocks of partition were coming one after another. Nehru confessed that the nation had to wade through an ocean of blood and tears. People showed profound disbelief in Gandhism. The Congress leaders were also chilled in their beliefs. Rajarshi Tandon declared at one meeting that the Gandhian doctrine of absolute non-violence was greatly responsible for the partition of India. Twenty-four hours before the dawn of freedom people had stoned Gandhiji's residence in Calcutta.

And the crisis was capped by Gandhiji's famous fast which he started on January 13, 1948, for the reinstatement of the Muslims in their houses in Delhi, for the restoration of some Mosques to their former use and for five other reasons; and as a sequel, the Government of India was forced to pay Pakistan a sum of rupees, fifty-five crores which had been loudly decried and refused.

And in the midst of such an extreme gloom, confusion and disaster, Nathuram Godse shot Gandhiji on January 30, 1948.

The whole world was shocked with horror at the tragic disappearance of one of the greatest men of all times. But Ambedkar, a queer combination of softness and hard-heartedness, did not react. Hard facts mentioned above had galled him, and his old bitterness, too, had not cooled down. He did not utter publicly a syllable on this tragedy; nor did he issue any statement. He joined the funeral procession for a while and retired to his study. Perhaps he thought that the mighty personality in Gandhiji had choked the free passage of Indian democracy. It is said that he was put in mind of the pithy remarks of Cicero who had exclaimed at the news of Caesar's murder that the dawn of liberation had come!

In the last week of February 1948, Ambedkar completed the draft constitution and submitted it to the President of the Constituent Assembly. The draft constitution was placed before the country for opinion. Ambedkar now wanted to propose an amendment substituting the word 'State' for the word 'Republic' in the preamble of the draft. His object in so doing was to see that nothing in the Constitution brought about an automatic and instantaneous severance between India and



British Commonwealth. The word 'State' was more neutral and was accepted by the Constitution of Ireland and South Africa. But most of the Indian leaders and Journals did not like this idea.

III

After the completion of the drafting work, Ambedkar badly needed rest. He came to Bombay for treatment. He felt now the need for a companion who would attend on him in his old age. In the hospital he came across his present doctor wife. The marriage was settled, and Dr. Miss Lakshmi Kabir went to New Delhi by air. On the morning of April 15, 1948, the second day of his fifty-sixth year, Ambedkar married Dr. Miss Lakshmi Kabir, a Saraswat Brahmin by caste, at his residence at No. 1, Hardinge Avenue, New Delhi. The marriage was celebrated under the Civil Marriages Act by the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi in the presence of a few personal friends of Ambedkar, who later entertained them to a luncheon.

His birthday was celebrated as usual with splendour. The Chief Minister of Bombay, Mr. Kher, paid glowing tributes to Ambedkar. Describing him as one of the most learned men among the political leaders of the country, he said that Babasaheb was not only their leader but was also the leader of India. Addressing a meeting at Sewri, Bombay, Mr. S. K. Patil told his audience that Ambedkar was a great savant and a great power, and his gifts were such that he could alone run the Central Government. Describing Ambedkar as a great architect of future India, the Bombay boss of the Congress prayed to God that the great son of India be spared for another twenty-five years for the conduct of national affairs. The *National Standard* of Bombay said that Ambedkar's conception of reform embraced the entire field of Hindu regeneration and described him as a leader gifted with a rare political acumen. The paper observed that he was a fighter who fought for principles and his idealism ensured the abolition of social injustices and the uplift of the underdog. As Law Member, it added, he was a tower of strength to his colleagues.

In the last week of April 1948, Ambedkar addressed the United Provincial Scheduled Castes Conference. In the course of his speech he said that political power was the key to all



social progress and the Scheduled Castes could achieve their salvation if they captured the power by organising themselves into a third party and held the balance of power between the rival political parties, the Congress and the Socialists.

He said he had joined the Central Government and not the Congress Party. The Congress Party was a burning house and he would not be surprised if it was completely ruined in a couple of years. If he joined the Congress, he would be unaffected like a stone in water, but if his followers would join it they would be dissolved. So he warned them to keep their organisation intact. This speech brought hornets' nest about his ears. So he issued a statement from New Delhi that his speech was *ex tempore* and was misreported. He added that he had joined the Cabinet because the invitation was free from any condition, that he thought that the interests of the Scheduled Castes would be better served by joining the Cabinet and that he hated the principle of opposition for opposition's sake.

About this time the Central Government set up a Linguistic Commission to report on the demands for Linguistic Provinces. Prominent among those who gave evidence before the Commission on behalf of Maharashtra was Ambedkar. He prepared a Memorandum with his usual care and study for being placed before the Commission.

In the Memorandum which he submitted to the Commission in Bombay on October 14, 1948, he says that a Linguistic Province produces what democracy needs, namely, social homogeneity, and makes democracy work better than it would in a mixed Province. There is no danger in creating Linguistic Provinces. Danger lies in creating Linguistic Provinces with the language of each Province as its official language. The latter would lead to the creation of Provincial nationalities. For the use of Provincial Languages as official languages would lead Provincial cultures to be isolated, crystallised, hardened and solidified. That would lead to a break-up of India and instead of remaining united, India may end in becoming Europe.

He visualises a unitary Maharashtra Province and observes that it will not merely be a viable Province but a strong Province in point of area, population and revenue. He asserts that Maharashtra and Bombay are not merely interdependent; they are really one and integral. Bombay and Maharashtra are tied



together by God, to use a Biblical phrase. As regards arbitration in this case it is as absurd as the suggestion to refer a matrimonial cause to arbitration. Maharashtra should not be denied the right to claim Bombay because it is an emporium for the whole of India. Every port serves a much larger area than the region it belongs to. Will Calcutta be separated from the Bengal Province because the Bengalis are in a minority in Calcutta and they do not own the trade and industry of Calcutta? Do the coal mines of Bihar belong to the Bihar Province or to the coal-owners who are the Gujaratis, Kathiawaris or Europeans? The trade and industry of Bombay was built up by Europeans chiefly on the labour of Maharashtra. Maharashtrians are not actuated by any bad motive. They are not a commercial community. Unlike other communities, the Maharashtrians have no nose for money, and I am one of those who believe that it is one of the greatest virtues. Money has never been their god. It is no part of their culture. That is why they have allowed all other communities coming from outside Maharashtra to monopolize the trade and industry of Maharashtra.

In the same month Ambedkar's great book, *The Untouchables*, was published. With great erudition and force the author has expressed the view that the Untouchables were Broken Men and because those poor men could not give up beef-eating and Buddhism, they were treated as Untouchables. He traces the origin of untouchability to a time about 400 A.D. and with his profound scholarship maintains that it is born out of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahminism. He tells his readers that the Brahmins gave up beef-eating and adopted Buddhistic ways and means to regain their prestige and power which they had lost owing to the rise of Buddhism.

It may be noted here that Col. Alcott in his book *The Poor Pariah* and Babu Nagendranath Basu in his *Modern Buddhism and Its Followers in Orissa* had some years ago propounded the theory that the Untouchables were Buddhists who had refused to join the renaissance in Hinduism.

This book, as all his writings, shows that, like Dr. Johnson, Ambedkar has the power of language and strength of thought and wields a powerful pen. His writings have a peculiar fragrance



of simplicity and directness. His style is pointed, logical and judicial and it often rises to an eloquence, sober and impassioned, hiding its intriguing lawyership beneath its construction. His style abounds in epigrams, provocative phrases and picturesque expressions.

Ambedkar's knowledge is extensive, varied, profound and encyclopaedic. His learning instructs and his thoughts provoke thinking. He writes for the writers and thinkers. Yet he has used words not as an artist but like a fighter. He wrote books not for literary fame but for great causes. As such, as a historian his writings may be, according to some critics, open to the charge of harshness. The man of mission dominates the historian in Ambedkar and is not satisfied with the defeat of rival arguments. He lacerates his opponent till he swoons. That is unavoidable, for dissection is always associated with blood.

The Draft Constitution was before the public for six months. At last the day dawned when Ambedkar introduced on November 4, 1948, the Draft Constitution in the Constituent Assembly. The Draft Constitution contained 315 articles and 8 schedules. Describing the Draft as a formidable document, he brought out in a grand, lucid and elaborate speech its salient and special features, the whole Assembly listening to him as one man. He brushed aside all criticism which was based on misunderstanding and inadequate understanding of the articles.

Explaining first the form of Government which the Draft Constitution visualised, he said: "The American form of Government is called the Presidential system of Government. Under the Presidential system the President is the Chief Head of the Executive. Under the Draft Constitution the President occupies the same position as the King under the English Constitution. He is the Head of the State but not of the Executive. He represents the nation, but does not rule the nation."

As regards the Executive, he observed: "The American Executive is a non-Parliamentary Executive which means that it is not dependent for its existence upon a majority in the Congress, whereas the British system is a Parliamentary Executive, which depends upon a majority in Parliament. Being a non-Parliamentary Executive, the Congress of the U.S.A. cannot disown the Executive and it tends to be less responsible



the Legislature whereas Parliamentary Executive tends to be more responsible. The Draft Constitution preferred more responsibility."

Pointing to the other salient features of the Draft Constitution, Ambedkar said: "The Draft Constitution, though a dual polity, has a single citizenship for the whole of India with a single integrated judiciary having jurisdiction and providing remedies in all cases arising under constitutional law, the civil law, or the criminal law and has a common all-India civil service to man important posts whereas under the Constitution of the U.S.A. there is a dual citizenship—a citizenship of the U.S.A. and a citizenship of the States; there is a Federal judiciary and a State judiciary and there is also a Federal Civil Service and a State Civil Service." "Subject to the maintenance of the republican form of Government," Ambedkar continued, "each State in the U.S.A. is free to make its own constitution whereas the constitution of the Indian Union and of the States is a single frame from which neither can get out and within which they must work." As regards the point of rigidity he maintained that it had been assuaged by giving power to Parliament to legislate on exclusively provincial subjects in normal times and by making provision for facility with which the constitution could be amended. "So its distinguishing feature is that it is a flexible Federation," he added.

Replying then to the charges that there was nothing new in the Constitution, he said: "More than a hundred years have rolled by since the first written constitution was drafted. It has been followed by many countries reducing their constitutions to writing. What the scope of a constitution should be has long been settled. Similarly, what the fundamentals of a constitution are, are recognised all over the world. Given these facts, all constitutions in their main provisions must look similar. The only new things, if there can be any, in a constitution framed so late in the day are the variations made to remove the faults and to accommodate it to the needs of the country. That the constitution has produced a good part of the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935, I make no apologies. There is nothing to be ashamed of in borrowing."

Dealing with the suggestions for village Governments, Ambedkar said that the village was a sink of localism, a den



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of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism and added that he was glad that the Draft Constitution had discarded the village and adopted the individual as its unit.

"I feel," he concluded, "that the constitution is workable; it is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace time and in war time. Indeed, if I may say so, if things go wrong under the new Constitution the reason will not be that we had a bad Constitution. What we will have to say is that Man was vile. Sir, I move."

IV

The whole Constituent Assembly was illuminated by the grand commentary, and speaker after speaker paid glowing tributes to Ambedkar for his lucid, able, symmetrical speech and the brilliant analysis of the constitution. Prof. K. T. Shah, Pandit Lakshmikant Maitra and Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari, who was a Member of the Drafting Committee, paid him high compliments. Dr. Punjabrao Deshmukh expressed satisfaction at the excellent performance and the impressive commentary of Ambedkar on the constitution, and said that Ambedkar would have perhaps shaped the constitution differently if he had the scope to do so.

Kazi Syed Kamruddin congratulated him for the introduction of the constitution and said that he was sure that Ambedkar was bound to go to posterity as a great constitution-maker.

The articles of the constitution were then discussed and adopted one by one. On November 29, 1948, Article 11 was adopted declaring abolition of untouchability amidst great acclamation.

Ambedkar returned to Bombay on December 18, 1948, and addressed a gathering of the workers and leaders of the Scheduled Castes Federation. At Manmad, he was presented with a purse on January 15, 1949. Speaking on the occasion, he declared that his people would establish real socialism in the land under the rule of peasants and workers. He also impressed upon his audience that the progress of a community always depended upon how they advanced in education. Ambedkar then stayed for some days at Hyderabad in connection with the college he proposed to start at Aurangabad. During his stay there he saw the excavations in the neighbouring places.



and attended a meeting of his Party in the third week of January'. He then went back to New Delhi. On March 3 he returned to Bombay, stayed for a fortnight, and left for New Delhi. In May 1949 also he visited Bombay, and immediately returned to New Delhi. These frequent flying arrivals in and departures from Bombay were in connection with the work of the People's Education Society and for medical advice.

On May 26 the Constituent Assembly resumed its work and adjourned on June 10. On July 7 Ambedkar returned to Bombay. By now the strike launched by the Bombay Municipal Kamgar Sangh had reached a critical stage and being its President, Ambedkar was in a quandary. "It is learnt that when the Hon'ble Dr. Ambedkar expressed his desire to intervene with a view to settling the dispute, he was offered the ultimatum of resigning either the presidentship of the Municipal Kamgar Sangh or his seat in the Cabinet. The Hon'ble Dr. Ambedkar had to be persuaded not to quit his seat in the Cabinet which position was more beneficial to the general interests of the Scheduled Castes in India."¹

From July 30 the Constituent Assembly sat in a long session till October 17 when it concluded the second reading of the Constitution. Ambedkar was working hard despite ill-health, moving practically every article, elucidating points and replying to the debates. In September Golwalkar, the R.S.S. Chief, met him in New Delhi. In the first week of November 1949 Ambedkar returned to Bombay for medical advice and treatment. He left for New Delhi on November 10. The Constituent Assembly began the third reading of the Constitution from November 14. On that day Ambedkar moved: "The Constitution as settled by the Assembly be passed." Members cheered him in the expectation of a speech, but Ambedkar decided to let other Members have their say first. Mr. Manuswami Pillay said that his Harijan Community had produced a Nandanar, a great devotee; a Tirupasanlwar, a great Vaishnavite saint; and a Tiruvalluvar, a great philosopher; and now it has produced Ambedkar who showed to the world that the Scheduled Castes also could rise to the heights and render service to the world. The Deputy Speaker congratulated Ambedkar on framing the constitution and for reciprocating the goodwill shown

¹ Statement by the Secretary of The All-India Municipal Workers Federation.



to him by the Members. Pandit Thakurdas Bhargava invited Ambedkar, who had now found a place in the hearts of Congressmen, to join the Congress Party and become a leader of the whole nation.

It was not that all the Members were pleased with the form of the constitution. There were a few dissenting voices. A Member said that the Constitution was worthless as the Provinces were reduced to the status of Municipalities. Another bewailed that the Constitution-maker had discarded the idea of decentralization favoured by Gandhiji. Yet a third one felt sorry that the Constitution did not provide for a ban on cow-slaughter. Some described it as a mixture of the constitutions of the world and a lawyer's paradise, and added that although a grand document, it did not implement Gandhiji's social and economic ideals. All these arguments were forestalled and refuted by Ambedkar in his introductory speech.

One speech was important in this respect. M. Sadulla, a Member of the Drafting Committee, revealed that the Drafting Committee was not a free agent and was handicapped by various circumstances. He added that many provisions which went against a sense of democracy had to be incorporated by the Committee because of superior forces that were operating.

And amidst loud applause rose the Chief Architect of the constitution on November 25, 1949, to reply to the debate on third reading of the constitution. At the outset Ambedkar told the House that he had entered the Constituent Assembly to safeguard the rights of the Scheduled Castes. He was surprised when the Constituent Assembly elected him to the Drafting Committee and he was more than surprised when the Drafting Committee elected him to be its Chairman. He, therefore, expressed his gratitude to the Constituent Assembly and to the Drafting Committee for reposing in him so much trust and confidence and for choosing him as their instrument and giving him that opportunity for serving the country. He expressed warm appreciation of the co-operation of Sir B. N. Rau and the secretarial staff, and of the lively interest shown by Kamath, Deshmukh, Saxena, Shah, Pandit Thakurdas, Sidhwa and Kunzru in the proceedings.

As regards the merits of the Constitution, he said that the principles embodied therein were the views of the present gene-



tion, or if this was an overstatement, the views of the Members of the House. And however good or bad a constitution might be, continued he, whether it would turn out good or bad would ultimately depend on the men who worked it.

Looking to the future of the country, he showed his anxiety and observed: "What perturbs me greatly is the fact that India has not only once before lost her independence but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of her own people. In the invasion of Sindh by Mahommed-Bin-Kasim, the military commanders of King Dahar, accepted bribes from the agents of Mahommed-Bin-Kasim and refused to fight on the side of their king. It was Jaichand who invited Mahomed Ghori to invade India and to fight against Prithviraj and promised him the help of himself and the Solanki Kings. When Shivaji was fighting for the liberation of the Hindus, the other Maratha noblemen and the Rajput kings were fighting battles on the side of the Moghul emperors. When the British were fighting the Sikh rulers, their principal commander sat silent and did not help to save the Sikh kingdom. In 1857 when a large part of India had declared a war of independence against the British, the Sikhs stood and watched the event as silent spectators."

"Will history repeat itself?" he asked the House. His anxiety was deepened, he proceeded, by the realisation of the fact that in addition to their old enemies in the form of castes and creeds people had too many parties with diverse opposite creeds. He, therefore, urged the people of India to be absolutely guard against the eventuality of parties placing the creed above the country or else "our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost for ever. We must be determined to defend our independence till the last drop of our blood." (Cheers.)

He then turned to the ways of maintaining democracy. He said that the first thing they must do was to hold fast to the constitutional methods of achieving their social and economic objectives and abandon the methods of civil disobedience, non-co-operation and satyagraha, for those methods were nothing but the grammar of anarchy.

Another danger, he felt, arose from hero-worship. Citing a quotation from John Stuart Mill, who warned the defenders of democracy not to lay their liberties at the feet of even a



great man, or trust him with powers which enabled him to subvert their institution, Ambedkar said: "In politics *Bhakti* or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and eventual dictatorship".

†The third thing people must do to safeguard the Indian Democracy, he said, was that they must not be content with mere political democracy but that they should make the political democracy a social and economic democracy. He observed that political democracy could not last unless there lay at the base of it social democracy which recognised liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. They must acknowledge, he added, the fact that there was complete absence of two things in Indian society: equality in social and equality in economic life. Sounding a grave warning, Ambedkar concluded: "On January 26, 1950, we will have equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up."

The House listened to his forty-minute lucid, eloquent and prophetic speech spell-bound, punctuating it with cheers. Members later described it as a graphic and realistic appraisal of the political conditions prevailing in India. The next day newspapers published his speech with great joy and pride, and showered eulogies on his words of wisdom and warning.

The Constituent Assembly adopted the constitution on November 26, 1949. In his concluding speech Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly, said: "Sitting in the chair and watching the proceedings from day to day, I have realised as nobody else could have, with what zeal and devotion the Members of the Drafting Committee and especially its Chairman Dr. Ambedkar in spite of his indifferent health, have worked. (Cheers.) We could never make a decision which was or could be ever so right as when we put him on the Drafting Committee and made him its Chairman. He has not only justified his selection but has added lustre to the work which he has done."



CHAPTER XXII

Shadow of Buddhism

I

AFTER his great triumph in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar returned to Bombay by air on January 2, 1950. He was lustily greeted by his lieutenants and prominent citizens at the aerodrome.

The Constitution was complete; but Ambedkar had now brought with him a new battle cry! It was the Hindu Code Bill which he had revised and submitted to the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) in October 1948. The work of revising and codifying the Hindu Law was going on for the past ten years. The Government of India had set up in 1941 a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir B. N. Rau. The Committee toured the country, heard various views and drafted the Hindu Code Bill. The Bill had been in and out of the Central Assembly since 1946. Ambedkar transformed it and parts of the Code Bill relating to joint family and women's property became a nightmare to most of the members of the Select Committee. It gave a great shock to its reactionary opponents.

As soon as Ambedkar touched the Code and became its spokesman, the Hindu intelligentsia was driven all over India into two camps, raising loud denunciations and singing loud praises. Traditions and modern times were at loggerheads, sanctimoniousness was at grips with social progress, and learning was pitted against revolutionary intellect. The authority of the Shastras was invoked on both sides. On one side was Manu and on the other was Ambedkar. Those who hated the change opposed the Code on different grounds. Some argued that the Code should be taken up for consideration after the first general elections. Some shouted that it should be put before the people of the merged areas and others cried out that it was a complete abrogation of the Hindu customs and traditions. Some pointed to the fundamental rights in the Constitution.

Ambedkar started the battle on January 11, 1950, when he



addressed the second session of the Siddharth College Parliament in Bombay. He declared that it would be wrong to describe the Hindu Code Bill as either radical or revolutionary. He said that the Bill, while according sanction to the new ways of progress, did not oppose the orthodox practices. He further stated that the new Republican Constitution of India had given a positive direction that Government should endeavour to prepare a Civil Code for the benefit of the country as a whole. The purpose of the Hindu Code Bill was, he explained, to codify and modify certain branches of the Hindu Law. Dwelling upon its significance, he said that it was beneficial from the point of the country's oneness that the same set of laws should govern the Hindu social and religious life. He further told his audience that the Hindu laws were being revised not because the Hindus were a weak people to resist its revival but for uniformity's sake. The Hindu Code was a right step towards a Civil Code. The laws should be easily understandable and be applied to all society irrespective of regional barriers. Moreover, a Hindu was free to adopt anybody from the Hindu Society and he could make a will denying inheritance to his daughter.

As regards the authority under which the Code was drafted, he said that the modifications proposed were based on the Hindu Shastras and Smritis. The property was governed by Dayabhag system; the child belonged to the caste of the father under Pitrisavarnya; divorce was supported by Kautilya and Parashara Smriti; and women's rights to property were supported by Brihaspati Smriti, he concluded.

On the evening of 11th January 1950, Ambedkar was presented with a golden casket containing a copy of India's Constitution at a meeting at Parel, Bombay, which was convened by the Bombay Scheduled Castes Federation. Ambedkar said in reply that he had entered the Constituent Assembly with the object of safeguarding the interests of the Scheduled Castes and not with the ambition of drafting the Constitution. However, through some circumstances the responsibility for drafting the Constitution fell on his shoulders, and he was proud that his name had been associated with the framers of the Constitution, because one got such a unique opportunity once in one's lifetime.



He said he had been branded for the last twenty years as a pro-Muslim and pro-British leader. He hoped now that his work for India's Constitution would help Hindus to understand him and also show them how the accusations hurled at him were utterly untrue.

Exhilarated in his hopes, he asked his people to shed narrow outlook and think in terms of the welfare and prosperity of the nation as a whole.¹ He stated that so far the country's future had not occupied any place in their thought; but now the time had come to think in terms of the wider interests of the nation as a whole. He, therefore, urged his people not to maintain their separate entity and asked them to win sympathies of all the political parties in the country. The vast meeting, he said, had falsified the charge that the sand had been swept from under his feet and showed that the ground was much more firm and solid than before.

Ambedkar left for Delhi on January 13. There he was honoured, on January 29, by Maharashtrian institutions in New Delhi. Replying to the address, he said that the Maharashtrians were more sincere, more conscious of their duties to the nation and were ever willing to sacrifice for the cause of the nation. He was proud that two Maharashtrians were in the Central Cabinet and the Governor of the Reserve Bank, too, was a Maharashtrian. In politics, in learning and in the cause of sacrifice, Maharashtrians were far ahead, he concluded.

Ambedkar was now at the zenith of popularity. It was natural that his birthday was celebrated in April on a nation-wide scale and functions in connection with it were attended by eminent men like the Chief Justice Chagla of the Bombay High Court. Presiding over a birthday celebration meeting at Naigaon, Bombay, Mr. Justice Chagla said that every Bharatiya citizen would remember gratefully the name of Ambedkar when he enjoyed his rights. He said that he attended the function not merely because Ambedkar was the leader of the Scheduled Castes but because he considered him a leader belonging to the whole nation. India's eminent and popular Justice recalled with pride how Ambedkar and he had studied at the same time for the Bar in England, how they had started practice at the same time, and how both of them had taught classes

¹ *The Times of India* dated 12-1-1950.



in the Law College, Bombay. He observed that Ambedkar was now a name well known throughout the world as a great authority on Constitutional Law and added that Ambedkar was also an authority on politics.¹

Addressing Ambedkar's birthday meeting at New Delhi, Mr. Hanumantaya, an M.P., said that Ambedkar would go down to posterity as a saviour, a constitutional authority, and a day would dawn when the people would find Ambedkar at the helm of the nation as the Premier of India. Mr. Sidhwa, another Member of Parliament, said that, truly speaking, Gandhiji was influenced by Ambedkar to do something for the political rights of the Untouchables. Sidhwa further declared that Ambedkar was the liberator of the downtrodden and was a great seer as well.

II

Ambedkar now reassumed his old role of an iconoclast. Speaking at a meeting, on the occasion of the Buddha anniversary, in New Delhi, he attacked the Godmen in Hinduism. He said that the Buddha's religion was based on morality. It was based on ethics and the Buddha acted as a guide and not as a god whereas Krishna said that he was the god of gods; Christ said he was God's son and Mohammad Paigamber said that he was the last messenger of God. Except the Buddha all founders of religions claimed for themselves the role of *Mokshadata* and claimed infallibility for themselves, while the Buddha was satisfied with the role of *Margadata*. The religion of the Buddha was morality. In place of God in Buddhism there was morality. The Buddha propounded a most revolutionary meaning of the word "*Dharma*". *Dharma* to Brahmins was Yajnas and sacrifices to God. In place of *Karma* the Buddha substituted morality as the essence of *Dharma*. The social gospel of Hinduism was inequality whereas Buddhism was for equality. The *Geeta* upheld Chaturvarnya, he added.

In his article entitled "Buddha and the Future of his Religion", which he contributed to the Mahabodhi Society Journal for its May number, he summarised his thoughts on Buddhism as follows: "(1) The society must have either the

¹ The *Janata* dated 22-4-1950.



function of law or the sanction of morality to hold it together. Without either the society is sure to go to pieces. (2) Religion, if it is to function, must be in accord with reason which is another name for science. (3) It is not enough for religion to consist of a moral code, but its moral code must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. (4) Religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty."

According to him Buddhism fulfils these requirements and so among the existing religions Buddhism is the only religion which the world can have. He feels that the propagation of Buddhism needs a Bible and opines that the majority of the present Bhikshus have neither learning nor service in them.

After this stormy speech in New Delhi, Ambedkar came to Bombay on May 5, 1950. Asked whether he was initiated into the Buddhist fold, he told a representative of the *Janata*, a weekly conducted and edited by his son, Mr. Yeshwantrao Ambedkar, that he was definitely inclined to Buddhism because the principles of Buddhism were abiding and were based on equality. He, however, made it clear that he had not embraced Buddhism, nor had he given any message to his followers to do so. He again returned to New Delhi on May 6. He might have come to Bombay to attend the meeting of the People's Education Society.

On May 19 Ambedkar went to Hyderabad in connection with the college which he was about to start at Aurangabad. During his stay in Hyderabad he declared that he had been invited to the Buddhist Conference at Colombo convened by the Young Men's Buddhist Association. While in Hyderabad, he addressed a meeting at the Boat Club where he said that secularism did not mean abolition of religion.

Accompanied by his wife and his Party Secretary, Mr. Rajbhoj, Ambedkar reached Colombo by air on May 25, 1950. On his arrival at Colombo, he told the pressmen that he had come there to observe Buddhistic ceremonials and rituals, and to find out to what extent the religion of Buddha was a live thing.

At Kandy, Ambedkar declined to address the Conference in its representative capacity and even showed disapproval of some of the resolutions passed by the Conference. He, however, urged a declaration on the part of the Buddhistic Conference



ating that they were determined not merely to have a fellowship but that they would propagate the religion and make sacrifices for it. As regards himself, he said: "Even though I have not declared myself to be a member of the fellowship, I have a much deeper purpose in the visit I have undertaken."

Ambedkar addressed the delegates of the Young Men's Buddhist Association at Colombo 'on the rise and fall of Buddhism in India'. Repudiating all suggestions that Buddhism had disappeared from India, he said: "Buddhism in its material form had disappeared. I agree. But as a spiritual force it still exists." As regards Hinduism, he said that it went through three stages: the Vedic Religion, Brahminism and Hinduism. It was during the period of Brahminism that Buddhism was born. Brahminism preached inequality. Buddhism preached equality. It was not true, he observed, that after the days of Shankaracharya Buddhism was dead in India. It was going on for years together. In fact the Shankaracharya and his teacher were both Buddhists, he added.

Turning to the causes that led to the decline and downfall of Buddhism in India, he said that he was digging for materials on the subject but in his views they were: the adoption of some rituals and practices from Buddhism by the Vaishnava and Shaiva cults which were vociferous in their propaganda against Buddhism. During the invasion by Allauddin Khilji thousands of Buddhist priests in Bihar were massacred, and consequently some of them fled for their lives to Tibet, China and Nepal. In the meanwhile, majority of Buddhists went over to Hinduism. The third cause was that Buddhism was difficult to practise while Hinduism was not. The fourth cause was that the political atmosphere in India had been unfavourable to the advancement of Buddhism, he concluded.¹

But according to Hindu scholars, thinkers and some foreign scholars the fall of Buddhism was due to many causes. Owing to its universalistic ambition its spread was everywhere but it had geographical centre nowhere. It discarded all national gods and godmen and acclaimed Buddha the greatest of all gods. The drunken hero-worship against which Buddha revolted was practised with a vengeance by the Buddha's followers by taking out processions of his tooth, hair and ashes! As long as it reacted as a reformatory flank in India, Buddhism

¹ The *Janata* dated 10-6-1950.



ained ground but when it began to act against the Vedic Religion, which was the national religion of the majority, Buddhism lost sympathy in India. The Vedic Hindus fought the Muslims bravely and did not fly to any other country. But the Buddhists, having a centre nowhere, fled to different countries and even, it is said, acclaimed the invasion of India by non-Hindus with the ringing of bells. Besides its godlessness, its over-emphasis on redemption, its sad tone, its unconcern with the world, and neglect of family, checked rather than fostered enterprise. So Hindu leaders warned the Scheduled Caste Hindus that if they went over to Buddhism in the hope that the outer Buddhistic world would exert influence to improve their destiny in India, no blunder or miscalculation could be greater. Because of its extra-territorial sympathies Buddhism lost its support and sympathy in India.

Ambedkar then addressed a meeting in the town hall at Colombo and appealed to the Untouchables there to embrace Buddhism. He told them that there was no necessity of their having a separate organisation. He also urged Buddhists in Ceylon to accept the Depressed Classes in Ceylon and look after their interests with paternal care.

The Conference over, Ambedkar visited, on his way back, Trivandrum and Madras. Addressing a meeting at the Legislative Chamber at Trivandrum, he declared that constitutional morality was far more important than the constitution, and added that if democracy was to succeed in India, both the people and the Governments should observe certain moralities or conventions. Dealing with the point of impartial administration, he pointed to Britain and remarked that in India there were many instances of the Party in power showing special favours.

Ambedkar then discussed general principles of the Hindu Code Bill at the State Guest House with the Chief Minister, Advocate-General, eminent lawyers and retired judges. During his stay in Trivandrum Ambedkar was taken round some of the temples in the city and after observing minutely everything about temples and the Brahmin priests he exclaimed: "O what a waste of wealth and food!"

On his arrival in Bombay, Ambedkar addressed a meeting on July 25, under the auspices of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. In the course of his speech he refuted



He charges that he was an opportunist with regard to his views on Buddhism. He said that he had been interested in Buddhism ever since his boyhood. At the same meeting Dr. V. M. Kaikini said that modern Hinduism was nothing but a branch of Mahayan Buddhism with some special beliefs, rituals and caste system added to it. The meeting was presided over by Prof. N. K. Bhagwat.

Ambedkar returned to his headquarters at New Delhi. In the middle of August and September he visited Bombay for eye treatment. During the September visit he made a speech at the Buddha Temple, Worli, on September 29. In the course of his speech he said that in order to end their hardships people should embrace Buddhism and added that the present Hinduism was the same about a thousand years ago. It was nothing but Buddhism, but after the Mohammedan invasion and on account of other causes it lost its purity and was mixed up with dross. In the end he declared that he would devote the rest of his life to the revival and spread of Buddhism in India.

Regretting Ambedkar's decision to renounce politics, *The Times of India*, Bombay, said that those who knew the economic and social views of the erudite scholar and doughty fighter were under no delusion that he would don the politician mantle and take the lead in forming a progressive party, and it attributed his new bent to the disgust of politics. *The Shankar's Weekly*, in a sarcastic tone, said that Ambedkar was nothing more than an Indian to whom renunciation appealed more than jobs and power. The *Weekly* suggested that Ambedkar should be regretfully handed over to Aldous Huxleys and Aurobindos and should be called Bhikku Bhimrao.

Ambedkar went back to Delhi and again returned to Bombay at the end of October. In November he returned to Delhi and circularized among the Members of Parliament a 39-page booklet containing the nature and scope of the changes in the Hindu Code Bill which was revised by the Law Ministry in the light of representations from various Hindu organisations in the country. It was then hoped that the consideration of the Hindu Code Bill would be taken up sooner but even in December 1950 it was not taken up. In December the Law Minister introduced in Parliament the 'Representation of the People (Number Two) Bill, 1950', to provide for the qualifica-



and disqualifications for membership of Parliament and State Legislatures, the conduct of elections and for other cognate matters.

On December 22, Parliament adjourned till February 5, 1951, and Ambedkar returned to Bombay. Nowadays in most cases his visits to Bombay were either in connection with the work of the People's Education Society or for health reasons. On January 14 he made a speech before the Buddha Vihar, at Worli, Bombay. He stated that Buddhism flourished for over 1,200 years in India. During the same week he was to have been presented with a purse by the Dock workers in Bombay. But he could not attend that function as he was suffering from pain in his leg. The purse was received by Mr. Bhole on behalf of the leader.



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CHAPTER XXIII

Back to Opposition

I

THE day for the battle on the Hindu Code Bill dawned, and all opponents rallied. The Bill had aroused widespread and bitter controversy. Social reactionaries raised a hue and cry in the name of religion. Political opponents of the Congress drummed that there was no mandate from the people on the issue and, therefore, it was unwise on the part of Government to rattle the Bill through Parliament. Others opposed the Bill on the plea that the times were inopportune to press forward that controversial legislation while there were some who foresaw the break-up of the Hindu society if the Bill was passed in its present form. The political opponents of the Congress argued that the Congress manifesto of 1945 contained no mention of the Hindu Code Bill; nor could the present Parliament, elected indirectly by the States legislatures, possess popular authority on the issue; nor could a Government which styled itself as a caretaker Government do so. They further argued that secularism did not mean that the Hindu Society could have no say in a matter affecting its social structure.

The Congress Party, too, was ramified into sections over this issue. Nehru had vehemently declared, on his arrival from America, that his Government would resign if the Hindu Code Bill was not passed by Parliament. Another boss of the Congress Party, Sardar Patel, had declared his unmistakable opposition to the Bill and said that it would not be taken into consideration at all. Up to now Nehru seemed to throw his weight in favour of the Bill and Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad were against it.

Amid such atmosphere Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill on February 5, 1951. Speaking on the Bill, Pandit Thakurdas Bhargava said that the Punjab should be exempted from its purview. Sardar Hukum Singh, the Sikh spokesman, regarded the Bill as a dubious attempt on the part of the Hindus to absorb the Sikh community. Another Member said that the legislators had no mandate from the people.



Replying to these objections, Ambedkar said that the Hindu Code would be uniform throughout India. As regards the Sikh objection, he replied that "the application of the Hindu Code to the Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains was a historical development and it would be too late, sociologically, to object to it. When the Buddha differed from the Vedic Brahmins he did so only in matters of creed, but left the Hindu legal framework intact. He did not propound a separate law for his followers. The same was the case with Mahavir and the ten Sikh Gurus. The Privy Council had as early as 1830 laid down that the Sikhs were governed by the Hindu Law."¹ To those who asked for a Civil Code he said that he was surprised to see the opponents of the Bill turn overnight the protagonists of a Civil Code, and added that he suspected their serious intention and pious purpose for having a good law for the country. Referring to the point of secularism, he said that the idea of a secular State in the constitution did not mean that they could abolish religion. It meant that Government could not thrust any particular religion on the people. The suggestion for referendum he rejected on the ground that Parliament was sovereign Parliament competent to make and unmake laws.

The debate continued for three days and the consideration of the Bill was postponed to the next session which was to meet in September 1951.

Ambedkar, outside his library, is a beehive of opposition and storms. While laying the foundation stone of Ambedkar-Bhavan in New Delhi, he made a violent attack, in the middle of April 1951, on the Central Government, accusing the Government of apathy towards the rights of the Scheduled Castes. This was a bitter broadside and it rocked the thinking world of India. The Congress Party was deeply perturbed at this and even Premier Nehru conveyed to Dr. Ambedkar his sense of displeasure against his remarks. Some of the Congress leaders murmured that Ambedkar should not be allowed to continue as a Member of the Cabinet with whose policies he was in disagreement, while the Law Minister's supporters said that he was misreported, and non-Congress Party leaders said that Ambedkar had every right to exercise his freedom of expression at least in respect of problems affecting his own community. Some of

¹ *The Times of India* dated 7-2-1951.



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the newspapers inquired whether the Cabinet observed the principle of joint or individual responsibility.

Two days after when Ambedkar introduced the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, his Sunday punch had repercussions in Parliament. Mr. Kapoor acidly described the Bill as "an election stunt on the part of Ambedkar who wanted to extract the fullest advantage by casting himself in the role of a saviour of the Scheduled castes". Upon this Ambedkar protested saying that the Bill had been introduced before he had delivered his Sunday punch, and he was stung to remark: "You can go ahead, Mr. Kapoor, I have borne all this for twenty-five years." Then Kapoor went on to say that Ambedkar was "a bold and audacious man who levelled accusations against his Cabinet colleagues and fellow M.P.s". The bitterness was increasing and it was even said that Nehru was to submit his resignation to the President at the end of the current session of Parliament in order to permit himself to reform and re-organise his Cabinet and even had asked Ambedkar to resign if he was not prepared to retract his charge. Things had, indeed, come to such a pass. When Ambedkar returned to Bombay at the end of April 1951, circles close to him said that the only reason why he remained in Government was his passionate desire to pilot the Hindu Code Bill through Parliament before the general elections.

After returning to New Delhi in May, the Law Minister presented the Representation of the People Bill to Parliament. During the course of his 90-minute speech he resolved doubts and disputes with a patient explanation or disconcerting repartee. While discussing the qualifications for membership of Parliament, he observed that Parliament could not be allowed to degenerate into an association of "Chorus girls", always dutifully crying "ditto" to Government. The serious business in the House had its humorous interludes. The serious scholarly exposition was enlivened, now and then, with flashes of humour. The M.P. who wanted to become both a Parliamentarian and a permit-holder would have to choose either of the two, said Ambedkar. Mr. Lakshmikanth Maitra of Bengal interrupted, saying "whichever is more profitable!"

In the course of the debate Dr. Parmar asked Ambedkar whether the Princes should be debarred from being Members of Parliament. The Law Minister answered: "Dr. Johnson,



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The author of the first English Dictionary, defined a political pensioner as a slave of the Government but he himself subsequently accepted a pension from the Government. It is no use being too logical." Thereupon Dr. Parmar asked: "Are political pensioners debarred from the House of Commons?" Ambedkar flashed back: "No, only Lords and lunatics as they used to say!" And the House burst into a resounding laughter.

Meanwhile, some decisions of the High Courts and an important decision of the Supreme Court raised some vital points in connection with the Article 15(i) and Article 29(2). The Supreme Court invalidated the Madras State Government's communal order on admission of students to colleges and services. A series of court decisions nullified the Article 19(2) and Article 31 in respect of freedom of speech and property. So the Union Government moved the Constitution Amendment Bill in Parliament stating that the Bill sought no other changes, but brought out what was implicit in the Constitution and gave effect to the intentions of that charter. Ambedkar rose in an expectant House to defend the Amendment. "Then slowly and deliberately," observes the special correspondent of *The Times of India*, Bombay, "but with all the weighty almost inevitable decision of the steam-roller in motion, Dr. Ambedkar expanded its real purpose and meaning, and crushed much of the criticism, which when he rose to speak, seemed to have decimated Prime Minister Nehru's original statement when he initiated the discussion."

Turning to the Supreme Court judgment, which had invalidated the Communal Order of the Madras State Government on the ground that it involved discrimination between castes, Ambedkar remarked that "it was utterly unsatisfactory and was not in consonance with the Articles of the Constitution". This remark created a storm in the House. When it died down, Ambedkar explained that the Supreme Court had overlooked the operative word "only" in Article 29(2)—"No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution on grounds only of religion, race and caste." He further stated that Article 46 directed the State to protect the interests of weaker classes. If then Article 46 was to be fulfilled, he added, the Articles 16(4) and 29(2) must be amended. The Amendment to Article 19(2) involved the addition of three more heads of restrictions to the freedom of speech and expression, public order and incite-



ment to an offence and friendly relations with foreign states. This part of the Amendment also he supported. The result was that the motion was approved and the Bill was referred to a Select Committee. The overwhelming decision in favour of the motion was largely the result of a very eloquent and impressive speech delivered by Dr. Ambedkar. "His peroration for its incisiveness and lucidity of exposition concerning difficult and delicate constitutional and legal issues must rank as one of the most outstanding debating performances ever witnessed in this Parliament," concluded the Reporter of *The Times of India*.¹

The Press, however, attacked Government for its undignified haste and said that the champions of the freedom of speech and expression having settled down in the seats of power, were now themselves imposing rigid restrictions upon them. Some doubted the competency of the present Parliament to pass the amendment of the Constitution, and even criticised Ambedkar for defending the amendment.

In May again Ambedkar delivered another broadside against Hinduism on the occasion of the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in New Delhi. In the course of his speech Ambedkar attributed all the vices of the Hindus such as violence, immorality and corruption in Government offices, to deterioration in Hinduism, and declared that real salvation for India would come when the people embraced Buddhism. This meeting was presided over by the Ambassador of France and it was attended by almost all Ambassadors in Delhi. His critics said that it was very strange that Ambedkar, who was striving his best to codify the Hindu Law, and, in fact, was pulling on with the Government with that end in view, should antagonise the caste Hindus on every occasion. This speech evoked bitter remarks against Ambedkar in newspapers which said that historically Ambedkar's charge was untrue. On eminent Hindu leaders this speech had no effect and they seemed to think that repeated thunders excited no more terror than the noise of a mill.

In July and August Ambedkar was busy with his educational activities. He had started a new college at Aurangabad and the foundation-stone of the new building for the college at Aurangabad was laid a few days later, on September 1, by the President of the Indian Republic, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who

¹ *The Times of India* dated 19-5-1951.



and a glowing tribute to Ambedkar for his erudition and for his zeal in spreading education among the poor classes. He commended highly the aim and ideals of the People's Education Society.

Ambedkar now looked tired. He wrote on August 10, 1951, to Nehru that his health was causing anxiety to him and to his doctors, and before he put himself into the hands of his doctors, he was anxious that the Hindu Code Bill should be disposed of. He, therefore, asked Pandit Nehru for a higher priority by taking it up in Parliament for consideration on August 16, so that it would be completed by September 1. He further observed that the Prime Minister knew that he attached greater importance to that measure and would be prepared to undergo any strain on his health to get the Bill through. The Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, wrote in reply on the same day that he should take things easy and as there was opposition inside and outside to the Hindu Code Bill, the Cabinet had decided that it should be taken up at the beginning of September 1951.

Accordingly, Nehru himself urged in the first week of September at the meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party for a speedy disposal of the Hindu Code Bill. It was the last session of Parliament. The majority in the Congress Parliamentary Party were against the measure and wanted to put off the consideration till the new Parliament. They, therefore, gave freedom of vote to their party members in Parliament. The Bill was not taken up in the first week of September. Just then it was decided at the Congress Party meeting that one part of Hindu Code Bill, the Marriage and Divorce, should be taken up on September 17, and the other clauses relating to property would be taken up later if time permitted.

September 17 dawned. Strong police pickets posted round the Parliament buildings were fully engaged with rival groups of excited women demonstrators in the morning when Parliament began consideration of the long awaited Hindu Code Bill.

The guns from the other side began to boom! Dr. Mookerjee said that the Hindu Code Bill would shatter the magnificent structure of Hindu culture and stultify a dynamic and catholic way of life that had wonderfully adapted itself to the changes for centuries. He, however, suggested that the principle should be applied to the members of all religions on



the basis of human law and taunted that there was an opportunity to implement secularism. Gadgil made a spirited speech in defence of the Bill saying that the Bill was necessary to bring the law into line with the existing public morality. Sardar Bhopendra Singh Mann termed the Code a conversion law and added that the new Manu of Ambedkarian religion should not be imposed upon him. Pandit Kunzru supported the Bill in his characteristic sober speech. Pandit Malaviya warned the Government not to demolish the fabric of respect for law. The women Members described the Bill as a testament of their faith in the Constitution.

While discussions were going on in Parliament on the Hindu Code Bill, Nehru lost his grit and suggested a compromise that the Divorce and Marriage part of the Bill should be treated as a separate Bill. So, on September 19, Ambedkar announced in Parliament that since the exigencies of time would not permit the House to legislate on any more than Part II of the Hindu Code Bill during that session, the second part would stand as a self-contained Marriage and Divorce Bill.

This truncated Bill the opponents hotly debated. They were determined to talk it out. There was no pressure from the whip. There was no time-limit on speeches. At this critical stage of the Bill, the Law Minister himself added fuel to the fire of the opponents of the Bill. Desperately disappointed at the slow progress and extraordinarily long discussion lasting four days during this session and three days during the last one on the second clause, Ambedkar made a fighting speech on September 20, in which he referred to the story of Rama and Sita which created an uproar in the House and alienated public opinion. It wounded the religious susceptibilities of some Hindu Members one of whom rose excitedly and shouted: "We stand for progress and are prepared to vote for the Bill without listening to the Minister's abuse and invective against the Hindu religion." The Law Minister replied that had the Members done so his speech would have been redundant. He, however, said that he had not even remotely intended to wound anybody's feelings and if he had done so inadvertently, he apologised. On a request from another Member he expressed his willingness to have the passage deleted from the records.



Replying to the debate, the Law Minister said that Dr. Mookerjee's remarks were not worth serious consideration as he had not opposed the Code while he was in the Cabinet but opposed it now for the sake of opposition. He asserted that "the previous enactment amending the Hindu Law had always been made applicable to the Sikhs and the law had all along assumed that Sikhs, for purposes of law, were Hindus". As regards the speech of Sardar Bhopendra Singh Mann, he said that it was repugnant and there was again uproar in the House there being cries of "your speech is repugnant to the whole House".

The uncalled-for attack on Rama and Sita and the pungent desperate tone worsened the situation and alienated more than most Members. Ambedkar brought hornets' nest around his ears and some of the bees stung Nehru who lost his grit completely and in confusion asked Ambedkar to drop the Bill. Describing Nehru's state of mind at this juncture one journalist quoted Johnson's famous remark on Goldsmith: "He wrote like an angel and spoke like Poor Paul."

On September 22 the debate on clause 4 came to an end. On September 24, the debate was resumed. Mr. Ramnarayan said that Dr. Ambedkar was likened to Manu but Manu—Mahashay was accepted by all; he was not guarded by the police while making laws. On September 25, clause 4 of the Hindu Code Bill was adopted by the House without enthusiasm or protest and the galleries ebbed out as other Bills came up for consideration. Even the Marriage and Divorce Part of the Hindu Code Bill could not be complete. The Bill was let down in a tragic manner and in the words of Ambedkar "it was killed and buried, unwept and unsung after four clauses were passed". A few months before this incident Mr. Justice Gajendragadkar of the Bombay High Court, a famous jurist and Sanskrit scholar, in the course of his speech on the Hindu Code Bill before the students of Karnatak University, had said: "If Dr. Ambedkar gives us Hindus our Code, his achievement would go down in history as a very eloquent piece of poetic justice indeed." Destiny, however, seemed unwilling to concede to the Law Minister the full laurels of a modern Manu!

Ambedkar's disappointment was sore. He was griff and grinning. The news of his resignation flashed in the newspapers. He resigned his seat from the Cabinet on September



27. In his letter of resignation he wrote to the Premier: "For a long time I have been thinking of resigning my seat from the Cabinet. The only thing that had held me back from giving effect to my intention was the hope that it would be possible to give effect to the Hindu Code Bill before the life of the present Parliament came to an end. I even agreed to break up the Bill and restricted it to Marriage and Divorce in the fond hope that at least this much of our labour may bear fruit. But even that part of the Bill has been killed, I see no purpose in my continuing to be a Member of your Cabinet." He, however, as a matter of civility to the Premier and to the Cabinet, expressed his willingness to continue till the Bills and motions standing in his name were finished for which he pleaded priority. Nehru appreciated his hard labour at the Bill and said that the Fates and the rules of procedure were against the Bill. He agreed to accept his resignation from the last date of the current session, and asked for a copy of his speech in advance. In reply Ambedkar informed the Premier on October 4 that if he prepared a speech he would give him a copy and stated that he had obtained permission of the Deputy Speaker to make his statement on October 11, after the business standing in his name was finished.

Ambedkar continued in office till after the Dasara Holidays. Parliament resumed work on October 11, 1951. There was no question hour on that day. The Delimitation Orders were taken first. After that work the Deputy Speaker called on Mr. Mahatab to move the Industries Development and Regulation Bill. It was at this juncture that Ambedkar rose to submit that he should be heard first. But he was surprised when he was told by the Deputy Speaker that he would have been allowed to speak then if he had earlier submitted a copy of his statement to the Chair. The Deputy Speaker added that he should, however, make his speech at 6 p.m. Upon this Kunzru and Kamath inquired if it did not amount to pre-censorship. In answer to a query the Deputy Speaker said that as he was the custodian of the rights and privileges of Parliament, it was necessary for him to see that the statement contained nothing irrelevant or libellous. He then turned to Ambedkar and continued: "Hon'ble Minister. . . ." But he was cut off by the Doctor who retorted that he was no longer a Minister and he did not intend to submit to that kind of dictate. He col-



He resigned his papers and left the House in protest. Thus the Chief Architect of the Constitution was made to leave the House as soon as he resigned his seat from the Ministry!

Most Members were unhappy at this turn of events. They were very anxious to hear Ambedkar. They applauded him as he went out. Section 128 of the rules of procedure does not specifically mention that the Speaker should be in possession of an advance copy of the statement of a Minister who resigns and wants to make a statement. The Deputy Speaker said at 6 p.m. that he would have permitted Dr. Ambedkar to read his statement even if he had still chosen not to submit a copy of his statement in advance for scrutiny. Members, however, were at a loss to understand how pre-censorship, if necessary at 10-15 a.m., became unnecessary at 6 p.m. The next day the House welcomed Ambedkar back to its fold as "leader of the opposition".

Ambedkar gave his statement to the newspapers immediately after his walk-out. In it he stated five points on which he differed from the Cabinet. He explained how Nehru left him out of every Cabinet Committee although he had promised Ambedkar the Planning Department, when he offered him Law Ministry. The second point was the charge levelled against Government that it had apathy towards the Scheduled Castes uplift. He differed from Government policy over Kashmir and said: "The right solution for the Kashmir issue is to partition the State. Give the Hindu and Buddhist parts to India and the Muslim part to Pakistan as we did in the case of India." The fourth point was the wrong foreign policy of India which increased enemies rather than friends. Owing to that wrong foreign policy India had to spend Rs. 108 crores out of Rs. 350 crores of her revenue on Army. He added that that colossal expenditure India had to foot because India had no friends on whom she could depend for help in any emergency that might arise. The last point was Nehru's lukewarm policy towards the Hindu Code Bill and it was his impression that Premier Nehru, though sincere, had not the earnestness and determination required to get the Hindu Code Bill through. It was thus clear, he said, that he went out not as a sick man but a very disappointed man; for, he said, he was the last man to abandon his duty because of illness.



The reaction of the Press and people to Ambedkar's resignation was very favourable. *The Times of India* said in its editorial: "Bereft of the crown of Manu, Dr. Ambedkar none the less leaves the Government with a considerable record of achievement behind him. The Cabinet is not overburdened with talent, and the departure of this discerning scholar and industrious student of public affairs cannot but dim its limited lustre." "Political memories, it is true," added the editorial, "are short but in shedding old prejudices Dr. Ambedkar showed himself capable of rising to the height of new responsibilities and occasions." "India can ill-afford," continued the editorial, "to lose the service of this able politician and it would be little short of tragedy, personal and national, if Dr. Ambedkar were to relinquish the national stage and relapse into communal politics." "A formidable ally," concluded the editorial, "Dr. Ambedkar is also a foeman worthy of one's steel. The last few years have seen him harnessing his outstanding ability to constructive purposes and both the country and his community stand to gain if he continues in that path."

The *National Standard*, Bombay, observed: "There are few men in the country so well equipped as Dr. Ambedkar to take charge of Planning, or of Finance, or of Commerce and Industry. What the Government loses the country hopes to gain by his constructive association with the Opposition." The *Free Press Journal*, Bombay, was sorry that a Minister of Ambedkar's eminence should have been forced to make his exit from the Cabinet in so unhappy a manner. Writing on the ruling of the Deputy Speaker, the Journal said: "The Deputy Speaker in his wisdom has thought otherwise. In doing so, he even cast aspersions on the Minister by saying that the Chair had power to stop 'irrelevant, libellous and improper statements'. This is hard on the Minister who certainly did not deserve that treatment. The Minister ought to have been permitted to make his statement as scheduled."

The Executive Body of the Scheduled Castes Federation met in the first week of October 1951 at New Delhi to consider the election manifesto meticulously drafted by their leader Ambedkar. The S.C.F. declared that it would have no truck with the Congress, the Hindu Sabha or the Reds in elections.



Ambedkar was now free to make his move and reappear on the political party platform. He addressed a meeting at Jullunder in the last week of October. There he declared that there was no place for the Scheduled Castes in the heart of the Congress Party and added that Nehru suffered from Muslim mania and his heart was pitiless to the Scheduled Castes. A few days later Ambedkar addressed a meeting of Lucknow University students and warned the country against indifference to the backward classes and said that if they were frustrated in their attempts to rise to the status of equality, the Scheduled Castes Federation might prefer the Communist system and the fate of the country would be doomed. In regard to the Kashmir issue he said: "If we cannot save the whole of Kashmir, at least let us save our kith and kin. It is a plain analysis of the fact which cannot be denied."

Ambedkar then returned to his permanent abode in Bombay on November 18. When he arrived in Bombay, he was given a joint reception by the S.C.F. and Socialist Party at the Victoria Terminus. After this colourful reception, he was taken in procession to the Siddharth College which was his residence during his stay in Bombay. On his arrival, he took to organising his party for election purposes. He immediately opened an election front against the Congress Party and at a meeting at Chowpatty, Bombay, declared that it was Subhas Bose who won Independence for India and not the Congress Party. Next evening he addressed a meeting held under the joint auspices of the S.C.F. and the Socialist Party in the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall, where he declared that the Congress Ministries had failed to give people pure administration, and expressed his sore disapproval of the statement of Nehru, who, as the President of the Congress, had declared that corruption in India was not such a great evil as should demand great attention. Referring to the Congress criticism that Ambedkar was ungrateful to the Congress Party, he quoted a citation from an Irish philosopher who said, "No man can be ungrateful at the cost of his integrity; no nation can be ungrateful at the cost of its independence, and no woman can be ungrateful at the cost of her honour."

Replying to another question, he said that it was not true that he got into the Cabinet through the efforts of Mr. S. K. Patil. He told his audience that it was one of the greatest



surprises in his life how he got into the Cabinet particularly when the Congress was dead against his entry into the Constituent Assembly. He, however, said that it was Nehru who called him in his chambers and gave him an offer of Minister-ship.

Ambedkar addressed a meeting at Nare Park, Bombay, and told his people that the Congress was not looking into the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes. At a mass meeting attended by about two lakhs of people at Shivaji Park, Bombay, on November 25, he asked Nehru to join the Socialist Party and lead the country. He impressed upon the mammoth audience the need for an Opposition Party to build the nascent Democracy in India and keep the ruling party in check.

In his whirlwind election tour, Nehru visited Bombay and Madras and in the course of his speeches at these places he said that it was very surprising and strange that Ambedkar did not oppose his foreign policy in the Cabinet meetings though he had been a Minister for nearly four years. Ambedkar must have remembered his reply to Dr. Mookerjee on the Hindu Code Bill!

Ambedkar in his vehemence against the Congress Party made a speech before the Muslims of Bombay, impressing upon their minds the importance of separate electorates. This speech was lamented by many of his sympathisers who said that it was unbecoming of the Father of the Constitution.

The Congress Party was the oldest and the best organised party in the country. Their election preparations were going on for months together methodically and energetically. Besides it was a ruling Party. Ambedkar could not do much in the direction of organising his Party and owing to his failing health could not go outside Bombay for election propaganda. For the last ten years he was not in close touch with his organisation, as he had to stay in Delhi as Labour Member and Law Minister. He had no correct idea of the strength and efficiency of his Party and that of the Socialist Party. The elections to Parliament and to the State Assemblies were held in the month of January 1952. The election tide flowed with Nehru, and Ambedkar together with the Socialist Party was swept away at the polls, Ambedkar getting 1,23,576 votes as against the Congress nominee, Mr. Kajrolkar, who secured 1,37,950 votes.



more than 50,000 votes, which were to be cast for the reserved seats, were purposely wasted.

It was a colossal failure and Ambedkar fell like a rocket. It proved once again that there is no gratitude in politics. The nation which had conferred so much glory on him seemed now unwilling to show him gratitude. The advocacy for the partition of Kashmir, his speech before the Bombay Muslims on separate electorates for the Muslims, lack of positive speeches before the people and above all the weakness of his disorganised party resulted in the rout. During the whole election campaign, said a paper while writing on his defeat, he laid emphasis on the defects of the Congress Government but did not lay stress on his alternative constructive programme. His vociferous lieutenant, Mr. Rajbhoj, was the only survivor in the election debacle. He was elected to Parliament against heavy odds.

Immediately after the polling, Ambedkar left for Delhi. In a statement which he issued from Delhi, on January 5, he said: "How the overwhelming support of the public of Bombay could have been belied so grossly is really a matter for inquiry by the Election Commissioner." The Socialist leader, Jayaprakash, issued a statement from Calcutta and said that, like Dr. Ambedkar, he, too, was at a loss to understand the debacle because from all accounts there was an overwhelming support for the Socialists in Bombay.

Ambedkar was in Delhi when the results of the Bombay elections to the House of People were declared. The political atmosphere was sad and full of surprise at Ambedkar's defeat.

VI

When Ambedkar came down to Bombay, his admirers and colleagues persuaded him in the middle of March 1952 to file his nomination to one of the 17 seats allotted to the Bombay State in the Council of States and he was declared elected at the end of the month. In April his birthday was celebrated as usual by his people. Literate people, who had a grudge against Ambedkar for his caustic speeches against the Congress Party and Hinduism, told his ignorant people in the villages that the great Doctor was done up, and had now receded back from Delhi to Bombay; but there too, he could not hold his



own and was routed! He had run out his role, they told his people mischievously; and the poor people snarled at these cheap calumniators.

Ambedkar had many things to do in connection with his college activities. He went to Aurangabad to attend a meeting of the People's Education Society concerning the college at Aurangabad. There he said in an interview that the step of converting the Osmania University into a Hindi University was ill-advised and added that the Central Government could have picked out one of the Universities in North India.

He then went to Delhi to attend the session of the Council of States which opened in the last week of May 1952. There in an explosive speech on the Budget he described the defence budget as being the greatest stumbling block in the path of the progress of the country and said: "The army is eating into the vitals of the funds that are necessary for the well-being of the country." If the defence budget were reduced by Rs. 50 crores, he said, it would do much good to the country. If India's foreign policy aimed at maintenance of friendship and peace, who were the enemies against whom it was necessary to maintain a huge army? he asked.

At this juncture Ambedkar appeared in the Supreme Court on behalf of the Zamindars of U.P. in connection with the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act. Ambedkar's argument was that there was lack of legislative competence and public purpose in enacting the law. The Supreme Court, however, rejected the appeal.

Then came the news that Ambedkar was to receive the Doctorate of Laws at the Columbia University convocation on June 5. Learning commands universal respect.

In fact he was to have received the Degree at the hands of General Eisenhower, who was then President of the University, but Cabinet responsibilities, and, later, electioneering, came in the way of the trip. It was said that the University was reluctant to confer it *in absentia*. Ambedkar said that his wife was not accompanying him to New York for lack of an adequate supply of dollars.

From New Delhi he returned to Bombay on Saturday, May 31. At night he was felicitated at a dinner party at the Cricket Club of India, Bombay, by Dr. V. S. Patankar, Principal, and Mr. K. V. Chitre, Registrar of the Siddharth College. Dr.



Ambedkar said that it was an irony that none of the Indian Universities had yet thought of honouring Dr. Ambedkar who was the Chief Architect of the Indian Constitution. Not even the Bombay University of which he had been a student had taken the initiative and it was left to a foreign University to honour him, he added. Ambedkar replied that although he was said to possess viriolic temperament and had on many occasions conflicts with those in authority, no one should be under an apprehension that he would say anything harsh there about India. He had not on a single occasion been a traitor to the country and always had the interests of the country at heart. Even at the Round Table Conference he had been two hundred miles ahead of Gandhiji so far as the interests of the country were concerned, he added.

Ambedkar left Bombay for New York by a T.W.A. plane on June 1, 1952. A large gathering of his followers and admirers gave him a send-off at the Santa Cruz airport. On June 5 the Convocation took place. Columbia University conferred on six persons the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. While awarding him an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, at its 198th Commencement exercises, the University hailed Ambedkar "as a framer of the Constitution, Member of the Cabinet and of the Council of States, one of India's leading citizens, a great social reformer and a valiant upholder of human rights". Ambedkar received the degree before a large crowd assembled to watch 6,848 graduates of Columbia's 17 schools and colleges receiving their degrees. Among those who also received honorary degrees were Lester B. Pearson, Canadian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and M. Daniel Mornet, the noted French literary historian.

Ambedkar returned to Bombay by a T.W.A. plane on June 14. The next day in an interview to the press he said that it was his impression that the American public was favourably inclined towards Pakistan. On inquiries he was told in America that this happened because Pakistan always took great care in the selection of her foreign representatives and ambassadors while India sent abroad inexperienced men to represent her. He added that it was the opinion of the American professors who visited India that Indian students received education of an inferior grade and could not derive sufficient guidance



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and knowledge from it, nor did they derive any inspiration for research and independent thinking.

A few days later Ambedkar and Asoka Mehta, the Socialist leader, filed election petitions pleading that the propaganda aimed at influencing the electorate to cast both votes in a double-member constituency in favour of the same candidate amounted to a corrupt election practice and hence these elections should be held invalid. The respondents against these petitions were Mr. S. A. Dange, Dr. Deshmukh, Dr. V. B. Gandhi, Mr. Kajrolkar and others.

The hearing of the election pleas of Ambedkar and Asoka Mehta commenced in Bombay before the Election Tribunal in the first week of October 1952. Ambedkar appeared in person and said that the propaganda for wastage of votes was illegal and that it was a gross perversion of law to arouse communal feeling among the electorates. The appeal, however, was dismissed.

On September 28 Ambedkar addressed a meeting of the Scheduled Castes organisations at Nare Park, Bombay, when he publicly criticised the organisers of the Building Fund and asked the organisers to submit accounts immediately. He said to his people that he had lost faith in the educated men of his community and pinned his faith on the illiterate. He was in an angry mood so much so that when in his ten-minute speech someone whispered on the rostrum, he roared: "I will not tolerate this. Give me the accounts tomorrow." This speech caused a flutter among his lieutenants. The Building Fund was started in 1931 and the collection is yet incomplete.

He left for New Delhi in the first week of November and returned in December.

On December 16, 1952, Ambedkar addressed the students' annual gathering at the Elphinstone College on "the problems of modern students". He appealed to the students to reorganise university education to meet the requirements of the modern world, and to make the University a place for knowledge and not a centre for training clerks.

In December 1952, the members of the Poona District Law Library invited Ambedkar to unveil the portrait of Mr. L. R. Gokhale and declare open the collections of the books donated to the library. Ambedkar unveiled the portrait and declared open the new sections of the library on December 22, 1952,



Poona, and addressed the gathering on the "Conditions Precedent for the Successful Working of Democracy". In this important speech he observed that "Democracy is always changing its form, that it is not always the same in the same country and that it undergoes changes in purpose". According to him, he said, the purpose of modern Democracy was not so much to put a curb on an autocratic King but to bring about the welfare of the people. Referring to the definition of Walter Bagehot that democracy was government by discussion and that of Abraham Lincoln that 'a government of the people, by the people, for the people', Ambedkar said that his own definition was "a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed". He then dealt extensively with the subject and said that the first thing required for the successful working of Democracy was that there must be no glaring inequalities and there must be neither an oppressed class nor a suppressed class. The second thing required was the existence of opposition to show whether the Government was going wrong. The third thing was equality before law and in administration. The fourth was the observance of constitutional morality. The fifth point was that the successful working of Democracy required the functioning of moral order in society; for moral order is taken for granted in Democracy. The last thing was the requirement of public conscience, he concluded. This thought-provoking speech became a topic for discussion for many days in the newspapers.

Ambedkar left for Kolhapur, and on December 24, 1952, addressed the annual gathering of the students of the Rajaram College. In the course of his speech he observed: "Knowledge is the foundation of a man's life and every effort must be made to maintain the intellectual stamina of a student and arouse his intellect." He asked the students to develop their thinking power and make use of the knowledge they had gained. Dr. Mrs. Ambedkar distributed the prizes.

Women of Kolhapur gathered in their thousands to present an address to Dr. Ambedkar. Replying to their address, Ambedkar referred to the Hindu Code Bill and said that none of the prominent Indian women leaders were really interested in the social progress of women and stated that the Hindu Code Bill was now just like milk spoiled by mixture with a bitter



He added that if they wanted to have the Hindu Code Bill passed, they should find two fat women to fast! Addressing a rally of 50,000 people under the auspices of the Belgaum District Branch of the Scheduled Castes Federation, Ambedkar sounded a note of warning to the ruling party that if the lot of the Scheduled Castes was not improved by the next election, the Scheduled Castes Federation would be forced to take stern measures which might upset the chariot of the Government and anarchy might follow. He recalled the dreadful results of the French and Russian revolutions in the past and thundered: "I shall wait for another couple of years or even till the next elections, for the alleviation of the misery of my people and if a new deal is not forthcoming through negotiations, I shall be forced to take recourse to stern measures."¹ The speech raised the whole issue of the future of the Scheduled Castes.

All newspapers again criticised his speech and although some of them realised the depth and gravity of his restlessness, many said that his threats might be dismissed without much ado since he had been issuing threats at intervals. To them he was a by-word for threats!

In February 1953 Ambedkar was present at a reception given in New Delhi by Mr. Rajbhoj in honour of Mr. M. R. Murti, Vice-President of the Indo-Japanese Cultural Association in Japan. Speaking on the occasion, Ambedkar said that he had come to the conclusion that the present generation or future generations would have ultimately to choose between the gospel of Buddha and the gospel of Karl Marx.² He added that the East had already become more important than the West, but he feared that if the Buddhist Gospel was not adopted, the history of conflict in Europe would be repeated in Asia.

The threats were not going in vain. In April Parliament rang with clamours for steps towards the removal of untouchability and passed a resolution calling for the enactment of a comprehensive law to deal with the problem. Some Members of Parliament, who participated in the debate, complained that untouchability was abolished on paper but not in practice. A need for drastic measures for penalising untouchability offences was felt all the more urgent. A Harijan Member told the House how a hotel-keeper had kicked off the cups which he and

¹ *The Times of India* dated 29-12-1952.

² *The Free Press Journal* dated 16-2-1953.



Harijan M.L.A. had used, how a Harijan Minister of Hyderabad on trying to enter a temple was threatened with lathis and how in Delhi a barber refused to shave a Harijan Member of Parliament. And yet the caste Hindu leaders grumble that Ambedkar is still bitter and does not forget the past!

In May Ambedkar delivered in Bombay a grand eulogy on Buddhism, and reiterated his faith in and dedication to the propagation of Buddhism. A few days later he gave an interview to Mr. Crowley for his transmission series in which the leader of the Scheduled Castes told him that if the social structure were not altered, the present system was likely to collapse pretty soon, and added that the alternative, if democracy did not work in India, was something of Communism.¹

Ambedkar was fully engaged in the work of his colleges in July and August. For most of the days in July and August, he stayed in Aurangabad. There he addressed a meeting of the Hyderabad Scheduled Castes Federation workers and leaders in which he said that politics was not the be-all and end-all of the nation's life. He urged them to study diligently the Indian Problem in all its aspects, political, social, religious and economic, and then fight with one accord for the salvation of the downtrodden. At this meeting he sounded a note of warning to his people that he would ex-communicate those who would make pilgrimages to Hindu places of worship. He said it did not do them any good.

While in Aurangabad, he told the press in an interview that whatever be the effects of Linguistic States once the Andhra State came into being, other Linguistic States were bound to come into existence. He said that he would favour two Marathi-speaking States if it facilitated the administration of two States. Referring to the events in Kashmir, he observed that Indians had every right to ask the Kashmiris when they had spent crores of rupees for the safety of Kashmiris, whether they were ready to merge with India or not. During his stay at Aurangabad he did not see his visitors unless they had qualified themselves by planting a tree each in the vast barren compound of the College and as the result hundreds of trees were planted. He had once himself cleared the compound of a hostel at Mahad by leading a host of lieutenants and leaders with axes, hoes and picks on their shoulders.

¹ *The Illustrated Weekly of India* dated 12-7-1953.



CHAPTER XXIV

CSL

Old Age

I

AMBEDKAR'S was indeed a virulent attack on the Constitution. Indeed, he had made the attack in a spirit of utter frustration. It was restlessness capped by righteous anger. The newspaper world felt sorry for his very angry reaction and reminded him of the glorious speech he had made at the time of the third reading of the Constitution. Criticising Ambedkar's plea for more constitutional safeguards for minorities, Mr. P. Kodanda Rao said: "It was very sad that our modern Manu should style himself as an Untouchable."

Ambedkar's health again deteriorated and for over two months he was under treatment in Bombay. In the middle of March 1954 he went to Delhi to attend the session of the Council of States. In the last week of April he went to Nagpur to contest the reserved seat in a by-election to the House of the People from the Bhandara constituency. During his election speeches he made a frontal attack on the Nehru Government and the leadership of Nehru. He said that Pandit Nehru's foreign policy had made India a friendless country, that Nehru had bungled the Kashmir issue and had sheltered men who were dishonest and that India was being encircled by a kind of United States of Islam. It was the bounden duty of the people to change the Government which could not solve any problem although it was given a long time to prove its mettle. In the first week of May 1954 the by-election took place and although Ambedkar got 1,32,483 votes, he lost his seat by 8,381 votes to the Congress candidate. The Praja-Socialist leader, Mr. Asoka Mehta, who contested the general seat from the same constituency, was, however, elected to Parliament against the Congress candidate.

Ambedkar is now sixty-three. His weak constitution cannot cope with the revolting surge in his brains to wrest and wring from the Constitution the good he expected for his people who are landless, shirtless, shoeless and hungry. He is



mainfully conscious of the fact that his hopes about a better future for his people have remained largely unfulfilled. Opinions may differ on his frequent volcanic attacks, but it would be unrealistic to say that Ambedkar is crying wolf. The gravamen of his charges against the Government is that it does not show initiative and imagination in social and economic matters pertaining to these landless people; nor does it foresee the seriousness of the threat to national peace and Indian democracy which their problem implies.

What has Ambedkar achieved for the Untouchables? The story of the past life of the Scheduled Caste Hindus was pitch dark. The fate of those sixty million people was more insufferable than that of the Negroes in that the Negroes were not regarded as Untouchables. At least the Negroes could be servants in the whitemen's houses. It is no exaggeration to say that the fate of the Israelites in Egypt, or the life of the Negroes in America or the condition of the Jews in Germany was better than the life of Scheduled Castes in India, their own land.

It is for the first time in the history of the past twenty-five hundred years that the sun of a better future has arisen on their horizon. Ambedkar, the son of their soil, their kith and kin, focussed the world attention on their civic, social and political rights and liberties, made untouchability a burning topic of the day, raised it to an international importance, and gave it a global publicity. His ceaseless hard struggle and his merciless hammer have forced an opening for them, and inaugurated an era of light and liberty. He awakened in them a sense of human dignity, a feeling of self-respect and a burning hatred of untouchability that was worse than slavery. He has pulled them out of slough and exorcized despondency and despair from their minds. He infused courage and new life into their demoralized and dehumanized cells. He gave them their soul and reimbued them with a spirit which enabled them to voice their grievances, and to stand up for justice, equality and liberty. Before the rise of his leadership they were treated worse than animals. His heroic struggle has raised them to political equality with other communities in India. What is more, his volcanic struggle has shattered the hopes of Missionaries and Moulavies. This is what he has done for the Untouchables.

The night of shame and despair in India has passed. Old



dilapidated walls are crumbling down. A new India is dawning at the foot of the Himalayas. The Untouchables are emerging from the dust. Their men are being gradually planted in administration, the police, courts, army, navy and the air force. Their progress over these past few years has been not less encouraging. In their own way they have also improved their habiliments, habits and sanitary conditions. Politically they are now fully conscious. Today they do not depend upon others for guidance and leadership. Their organisers conduct big conferences and vast meetings, and their leaders have established institutions of considerable importance. But it is unfortunate that most of those men who rise from amongst the Scheduled Castes turn their back upon them. They try to become second-class Brahmins.

Yet it is an indisputable fact that the Scheduled Castes still suffer social and economic hardships and land and legal impediments in rural areas. These lowest of the low feel that the Government, which floods the world with delegations and missions, has not taken seriously to the problem to remove their ills in villages, to redeem their life from village serfdom and economic morass, and to rehabilitate them as normal human beings. They want all the State Governments to adopt a bold and radical agrarian policy. Land should be given to these landless people, the sons of the soil, on the basis of assessment. They must find boarding and lodging in Hindu hotels and hostels, and any breach on this count should be treated as a crime, so that the owners of those hotels and hostels may not shun them on excuses of their invention. They should be provided with drinking-water facilities in villages. Lack of water is one of the most painful things in their life in villages.

Research scholars observe that their housing conditions—their small huts made up of tin or coconut leaves and mud are crowded with families—have a direct bearing on their morals and health. Their separate localities should be abolished and families should be accommodated in city plots. Although all public services should go according to merit, promotions in mills, factories and railways should not be denied to them under any pretext. The reservation of percentage in services prescribed for them by the Constitution should be rigidly implemented by Government. In villages and cities they suffer from desperate poverty. Grinding poverty drags them into the ranks



eggars. It makes them vulnerable to the feelings of decency, self-respect and possible victims to conversion. When they have no rags to cover their shame and have no clothes to wash, men enjoying all material benefits of civilization strangely enough murmur of their dirty clothes!

The disease, however, is being cured. It is disappearing gradually. But no sensible Hindu would pretend that the Untouchable is out of it. Caste, of which untouchability is the perverted outcome, is decaying but it is not dead. Those who indifferently shelve the problem and shrink from responsibilities should be asked to remember the words of a Negro girl, who, when asked to suggest a fitting punishment for Hitler, replied: "Make him black and make him live in America!" The one leader in a liberated India who unceasingly cries for the speedy abolition of untouchability is Swatantryaveer Savarkar. He is continually warning the Hindus that if they do not bury the gasping untouchability and lift the curse, it would reappear and ruin the land. To him abolition of untouchability is more than winning a major war for the country.

To say that the economic problem of the Scheduled Castes is bound up with the larger issue of poverty and employment is not fair. It is dangerous to postpone the issue assuming that once poverty is abolished untouchability would disappear. To bury the ghost of untouchability both economic and social regeneration programme must be taken up simultaneously. The Government should even inflict a punitive tax upon villages which would not act up to its laws in this respect. Government should help the social reformers materially and substantially. The Indian Government should take a cue from a recent speech of Dr. J. H. Holmes of the U.S.A. who said in Bombay: "We have our own untouchables exactly as you have them here. They number over 14 millions." And slavery is said to have been abolished under the Constitution of the U.S.A. some decades ago! The Indian Government should take a lesson from a recent appeal made by Mr. Clarence Mitchell, Director of a Negro Institution, to the Secretary of Defence of the U.S.A., demanding an end of segregation of Negro children in schools on army posts. The rebuffs and rebukes by Malan are too illustrative. It is a great pity, the leaders of the Scheduled Castes maintain, that the present rulers who fill their



imaginations with the pictures of world affairs, are not giving a moment's thought to the condition of the downtrodden who number about 60 millions in their own country. They rightly feel that the Government should lighten their age-long burden instead of lighting the towns and sub-towns.

II

The mission of Ambedkar's life is the preservation of human dignity, development of self-respect among the downtrodden classes, and attainment of self-salvation. In a word, it is man-making! Ambedkar is a great teacher who teaches the common man to have belief in his potential power, to rouse it up, to develop it, and to stand on his own feet. Man should not allow himself, he observes, to think that he is a mere nobody, that he is good for nothing and that he is a helpless log.

His advice to the downtrodden classes, and especially to young men, is exemplary. He asks them to rely on their self, on their own efforts, to trust and exercise their own intelligence, and to seek refuge in reason. To him nothing is more sacred than learning. Nature makes none a slave. No man is born a dullard. He recalls to students of the glorious traditions and untiring industry, high aims and high sense of public life of Ranade, Tilak and Gokhale. He relates to his people the story from the Greek mythology of the Goddess Demeter who tried to develop superman's power in a child by keeping it on fire every day. His message to his people is that they should strive endlessly, sacrifice the present pleasures for a great future and should go through the ordeal of fire and sacrifice till they attain their goal. "You must have a firm belief in the sacredness of your goal. Noble is your aim and sublime and glorious is your mission. Blessed are those who are awakened to their duty to those among whom they are born. Glory to those who devote their time, talents and their all to the annihilation of slavery. Glory to those who would keep on their struggle for the liberation of the enslaved in spite of heavy odds, carping humiliations, storms and dangers till the downtrodden secure their human rights."

Ambedkar, therefore, does not like that his hungry men should envelop themselves in the coils of *Bhakti*, the cult of devotion, the opium of helplessness. He asks the common man



not to resign himself to his fate and accept his position as a divine dispensation. The ignorant people believe that their fate is pre-appointed and irretrievable. Ambedkar wants to root out this disease from their minds. Like Vivekananda, he tells them that it is sentimental nonsense which makes them impotent. For *Bhakti* makes their nerves soft, delicate and yielding.

Ambedkar tries to divert the minds of the downtrodden from the thought of life after death to their present life of degradation. He wants them to enjoy material amenities and to bring themselves up to the cultural level of the majority. This is an antidote to the demoralized and dehumanized minds of the Scheduled Castes people who have been made to accept their position as a divine dispensation. At the same time, to the more advanced men and societies he softly warns that material comfort is by no means the solvent of all human ills. Man does not live by bread alone. He is a cultural being.

That is why thinking people regard the life of Ambedkar, who is one of the greatest Protestant Hindu leaders of modern India, as a phase in the renaissance of Hinduism and in the reorganisation of Hindu social order. The first renaissance of Hinduism was inaugurated by the Upanishads with their stream of new thoughts when the gods, priests and sacrifices receded into the background. With the resurgence of orthodox priests and ideas of sacrifices, decadence set in again with added vigour. At this time Buddha came forward to rejuvenate and reorganise the social and religious systems of the Hindus. He attacked the priestcraft, the institution of sacrifice, and stood for the abolition of the ramifications in the society.

With the rise of Shankaracharya Hinduism slyly absorbed Buddhist principles, but tightened its hold on caste system and karmakand. Then came another revival with the spiritual teachings of Ramanuja, Chakradhar, Kabir, Ramanand, Nanak, Chaityanya, Dnyandeo and other saint-poets of Maharashtra. The fourth phase began with the rise of Ram Mohan Roy, Phooley, Ranade, Dayananda and Vivekananda carried forward by Savarkar on a rationalistic basis. Gandhiji's contribution was more of a humanitarian nature than a social one.

Ambedkar's movement saw the fifth phase of the renaissance of Hinduism and reorganisation of the Hindu social order. His revolt against Hinduism and Hindu Society is



volcanic, and varies from the revolts inaugurated by revolutionaries from the Buddha to Veer Savarkar; for Ambedkar is the first great revolutionary leader who rose for the first time from among the oppressed people during the history of over two thousand years of their slavery. He started not only a war against Hinduism and Hindu social order but also a mental revolution unprecedented in the history of Hinduism, to purify and revolutionise Hinduism, to reorganise and revitalise the Hindu Society and to save it from decadence and degradation. His contribution, therefore, to Hinduism and to Hindustan will be considered greater than that of most of the modern Hindu leaders like Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda and Vivekananda; for, unlike them, he has contributed to the constitutional and political thought and development of this country.

Ambedkar wants reorganisation of the Hindu social order on the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity. In short, on the basis of democracy and social equality. He demands liberation of the Hindu Society from casteism and priestcraft. If the Hindus act up to his principles, they would be a free people, a living, movable race, a moving society. According to his social philosophy, every Hindu must have the liberty to associate in all legitimate ways with his co-religionists. The Hindus must build a common Social Code. If they have the freedom to marry among themselves, to dine together, to work together in all spheres of life, they will become a united people, and will have the ability to grow and to assimilate new members in their fold. Ambedkar is for one national language, the Hindi; one common script, the Nagari. He expects all classes to think for themselves. It is not good for them to leave thinking to a certain section of the society which calls itself the custodian of knowledge. They should develop the ability to think over the problems which affect their destiny, religion and country.

Thus his social philosophy appeals to the Hindus to liberate Hinduism and solidify Hindu Society, and to revitalize the Hindu thought and abolish the touch-me-not-ism. It is, therefore, clear that his is the cause of Hindutva, the cause of the country, the cause of humanity. The service rendered to the Scheduled Caste Hindus is service rendered to the cause of the poorest of the poor in the world.



III

CSL

The evening of life has added lustre to the serenity and grandeur of Ambedkar's personality. Solid, massive, grave and dynamic, Ambedkar is a thick-set man with an oval face having a fierce air round it and a bald dome. He is five feet seven inches tall and weighs about one hundred and eighty pounds. His majestic forehead is an index to the height of his ambition for which even the highest position in the land, he said, would be unequal. His protruding, defying chin indicates the superb courage that sees a task through even though the heavens fall. It has a will to suspend the whole hate of hell on its bend. The challenging nose stands like a rudder to the ship of a stormy life. His eyes are penetrating and animated, but have a certain look of scepticism. But when he is enraged, through his penetrating eyes looks the bitterness of all ages and through his lips pass the embers of an Untouchable's hate. He is a Jamadagni. Yet when he is in a brighter mood, his face shines like a light-house. They who have light in themselves do not revolve as satellites.

By temperament Ambedkar is cyclonic. At the least provocation he flies into anger. A slight change in the order of his books on the table irritates him and he roars: "Where are the papers, the books? Who has removed them?" The Doctor wife and his servants take fright. Then somebody enters the room slowly and asks him what he means by papers. "Is it a book or a note-book? What colour is it and what size?" Then a running search follows till the book or the note-book is found, and when it is produced before him, he ejaculates: "Oh! that is it. Where was it?" The next moment his anger cools down.

It will not be far from truth that if one says that Ambedkar is not a man of the family. He is *asang*, unfit for familiarity. Constant tours, continuous study and public appointments keep a great leader engrossed all the time. Naturally to his family also he comes to be a leader. Ambedkar, too, has come to be a leader to his son and nephew.

The fierce air around the Doctor's face and his industrious life are unfavourable for familiarity. There might be none around him who has not suffered rebukes at his hands at some time or other. Some eminent men have described him as a British



Bulldog and Sarojini Naidu called him Mussolini. His ability, integrity, great learning and untold sacrifice inspire devotion and confidence. Yet his imperious life is like an empire which has lost many cities under the debris of forgetfulness and neglect.

No doubt Ambedkar manifested interest in the welfare of those who stood by him or were loyal to his cause, but he did not show enthusiastic familiarity with or admiration for anybody. His opponents were never generous to him although they showed a sort of rapprochement; so he also was not generous to them.

His truthfulness is shattering. He is harsh like truth. Like all great men, he is a dynamo of energy and uses time sparingly. He has the vision of the Buddha; but humility is not conspicuous among his merits. No one has ever accused him of it. His proud self-confidence often verges on boastfulness. But the opinion he expressed about his merits he has justified by the great service he has rendered to the nation.

It is said that the higher we rise, the more isolated we become. Although this is true of Ambedkar, in his relaxed mood he talks endlessly. His talks give you both entertainment and arguments. He laughs the loudest when he has a dig at somebody and his laughter drowns even the retort of his victim. Clad in a lungi and a shirt, he then radiates joy and laughter. Besides a strong sense of humour, he has an irresistible taste for country jokes and country idioms. They are all hard, rude, crude, grinding and rollicking. The hearers hold their sides and revel in his quips. His humour is caustic, and often verges on rudeness which might be a legacy of the underworld in which he passed his early life. And the relieving feature of it is that you will get more jokes from him in one hour than you get from all other politicians in five years. But there are lightnings more often than sunshine.

The sweetest nuts are in the hardest shells. Though grave and fierce in appearance, Ambedkar is a fountain of emotions. The pathos of a picture makes him abandon a show in the middle! When his pet dog fell ill, he inquired after its health, personally visiting the hospital twice a day; and when news came to him that the poor dog had laid its bones, he rolled in his chair like a bereaved mother, the messenger curbing his laughter with much difficulty! Once a poor woman knocked



hindoo at 2 a.m. and bewailed that for the last twelve hours she had tried to get her dying husband admitted into a certain hospital, but to no purpose. Ambedkar took her into his car, drove to the hospital and got him admitted. Then at 4 a.m. he shouted at his friend, Mr. Donde, who resided near the hospital, and called for tea. He gave advice free on several occasions and conducted free of charge several cases wherein the interest of the poor was at stake.

When his youngest son died, Ambedkar was so much overwhelmed with grief that he would not part with the dead body ; and for days together he would not enter the room wherein his son had breathed his last. When his first wife went the way all life must go, his grief knew no bounds. He writhed with grief. He once suffered terribly from eyesore and burst into tears at the thought of losing his sight which, he said, would make life impossible for him. At the last glimpse of the dead body of a colleague he has wept piteously at the cremation grounds.

In his otherwise busy, engrossed, and stormy life, Ambedkar finds time to hear music for which he has a liking. It is his opinion that every man should love harmony in music and beauty in art. Recently he was taking lessons in playing a violin. Like Prime Minister Churchill, he draws pictures and is tickled when the servants tell him that the drawings are full of life! But the artist and painter in Ambedkar has to be shrewdly wooed into that mood by his servants when the Doctor wife and they think that the Saheb is not leaving books for days together. Nice pictures and beautiful specimen of architecture have an attraction for him. He complains that in India appreciation of art is confined to casteism. A man must be born into a caste which follows a certain art. Art suffers, he observes, because man cannot follow his bent.

Ambedkar's house was not a detached villa that gave you an appearance of seclusion. His vast library, his rich clothes, his enormous pens, his grand car, the numerous varieties of shoes and boots and the rare collection of pictures were not a mere expression of diversion but were the living marks of his conquering personality that marched on removing all obstacles till he felt he had secured all that he was capable of winning in the world in which he lived. Those fine, rich and rare articles illustrated not the disinterestedness but the march of a great



mind determined to show its superiority, splendour, power and knowledge. They were the marks left behind on the path of life by a man who had for many years lived under a starvation line and in squalor, and who was shown out of saloons, was kicked out of carts, was ousted from hotels and was ostracized in colleges, courts and offices and yet had vowed to sleep in the shade of bank notes.

Ambedkar has irresistible fascination for big and varied types of fountain pens. Rich dress and the best cut interest him. It seems he takes a secret joy in making himself as large as possible. Yet in all other aspects of life, thrift, which is the child of hard early life, has a strange control over him. He does not smoke. He is a thorough teetotaler.

The bookworm in Ambedkar has no time for social life. Once in a great while he goes to the movies. Uncle Tom he saw in the company of his first wife. Achhyut Kanya, a film based on the life of Untouchables, he witnessed with peculiar emotion in his eyes. Recently in the company of his Doctor wife he saw Oliver Twist. The life of the underdog, the poor, the suppressed gives him a throb. In his boyhood he played cricket and when his first wife had been to Dharwar for a change of air, there he played cricket with the boys of the hostel which he was then conducting for the students of Depressed Classes. In the early twenties he enjoyed the game of cards and sometimes had a round of bridge with great interest, and had daily baths in the sea, both as a diversion and an exercise.

Though an expert cook, Ambedkar never insists on any particular dish. At times he takes his meal in his library. When he is angry with the members of his family, he is still like a statue, without words, without food. He then murmurs that he is not a man to be associated with. Long years of strenuous struggle, the cares of the downtrodden, the maladies he suffered from and the perils which beset his way have not left their marks on his radiant face. He suffered for some time from appendicitis and had blood pressure. But in his declining years diabetes has marred his health. His body seems to have yielded to it; but his will is unbent. His wonderful faculties are very little impaired. Recently he underwent an electric treatment for his legs which are now unable to prop the heavy burden. With the support of a walking stick, or throwing his arm on the shoulder of a bodyguard, he trudges on.



His handwriting has an elegant style which indicates firmness, clarity and display. He loves fine dogs and may bring one from the farthest corner of the country if his eyes fall on a charming breed.

To visit Ambedkar is to visit a speaking museum. His conversation is illuminating, entrancing, vigorous and communicative. His talk ranges over many subjects which are stored in his prodigious mental museum. He gives his listener a ride through the dark ages with the lamp of history, and takes him to the Pamir, the roof of the world, where his listener gets a bird's-eye-view of the world. Ambedkar gives him an interpretation of the past, reveals the significance of mythology and explains the ancient and modern philosophies, creeds and doctrines. The fascination is simply unailing. The listener enjoys the contact with one of the greatest minds of our age.

Before his appointment as Labour Member, Ambedkar's routine was not regular. In those days he got up early in the morning, or after reading the whole night, he slept from dawn to morning; took little exercise, his bath and then breakfast. After the newspaper reading, he took his meal and went to the court in his car, looking hurriedly into a new book which came by the morning post. Sometimes he took lunch at noon in a hotel if he had a case in the court. After the court business was over, he had a round in book-stalls and returned home with a heap of new books; or on his way back rarely he visited the house of an acquaintance from whom he wanted to seize a rare book. Then dinner in a nook with a book; and then followed the endless reading.

When Ambedkar is engrossed in reading, he has no time to speak to you or to take his dinner if he has not taken it, or to get angry with you. He has a glance at you and he loses himself in the book. You sit and wait, feel embarrassed and realise that it is a sin to disturb his deep concentration and profound contemplation. You slowly come downstairs and leave the place. Alexander Dumas, the author of the Three Musketeers, held out his hand in greeting a friend who dropped in but went on scribbling with his right hand! Ambedkar does no such thing. At such a time he does not move even his eyelid. Before retiring he takes a glass of milk. After his second marriage, his doctor wife tried to enforce rigid regularity in his routine; but she must have found the case almost impossible.



GL

The time factor is a legend that revolves round Ambedkar's name. None can encroach upon his time. To Napoleon time was everything. To a business magnate time is money, but to Ambedkar time is knowledge. Two great Indians of our age utilized every moment of their life as life's greatest treasure. They are Gandhiji and Ambedkar. They knew the meaning of a moment. To them time was a precious gold mine. Ambedkar is one of those few men of our age who with resolute purpose, patient industry and careful economy of time acquired knowledge and developed capacity for work for which ordinary men will require ten births. To Ambedkar love of books is the greatest means of education and self-development, and the highest type of recreation and enjoyment. Ambedkar never reads for amusement. "What instructs me," he observes, "amuses me."

Company of books gives Ambedkar supreme joy of life and serious aloofness. As stated above the reading continued after dinner. Night disappeared; morning arrived; buzzing in the half-awakened buildings nearby began; still the scholar was at one with the world's great minds and the great thinkers of all ages, who were his spiritual ancestors. The dog Peter went to his feet to receive his morning patting, and the scholar knew that it was morning. Ambedkar the scholar desires to be away from the clang of the bell, clatter of the carts, stroke of the hammer and splutterings of the cars. His motto is *ancora Imparo*. His thirst for knowledge is that of an empire. His ultimate hope is to sit conversing with the great thinkers and law-givers of all ages in a library built in a dense forest! Is this a search for divine light or for probing into the secrets of human heart, pride, justice and selfishness?

Jefferson said that his first love was literary pursuits. Tilak, the first mass leader of Modern India, too, said that he would be a professor of Mathematics in a free India. Great men are sometimes pushed into the vortex of politics by their sense of justice and love of liberty; and at the first opportunity they turn their back upon the tumult of the daily life and seek refuge in knowledge. The cause of the Indian Independence pushed Tilak into politics. The cause of the Untouchables drove Ambedkar into politics. Otherwise Ambedkar would not have cared to see the inside of a Legislative Assembly. He would have been a savant, a seer, a Dnyaneshwar. Thanks to the



Maratha officers and peons who inflicted insults on Ambedkar. Otherwise Indian politics and the world problem of slavery would have been deprived of a mighty and colourful personality and a saviour.

Goethe said we know accurately when we know little; for with knowledge our doubts increase. Ambedkar knows accurately only when he knows more. He has no flash of a Savarkar or of a Nehru. But when he proves his point, he quotes one after another all the great thinkers on that particular subject to support his point, and he becomes supreme, irresistible and invincible. Johnson seldom went through a book from cover to cover; neither did he believe that anyone did it. But Ambedkar can recollect and tell you about the colour and the chapter of a book that he has read. Ambedkar's thirst for books is ever growing and flowing like the ever-flowing Ganges. He has purchased thousands of books and has collected some rare books. Pandit M. Malaviya had once offered him two lakhs of rupees for his library. Ambedkar declined the offer saying that if he lost his library he would lose his life. But like Dr. Johnson, Dr. Ambedkar is not a good man, it is said, to lend books to.

Nobody is allowed to touch any book in Ambedkar's library. He once said that if ever owing to any misfortune a bailiff came to take possession of his library, he would kill him on the spot before he touched the first book. Books are the breath of his life. Cicero said he would give up all to live among books. Gibbon said he would not exchange his booklove for the treasures of India. Macaulay said he would not be a king if he would not be allowed to read books. Sir Walter Scott burst into tears as he bade his lifelong friends on the bookshelves a sorrowful farewell. Ambedkar bitterly wept at the thought of losing his eyesight; for then life would, he sobbed, be meaningless. He said that he would put an end to his life if he lost his eyesight.

Great is his joy when he writes a book. When he sees his thoughts printed in a book, he gets heavenly joy. A new book born of his brains gives him greater joy than the birth of four children. Jefferson sold his library to the U.S.A. Government to be able to pay his debts. Ambedkar has parted with his magnificent library for the use of the Siddharth College. But his purchase of books is still going on and another library is springing up.



IV

All that is great in men comes through labour. "You have no idea of my sufferings and labour; you would have been wiped out," said Ambedkar to one journalist. Pursuit of an ideal gives a man driving power and a splendid moral heroism. All his life Ambedkar has laboured to develop his powers and devoted them to the release of his people from bondage. It is the breath of his nostrils and the fire in his blood. To that end he has directed all his knowledge, all his capacity, all his happiness and all his exertions. He is a queer combination of a thinker who loves action and a profound scholar who is a man of affairs. Action without knowledge is blind. But Ambedkar is a man of reflection as well as action. He has made a stir in the world of letters and politics as well. He has a wonderful store of knowledge and has a vast field of experience and observation.

Three personalities have influenced the life and actions of this great man. Besides the stories from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* which he heard with wrapt attention in his childhood, the life of Buddha, teachings of Kabir and struggle of Phoolley have contributed tremendously to the building of his personality. These personalities gave him his soul force, and Western Education gave him his weapons.

By the combination of idealism and practical life, by knowledge and experience, Ambedkar has come to belong to the race of Ranade, Bhandarkar, Tilak and Telang who unfurled the Indian flag of learning in the world of learning and research. They were leaders in whom learning was happily blended with life. Tagore's *Gitanjali*, Raman's *Rays*, Prafulla Ray's researches into Science, Bose's researches into Plant Physiology and Radhakrishnan's Philosophy adorned the world and made it richer. But that was a different order. Ambedkar is the last link of the batch of the scholar-politician, the type that is dying out in India and making politics poorer. The lawyer-politician type of Sapru, Jayakar and Sastri held for a time its own; but now the action-politicians in alliance with the dividend-politicians are capturing the field.

Yet Ambedkar has one more advantage over the scholar-politicians save Tilak. Ambedkar has led a stormy political life, has launched political struggles and passive resistance move-



ments and was in the firing line when it was necessary. To him life does not consist in recklessly running into fire. He has faced cruel attacks and has returned merciless blows. But when? When he is forced out; when he feels that the cause of the Scheduled Castes is likely to go by default and when he is baited out from his books. When he is awakened from his eternal talk with the great ones of the world, ancient and modern, and compelled to act, in a moment he knows how to begin the fight and he thunders and, like Bheem, throws thunderbolts into the camps of his opponents. That is why he is rated among the best brains, is regarded as one of the dozen most astonishing men and one of the bravest sons of India. Some rate him among the best brains of the world. Indeed, he is a giant, a Gulliver among Lilliputians. When you think of Ambedkar, you think of a Colossus and an enormous repository of knowledge! He is the son of India who would equal any mighty man of our age in learning and politics. Those who have boasted of their erudition and acquirement in politics have returned humbled and bowed after one visit to Rajgriha, measuring the light of their lamp in the light of the eternal *Dnyana Yajnya*.

Ambedkar is a powerful speaker both on the platform and in Parliament. Galvanic and embarrassingly brutal to a fault in his speech, he showers a fusillade of pistol shots at his opponents. He has not the oratory of Burke. Simple, direct and trenchant, his speech has a charm of its own. Its fearlessness is sharpened by a vast confidence and experience which he has attained by his ceaseless study. What he tells, he believes, is gospel truth and those whom it hits style its vehemence and violence as insolence par excellence.

Like all positive men of character and mission, Ambedkar has his idolaters and detractors. He has a reputation for great personal integrity and fearless intellectual honesty. Though he has led an immaculate public life, he has his detractors. Every iconoclast breaks the idols of the previous generations and sits in the temple himself. The Buddha was an iconoclast and he was afterwards idolized and worshipped as an incarnation. Ambedkar's word is law to his people. To them his words are gospel truth. They have idolized him and every year they take out processions with his pictures in the palanquins on the day of his birthday. His birthday is celebrated with devotion and



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belief like the anniversaries of Rama, Krishna, the Buddha, Tilak, Gandhi, Savarkar and Nehru.

Ambedkar's hold over his people is unshakable. One example will bear out this remark. When he prohibited his people from worshipping Hindu Gods, for a time they obeyed him literally. But custom and tradition are ingrained in blood and are not easily uprooted. Ignorance aggravates the fears of the people. So after a while the fear of God got the upper hand and a majority of them stealthily reverted to their old forms of worship. An old devout man went to his 'Babasaheb' and entreated him to allow him to bring the image of Ganapati, the Hindu God, so that he might fulfil his vow which he had made to God. Ambedkar smiled at the guileless heart of the old man and said to him in a loud voice: "Who told you that I do not believe in God?" "Go, do as you like," was the reply. And then the old man fulfilled his vow. Another example. A Congress Minister provided one of Ambedkar's followers with the post of a watchman. The son of the job-seeker scolded his father for having gone over to the opponents of Babasaheb for bread and shelter. The old man went to the minister and with a break in his voice told him about his inability to accept the job as according to him acceptance of a post in that begging attitude would mean disloyalty to their "Raja" Ambedkar.

One redeeming feature about Ambedkar is his marvellous combination of obstinacy and resilience and his ability to seize an opportunity by the forelock which quality succeeds in politics. It is resilience and not expediency that makes him shed his obstinacy without compromising his stand or conscience. He is shrewd enough to know that dawn does not come twice to awaken a man. He has the gift of catching the ball as it bounces. In his early twenties he impressed upon the mind of his father's friend the importance of Shakespeare's immortal lines: "There is a tide in the affairs of men." His co-operation with the Simon Commission brought out the star in him in the political sky. His tremendous conscientious work at the R.T.C. in the constitution-making brought forth the constitutionalist in him. The Executive Councillorship gave him a chance to show his abiding interest in the betterment of the conditions of labour problem and he gained varied experience as an administrator; lastly, the labour he undertook and the ability which he showed as the Chief Architect of the Constitution of India crowned his



work as a constitutional authority of world fame, showing what an untouchable Hindu can do and how he can vie with the best brains of the world. Self-made and self-raised Ambedkar's morning of life was dusty, noon bright and evening golden as a matter of course.

Ambedkar does not accept the *Geeta* at all. To him it is an irresponsible book of ethics, a compromise of all errors. He believes in the necessity for religion. He says that a poor man mad with hunger does not resort to theft not because he fears the legal consequences, but because of the healthy pressure his religion exercises over his mind. He holds that religion has a direct connection with the heart, and laws have it with reason. In life emotion plays a predominant part. Hence the importance of religion in the building of man. He has often said that whatever good points he has in him they are the fruit of religion. He remarks that there is no religion at present in India except the worship of idols, of sadhus, of saints and miracle-makers. He laments that our religion today has neither God nor morality. According to him this is a state of degraded human mind and so he observes that it is a task for the future generation to restore religion to its purer and nobler form.

He believes in God in the sense that some unknown power might be influencing the human destiny. This faith in the unknown power he has expressed on many occasions. One day while passing over a bridge in the countryside, his motor car was about to fall into the river below. The front wheels were hanging in air above the water, and the hind wheels were stopped by a large stone underneath and the whole car was swinging like a balance. Quick as flash Ambedkar and his driver rushed out of the car and stood outside stupified! Ambedkar prayed to the heavens for his rescue. On his return home in Bombay, he called his son and nephew and held them to his bosom and said it was a freak of destiny and the blessings of heavens that had saved his life. And he wept like a child! He is sceptical of the sincerity of the man who boasts that he has no faith in God and no belief in religion. This will be a paradox for the Socialists who are toadying him in politics and a poser to the followers of Godless Buddhism.

As a frontrank leader Ambedkar keeps himself away from the controversies over provincialism. But when points come up for discussion, he proudly says in his characteristic frankness that



Maharashtrians never acted as traitors to the country and cited the exemplary behaviour of the patriotic Maharashtrian students in London. In that vein he had also said that Maharashtrians would be the last people to be frightened by the threat of the proposed Pakistan because they had once in their living past routed the Muslim forces in battlefield after battlefield. None is so emphatic as Ambedkar over the question of a separate Maharashtra State with Bombay as its inseparable part; and he asks Maharashtrians not to budge an inch from that stand.

Ambedkar has a peculiar charm and magnetism for the word Bharat. He had named one of his weeklies *Bahishkrit Bharat*. The name of his Printing Press is Bharat Bhushan Printing Press. He had insisted that the Depressed Classes should be called Protestant Hindus or Non-conformist Hindus. His fight for temple entry and his battle for codifying the Hindu laws speak volumes for his inner struggle. You may believe the conversion of Lord Halifax, but not of Ambedkar. For one must not forget his memorable words which echoed the feelings of the innermost recesses of his heart: "Had my mind been seized with hatred and revenge, I would have brought disaster upon this land in less than five years."¹

Ambedkar is a leader of the masses. The Liberal statesmen influenced the upper classes. Tilak was the first leader of Modern India who influenced the middle class and spread his influence over the masses. Gandhiji moved the masses and Ambedkar moved the lower strata of the society. Ambedkar has travelled endlessly throughout the land and like Tilak, Gandhiji, Nehru, Savarkar and Subhas, had his say before the people. Ambedkar belongs to the type of men who are born with a mission. He represents more a cause than an organisation. He says a leader should not pander to the whims of the people. He is a leader who places courageously before the people the true path of salvation. Such a type of leadership generates magnetism but is more related to the cause than to the organisation.

Ambedkar did not try to organise his political party on modern lines. He has no taste for individual organisation. There are no regular annual conferences, nor general meetings of the organisations with which he is connected. Where and when he sits is the venue of conference and the time for decision.

¹The *Navayug's* Ambedkar-Special Number dated 13-4-1947.



the President or the Secretary or the Working Committee has to fall in line with his arrangement. His followers are attracted to him by his integrity, ability, sacrifice and learning. The formation of caucuses, the manufactured eulogies of the Press and the craftiness of playing one leader against another have no appeal for him. When he wants his people to assemble under his banner, he simply gives a clarion call and the organisation springs up like crop in the rainy season. In summer there is nothing in the field, the banner resting in his study corner and the people at home.

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The story of the life of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is thus the struggle of a champion of human rights. He is a fighter for the dignity of man and the saviour of a suppressed people. No man in this country, or perhaps in any other country, can equal Ambedkar in his career which is exciting, varying, romantic and wonderful. To be born in a dunghill, to begin life as an Untouchable, to be treated in one's boyhood as a leper, and to have passed one's youth barred and bolted from society which showed one out of hairdressing saloons, hotels, hostels, cars, temples and offices, is a shocking experience in life. To have acted as a tiffin-carrier boy, to study under starvation line, to obtain the highest degrees of world famous universities, to devote one's time to study, to have made one's way fighting every step forward now with a surgical scalpel, now with a bludgeon, favoured neither by a family fortune, nor by a political adoption, and to have faced perils and bitter political opposition, is creditable, courageous and remarkable enough. And yet to have grown in name, fame and national prominence without being lifted by a party press or party caucuses, to have served on important committees relating to the development of Franchise, Economics and Constitution of a nation, to have been Labour Member of the Executive Council of a Government, to have been the first Law Minister of a free nation, to have been the Chief Architect of the Constitution of a nation that trampled one in one's boyhood and to have released the suppressed people from the stigma, shackles and slavery under which they had groaned for ages is surely an unequalled achievement in the whole experience of mankind ! And so this son of an untouch-



able Hindu stands out in the history of this ancient land as an educationist, economist, author, professor, lawyer, leader, fighter, law-giver, law-maker, leveller and liberator.

He edited papers. He wrote books on economics and sociology, history and politics. He conducted hostels and reading rooms. He was Principal of a Law College. He presided over hundreds of political and social conferences. A mass leader, he led social, political and labour movements. He founded political parties and colleges. He displayed the wisdom of a statesman, the qualities of a leader, the courage of a hero, the endurance of a martyr and the erudition of a savant. He adorned high public offices enriching them with his wisdom, democratic mind and the love for human dignity. That in such a span of life the son of an Untouchable could crowd such varied interests, distinctions and scholarship is an unparalleled achievement in modern world.

Great men have sprung from palaces as well as from cottages. They have sprung from shoemakers, tailors, butchers, bricklayers and blacksmiths. But Ambedkar has the unique distinction of springing from the dust. He came from a family whose hundred forefathers were treated in this land worse than dogs, whose touch was regarded as a pollution and whose shadow a sacrilege.

Ambedkar's name, therefore, will be imperishably linked with the history of India. Most of his ideals have been incorporated into the constitution. He rebelled against Manu and dethroned him from his high pedestal. This has been a victory unequalled in the history of this ancient land. Ambedkar thus achieved what was above the ambition and attainment and beyond the dream of men of his community. He belongs to the men of first eminence of our age. He belongs to the line of those who have been saviours of the suppressed and oppressed. He has shaped the life of sixty million people. He has made his mark on the times. He has written his name on the future of this country and on the history of human freedom.

Ambedkar's life constitutes a proof that the strength in the seed to rise is not dead among the suppressed castes in India. It is a solid evidence of the survival of their manhood, virility and virtues. His life provides an example and an inspiration to the downtrodden masses of humanity that no bar of class, no bar of caste, no bar of privilege, no bar of riches can prevent



the full attainment and growth of an individual who is determined to build his personality on patient labour, burning sincerity, supreme courage and selfless sacrifice. He has dealt a shattering blow to the arrogance of those who hold that individual elevation and attainment are the monopoly of the privileged few. We will not see the like of Ambedkar. Nature breaks, Emerson observes, the mould of a Great Man as soon as he is born.

"If I fail to do away with the abominable thralldom and inhuman injustice under which the class, into which I was born, has been groaning, I will put an end to my life with a bullet." This was the glorious vow taken by Ambedkar. Untouchability has been abolished under the Constitution of free Bharat. The vow has been fulfilled, the dream realized and the ambition has materialized. The bondage is ended. He said it. He has done it.

Thus the unique life of Bharat Bhushan Ambedkar has become a new source of learning and a new source of inspiration for devotees. From it has emerged a new deity and the lamp that will be burning in its temple in this land of temples will be seen from all sides of the nation and from distant corners of the world. A new academy of knowledge, a new inspiration for poetry, a new place of pilgrimage and a new opportunity for literature have sprung !



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