

CHAPTER - IV

The Scheme for Electoral Concessions : Consensus through Disagreement -(1930-32)

The Report of the Simon Commission was published towards the middle of 1930. Two years earlier an alternative scheme of reform called the Nehru Report (1928) was also submitted on behalf of the nationalists who boycotted the Simon Commission. But none of these Reports could satisfy the political aspirations of the Depressed Classes. The Simon Commission retained the non-Muslim joint electorate and left the question of franchisal qualification undecided. The Nehru Report was even more outrageous. It ruled out separate electorates as being most harmful for the nation. At the same time 'reservation' was provided for none other than Muslims. The expectations of the Depressed Classes were, therefore, totally belied.

Such outright rejection of their claims at all quarters had stiffened the attitude of the depressed people. They remained unyielding in their demand for adequate representation in the Legislature. They also demanded weightage in the matter of their representation although they agreed that the quantum of weightage may vary in order to suit the need of changing circumstances. As for the nature of the electorates it was further stated that although separate electorates would be more conducive to the interest of the depressed people they would nevertheless accept

joint electorates with reserved seats if adult suffrage is introduced as a matter of general principle. These demands were made in a meeting of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held at Nagpur immediately after the publication of the Report of Simon Commission. In his Presidential address at the same conference Dr. Ambedkar indicted the government as well as the nationalists for not giving proper attention to the interests of the Depressed Classes. He was particularly most critical of the nationalists who, he alleged tried always to defer the question of settlement of the social problems until 'the political freedom of the country is achieved'.⁽¹⁾ The Depressed Classes, Ambedkar further held were not prepared to wait for an indefinite time. They wanted immediate 'adjustment of the political machine' so as to be partners in the future government of the country. He also demanded adequate safeguards for the Depressed Classes of India.

The government paid no heed to the Nehru Report which was the result of a unilateral exercise on the part of the nationalists. But the Report of the Simon Commission was also rejected by most of the political parties in India. Nevertheless the government arranged to hold a Round Table Conference in London. Lord Irwin had already promised (31 August 1929) that a Round Table Conference would be held in London in order to draw up a new constitution for India. It was a measure to conciliate Indian public opinion which was very much estranged by the all-white composition of the Commission. This became furthermore necessary in view of the fact that the Indian National Congress boycotted the Conference from the

beginning.⁽²⁾ The Conference was inaugurated at a time when the Civil Desobedience movement was at its height. It was inaugurated on November 12, 1930, by the King and was presided over by the Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald. There were altogether 89 delegates from India, out of which 57 represented British India and 16 were the representatives of the Indian States. There were also 16 members of the British Parliament from all the three political parties of the country. The British Indian delegates were nominated by the Viceroy. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Diwan Bahadur R. Srinivasan, a leader of the Adi-Dravidas and a sitting member of the Madras Legislative Council were chosen as delegates to represent the interest of the Depressed Classes in the Conference.

In the fifth plenary meeting of the first session of the Round Table Conference Ambedkar presented his viewpoint regarding the safeguards necessary for protecting the interests of the Depressed Classes in the proposed constitution of a self-governing India. In a long speech exceeding 3500 words he criticised the caste Hindus, the British Government and the bureaucracy in India for maintaining most unsympathetic attitude to the Depressed Classes who comprised nearly one-fifth of the total population of British India. The Hindus had declared them outcastes and treated them as slaves whose sense of dignity as human beings was partially recognised only under the colonial rule. But the British masters although not as much unfeeling as the caste Hindus were unable to restore their human status "because it is afraid that its intervention to amend the existing code of social and

economic life, will give rise to resistance". The depressed people were therefore quite sure that neither the British Government nor even the much publicised scheme of Dominion Status/Swaraj would be able to do anything good for them and they would have to fight out their own case single-handed. In the concluding part of his speech Ambedkar summed up the claims put forward on behalf of the Depressed Classes. The depressed people being considered as outcastes must be treated at par with the Muhammadans and have necessary concessions of a minority community so far as electoral matters are concerned. The settlement of the demands of the depressed people need not be kept pending until the political freedom of the country is achieved, they are to be settled without further loss of time. Finally, the concept of a Swaraj/Dominion Status leaving the scheme of power adjustment undefined would be totally unacceptable to them. They would, therefore, strongly demand that "we shall be installed, in adequate proportion, as the political sovereigns of the country along with our fellow countrymen". Ambedkar was quite terse in his comments

"The depressed classes have had no friend. The Government has all along used them only as an excuse for its continued existence. The Hindus claim them only to deny them or, better still, to appropriate, their rights. The Muhammadans refuse to recognize their separate existence, because they fear that their privileges may be curtailed by the admission of a rival. Depressed by the Government, suppressed by the Hindu and disregarded by the Muslim, we are left in a most intolerable position of utter helplessness to which I am sure there is no parallel and to which I was bound to call attention"⁽³⁾

The case of the Depressed Classes was more forcefully presented in the meeting of the Minorities Sub-committee of the Round Table Conference. Here Rao Bahadur Srinivasan had almost repeated the allegations of Dr. Ambedkar against the caste Hindus who, he believed would never cease to look down upon the low caste people unless they were salvaged from their present position with a considerable amount of political power in their hand. "You are well aware", remarked Srinivasan in a bitter voice "of the treatment we undergo at the hands of the caste people. The only alternative is to have power in the Legislature, so that we may fight our own case". The extent and the scope of the political power claimed on behalf of the depressed people was also clearly indicated.

"Our object is to have adult suffrage, and to have separate electorates only as a temporary measure. We want reservation of seats on a population basis, with sufficient weightage to enable us to withstand the majority in the Council".⁽⁴⁾

Both Ambedkar and Srinivasan submitted a memorandum, entitled 'A Scheme of Political Safeguards for the Protection of the Depressed Classes in the Future Constitution of a Self-Governing India' to the Round Table Conference, setting therein 'the terms and conditions on which the Depressed Classes will consent to place themselves under majority rule in a self-governing India'.⁽⁵⁾ The Scheme specified a set of eight conditions including one on 'Fundamental Right' which would safeguard the interests of the

depressed people. Condition no. IV dealt with the proposals for ensuring adequate representation of the depressed people. Separate electorate was claimed only for the first ten years, thereafter if the majority of the depressed people agree there may be a switch over to joint electorate with reservation. The principle of adult suffrage was insisted upon. The quantum of representation was not specified. But it was stated that the total number of representation granted to the depressed people should have some parity with the total number of representation granted to other communities. Weightage was demanded on behalf of the depressed people of Bombay and Madras. Condition no. VIII of the Scheme pointed out that the amelioration of the condition of the depressed people would not result only by means of obtaining adequate representation for them in the Legislatures. They must also be allowed to exercise the power to influence governmental action. For this, they need to be accommodated also in the Cabinet. "The Depressed Classes therefore claim that in common with other minorities, their moral rights to be represented in the Cabinet should be recognized".

It may be noted here that the Scheme of Political Safeguards presented to the Minorities Sub-committee was in essence a repetition of what Dr. Ambedkar had demanded on behalf of the Depressed Classes in his presidential address at the first session of the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held at Nagpur on the 8th August 1930. There was however a slight difference in the scheme of 'Electorates' as proposed by Ambedkar in his presidential

address at Nagpur and in the Scheme jointly submitted by him and Srinivasan before the Minorities Sub-committee. Ambedkar insisted on adult suffrage which if granted "we ought to have no objection to the scheme of joint electorates with reserved seats being applied to the Depressed Classes".⁽⁶⁾ But Srinivasan was a little undecided on this point. Being cross-examined by Issac Foot at the first meeting of the first session of the Round Table Conference (December 23, 1930) Srinivasan confessed that weeks earlier he was in favour of putting primary stress upon separate electorate. But now "we only ask for a separate electorate as a temporary measure".⁽⁷⁾ The Scheme of Political Safeguards embodied this compromise formula. It envisaged a temporary expedient of separate electorate for ten years to be replaced by joint electorate with reservation based on adult suffrage.

The views held by the spokesmen of the Depressed Classes received sympathetic attention of some influential members of the conference. One of them Mr. Issac Foot raised the issue at the parliamentary debate on the House of Commons on 26 January 1931. Mr. Foot referred to the disabilities of the depressed people and said : "If you do not establish safeguards for their protection their blood may cry against us". Drawing attention to the endless plight of this luckless people, he had also forewarned the government and the people of India :

"They may be defenceless now but one day will be strong. As there is justice upon this earth there is no bank that can keep back for ever the accumulated sufferings of these people".⁽⁸⁾

But all said no decision could be arrived at in the meeting of the Minorities Sub-committee. The report of the Sub-committee signed on behalf of the Prime Minister referred to conflict of opinion among the members and no satisfactory solution of the problem of representation could be found out.

"...if the whole, or practically the whole, of the seats in a Legislature are to be assigned to communities, there will be no room for the growth of independent political opinion.. and this problem received a serious complication by the demand of the representative of the Depressed Classes that they should be deducted from the Hindu population and be regarded, for electoral purposes, as a separate community".(9)

The sub-committee therefore recommended that the question of representation may be taken up for further discussion at the next meeting of the Round Table Conference.

After returning from the Round Table Conference in London, Ambedkar convened a Leaders' Conference in Bombay which met in the Gokhale Education Society's Hall at Parel on April 19, 1931. Prominent leaders of the Depressed Classes from all parts of the country - Bengal, C.P., Madras and Maharashtra attended the conference which was presided over by N. Shivraj. Ambedkar submitted a report of his work at the Round Table Conference and it was wholeheartedly endorsed by the conference amidst thunderous applause. The Conference then appealed to the Government to

nominate the Depressed Class representatives on the Federal Structure Committee so that the Class may have effective say in the next Round Table Conference. Petitions were also submitted for inclusion of the Depressed Class representatives in the provincial cabinets. (10)

The results of the Round Table Conference so far as the Depressed Classes were concerned were overassessed at the time. One of its solid outcome was the definite emergence of the Depressed Classes in the political picture of India and more important was the brilliant and moving exposition of their insufferable conditions by Ambedkar before the bar of world opinion. But then speaking from another context, Ambedkar himself had confessed in a personal letter written to his secretary Shrivarkar, that his achievements in the Round Table Conference was like laying a foundation that had more of sand than mortar'.(11) It was more of an exercise in futility. Owing to disagreement on the question of seats, which the different communities sought to secure in the proposed legislatures, and on the system of election whether separate or joint electorate with reservation should be employed and also whether adult suffrage could be immediately introduced, the Conference was adjourned. The non-participation of the Congress representative contributed to the major weakness of the Conference. It was arrogant on the part of the government to plan to go ahead without caring for the participation of the Congress. But it was not quite easy and subsequent events proved that taking any vital decision on Indian matters without Congress 'was like reckoning without hosts'. (12)

The difficulties with the representatives of the Depressed Class was that although they would always stoutly adhere to the demand of community-wise representation they could not at the same time device any means which would arrest the tendency of endless fragmentation of the political society in India. Not that they remained obstinate on every point. In the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held at Gurgaon on 31 October 1931, Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah made it clear that although the depressed people "are for adult franchise as the ultimate goal" they knew that "it is not practicable in the present day". This is a quite good gesture. But then why upon earth did they steadfastly cling to the demand of separate electorate? Rajah referred to the deliberations of the Simon Commission where "out of 37 Depressed Class associations who submitted their representations 35 demanded Separate Electorates, one favoured Joint electorates with Adult Suffrage and Reservation and the other wanted Nominations".⁽¹³⁾ This is a clear indication that the Depressed Classes grew bitter enough to win their bait at all costs. Ambedkar was once reminded that whether he was aware that the claim of separate electorates might lead to growing communal tension in the country and he replied - "Even assuming it does... I do not see how you can get rid of it"?⁽¹⁴⁾

Ambedkar's and Srinivasan's stand was widely accepted by the depressed people all over the country. But the dissenting views were neither to be ignored. Ambedkar was opposed by a section of the Depressed Class spokesmen in the Bombay Presidency who styled themselves as nationalists and demanded reserved seats in joint electorates. It is often believed that such opposition was secretly

sponsored by the Congress and the followers of Gandhi who wanted to discredit Ambedkar with a view to uphold the primacy of the Congress in the politics of the country. Ever since the time of the first session of the Round Table Conference the Congress elite as well as the pro-Congress sections of the press sought to organize meetings of the untouchables with a view to project only such among the Depressed Class spokesmen who were engaged in opposing Ambedkar. Thus they were bent upon doing "whatever they could to show that 'untouchables are denouncing Ambedkar' and that there was a wave of support for joint electorates".⁽¹⁵⁾ P. Balu and B.J. Deorukhar were prominent among those who opposed Ambedkar. Both of them belonged to the Chamar caste which had traditional rivalry with the Mahar caste to which Ambedkar himself belonged. It was primarily among the non-Mahar depressed people that the Congress could make any impact at all. Deorukhar and his supporters tried to cause disturbances in the conference of Ambedkar held in Bombay immediately after his return from London. They were driven out by the followers of Ambedkar. However, the supporters of Ambedkar were in a majority mostly outside of Maharashtra.

II

The first session of the Round Table Conference failed to make any specific recommendations so far as the claims of the Depressed Classes are concerned. The Minorities and the Depressed Classes were definite in their assertion that they could not consent to any self-governing constitution for India unless their

demands were met in a reasonable manner. Nothing better could, of course, be expected from the type of motley crowd that was assembled in London and the way delegates were chosen. The Conference, therefore, had to be adjourned until further notice. In the meantime, situations both in India and England had substantially changed. In India, the ban on the Congress Working Committee was lifted and its members along with many other important leaders including Gandhi were released unconditionally, on January 26, 1931. Long and protracted negotiations began between Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi which resulted in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact signed on March 5, 1931. In England the Labour Government was replaced by the National Government and although Macdonald continued to be its head Irwin had to quit and Lord Wellington became the new Viceroy of India.⁽¹⁶⁾ In the context of such far-reaching changes the importance of Congress as a powerful factor in Indian politics was more assuredly felt in the official circle. The Prime Minister while adjourning the first session of the Round Table Conference, expressed the hope that the Congress would be willing to join future deliberations of the Conference and invited it to co-operate with the task of constitution-making for India. There was in fact no escape from such a course of action. The Indian delegates were not in a position to speak for the whole of India in the absence of the Congress leaders. Without the representatives of the Congress there was a fear that the conclusions reached at the Conference might not be acceptable to the masses of India.

The second session being held between 7th September and 1st December 1931 did not open with a meeting of the full Conference. The Federal Structure Committee (Sub-committee I) was reassembled on the 7th September and the Minorities Committee (Sub-committee III) on the 28th September, followed by a plenary Session beginning on the 28th November 1931. The other committees were not reassembled. The issue of the Depressed Classes were taken up for discussion in the meetings of both of the Federal and the Minorities Sub-committees in which apart from Ambedkar and Srinivasan the presence of Gandhi was an added attraction.

The deliberations of the second session so far as the Congress was concerned were largely conditioned and guided by the Nehru Report (1928) drawn on behalf of the Congress and also by the Congress Working Committee Resolution on the communal problem. The Nehru Report, it may be noted here admitted that "the Hindus are chiefly responsible for this suppression of a large class" to whom representation may be allowed either by Nomination or by Separate Electorates. But even after a formal recognition of the legitimacy of their claim the author of the Report rejected both of the expedients. This sudden volte-face had much aggrieved the depressed people whose leader M.C. Rajah gave a bit of his mind in his presidential address at the All-India Depressed Classes Conference of October 1931 - "If there are only two alternatives open statesmanship demands to choose the lesser evil but rejecting both is ignoring the problem and not solving it".⁽¹⁷⁾ But the Depressed Classes though said to have been treated

unsympathetically by the Congress, the Working Committee had resolved that the Congress being unable to set forth 'any communal solution of the communal problem' would recommend adult suffrage (as per resolution of the Karachi session of the Congress) and Joint Electorates forming the basis of representation in the future constitution of India. Clearly, therefore, the Congress proposed to solve the problem of the Depressed Classes by means of a constitutional guarantee of equal fundamental rights for all and protection of minority rights and universal adult franchise which would put them all together in the roll of voters.

Personally, Gandhi was unconcerned with the question what place untouchables will have in any political constitution, because for him the problem of the Depressed Classes was a socio-religious one whose solution lay in the awakening of Hindu conscience, supplemented by some special efforts for their general uplift, and not in any kind of constitutional safeguards like special representation. When a Depressed Class deputation led by P. Balu, waited on him at Manibhaban, Bombay, on 26 June 1931, and urged him to support the proposal for reserved seats in joint electorates in the second session of the Round Table Conference, the latter did not make any commitment to this proposed electoral arrangement, and only promised that everything he would urge in the Round Table Conference would be in the interest of the Depressed Classes, and the country in general.⁽¹⁸⁾ To another deputation, led by Ambedkar, which waited upon Gamdhi on 14 August 1931, and wanted to know the latter's opinion on the special representation of the Depressed

Classes, he expressed his firm opposition to any such electoral arrangement on the ground that it would result in the political separation of the untouchables from the Hindus and would be therefore 'absolutely suicidal'.⁽¹⁹⁾

The very frank discussion that was held between the two leaders on 14 August 1931, indicated the shape of things for the future. In his speech in the 24th meeting of the Federal Structure Committee held on the 17th September 1931 Gandhi made a terse statement that although for sound historical reasons his party has reconciled itself to special treatment of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh tangle, "the Congress will not extend that doctrine in any shape or form". This is because the interests of the Untouchables "are as dear to the Congress as the interests of any other body or of any other individual throughout the length and breadth of India". That interest, he further added could be guaranteed by means of adult suffrage and "safeguards would be the wrong way to go about the business". In explaining his stand for rejection of a scheme for any further special representation Gandhi remarked that with adult suffrage in the political society envisaged by him even the landlords can act as trustees for their tenants, and further even a European or an Englishman (like Charlie Andrews for example) can be "elected a delegate in any constituency in India without the slightest difficulty". What is therefore wanted, according to Gandhi's perception of future India, is neither safeguards nor special representation but only the good will of the people added with a confidence in the universally trusted apparatus of adult suffrage.

"In any case", Gandhi remarked

"I do feel that, in any scheme that the Congress can be party to, there is no room for the protection of special interests. The special interests are automatically protected when you have got adult suffrage".⁽²⁰⁾

Incidentally, although rejecting special representation Gandhi referred to the 'provision in the Congress regarding special cases' and explained 'we certainly want Untouchables to be elected' in our Legislatures. But if however the constituencies so misbehave themselves as not to elect them "I would have a clause in the constitution which would enable this elected Legislature to elect those who should have been elected, but have not been elected".⁽²¹⁾ However Gandhiji could not foresee a situation when even with such constitutional provision an elected Untouchable is only a dummy of the upper caste Hindus. In his minute submitted to the Bengal Franchise Committee Mukunda Behari Mullick referred to the election of Babu Rasik Chandra Charmakar, Babu Mohini Mohan Das and Babu Hoseini Rout to name a few, all of whom were allowed a smooth entry into the Council 'as a sort of ridicule by the political party'. The said representation contained many other names who having operated as dummy candidates of the Congress secured their entry into the Councils through discomfiture of decidedly more worthy candidates.⁽²²⁾

On 28 September 1931 Ambedkar presented his viewpoints before

the members of the Federal Structure and the Minorities Committee. He remained quite firm to repeat his demands which were already submitted on behalf of the Depressed Classes. He also found an ally, Sardar Ujjal Singh to support his claim. "Taking India as a whole", the Sardar remarked

"the Muhammadans are certainly a very strong minority, but there are three or four other minorities - the Sikhs, the Europeans, the Christians and the Depressed Classes - whose rights have got to be equally protected".⁽²³⁾

The gist of Ambedkar's statement was that the depressed people must have their legitimate share of seats in the Legislature which need also to be protected in the manner already specified by them. He had also indirectly attacked Gandhi for his alleged exercise to take a unilateral decision in matters touching the interests of the Depressed Classes -

"Those who are negotiating ought to understand that they are not plenipotentiaries at all; that whatever may be the representative character of Mr. Gandhi or the Congress people, they certainly are not in a position to bind us - certainly not".⁽²⁴⁾

The acrimonious tone of the debate was to some extent due to some insinuating comments of Gandhi in which he spoke about the non-representative character of persons who were nominated by the British Government to function as delegates of the Depressed

Classes. In an interview outside the Round Table Conference Gandhiji pointed out that Ambedkar only represented the Depressed Classes of that part of India to which he belonged and that he had received telegrams of the Depressed Classes of various parts of the country, assuring their "fullest faith in the Congress and disowning Dr. Ambedkar".⁽²⁵⁾ He further told Evelyn Wrench, the editor of the *Spectator*: "If the untouchables in all part of India would record their votes, I should be their representative".⁽²⁶⁾

Ambedkar's speech (October 8, 1931) before the members of the ninth meeting of the same Committee was a clear repudiation of Gandhi's statement :

"I say therefore that whether I am a nominee or not, I fully represent the claims of my community. Let no man be under any mistaken impression as regards that".⁽²⁷⁾

He had also bitterly criticised Gandhi for his and his party's much acclaimed sympathies for the depressed people - "I can only say that it is one of the many false claims which irresponsible people keep on making, although the persons concerned with regard to those claims have been invariably denying them".⁽²⁸⁾ In the concluding portion of his speech Ambedkar then, expressed his apprehension that if the British masters leave India without solving the problem of the Depressed Classes they would have to suffer untold miseries in the hands of their native master. Ambedkar also made it clear that as a matter of fact his community is not at all 'clamouring

for transfer of political power', but if it becomes inevitable, he on behalf of his community would only demand

"that transfer will be accompanied by such provisions that the power shall not fall into the hands of a clique, into the hands of an oligarchy, or into the hands of a group of people, whether Muhammadans or Hindus; but that the solution shall be such that the power shall be shared by all".⁽²⁹⁾

The broad outline of the programme as to how power should be shared had been already indicated in the joint memorandum submitted by Ambedkar and Srinivasan ('A Scheme of Political Safeguards') before the members assembled at the first session of the Round Table Conference.⁽³⁰⁾ A supplementary memorandum giving the details of the special representation claimed and signed by the same persons was now submitted on the 4th November 1931. It was tagged as Appendix VII of the Second Report of the Minorities Committee. The memorandum specified the general principle of allocation of seats in proportion to the population of the depressed people in both of the Federal Legislature and in the provincial legislatures in Bengal, Central Provinces, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Punjab and the United Provinces. In Madras and in Bombay (in the event of Sind remaining a part of the Bombay Presidency) the Depressed Classes would remain satisfied with 22 and 16 per cent representation respectively. As for the method of representation separate electorates were preferred which if found necessary may be replaced after twenty years by a system of joint electorate. But such changes

could be introduced subject to some strict conditions like a referendum of the voters. The memorandum also submitted that the existing disreputable nomenclature for the depressed people should be changed as most of them would like to be identified as 'Non-caste Hindus', 'Protestant Hindus' or 'Non-conformist Hindus' or with some such designation instead of 'Depressed Classes'.⁽³¹⁾

The pattern of arguments and counter-arguments both on behalf of the Depressed Classes and the Congress soon made it clear that the deliberations at the Round Table Conference would lead the delegates nowhere and there was little chance of a consensus. Dr. Ambedkar always sceptic about the prospect of receiving a righteous deal from the Hindus had moreover information that Gandhi had a secret understanding with the Muslims who would in exchange of Gandhi's support for the Muslim claim of fourteen points would support him in rejecting the claim of the Depressed Classes for separate electorates.⁽³²⁾ But then Gandhiji was also visibly displeased with Ambedkar. Much to the chagrin of the nationalists the accredited leader of the Depressed Classes had suddenly made an agreement with the representatives of the Muhammadans, a section of the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the British community on the basis of a fixed quota of seats for each of the signatory communities to be filled through separate electorates. The agreement provided that in case of the Depressed Classes "no change to joint electorates and reserved seats shall be made until after twenty years' experience of separate electorates, and until direct

adult suffrage for the community has been established". Besides the agreement recommended for them 20 seats in the all-India Upper House of 200 seats and 45 seats in the all-India Lower House of 300 seats with 180 seats in the provincial legislatures having 1100 seats. The agreement also recommended special treatment of the Depressed Classes in the constitution for removal of their disabilities and facilitating their recruitment to the public services. (33)

The agreement, known as the Minorities Pact, was introduced in the Minorities Sub-committee on 13 November 1931 (having already received the blessings of H.Carr) by the Aga Khan, the Muslim representative on the Round Table Conference. Gandhi was scheduled to address the members of the Minorities Committee on that very day. Naturally he felt tremendously frustrated at this sudden turn of events :

"I am astonished that Sir Hubert Carr should tell us that they have evolved a scheme which, being designed only for a temporary period, would not damage the cause of nationalism, but at the end of ten years we would all find ourselves hugging one another and throwing ourselves into one another's laps. My political experience teaches me a wholly different lesson. If this responsible government, whenever it comes, is to be inaugurated under happy auspices, it should not

undergo the process of vivisection to which this scheme subjects; it is a strain which no Government can possibly bear".⁽³⁴⁾

Deprecating the whole scheme of the Minorities Pact Gandhiji explained that the Congress is well agreeable to inclusion of adequate clauses and reservations as to the fundamental rights and civil liberties of the citizens in the future constitution of India. It is also ready to accept any solution that may be acceptable to the Hindus, the Muhammadans and the Sikhs. But "Congress will be no party to special representation or special electorates for any other minorities", namely the Depressed Classes for example. The Minorities Pact, he further added is not a scheme "designed to achieve responsible government, but is absolutely a scheme designed to share power with bureaucracy".⁽³⁵⁾ In conclusion Gandhiji made a moving appeal to the representatives of the Depressed Classes. He said that a large number of Hindus are now ready to atone their sin and would be glad enough to welcome the so-called Untouchables within the fold of Hinduism and assuredly as their equals. In the circumstances when the general trend indicates a spirit of unity and cohesion the depressed people should not seek to withdraw under a misconceived notion that their rights as human beings would be protected only when they are separated. The depressed people should know "that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar-sinister, which is the shame not of them but of orthodox Hinduism". However,

even after all these persuasions if the depressed people decide to separate they should better apostatize from Hinduism first.

"I do not mind Untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in the villages... therefore I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with my life".⁽³⁶⁾

But parleys and debates came to no avail. Gandhiji although always nursing the unconquerable hope of keeping the polity united was unable to lead the house to a consensus. The Prime Minister when submitting his report of the Minorities Committee therefore admitted that the basic problems regarding representation of the Depressed Classes could not be solved by means of a joint deliberation. "The Committee has in these circumstances, to record with deep regret that it has been unable to reach any agreed conclusion of the difficult and controversial question which has been the subject of its deliberations"⁽³⁷⁾ The second session of the Round table Conference started with a bang but at long last ended in a whimper.

But there is an inside story which may explain as to why it failed at all. It has been alleged in some quarters that the way the Minorities Pact was arranged is a clear indication of the

secret influence of the wire-pullers in politics who tried to fish in the troubled waters. The *Modern Review* of Calcutta pointed out that 'some lotus-eating intriguers', in collusion with their 'British patrons', were trying 'to please the powers that be' with a motive to 'convert the Hindus into a powerless entity by vivisecting the community into caste Hindus and the depressed classes'. It agreed with Gandhi's view that separate electorates would retard the 'gradual absorption of the Depressed Classes in the so-called higher social ranks of Hindu society'.⁽³⁸⁾ In another section of the press the makers of the Pact were denounced as 'traitors, sycophants and enemies of Indian freedom'.⁽³⁹⁾

It was believed in the nationalist circles that the British Conservatives had given their support and blessings to the Minorities Pact. "It is well known", writes Jawaharlal Nehru, "that a certain alliance was formed in London during the Second Round Table Conference between the delegates of some minority groups and British Conservatives".⁽⁴⁰⁾ An Indian journalist, who had an interview with Clement Attlee, the Labour leader, before the second session of the Round Table Conference, afterwards recorded in his autobiography that the later told him that during the second round of talks the Tories would try 'to set up obstacles to India's advance towards self-rule by 'playing up the grievances of Muslims and the Depressed Classes in their bid to thwart the Congress'.⁽⁴¹⁾

On returning from the second session of the Round Table

Conference, in a public meeting held at Bombay on 28 December 1931, Gandhi declared that he was not prepared for any concession like reservation of seats to the Untouchables 'because...it would be perpetuating untouchability'.⁽⁴²⁾ Quite in another context he reiterated his standpoint - "What these people need more than election to the legislature is protection from social and religious persecution".⁽⁴³⁾

On the other hand, Ambedkar, after returning from London, criticised Gandhi for the latter's allegedly hostile attitude towards the Depressed Classes. It was alleged that he resisted the Depressed Classes' legitimate claims for political concessions almost at the same time when he showed undue sympathy for the Muslims. He was not prepared to conciliate with Ambedkar while he surrendered totally to the Muslim community. "Had he used persuasiveness to argue Ambedkar into a spirit of compromise, Ambedkar's brains and guns would have been a positive help in demolishing the fortress of Muslim communalism"⁽⁴⁴⁾

During the various discussions suggestions were made that the British Government should settle the dispute on its own authority. These suggestions were of course accompanied by some important reservations. Even then it was a clear indication that the political windbags representing the various parties from India would not be able to solve their problem which need to be settled by applying the superior wisdom of the colonial masters. When the

Prime Minister saw that there was no solution to the Minorities problem, he asked the members to sign a requisition authorising him to settle the communal problem and to pledge themselves to accept his decision. With the exception of Ambedkar, all other members including Gandhi signed this pledge and thereby allowed the British Government to take a peremptory decision like the one in August 1932.

III

Gandhi's pleadings in the second session of the Round Table Conference for joint electorates could not be accepted at the time. But his efforts were not entirely fruitless for a section of the Depressed Classes soon felt convinced by the arguments of Gandhi. Baloo and Deurukhar, two of the leaders of this class had expressed their disagreement with Ambedkar and quickly tilted to the side of Gandhi. Even M.C. Rajah, a prominent leader of a section of the Depressed Classes withdrew his support to the separate electorates. He arrived at an agreement with B.S. Moonje, the President of the Hindu Mahasabha, on the basis of the principle of reservation of seats in joint electorate in proportion to the population ratio. The agreement was cabled to the British Prime Minister on 28 February 1932 with the message that the depressed people were no more in a mood to stick to the demand of separate electorates as proposed by Ambedkar and his followers in the Round Table Conference. The alternative plan which was communicated in the message was as follows :

"the Working Committee of the All-India Depressed Classes Association has unanimously decided in favour of joint electorates with the Hindus, with reservation of seats on a population basis. Complete agreement now prevails between the Depressed Classes Association and the Hindu Mahasabha"(45)

Finally in a letter to the Prime Minister released to the press on 21 March 1932, Rajah asked the former to treat the agreement as concluded between the only central organization of the Depressed Classes i.e. the All-India Depressed Classes Association of which he was the President and the organised body of the Hindus taken as a whole i.e. the Hindu Mahasabha. He also wrote that he had entered into an agreement with the Hindu Mahasabha because he had a ray of hope "of our assimilation into the main body of the Hindus".

The Rajah-Moonje Pact produced a mixed reaction. Depressed people supporting Ambedkar and opposing his viewpoints argued both in favour and against the Rajah-Moonje Pact and the controversy dragged them into a brawl leading to an angry demonstration of their muscle power at the opening of the second session of the All-India Depressed Classes Congress which commenced at Kamptee on the 7th May 1932 under the presidentship of Rai Sahib Muniswami Pillai. The meeting passed a dozen of resolutions one of which supported the Minorities Pact, the most important being M.B. Mullick's from Bengal who upheld the Pact as having contained the 'irreducible minimum of the demands of the Depressed Classes'.

Those who opposed the Pact included such stalwarts like Gavai, Thaware, Khandekar, Gorghat not to speak of others whose number was not quite few. There was yet another group who opposed both the Ambedkarites and his adversaries.⁽⁴⁶⁾

However, in a statement issued by Rajah to the members of his community he scuttled most of the arguments of those who criticised his pact recently signed with the Hindu Mahasabha. He had further made a comparative estimate of the total number of seats allocated for the Depressed Classes and the Muslims as per terms of the Round Table Conference Minority Pact. Acting on the basis of this statistical analysis he had then accused both Ambedkar and Srinivasan in the following words :

"...it is evident that these two depressed classes delegates have done a positive harm to the depressed classes by claiming and accepting seats on behalf of the depressed classes much less than what they would be entitled to on the basis of population".⁽⁴⁷⁾

In contrast with the Minorities Pact the gains of the Rajah-Moonje Pact were said to be definitely higher. This was shown with the help of the following table :

Legislatures	Strength of Chamber	Seats according to R.T.C. Minority Pact	Seats according to Rajah - Moonje Pact
CENTRE			
All-India			
Upper	200	20	38
Lower	300	45	57
Assam	100	13	13
Bengal	200	35	49
Bihar and Orissa	100	14	14
Bombay	200	28	16
Central Provinces	100	20	24
Madras	200	40	39
Punjab	100	10	13
United Provinces	100	20	26

The above chart shows that under the Minorities Pact the Depressed Classes were given a total of 180 seats in all the seven provincial legislatures whereas they got 194 i.e. 14 additional seats under the Rajah-Moonje Pact. The gains for the central Legislatures was similarly 18 higher in the Upper House and 12 higher in the Lower House. This apart according to the Rajah - Moonje Pact the Depressed Classes had the right to contest additional seats also, as they had contested and won the elections to the Local Boards in Alandur, Sembiam, Villivakam, and other Unions in the Chingleput District of the Madras Presidency. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

Rajah had also disarmed his critics by pointing out the many

inconsistencies in their arguments and by also openly accusing them of frequent changes in their stand.⁽⁴⁹⁾ He said that he was indicted for toeing line with the high caste Hindus and deserting the separate electorateites which he himself was at the beginning of his political career. But then Ambedkar also made a quick change of his viewpoint. In his representation to the Simon Commission on behalf of the Bahiskrita Sabha of Bombay he said that "the Sabha does not wish to ask for communal electorates. In its opinion it would be sufficient if the Depressed Classes are provided with reserved seats in general constituencies".⁽⁵⁰⁾ But soon after at the Round Table Conference he became a staunch advocate of separate electorate. Rao Bahadur Srinivasan, another Depressed Class representative in the Round Table Conference who endorsed Ambedkar's point of view at the said conference made just an opposite statement at the Simon Commission and declared "our people are not yet advanced to have Separate Electorates. Unless you give Adult Franchise the Depressed Classes should have no Separate Electorates". Moreover in demanding separate representation the Rao Bahadur had certainly overstepped his limits, for the Madras Depressed Classes' Federation of which he was the President had by a meeting held immediately before his sojourn to London in 1930, authorised him to demand reservation of seats in joint electorates. As for Munuswami Pillai who thundered against the Rajah-Moonje Pact at the Depressed Classes Congress at Kamptee (May, 1932) it would be just enough to recall that the gentleman who clamoured for separate electorates supported reservation of seats under joint

electorates for Union Boards, Municipal Councils, Taluka Boards, District Boards etc when the Madras Local Boards Act was passed in the Madras Legislative Council in 1930.⁽⁵¹⁾

The Separate versus Joint Electorate controversy had little chance to end in a reasoned judgement. While there are unassailable arguments on both sides, it seems Rajah's agreement with the Hindu Mahasabha leader had greater value than Ambedkar's with non-Hindu Minorities.⁽⁵²⁾ Whatever might be the degree of the representative character of M.C. Rajah as a Depressed Class leader as compared with Ambedkar, the former's was an agreement with the Hindu Mahasabha which claimed to represent the Hindu community of which the Depressed Classes formed a part and which was in some ways concerned with their welfare, while the latter had made an agreement with the non-Hindu minorities almost ignoring the inherent natural relation of the Depressed Classes with the Hindu community.

The controversy was again taken up at the forum of the Indian Franchise Committee which was presided over by Lord Lothian. This Committee, it may be recalled here was constituted under Prime Minister's instructions as a result of the recommendations of the Franchise Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference (Second Session). So far as the Depressed Classes were concerned the Lothian Committee had to deal with their problem with much greater details and thoroughness than the Southborough Franchise Committee, keeping in view the necessity of providing them a special system of representation. The Committee was entrusted with the task of

defining the term 'Depressed Class' and estimating their number. It was also asked to examine in view of the controversy on joint versus separate electorates, the extent to which the Depressed Classes would be likely to secure the right to vote in ordinary electorates through a general extension of the franchise and place on record 'facts which would facilitate the devising of a method of separate representation for the Depressed Classes'.⁽⁵³⁾ The terms of reference did not specify in categorical terms as to whether the Lothian Committee would make any recommendations on the suitability of any particular kind of electorate. However Lord Lothian made it clear that to recommend any particular system of electorate joint or separate, was beyond his Committee's terms of reference.⁽⁵⁴⁾ But despite such announcement the advocates of joint and separate electorates submitted their views before it. The All-India Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha headed by J.S. Pillai,⁽⁵⁵⁾ All India Arundhataya Central Sabha of Madras,⁽⁵⁶⁾ Depressed India Association of Bombay headed by R.S. Nikaljay,⁽⁵⁷⁾ Gujarat Depressed Classes Association headed by P.G. Solanki,⁽⁵⁸⁾ All India Namasudra Association headed by Rasiklal Biswas,⁽⁵⁹⁾ U.P. Hindu Backward Classes League,⁽⁶⁰⁾ and U.P. Adi Hindu (Depressed Classes) Association of Lucknow⁽⁶¹⁾ asked for separate electorates in their memoranda to the Franchise Committee. Rasiklal Biswas pointed out to the Franchise Committee that his Namasudra community wanted separate electorates as well as weightage in representation, because even with adult franchise they had little chance of "getting their candidate returned through the system of general electorate."⁽⁶²⁾ R.S. Nikaljay pointed out in his memorandum that 'the cry for joint

electorates' were 'raised by high class Hindus', simply 'with a view to keeping all the reins of power in their own hands'.⁽⁶³⁾ He also pointed out that the All-India Depressed Classes Association of which M.C.Rajah was the President never functioned and was merely a paper organisation.⁽⁶⁴⁾ P.G.Solanki while upholding the demands submitted by Ambedkar pointed out that there was 'no leader among the Depressed Classes possessing the fame of Dr. Ambedkar', 'who has been acknowledged as the leader of the Depressed Classes.⁽⁶⁵⁾

On the other hand M.C.Rajah and G.A.Gavai,⁽⁶⁶⁾ P.Baloo,⁽⁶⁷⁾ Dalit Jat Sudharak Sabha of Gorakhpur,⁽⁶⁸⁾ and the All-Bengal Namasudra Youngmen's Association of Dacca⁽⁶⁹⁾ supported reservation of seats in joint electorates. Baloo held in his memorandum to the Indian Franchise Committee that as the major portion of the Depressed Classes were agriculturists, servants engaged in the domestic work of the upper caste people many of them being also engaged in small-scale business they were "to a certain extent dependent upon the good-will and help of the upper classes", and could not therefore, isolate themselves from the caste Hindus by such electoral device as separate electorates. He held that his Chamar community had particularly decided in a conference, held at Bombay in October 1930, in favour of joint electorate with reservation of seats, as the community, because of its hereditary business in leather goods and shoe-making, wanted to keep connection with the upper classes.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Monohar Dhali, Jogendranath Adhikari and Gangacharan Poddar, the Joint Secretaries of the

All-Bengal Namasudra Youngman's Association, in their letter to the President of the Bengal Franchise Committee, opposed the political separation of the Depressed Classes from the Hindus by the mechanism of separate electorates. They wanted removal of social differences and proportionate reservations of seats in joint electorates for an 'experimental period' in view of the political backwardness of the Depressed Classes.⁽⁷¹⁾ At Delhi on 29th March 1932, Lord Lothian and the members of his secretariat watched a demonstration of the Depressed Classes' Association of Delhi in favour of the Rajah-Moonje Pact before the office of the Franchise Committee.⁽⁷²⁾

At Delhi, on 30th March 1932, a controversy took place between M.C. Rajah and B.P. Ambedkar on the question of electorate in the Franchise Committee meeting. Backed by Gavai, Rajah unhesitatingly asked for joint electorate with reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes on the basis of their total population in view of just "a remarkable change in the angle of vision towards the depressed classes even in my caste-ridden province of Madras". But Ambedkar tried to shake them from their position by severe cross-examination. He also questioned the bonafides of Rajah's Association and produced a telegram from the Mahar Youth League repudiating the Rajah-Moonje Pact.⁽⁷³⁾

In the midst of this heated controversy the Committee had to proceed with utmost caution. However, its Report including qualifying notes and minutes of dissent was published on June 3, 1932. The Report submitted its findings which were arranged under

some major heads viz Definition of Depressed Classes, Provincial estimates of Depressed Classes, Enfranchissement, Reresentation of Minor Majorities and Special Interests.⁽⁷⁴⁾ In a chapter dealing with the Depressed Classes the Committee observed that the term when used in a political context should not include "primitive or aboriginal tribes, nor should it include those Hindus who are only economically poor and in other ways backward but are not regarded as untouchables".⁽⁷⁵⁾ The Committee thus agreed to define the Depressed Classes as 'those who are untouchable, i.e. who cause pollution by touch or approach or denied access to temples'. The Committee also examined the figures of the population of the Depressed Classes given by various authorities in the past. Thereafter the Committee had prepared the following table indicating the total number of Depressed Class population.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Province	South-Borough Commr. Commt.	Sir H. Sharp 1917.	Census 1921.	Simon Commr. Commis- sion. 1931.	Census 1931.	Prov- ial Govt. 1932.	Prov- ial Comt. 1932.
Madras	6.4	5.7	6.4	6.5	7.0	7.1	7.1
Bombay	0.6	1.6	2.8	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.7
Bengal	9.9	6.7	9.0	11.5	-	11.2	0.07
United Provinces	10.1	8.4	9.0	12.6	12.6	6.8	0.6
Punjab	1.7	2.1	2.8	2.8	1.3	1.3	1.3
Bihar & Orissa	9.4	1.2	3.0	5.0	3.7	5.8	4.3
Central Provinces	3.8	3.0	3.3	3.3	2.9	2.9	2.9
Assam	0.3	2.7	2.0	1.0	1.0	0.65	0.65
T O T A L	42.2	31.5	43.3	43.6	-	37.45	18.62

The question of introducing a system under which all adult members of the population may be reckoned as qualified voters next came in for serious consideration of the Committee. This is a condition which is normally accepted to be the sine qua non of the smooth functioning of a democracy. The Committee also agreed that the adoption of the principle of adult franchise would avoid the necessity for devising special franchises by ensuring representation of all elements of the population. But at the same time it had also pointed out that there are some real difficulties in adopting the principle of adult franchise. For a variety of reasons the introduction of the system would be rather difficult in the existing situation of India. The Committee therefore concluded "that in view of the prodigious difficulties... it would be the course of wisdom and statemanship not to launch the new constitution on the basis of adult franchise, but to seek a more managable basis, and that it will be for the legislatures themselves to determine at what pace the electorate should be further expanded".⁽⁷⁷⁾ However the Committee could not give any indication of what that 'managable basis' should be when the question of the enfranchisement of the depressed people came in for its consideration. The Committee was also aware that in the absence of a new electoral roll it would be impossible to calculate the voting strength of the Depressed Classes and since most of them would not have the requisite property or educational qualification it was quite certain that they would not be enrolled

in proportion to their population. But since "it is essential that under responsible government these people should be able to express their opinions in the Councils, the Committee recommend a levelling up of the depressed class vote by some form of differential franchise".⁽⁷⁸⁾

It may be interesting to note in this connection that the Bengal Franchise Committee set up by the Government of Bengal on the 15th January 1932 with the specific responsibility to advise the Indian Franchise Committee in association with the local government made almost the similar observation with the exception that it had at the same time also recommended "that the direct vote should be conferred on all persons paying 12 annas local tax or rate or over".⁽⁷⁹⁾ However the dissenting note submitted to the Committee by Mukunda Behari Mullick contained observations which were largely in conformity with the views of the separate electorateites. Of course Mullick did not formally record his opinion on the suitability of a particular kind of electorate so far as the depressed people were concerned - "I do not consider it worth while to pursue this point as it has been definitely ruled by the Chairman of the Indian Franchise Committee that this question is not within the scope of their enquiry". But while dealing with a question as to if Depressed Classes are likely to have representation of their own choice in general electorates he had by an admirable marshalling of facts based on the election records of past five years (1920, 1923, 1926, 1929 and 1930) proved

apparently beyond doubt that given the existing backward condition of the depressed people there was little chance of genuine Depressed Class representative to be returned by general electorate :

"Our experience and the review of the results of the previous elections... show clearly that the depressed classes will not be able to secure representatives of their own choice in the general electorates under a joint system of elections".⁽⁸⁰⁾

IV

While the controversy on joint versus separate electorate was going on and the Indian Franchise Committee was carrying on its work, Gandhi who was in jail (because of resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement) felt seriously disturbed at the news of the British efforts to solve the problem regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes according to its own unilateral decision. The plea for such an initiative was that the delegates of the Second Round Table Conference with the exception of Dr. Ambedkar agreed to allow the Prime Minister to suggest a measure for the settlement of the communal question which remained unresolved at the conference. Gandhi had information that the British Government was up for a settlement which would concede separate electorate to the Depressed Classes. This would be contrary to what Gandhi stood for and so he reminded the Secretary of State for India that his statement in the Second Round Table Conference to resist with life

the grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes was not made in the heat of the moment or by way of rhetoric but meant to be a serious statement. It was also stated that the question of the Depressed Classes "is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue". In the circumstances Gandhi would try to resist the decision of the government if it sticks to a policy of making any unprincipled concession to the Depressed Classes:

But I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, I must fast unto death". (81)

Gandhi's letter met with an evasive reply from Sir Samuel, the Secretary of State , who while advising Gandhi to wait until the decision of the Indian Franchise Committee is published assured him that the decision of the government will depend 'solely and only upon the merits of the case'. (82) The government remained firm in its decision and on the 16th August 1932 the Prime Minister announced his scheme of Communal Award.

The Comunal Award granted separate electorates to the Muslims, Europeans and Sikhs. To the Depressed Classes it gave both separate electorate and the right to vote and contest in the general or unreserved constituencies. A member of the Depressed Class, could

therefore, in some cases give two votes all at the same time. Special Depressed Class constituencies were also to be framed in selected areas where such people were most numerous and except in Madras, the constituencies were so designed as not to cover the whole area of the province. In Bengal since the Depressed Class voters were likely to constitute a majority in some of the general constituencies no number was fixed for special Depressed Class constituency. It was expected that the "Depressed Class should contain not less than ten seats in the Bengal Legislature". The special constituencies were also said to be set up as a temporary expedient and it was expected that they would terminate after twenty years if not earlier as per a relevant provision of the Award. The Award gave 71 seats to the Depressed Classes in all the provincial legislatures having 1508 seats. The allocation of seats was according to the following table:

<u>Province</u>	<u>Total Seats</u>	<u>Seats for Depressed Classes</u>
Madras	210	18
Bombay including Sind	200	10
Bengal	250	10
United Provinces	228	12
Punjab	175	-
Bihar & Orissa	175	7
Central Provinces including Berar	112	10
Assam	108	4
North West Frontier Province	50	-
T O T A L	1508	71

In his explanatory statement on the Communal Award the Prime

Minister claimed that his scheme would satisfy the rival claims of the Depressed Class people whose representatives were most vociferous in the Round Table Conference for separate representation of their community. The Award would also meet the demands of the nationalists who wanted to integrate the Depressed Classes within the fold of Hinduism. The Prime Minister said:

"Our main object in the case of the Depressed Classes has been while securing to them the spokesmen of their own choice in the legislatures of the province where they are found in large numbers, at the same time to avoid electoral arrangements which would perpetuate their segregation. Consequently Depressed Class voters will vote in general Hindu constituencies and an elected member in such a constituency will be influenced by his responsibility to this section of the electorate". (83)

Whatever might be the explanation given by the Prime Minister, the Award aroused serious apprehensions in the mind of Gandhi. He felt sure that grant of separate electorate to the Depressed Classes 'would end in nothing but civil war between the caste Hindus and Harijans'. (84) The possible consequence of separate electorates for Harijans ", he confided to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai on 21 August 1932, "fill me with horror... The separate electorates will create division among Hindus so much so that it will lead to bloodshed. Untouchable hooligans will make common cause with Muslim hooligans and kill caste Hindus. Has the British Government no idea of all this"? (85)

It is not true that the British Government could not foresee

this situation. On the contrary, the crux of the problem was that, as the government rightly saw the situation:

"Most of the Depressed Class leaders regard the Depressed Classes' problem as part of the communal problem. Most of Hindu opinion object to its being treated as part of the communal problem on the ground that Depressed Classes do not form a separate community as do Moslems, Europeans, Indian Christians etc". (86)

The government knew it further that with the granting of double vote to the Depressed Classes, one in a special constituency for their own representative and one in the general electorate, together with a modest number of reserved seats caste separatism would have the necessary sanction of the government and would be given official recognition. So this was all intended by the government. In final defence of their position for conceding separate electorate to the Depressed Classes the Prime Minister stated "The anomaly of giving certain members of the Depressed Classes two votes is abundantly justified by the urgent need of securing that their claims should be effectively expressed and the prospect of improving their actual condition promoted". (87)

The debates in the Round Table Conference had made it clear that there were major difference of opinions between most of the high caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes. Such breaches had made their appearance long ago and they became more manifest under definite colonial patronage since when with the introduction of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms the British imperial strategy set the

terms for decolonisation from 1920s.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Ambedkar was in favour of a complete political partition between Depressed Classes and the Hindus and the government believed that "It is an exceedingly difficult demand to refuse, in spite of the overwhelming difficulties...This demand may have to be met".⁽⁸⁹⁾ The British Government, therefore, announced the Communal Award as 'a bounty with a vengeance'.⁽⁹⁰⁾ When Lord Willingdon succeeded Irwin, Samuel Hoare apprised the Viceroy of the importance of the demand of the Depressed Classes along with the Muslims. Hoare also assured in private letters that their case would receive special advocacy. Ambedkar's hard work in England had its desired effect.⁽⁹¹⁾

But the Award could not satisfy all alike belonging to the Depressed Classes. The Depressed Classes' leaders of Bengal although satisfied with the provision of separate electorate were particularly unhappy with the number of seats allocated for them. Protest meetings were organised in the province in which it was alleged that the government did not do justice to the depressed people of Bengal. A representation was also sent by Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma which claimed for allocation of at least 27 out of 80 general seats in the provincial Legislature.⁽⁹²⁾ Even Ambedkar who won a great victory in his bargains particularly protested against the complete denial of the right of representation to the Depressed Classes of the Punjab.⁽⁹³⁾ On the other hand B.J.Deurukhar, the staunch supporter of Rajah-Moonje Pact, described the Communal Award as 'very disappointing'. According to him as a result of the separate electorates 'majority castes' among the Depressed Classes would capture the seats at the cost of the 'minority castes'

and the Depressed Classes as a whole would be isolated from the Hindus.⁽⁹⁴⁾ M.C.Rajah, the architect of the Rajah-Moonje Pact also felt apprehensive of the Imperial designs and his fear proved to be not unfounded as the British Premier had failed to "advise the communities to unite with one another politically, whatever their social and religious differences may be and to join in a Joint Electorate."⁽⁹⁵⁾ The Working Committee of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha in its meeting at Delhi on 20 and 21 August 1932 strongly condemned the Communal Award for having created separate constituencies for the Depressed Classes.⁽⁹⁶⁾ In another meeting held on the 25th September 1932 the Mahasabha complained that the Communal Award had deliberately flouted the unanimous opinion of the Hindus and important sections of the Depressed Classes in favour of joint electorates. The nationalist public opinion, which in general condemned the Communal Award as designed to weaken the forces of nationalism, regarded separate electorate as specially intended to weaken the solidarity of the Hindu community. *The Bombay Chronicle* observed that the main object of the Award was to turn the national majority of the Hindus into a minority.⁽⁹⁷⁾ It was also pointed out in the official reports that Hindus in general dislike the separate electorate for the Depressed Classes and extreme Hindu opinion regarded it "as a deliberate attempt to split Hinduism."⁽⁹⁸⁾

However, the most vehement opposition to the scheme of separate electorate for the depressed people came from Gandhi. On 18 August 1932 Gandhi wrote to the Prime Minister about his decision to

resist the scheme by 'perpetual fast unto death' which was to commence from the noon of 20 September 1932. But the Prime Minister's reply to Gandhi's letter contained no promise for reconsideration of the Award. It reiterated the decision of the government that there shall be no change in the scheme of separate electorate so long as the parties affected by the Award do not give their consent to a change. Naturally there was no indication of any solution of the crisis. The die was already cast.

The fast therefore created a problem, that of how to save Gandhi's life. In England men like Andrews, Polak and Lansbury began to invite the attention of the English people to the serious character of the situation. In India the 20th of September was observed as a day of fasting and prayer and Shantiniketan participated in the observance. Negotiations were opened for finding a way out of the impasse. Dr. Ambedkar was drawn into the negotiations and with the aid of men like Amritlal Thakkar, Rajagopalachari, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Birla, Sardar Patel, M.C.Rajah, Jayakar, Rajendra Prasad, Hridaynath Kunzru and others a scheme was formulated which met with the acceptance of all parties by the fifth day of the fast. Thus the Poona or Yervada Pact came into being (24 September 1932) which was signed by the caste Hindu politicians as well as Depressed Class leaders of two opposite groups⁽⁹⁹⁾ and cabled to the British Prime Minister for immediate acceptance so as to avert the disaster upon Gandhi's life.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Simultaneously Ambedkar and Srinivasan and M.C.Rajah made separate cables to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State and Viceroy indicating

their assent to the Pact. In the meantime the Pact was also unanimously ratified by the conference of Hindu leaders held in Bombay on 25 September 1932. (101)

V

One of the basic principles on which the Poona agreement was made was laid by the Liberal leader Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. He devised a compromise formula between the two hostile claims of separate and joint electorate. He proposed two different systems of election for two types of reserved seats. For some reserved seats in the joint electorate he suggested that the Depressed Class candidates would be nominated as a result of private consultation between Hindus and the Depressed Classes. For the rest of reserved seats the Sapru formula recommended two elections-primary and secondary. In the primary election the Depressed Class voters would choose a panel of three candidates for each seat out of whom their representatives would be finally elected by the general electorate, comprising caste Hindu as well as Depressed Class voters. Sapru held that this electoral system while maintaining the principle of joint electorate would enable the Depressed Classes to choose their own candidates, an opportunity not available to them previously. (102)

Ambedkar and Solanki, the two protagonists of the separate electorate system accepted the Sapru formula. But within its framework Ambedkar asked for 197 reserved seats as against 71 provided

by the Communal Award. Out of these 197 seats he wanted the double election system to be applicable for 76 leaving the rest to the single election system. He had further suggested that the Primary election was to continue for ten years, and the question of reservation was to be decided after a further period of 15 years by a referendum among the Depressed Classes. While Sapru had fixed the number of candidates to be elected in the primary election at three, Ambedkar fixed the number at two. (103)

There were breathless moments of stress and strains at the time of negotiations leading to the agreement at Yerwada. Ambedkar's panel system was at first not acceptable to Gandhi to whom the panel system should be applied to all or none of the reserved seats. Ambedkar was unwilling to agree, but soon emotionally won over gave his consent to Gandhi's terms. Then came another stalemate on the question of duration of primary election and referendum to decide the duration of reserved seats. Gandhi approved of the referendum, but said it should take place after five years. Here again Ambedkar refused to condescend and the Pact had to be signed at last without the condition of referendum attached to it. Finally, there had been also much of a haggling on the question of allocation of seats. It was then decided that 148 seats in the Provincial Assemblies should be granted to the Depressed Classes. At the same time they were to also have 10 per cent of the seats of the Hindus from British India in the Central Assembly. (104)

The Poona Pact gave the Depressed Classes more than double

the number of seats they had got in the Communal Award. The following comparative study will explain the relative advantage of the two so far as the Depressed Classes were concerned :

<u>Province</u>	<u>Seats under Communal Award</u>	<u>Seats under Poona Pact</u>
Madras	18	30
Bombay including Sind	10	15
Bengal	10	30
United Provinces	12	20
Punjab	-	8
Bihar & Orissa	7	18
Central Provinces & Berar	10	20
Assam	4	7
North West Frontier Province	-	-
 T O T A L	 71	 148

The Poona Pact was widely acclaimed by the nationalist public opinion as well as Press "as a personal triumph for Mr. Gandhi and a sure indication that Indian Political parties were able to settle their own differences".⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Most of the depressed people also felt satisfied with the deal of the Poona Pact under which they gained the all-time highest privilege so far as electoral representation was concerned. But Ambedkar did not seem to be satisfied with the arrangement. He made a psephological analysis of the result of the election which according to the new constitution was held in February 1937. His contention was that the advantage allowed to the Depressed Classes was actually intercepted by the Congress which bagged 78 out of total 151 seats reserved for the Untouchables. "The power to do mischief", Ambedkar held

"in elections which a joint electorate gives to a majority is increased immensely if the electoral system is based on the principle of a single member constituency".⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ The mischief was writ large in the election result of 1937. The Congressite candidate winning a reserved seat functioned as a party stooge operating largely at the instance of his Congress boss and therefore seldom dared to uphold the real interest of the untouchables unless instructed by the party to open his mouth on the floor of the Legislature.

According to Ambedkar, the benefits of the Communal Award although it had earmarked a lesser number of seats for the untouchables was definitely higher than that of the Poona Pact. The Communal Award gave the untouchables the benefit of Double Vote, one to be used through separate electorate and the other to be used in the general electorates. Now if the Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats it also deprived them of the right to the double vote. Ambedkar held that this increase in seats can never be deemed to be a compensation for the loss of the double vote which increased the bargaining power of the Depressed Classes.

"The Second vote given by the Communal Award was a priceless privilege. Its value as a political weapon was beyond reckoning. The voting strength of the Untouchables in each constituency is one to ten. With this voting free to be used in the election of caste Hindu candidates, the Untouchable would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate the issue of the general election".⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

Ambedkar felt convinced that a mere right to vote is not just

enough so long as it does not ensure the return of a candidate, himself being Untouchable at the same time. The Poona Pact having failed to give this guarantee would not come to the real benefit of the Untouchables. Then again as stated earlier the provision of panel system was also not acceptable to Ambedkar. He denounced the system as a costly paraphernalia. He was also afraid "that under the panel system of election, the general constituency would in most cases return the member who, from the strictly Depressed Class point of view ,was the weakest of the panel",i.e. a candidate who might have polled the lowest number of votes from the Depressed Classes in the primary election. Such fear was evidently accentuated by the orthodox Hindus' display of political strength in their opposition to Gandhi's anti-untouchability movement.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ It may be noted in this connection that Ambedkar was not the only Depressed Class leader to criticise the panel system. Some other Depressed Class leaders also preferred separate electorate provided in the Communal Award to the scheme of joint electorate prescribed in the Poona Pact. T.Chinniah, the convenor of All-India Adi Dravida Mahajan Sabha, Nungambukkam, Madras, held that under the Poona Pact the real representatives of the Depressed Classes would not be elected, because those who polled the lowest number of votes in the primary election would in most cases obtain majority of votes in the final election.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Even in far off Bengal, the Poona offer did not seem to have satisfied all the sections of the Untouchables. The Depressed Classes Association of Bengal had already registered its protest against the insufficient number of seats reserved for their members.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

But even keeping in mind the point of criticism levelled by Ambedkar against the Poona Pact one wonders as to how the same man who was so critical of the Pact could so forcefully support the agreement at its initial stage. In one of his first public utterance after the Poona agreement Ambedkar made it clear "I must confess... there was so much in common between the Mahatma and myself...I am very grateful to the Mahatma for having extricated me from a very difficult situation", meaning thereby that it was gandhi's conciliatory attitude that saved him from being held responsible in case Gandhi died at the time of his fast. Thereafter Ambedkar also remarked :

"My only regret is, why did not the Mahatma take up this attitude at the Round Table Conference? If he had shown the same consideration to my point of view, it would not have been necessary to go through this ordeal".⁽¹¹¹⁾

Gandhi once said, "It is always my lot to appear to be unfair. I cannot help it".⁽¹¹²⁾ This is quite true. Even a large majority of the Hindus whom he tried to save by keeping them united became critical of his policy. It was pointed out that had Gandhi agreed to reserved seats in joint electorate in the Round Table Conference the Depressed Class representatives would have been satisfied with lesser number of seats in which case the caste Hindus need not sacrifice so many seats to the Untouchables as they had to in Bengal and elsewhere.⁽¹¹³⁾ Again the acceptance of the principle of separate primary election was regarded as subversive of

the very purpose of Gandhi's fast, because it amounted to an acceptance of separate electorate. Reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes without any specific mention of the period at the end of which reservation would expire was therefore regarded as undemocratic if not anti-national too. "So long as there is reservation", observed the editor of an influential magazine

"mutual distrust and suspicion between the two sections of the Hindus will be in evidence. The earlier both such inner want of mutual confidence and its external signs disappear, the better for the Hindu community. The Hindus must attain solidarity within the minimum period."(114)

In the midst of a bitter recrimination everybody forgot that the principle Gandhi had maintained in the London Round Table Conference having been denied by the decision of His Majesty's Government, the problem had been oriented afresh. Gandhi had to therefore accept joint electorate with reserved seats only to avert the greater evil of separate electorate. Nobody again cared to recall that under the Rajah-Moonje Pact the Depressed Classes were to get 265 seats which was drastically reduced to only 148 under the Poona agreement.

But if the Poona Pact made a drastic retrenchment of the quota earmarked in the Rajah-Moonje Pact, it had also granted the Depressed Classes 18% of the general seats in the Federal Legislature. To many Hindus this appeared as undue bounty amounting to appeasement. Most of these people had fresh in their memory the events

of 1909 when Gopal Krishna Gokhale's overdose of liberalism had won for the Muslims some undue advantage under the Morley-Minto Reforms Act. They felt that more than two decades after, the same liberal extravagance and this time shown by Gandhi had won for the Depressed Classes unequal advantages for which the high caste Hindus alone had to suffer.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

The grievance of the caste Hindus were not wholly unreal. In Bengal the Hindus felt particularly sore about an arrangement which had made a large size dent upon their share. Quite a large section of Hindus in Bengal who were dissatisfied with the seats allocated to them under the Communal Award felt further aggrieved when the Poona Pact offered 30 seats to the Depressed Classes out of the 80 general seats. As pointed out by Subash Chandra Bose, "In province like Bengal where Hindus had already been unjustly treated in the Award, the Poona agreement was regarded as a further injustice by the rest of the Hindu community particularly in view of the fact that the depressed class hardly existed there."⁽¹¹⁶⁾ To Subhas Chandra not all the people belonging to the Depressed Class deserve to be identified as backward and hence should not be covered by the blanket deal of the Poona Pact. Many people shared his views which were reflected in at least two of the leading dailies of Calcutta - Subhas Chandra's *Liberty* (17 August 1932) and J.M.Sengupta's *Advance* (18 August 1932).⁽¹¹⁷⁾

This orthodox opposition to the Poona Pact was mounting in Bengal since December 1932, when 25 Hindu M.L.C.s had sent

a telegram to the Prime Minister, followed by another telegram from Satyendranath Sen, a member of Central Legislature. In January 1933 another delegation from Bengal consisting of B.P.SinhaRay, Hirendranath Dutta, Tulsi Goswami, Pramathnath Tagore, B.C.Chatterjee and J.N.Bose met the Viceroy to convey to him their disapproval of the Poona agreement. Lord Willingdon felt pertubed at the expression of their strong feeling and he wrote:

The Hindu position here is certainly very hard. Under the pact they have had a further 20 seats taken away from them and handed over to the Depressed Classes, with the result that they will be in a small minority in the new Council and this notwithstanding the fact that they are in Bengal the chief men of influence both educationally and materially".⁽¹¹⁸⁾

In a short time this 'orthodox Hindu backlash' assumed a very serious character. Thus in March 1933, J.L.Banerjee, a veteran Gandhite and a tried non-co-operationist moved in the Legislative Council a resolution which stated that the Poona Pact "is unacceptable in the peculiar circumstances of Bengal, that it is injurious to the interests of the Hindu community of this province and subversive of their solidarity", and "therefore, the Prime Minister should be pleased to revise and withdraw his acceptance of the same so far as this province is concerned". The resolution was also heartily supported by such other Hindu elite like S.M.Bose, Anand Mohan Poddar and Naresh Chandra Sengupta.⁽¹¹⁹⁾

It should be noted in this context that the strong Hindu reaction to the Poona Pact had in its turn further stiffened the

attitude of the Depressed Classes in Bengal. Babu Rasiklal Biswas was already critical of the Hindus and now Babu Mukunda Behari Mullick came to openly challenge the validity of the position of the Hindus. Babu Amulyadhan Ray came in almost a direct confrontation with the Hindus when he openly criticised J.L.Banerjee's resolution as a very glaring example of 'Brahminical fraud'. Not content with such invective he even went further and described Banerjee's move as the triumph of a 'determined combination of the zamindars, moneylenders and the caste Hindus against the Depressed Classes'. Emotion ran high, so much so that the sober voice of Aukshay Kumar Sen, the only caste Hindu to refuse to vote in favour of Banerjee's resolution was lost in the wilderness. (120) Mischief of clan spirit reigned supreme everywhere and endless bickerings leading to political chaos became the order of the day.

Gandhi, always 'nursing the unconquerable hope' of keeping the Untouchables bound together in fraternity with the Hindus gave them perhaps more seats than what were due to them. Considering the number of Depressed Class population this arrangement had nothing unfair in it. Rather it may appear to be very fair and just in the context of enormous injustice heaped upon the Untouchables for centuries in the past. But the colonial masters saw an opportunity in the situation. They convinced the depressed people that as a Hindu minority their interests were identical with those of the Muslims minority and their combined strength would increase their bargaining potential against the Hindus and would therefore bring more advantages for each of them. Henceforth

Bengal became the centre of a new political alignment between the Muslims and the Harijans while the European M.L.A.s remained patrons, priests and witnesses of this strange alliance. (121)

It may be interesting to note in this connection that the Poona Pact accepted by the British Government was later on criticised by many members of the British Parliament, particularly its Conservative members. The Joint Parliamentary Committee held that the original Communal Award contained a more satisfactory solution of the problem of Depressed Class representation than the Poona Pact, because on the one hand, it sought to maintain the unity of Hindu community by making provision for the caste Hindus and Depressed Classes voting together in the general constituencies, and on the other hand, it gave the latter the right to choose their own representatives so as 'to ensure their case being heard and to influence voting'. The Joint Committee also pointed out that the lesser quantum of representation given in the Communal Award was absolutely justified as the Depressed Classes were not in a position to find larger number of candidates of 'adequate calibre' on account of their backwardness. But since the Pact had been formally accepted under authority of His Majesty's Government according to the Clause 4 of the Communal Award, the Parliamentary Committee did not deem it politic to reject the Pact. (122) During the discussion on the Government of India Bill, 1935 in the House of Commons, some of the diehard Conservatives opposed the Poona Pact. Sir Henry Croft held that this pact would bring the Depressed Classes under the 'permanent bondage of Congress

leadership'. He pointed out that the 71 seats allotted to the Depressed Classes under the Communal Award would have gone to their actual representatives, but under the Poona Pact all 148 seats would be captured by the 'so-called depressed class representatives', set up by the Congress. He alleged that the Poona Pact had been manoeuvred by Gandhi 'with very great ingenuity', because the latter wanted to maintain 'the domination of Hindu political power'.⁽¹²³⁾ However the Labour member, Clement Attlee quickly pointed out the misconception of Croft. He said that Gandhi's policy was to remove the disabilities of the Depressed Classes by integrating them into the Hindu community, and that any policy of separating them from the Hindu community was dangerous.⁽¹²⁴⁾

The Poona Pact marked the end of an epoch. But there are people, now and then, who believed that Gandhi had won his victory by moral coercion. Critics of Gandhi also appeared to be trusted friends of the depressed people since more often than not they had made loud claims to vindicate the rights of the Untouchables. However, "It is a general popular error to imagine the louder complainers for the public to be the most anxious for its welfare".⁽¹²⁵⁾

N O T E S

1. *IAR* Vol. II (1930), pp. 367-371.
2. The Round Table Conference worked through nine sub-committees each of which was entrusted with a specific charge. The Minorities Sub-Committee (no. III) being chaired by the Prime Minister for example, was to recommend measures which may secure the willing co-operation of the minorities and the special interests. Similarly the Franchise Sub-committee (no. VI) under the chairmanship of Sir W.F. Jowitt was to suggest on what main principles was the franchise to be based for men and women.
3. *IRTC. 12th November 1930 - 19th January 1931. Proceedings. Fifth Plenary Meeting (The General Discussion) 20th November 1930,* pp. 123-127
4. *IRTC. 12th November 1930 - 19th January 1931. Proceedings of Sub-committee (Vol. III), Sub-committee No. III (Minorities),* First meeting dated 23.12.1930. pp. 18-19.
5. *Ibid* ..Appendix II. pp. 168-174.
6. *IAR* . Vol. II (1930), p. 371
7. *IRTC. 12th November 1930 - 19th January 1931. Proceedings of Sub-committee (Vol. III), Sub-committee No. III (Minorities),* p.19.
8. *IAR*. Vol. I (1931), p. 422.
9. *IRTC. 12th November 1930 - 19th January 1931, Sub-committee No. III (Minorities). (Sub-Committees' Reports, Conference Resolution and Prime Minister's Statement) Report presented at the meeting of the committee of the whole conference on 16 and 19 January 1931.* p. 47.
10. Keer D.,Dr. Ambedkar : Life and Mission, Bombay, 1991, pp.160-161.

11. Ambedkar's letter dated 21 January 1931. *Ibid.* p. 157.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Speech by M.C. Rajah dated 31 December 1931. *IAR.* Vol. II (1931), p.326.
14. See before. Chapter III, p. 111.
15. Omvedt G., *op.cit.*, pp. 172.
16. However, the Labour Party which assumed the role of Opposition in the Parliament soon expelled Macdonald for forming the National Government. Macdonald, thus for all intents and purpose, became the head of the Conservative or Tory Government with Mr. Wedgwood Benn being replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare as the new Secretary of State for India.
17. Speech of M.C. Rajah dated 31.12.1931. *IAR.* Vol. II (1931), p. 326.
18. *CWM.* Vol. XLVII, pp. 66-67.
19. Keer D., *op.cit.*, p. 167.
20. *IRTC (Second Session) 7th September 1931 - 1st December 1931. Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee (Vol. I.).* pp. 163-164.
21. *Ibid.* p. 164.
22. G.B. Appointment Deptt. *Report of the Bengal Franchise Committee* (Appendix C), Calcutta, 1932, pp. 23, 24.
23. *IRTC (Second Session). Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee (Vol.III).* p. 339.
24. *Ibid.* p. 1337.
25. *CWM.* Vol. XLVIII. p. 161. Extracts from Mahadev Desai's London letter.

26. *Ibid.* p. 179. Extracts from Elvyn Wrench's report.
27. *IRTC (Second Session). Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee (Vol. III.),* p. 1356.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.* p. 1357.
30. See before, p. 135.
31. *IRTC (Second Session) 7th September 1931 - 1st December 1931. Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee (Vol. III.),* pp. 1409-1411.
32. Keer D., *op.cit.*, p. 178.
33. Ambedkar B.R., *What Congress and Gandhi have Done to the Untouchables*, Bombay, 1945, pp. 307-309 (Appendix III. Minorities Pact).
34. *IRTC (Second Session) 7th September 1931-1st December 1931. Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee (Vol. III.),* Tenth meeting dated 13 November 1931, p. 1382
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.* p. 1385.
37. *IRTC (Second Session) 7th September 1931 - 1st December 1931. Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee (Vol. III),* Second Report of Minorities Committee dated 18 November 1931. p. 1389.
38. *Modern Review*, Calcutta, December 1931 (editorial notes).
39. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 15 November 1931 (editorial).
40. Nehru J., *Nehru : The First Sixteen Years*, Vol. I. ed. Norman Dorothy, Bombay, 1975, p. 270.
41. Das Durga, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*, Calcutta, 1973, p. 152.
42. CWM. Vol. XLVIII. p. 449

43. *Ibid.* p. 119.
44. Keer D., *op.cit.*,
45. *IAR.* Vol. I (1932), p. 333.
46. *Ibid.* p. 332 (Resolution Passed)
47. *Ibid.* pp. 335-336.
48. *Ibid.* p. 337.
49. M.C. Rajah's presidential address at the All-India Depressed Classes' Conference dated Bombay the 10th July 1932. *IAR* . Vol. II (1932), pp. 368-373.
50. *Ibid.* p. 369.
51. *Ibid.* p. 370-371.
52. There were of course some prominent Hindu leaders who supported the claims of the Depressed Classes as for example Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir A.P. Patro, Dewan Bahadur A. Ramaswami Mudalier, N.M. Joshi, A.Rangaswami Iyenger, Dewan Bahadur M. Ramachandra Rao and others including also Dr. B.S. Moonje and Brahmo Liberal Chimanlal Setalvad.
53. *IFC. Report*, Vol. I. (Prime Minister's letter of instruction), p. 108.
54. *The Times of India*, 8 March 1932.
55. *IFC.* Vol. IV. (Selection from Memoranda and Oral Evidence, Madras, Bombay, Bengal and U.P.), p. 65.
56. *Ibid.* p. 94.
57. *Ibid.* p. 346.
58. *Ibid.* p. 348.
59. *Ibid.* p. 581.

60. *Ibid.* p. 825.
61. *Ibid.* p. 832.
62. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 18 February 1932.
63. *IFC.* Vol. IV. p. 346.
64. *The Times of India*, 10 March 1932.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 1 April 1932.
67. *IFC.* Vol. IV. pp. 359-360.
68. *Ibid.* p. 823.
69. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 2 March 1932.
70. *IFC.* Vol. IV. pp. 359-360.
71. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 2 March 1932.
72. *Ibid.* 31 March 1932.
73. *Ibid.* 1 April 1932.
74. *IFC. Report.* Vol. I. pp. 108-127. Chapters X and XI.
75. *Ibid.* Chapter X. para 282, p. 109.
76. The figures in the table are in millions. There are some discrepancies in the data and figures in some entries are approximate, not available and also under revision. See *IFC. Report.* Vol. I. Chapter X. p. 119.
77. *IAR.* Vol. I. (1932), pp. 452-453. The Indian Franchise Committee Report.
78. *Ibid.* p. 458.
79. G.B. Appointment Deptt. *Report of the Bengal Franchise Committee*, Calcutta, 1932, p.4. Twelve annas is three-fourths of a rupee.
80. Minute of the Depressed Classes by Mr. M.B. Mullick dated 12 March 1932. *Ibid.* pp. 21-24.

81. Gandhi's letter to Sir Samuel Hoare dated 11 March, 1932.
BPSA ., pp. 159-160
82. *Ibid* . p. 160.
83. Sitaramayya P., *History of the Indian National Congress* Vol.I., New Delhi, 1969, p.663. For the whole text of the Communal Award see Appendix VI, pp. 656-664.
84. Desai M., *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, Ahmedabad, 1933, Vol.I. p. 302.
85. CWM.Vol. L., p. 469.
86. 'A Secret Note on the Problem of Depressed Class Representation', Templewood Collection (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library), MSS EUR E240, Vol. 65., p.38. Quoted in 'Casteism and the Communal Award':1932' by Hasi Banerjee in Bandyopadhyay S and Das S., *op.cit.*, pp. 131-132.
87. G.I., Home, Political No. 41/1/1932. A Secret Note on the Communal Award.
88. On this see Page D., *Prelude to Partition : The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control*, New Delhi (Oxford), 1982.
89. See extracts quoted by Hasi Banerjee from the India Office Department note on Communal and Minority Problem in Bandyopadhyay S. and Das S., *op.cit.*, p. 134.
90. Sitaramayya P., *op.cit.*, p. 534.
91. See extracts quoted by Hasi Banerjee from Templewood Collection. *op.cit.*, p. 134.
92. Bandyopadhyaya S., *op.cit.*, pp. 167-168.
93. G.I., Home, Political No. 41/4/1932. Appendix f. 25.

94. *Ibid* pp. 24-25.
95. M.C. Rajah's presidential address at the All-India Depressed Classes' Conference dated Bombay the 10th July 1932. *IAR*. Vol. II (1932), pp. 371-372.
96. *Ibid*. pp. 322, 326.
97. Quoted in Keer D., *op.cit.*, p. 204.
98. G.I., Home, Political No. 41/4/1932. Telegram from Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, dated London 22 August 1932.
99. *CWM*. Vol. II. pp. 464-465.
100. *IAR*. Vol. II (1932), pp. 251-252.
101. *Ibid*. pp. 252, 253.
102. Fischer L., *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, part II, Bombay, 1959, p. 63.
103. *IAR*. Vol. II (1932), p. 249.
104. For a more elaborate description of the negotiation see Keer D., *op.cit.*, pp. 212-214.
105. *India in 1931-32*, p. 63.
106. *BPSA*., p. 169.
107. *Ibid*. p. 172.
108. *India in 1932-33*, p. 13.
109. *CWM* . Vol. III. Appendix IX, pp. 431-432. T. Chinniah's letter to Gandhi dated 9 December 1932.
110. Bandyopadhyay S., *op.cit.*, p. 76.
111. *IAR*. Vol. II (1932), pp. 253-254. Ambedkar's speech.
112. Keer D., *op.cit.*, p. 212. Gandhi's conversation with Ambedkar at Yarvada jail.

113. Setalvad C.H., *Recollections and Reflections : An Autobiography*, Bombay, 1946, p. 375.
114. *Modern Review*, October 1932, pp. 482, 483.
115. Tripathi A., *Swadhinata Sangrame Bharater Jatiya Congress : 1885-1947* (in Beng.), Calcutta, 1990 (1397 B.S.), p. 203.
116. Bose S.C., *The Indian Struggle (1920-1942)*, Bombay, 1967, p. 248.
117. Tripathi A., *op.cit.*, p. 203. Interestingly Tripathi had in this connection referred to a letter written to Sardul Singh which though intercepted by the Intelligence Branch is preserved in the government file itself. See G.I., Home, Political No. 3/33 of 1940 (A).
118. Willingdon to Hoare dated 15 January 1933. *Ibid.* p. 203.
119. Bandyopadhyay S., *op.cit.*, p. 173.
120. *Ibid.*
121. Tripathi A., *op.cit.*, p. 203.
122. *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform (Session 1933 - 34)*, Vo. I. part I, Report, p. 68.
123. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, Vol. 301, No. 90, Committee Stage, 10 May 1935, pp. 1263-1270.
124. *Ibid.* pp. 1274-1275.
125. Edmund Burke, *Observations on 'The Present Stage of the Nation'*, 1769.

"Then I asked : Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so,
make it so?

He replied : All Poets believed that it does"

- William Blake.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 'A Memorable Fancy'.

The election results of 1937 were a great disillusionment for the Depressed Classes, now categorised under a non-pejorative term, Scheduled Castes. Of course Ambedkar had his own psephological analysis which claimed that Congress success at the poll was no indication of its acceptability among the Scheduled Castes. But it seemed a queer interpretation particularly when further endeavours were made for a complete polarisation through renewed demands for separate electorate. Once again there was recrudescence of the same old wrangle grown bitter still further by imperialism dangling the carrot of self-government for winning over the parties to support its war efforts. So nothing could be gained in the long run - the August Offer (1940), Draft Declaration (1942) and Wavell Plan (1945) all ended in fiasco.

Before that distressing finale Gandhi had all along tried to convince the Harijan leaders that their destiny is inextricably linked up with the general body of Hindu population and together they should fight the war against orthodoxy. But Ambedkar who had fresh in his memory the worst excesses of Brahminical insolence would stop not until separate electorate is gained. The two leaders each intending to do good to the people could agree with none. The nation still remained hopelessly vague about the future.