

## **Chapter 7**

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# **Caste, Politics and the Activities of Gandhiji and Ambedkar**

### **7.1. Introduction**

The role, ideas and activities of Gandhiji and Ambedkar towards the issue of Caste and its politics heralded a new dimension in the history of India. Their approaches relating to the issues of Caste, Untouchability and Harijans made them fundamentally opposite to each other. Gandhiji's role and activities relating to these issues were completely traditional in nature and peculiar in character. He could not do anything without the affiliation to the traditional beliefs and convictions. He never dared to break the norms of the caste-based traditions. His explanations in connection with these subjects were basically based on age-old traditions. In spite of his numerous limitations related to these factors, Gandhiji emerged as a saviour of the Harijans in India. He also became the champion of the ill-fated untouchables in India and founded the Harijan Sevak Sangha to uplift their socio-economic and educational status and position in the society. He earned name in the world history for the benevolence of the Harijans. He was influenced by the concept of liberal ideas relating to the social reforms of the Harijans in a different way that ushered an epoch-making event in the life of Gandhiji and also in the history of the freedom struggle in India. But the ideas, roles and activities of Ambedkar relating to these issues were much more attractive and encouraging. He fought for the abolition of the inhuman Caste Institution and Untouchability and tried to establish the concept of liberty, equality, fraternity, nationality, democracy, and socialism with a mission to build up India on the basis of liberalism, nationalism, humanism, justice in all aspects such as social, political, economic etc. His role for the progress of the Harijans as human being in India was very much reformative and energetic. However, Gandhiji and Ambedkar ultimately came forward to establish the concept of liberalism, social reforms, human rights and social justice in the Indian socio-political and economic arena. They worked for the betterment of the downtrodden, toiling masses of India in their own ways. They explained their views and opinions distinctively to uplift the ill-fated conditions of the Depressed Classes, Untouchables and Harijans. Both of them were completely

opposite to each other in the context of their thoughts and views relating to the issue of Caste, Untouchability and Harijans. However, Gandhian political philosophy was mainly based on the ideologies of Ahimsa (Non-Violence) and Satyagraha (Truthfulness) whereas the political ideology of Ambedkar was based on the principles of humanity, liberty, equality, fraternity, social democracy, political democracy, human rights, social justice, nationalism and so on. In fact, Gandhiji was so committed to these two cardinal ideas (Ahimsa and Satyagraha) that he even suspended political action in Chauri Chaura in 1921 when the situation became violent. For Gandhiji, non-violent action is the only test for truth. Satyagraha is a form of persuasion, which aimed not at the conquest of the opponent but at the removal of conflict through genuine agreement. Based on truth, non-violence and self-suffering, Satyagraha is a force that contained an element of coercion. According to him, "Satyagraha provides strong moral strength to the Satyagrahee who is himself willing to endure self-suffering"<sup>1</sup>. Ahimsa denotes not merely refusal to use violence; it also contains a positive psychological element seeking to eliminate ill-will. Love is an important constituent of ahimsa for, without love, ahimsa will remain a mere theoretical conceptualization. Ahimsa and truth, argued Gandhiji, "Are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. Nevertheless ahimsa is the means and truth the end"<sup>2</sup>. In politics, the use of ahimsa was based in Gandhi's view "upon the immutable maxim that government is possible only so long as the people consent, either consciously or unconsciously, to be governed"<sup>3</sup>. He developed a new form of political struggle based on the idea of Satyagraha or Non-violent protest. He ushered in a new era of nationalism in India by articulating the nationalist protest in the language of non-violence or ahimsa, which galvanized the masses into action. Gandhiji advised the masses to follow the essence of his two cardinal doctrines i. e. Ahimsa and Satyagraha to maintain tranquility in the field of society, polity and economy. Some scholars pointed out that the followers of Gandhiji almost failed to keep it up these two ideologies in mind whenever they moved to lead anti-British political movement in India. Even Gandhiji was forced to launch the 'quite India' movement against the colonial government to liberate the country from the foreign yoke through the historic callings of 'do or die' and 'fight to finish'. Naturally, the concept of Ahimsa and Satyagraha ultimately depended on the callings of 'himsa' (violence) in the true sense of the terms. Not only Gandhian political strategies failed to cope up the interest of the common masses but also it was to pursue non-violence

even facing the bayonet and bullet. It was a creed not to physically attack the law-makers but to sacrifice life in passive resistance. It was to non-co-operate with the government or to deny the rule through civil disobedience and not to force the government with arms. Gandhiji said, "When we do not like certain laws we do not break the heads of law-givers but we suffer and do not submit to the laws"<sup>4</sup>. He also said, "... Believe me that a man devoid of courage and man-hood can never be a passive resister"<sup>5</sup>. In Indian politics Gandhiji used the policy of non-violence non-co-operation in 1920 and the policy of civil disobedience in 1930 against the British Government. But he always maintained the creed of non-violence or passive resistance was not a weapon of the weak. He advised all to live a life leading to the realization of truth. He made no difference between the personal and political life in this regard. He advocated the concept of Ramrajya that was an ideal state of 'Swaraj'. He disapproved of proletarian dictatorship of the communists and also of Parliamentary democracy. Even he said that democracy do not serve any good in India. To him, "Parliaments are really emblems of slavery"<sup>6</sup>. In the last stage of his life, Gandhi proposed for the disbanding of the Congress Party after the attainment of freedom and turned it into a social organization<sup>7</sup>. In fact, he was not a rationalist or a follower of reason, but he claimed that his life was after inner-voice of the truth within. He stressed on 'Love-Force' instead of 'brute-force'. Practically speaking, Gandhiji tried to introduce the doctrines of Ahimsa and Non-violence in the field of political arena to liberate the country from the foreign suzerainty and bondage. But he did not come forward to implement these ideologies in the field of caste-politics to liberate the toiling masses from age-old traditional thoughts and believes of the Caste Institution. The Institution of Caste practically wrecked all sorts' of rights, privileges and liberty of the low-born peoples. But Ambedkar was the chief architect of several Hindu temple entry movements in India. His main motto was to establish the rights and privileges of the untouchables in the Hindu temples. But the Harijan Sevak Sangh of Gandhiji refused to incorporate abolition of Caste System in its programmes. Gandhiji used Satyagraha against Britishers but did not favour it for untouchables against the caste Hindus. He wanted to abolish untouchability but not at the cost of offending caste Hindus. Thus he had his own reservations on the issue of rights of the Depressed Classes. But Ambedkar wanted reorganization of the Hindu society with complete abolition of the Caste System and untouchability on the principle of liberty, equality and justice. He demanded the recognition of the Depressed Classes as a

separate community as the Muslims with separate political rights. His main mission was to annihilate caste, untouchability, socio-political, religious and age-old evil traditions and hypocrisy and to build up the country on the basis of the ideologies of liberty, equality, fraternity, nationality, democracy, socialism and so on. The other prime object of Ambedkar was to liberate the low-born people from the yoke of age-old evil Brahmanical traditions and believes to lead a free life in the society. However, Gandhiji and Ambedkar worked for the benefit of the downtrodden masses in India completely in opposite in directions to each others. Therefore, the role and activities of Gandhiji and Ambedkar towards the issue of Caste and its Politics was very much interesting and investigating to expose their real mentality publicly and historically in the true sense of the terms. To make a true picture relating to the questions of Caste and Untouchability before the emergence of Gandhiji was very much important in these connection to understand the real truth. Naturally, the discussions relating to these issues can be done under the following heads:

- 7.1 Caste Politics of the Congress Leaders and Politicians before the Emergence of Gandhiji and Ambedkar in the Political Arena.
- 7.2. Caste Politics after the Emergence of Gandhiji and Ambedkar in the Political arena.
- 7.3. Caste Politics between Gandhiji and Ambedkar in connection with the 'Communal Award' and the Historic 'Poona Pact' of 1932.
- 7.4. Caste Politics between Gandhiji and Ambedkar relating to the Question of the Harijan Temple Entry Movement.

## **7.2. Caste Politics of the Congress Leaders and Politicians before the Emergence of Gandhiji and Ambedkar in the Political Arena**

Before the emergence of Gandhiji and Ambedkar as national leaders in Indian political arena, the moderate politicians of the Indian National Congress tried to address the problems and issues of the Depressed Classes and Untouchables in India. Their dealings with the questions of age-old traditional, inhuman and superstitious social evils and social wrongs such as Caste system, Untouchability etc. were not fruitful at all. They failed to bring radical change in the sphere of socio-economic, politico-cultural, dictated socio-religious norms and customs of the so-called Hindu

society. Naturally, the Depressed Classes and the Untouchables of India remained in the same distressed conditions as before. Some scholars pointed out that the attitude of the political leaders of the Indian National Congress towards the problems of the Depressed Classes and Untouchables were just like a public show. Their main motto was to deceive them in all spheres of their individual as well as their national life. But W. C .Bannerjee, Dadabhai Nairobi, Budruddin Tyabji, Surendra Nath Banerjee and other eminent politicians of the Indian National Congress distinctively expressed their views on the incurable social issues like the Caste System, superstitions, Untouchability and others. Most of them worked on the line of their predecessors and always tried to protect their class interest intact. None of them came forward to launch a direct reform movement to eradicate numerous social evils from the Hindu society except few exceptions. Most of the moderate and extremist politicians of the Indian National Congress gave emphasis on political reform rather than social reforms. They did not like to give priority to social reform. As a result, there arose a great controversy relating to the question of social reform between the two groups of the Indian National Congress. The social reform group vehemently opposed to the role and activities of the political reform group. They pointed out that social reform was inevitable before political reform. Otherwise, the concept of Indian nation, nationalism, unity in diversity would not be possible at all. In fact, their fighting for independence against the mighty British imperialism was based on the damp of sand. The political reform group ultimately failed to realize the untold and priceless importance of the social reforms. Naturally, they lost a great opportunity to hasten the national movements with strong holds. Therefore, it can be said that the lot of the toiling masses of India was not improved up to the mark under the leadership of the pre-Gandhian politicians and leaders of the Indian National Congress. Although some politicians profoundly felt the necessity of a national movement against the mighty British Government since the inception of the Indian National Congress. They said that national movement should not be organized exclusively on political line only. It should consider the political questions along with the factors that affecting the Indian social economy. Therefore, they realized it very well that they should adopt best measures for vitalizing Hindu Society by removing all social evils.

That is why; we should examine the role, activities and attitudes of some Congress leaders and politicians in this perspective. The name of W. C .Banerjee - the first

President of the Indian National Congress may be mentioned first in this connection to realize the motive and intention of him relating to the issues of Caste and Untouchability. He clearly mentioned the following aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress in his Presidential address to make the national movements with strong holds.

- i. The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst the countrymen;
- ii. Eradication of all possible prejudices relating to race, creed, or provinces;
- iii. Consolidation of sentiments of national unity;
- iv. Recording of the opinions of educated classes on the pressing problems of the day; and
- v. Laying down of lines of future course of action in the public interest etc.

Therefore, it can be pointed out that Mr. Banerjee did not include a provision for direct anti-caste and anti-untouchability campaign against the orthodox Hindus to bring solidarity and unity among the multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious people of colonial India. Mr. Banerjee expressed his views once again on the subject of Social Reform in the Presidential address in the Eighth Session of the Indian National Congress in 1892. He pointed out that some of their critics had been busy in advising them that they ought not to meddle with political matters, but leave politics aside and devote themselves to social subjects in order to improve the social system of their country. They even demanded that they knew their affairs better than those. However, Mr. Banerjee was one who had very little faith in such public discussions. According to him; this matter ought to be left to the individuals of a community who belong to the same social organization to do what they could do for its improvement<sup>8</sup>. He also noted the fact that they knew it very well that how people became excited when social subjects were discussed in public. He cited the example of the Age of Consent Bill in this regard that was introduced into the Viceregal Legislative Council. Even Mr. Banerjee did not propose to say one word as to the merits of the controversy that arose over these subjects. He alluded to it to illustrate how apt the public mind was to get agitated over these social matters if they were discussed in a hostile and unfriendly spirit in public. He pointed out that they did not understand what was meant by social reformation. Even some of them were very anxious and pointed out that their daughters should have the same education as theirs sons, that they should go

to Universities, that they should adopt learned professions; others who were more timid would be content with finding that their children were not married when they were very young, and that widows should not remain widows all through the rest of their lives. He always expected Congress to remain as a pure political organization devoting its energies only to political matters. Mr. Banerjee was very much afraid about the critics who always tried to find out their faults for not making social subjects a part of their work. And it was very much surprising to him when the critics uphold the proposition that the Congress platform was suitable only to discuss social problems and to find out its solutions. Mr. Banerjee was very much worried against those who held that they were not fit for political reform. He clearly pointed out that there was no connection between social and political reform. He cited the instances to prove this notion. He pointed out that they had been suggesting year after year on different matters, like the separation of judicial from executive functions in the same officer. So there was no urgency to give top priority to social reforms before the completion of the political reforms. In the same way, they took Permanent Settlement which they had been advocating, the amendment of the law relating to forests and other such measures. Mr. Banerjee also asked what these had to do with social reform.

But some emergent nationalists expressed their views in favour of social reform in the first session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay in 1885. The name of Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao, Justice M. G. Renade (the then Rao Bahadur) and others may be mentioned in this connection who critically highlighted the necessity and utmost urgency of the eradication and removal of all age-old traditional inhuman and unscientific socio-religious, and poisonous evil dogmas from Hindu Society. Practically speaking, nothing was done in this regard in 1886. As a result, there arose a great controversy among the moderates, extremist leaders, politicians and other educated Indian intelligentsia in connection with the question of social reform and political reform. Naturally, they were divided into two opposite camps. But the conservative groups of the Indian National Congress asserted their proposition in favour of political reform rather than social reform. They proposed for the establishment of a separate organization to address the issues of caste and untouchability. They raised numerous questions in connection with the utility of social reforms. They said that Congress should set up a separate body for the discussion of social questions. It was not the right way of social discussion in the

Congress platform. In fact, it was completely intolerable to them. They did not like the Social Reform group. To them, Congress should not take any initiative to eradicate social evils under the umbrella of the Indian National Congress. Under these unavoidable circumstances, a separate organization called the 'Indian National Social Conference' was formed for the consideration of different subjects relating to the questions of social reforms, social economy, socio-religious digamous and other burning issues.

But Dadabhai Nairaji was one from the leaders who presided over the Second Session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in 1886. He expressed his opinions relating to the issues of social reforms with utmost antipathy. He cheerfully mentioned that Congress ought to take up the questions of social reforms relating to caste, untouchability, superstitions and others. But Congress failed to do these social reforms. Naturally, the failure of the Congress had been identified as a reproach against them. He said that no other member of the Congress had realized the necessity of social reforms more than him. He said that there was proper time, proper circumstance, proper party and proper place for everything. All of them were assembled together in the Congress platform as a political body to represent their political aspirations to their rulers, not to discuss social reforms. None should blame them for ignoring the social reforms of the Hindu society. The Hindus were categorically divided into numerous castes and each caste group had its own customs and social arrangements that were distinctively different from each other's in the same province side. Even the Mohammedans, Christians of various denominations, Parsis, Sikhs, Brahmos and others lived in India. How could this gathering of all classes discuss the social reforms needed in each individual class? Only the members of that class could effectively address to the reforms one needed. That is why; the Congress must confine itself to these questions in which the entire nation had a direct participation and it must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to Class Congress<sup>9</sup>. Under these circumstances late Rajah Sir T. Madhav Rao (K.C.S.I.) presided over the First Indian Social Conference held at Madras in 1887. Many supporters attended the meeting. They realized the necessity of holding such conferences in different parts of India. They expressed their valuable opinion on the subject of social reforms. They proposed a plan to adopt the required measures for the improvement of the conditions of the Depressed Classes in the Indian society.

Even some of them came forward to deal with different subjects relating to the disabilities attendant on distant sea-voyages, the ruinous expenses of marriage, the limitations of the age below which marriage should not take place, the re-marriages of youthful widows, the evils of the remarriages of old men with young girls, the forms and evidences of marriages and inter-marriages between sub-divisions of the same caste, caste problems, untouchability and so on. Their main motive was to establish a society based on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity in India that would hasten the process of democratic movement against the British Government. As a result, they proposed to form different sub-committees to deal with these social questions. The Sub-Committees advocated certain fundamental principles and penalties for breaking its norms. Therefore, the members of the Social Reform Party should enforce these norms, otherwise they might have to be bound by the prescribed penalties by the Sub-Committees themselves, or through their spiritual heads whenever it was possible to do so, or through Civil Courts. And failing all by application to Government for enabling the Committees to enforce the rules in respect of their own pledged members.

Budruddin Tyabji, a reputed Congress leader who presided over the Third Annual Session of the Congress held at Madras in 1887 delivered a speech on the subject of Social Reform in that meeting. But the attitude of Mr. Tyabji towards the issues of caste and untouchability and other social evils can be found out from his lectures given there on social reforms. He clearly pointed out that an objection was raised against the Congress for not addressing the social questions relating to age-old acute social evils. However, this objection seemed to him not only strange but also irrelevant because Congress was consisted of the representatives, not of any one class or community, not of one part of India, but all the different parts, and of all the different classes, and of all the different communities of India. But any question of Social Reform must be related only to a particular caste or community not the whole class of colonial India. Apart from these, the arguments against the thesis of social reforms, Mr. Tyabji asked the people of different castes, classes and communities to solve their social problems in their own way. He said that Mussalmans had their own social problems to solve, just as the Hindu and Parsi friends had theirs. The leaders of the particular communities to which they belonged could deal with these questions best. He also pointed out that that the only wise and possible way that could be

adopted was to confine their discussions only to such questions that affected the whole of India at large. However, Surendra Nath Banerjee who presided over the meeting of the Congress Session held in Poona in 1895 mentioned the following subjects on 'Social Reform' in his presidential speech. This was the last occasion when a Congress President expressed his personal views on this matter.

Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee, the-then President of the Indian National Congress pointed out that they could not afford to have a schism in their camp because already they had told them that it was a Hindu Congress, although the presence of their Mohammedan friends completely contradicted the statement. This was the Congress of one social party rather than that of another. The Congress consisted of the Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Christians, the Parsis and the Sikhs, of those who would reform their social customs and those who would not and Congress was the pillar of united India. Mr. S.N. Banerjee also pointed out that they had all agreed to bury their social and religious differences and recognized the one common fact under the common platform of the Indian National Congress that being the subjects of the same sovereign and living under the same Government and the same political institutions, they had common rights and common grievances and they had called forth this Congress into existence with a view to safeguard and extend their rights and redress their grievances. What should they say of a Faculty of Doctors who fell out, because though in perfect accord as to the principles of their science, they could not agree as to the age at which they should marry their daughters, or whether they should remarry their widowed daughters or not. He clearly mentioned that it was a political and not a social movement. Therefore, it was not an urgent matter to complaint relating to this issue against them. He said that they were not a social organization any more than it could be urged against any of their lawyer friends that they were not doctors. Even in regard to the question of political matters, such was their respect for the opinions of minorities, that so far back as 1887, he thought it was at the instance of Mr. Badruddin Tyabji, who once was their President and whose elevation to the Bench of the Bombay High Court was a matter of national congratulation, a resolution was passed to the effect that where there was practical unanimity among a class, though in a minority in the Congress, that a question should not be discussed, it should forthwith be abandoned. There was special danger to which an organization such as theirs, was exposed and which must be guarded against them, the danger of there being

developed from within the seeds of dissension and dispute<sup>10</sup>. Under these unavoidable circumstances, the 'Social Reform Party' had already established a separate organization of its own called the 'Indian National Social Conference' in 1887 to address different types of social evils that festered Hindu society at a large. But the members of this Conference were not satisfied with the activities of Congress as Congress was completely dissociating itself from questions of social reform. Many leaders of the Indian National Congress expressed their views that Social Reform should not precede Political Reform and pressed for a decision. Auckland Colvin, a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council vividly stated that Indians ought to turn their attention to Social Reform in preference to endeavours they were making "to teach the British what their duties were in regard to the Government of India"<sup>11</sup>. But Mr. S.N. Banerjee was the last Congress President who highlighted the Congress motive towards the issue of social reforms in 1895. None of the Congress President considered social reforms as on urgent basis to eradicate all sorts of the social evils existed in the Hindu society, like caste, untouchability etc. As a result, there arose a great controversy between the two groups of the Congress camp on the issue of social reform versus political reform. Dadabhai Naoraji, Budruddin Tyabji and Surendranath Banerjee belonged to a particular school. They individually realized the importance of social reform. But W. C. Bannerjee and others who belonged to other school demanded social reform as on urgent basis under the umbrella of the Indian National Congress. They vividly pointed out that there could not be build up political reform with out the completion of the social reform. Both these schools within the Congress camp were fundamentally opposed to each other and did not develop a spirit of antagonism and intolerance towards each other up to 1895. As a result, the INC and the Social Conference functioned as two distinctive parallel organizations. They already tried to fulfill their particular aims and objectives. In spite of their differences, the relation between the two schools in the Congress camp was good and co-operative up to 1895. For instance, it can be noted here that the programmes of the Indian National Congress and the Social Conference were held in the same pandal and majority of the Congressmen attended the Social Conference who had come to attend the Congress session. But the relation between the two groups became worse due to the Anti-Social Reform Section of the Congress after 1895. Therefore, the Social Conference became an eyesore to them. They even did not like to use the Congress pandal for holding the session of the Social Conference. When the Congress met in

Poona in 1895, they rebelled and threatened to burn the Congress pandel if the Congress would allow for using that pandal for the purpose of the Social Conference. Tilak played a vital role among the other leaders of the Political Reform group against the Social Reform Section group in this context. Although he said, 'Swaraj is my birth right'. In the context of Untouchability, once he stated, "If a God were to tolerate Untouchability, I would not recognize him as God at all."<sup>12</sup>. Yet he deadyly opposed to use the Congress pandel by the Social Conference. Therefore, he, along with the other leaders of the Indian National Congress threatened to burn the Congress pandal if they would allow the Social Reform group to use the pandel of the Congress. The rebellious group succeeded because the Pro-Social Reform Party in the Congress was not prepared to fight its opponents. Therefore, it can be pointed out that the Pro-Social Reform Party in the Congress did not like to take up the challenge was evident from the letter which Mr. Surrendranath Bannerjee wrote to Mr. Ranade over the question raised by Mr. Tilak's Party regarding the use of the Congress pandel by the Social Conference in which he said, "The raison d'etre for excluding social question from our deliberations is that were we to take up such questions it might lead to serious difference ultimately culminating in a schism, and it is a matter of the first importance that we should prevent a split. The request of the other side is very unreasonable; but we have sometimes to submit to unreasonable demands to avert greater evils"<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, Congress did not want to consider this matter under the pressure of the Anti-Social Reform group. But some of the leading Social Reformers welcomed this rebellion by the opponent of the Social Reform Party in the Congress against the Conference. Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao wrote to Mr. Ranade that he "was glad that the pandel was not allowed to be used by the Social Conference, for the deception that used to be practiced by the Congress upon the English people that it worked in conjunction with the Social Conference was unveiled and the English people would now clearly understand that the Congress really did not mean to work with the social conference"<sup>14</sup>.

That is why, no Congress President after 1895 raised the question of social reforms in their Presidential address. In fact, the Congress had become purely a political body after 1895 and it had completely discarded the principle of social reform from their agenda to remove the social evils of the Hindu society. Congress had done nothing since the beginning up to 1916 on those issues in the Hindu society. Under such

unavoidable circumstances, the Depressed Classes passed the following resolutions in the year of 1917 at two separate meetings held in the city Bombay under two different Presidents. The first meeting was called under the chairmanship of Sir Chandavarkar on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1917 and passed the following resolutions<sup>15</sup>.

First of all, it was resolved to remain loyal to the British Government and prayed for victory of the Allies.

Secondly, it was resolved unanimously to approve the scheme of reform in the administration of India Muslim League.

Thirdly, it was unanimously resolved in this meeting to improve the lot of the untouchables, Depressed Classes considering their degraded conditions in the Hindu society, economy, polity, education etc. through the scheme of reform and reconstitution of the Legislative Councils which Government might be pleased to adopt necessary measures to pay due attention to protect the interests of those classes. It was further noted in this meeting that the British Government was so gracious to grant these classes the right to elect their own representatives to the said Councils in proportion to their numbers.

Fourthly, it was unanimously appealed to the British Government for the introduction of a compulsory and free system of education to improve the social elevation of any community which completely depended upon the universal spread of education among its members and it would be much help to uplift the ill-fated conditions of the Depressed Classes by removing their the age-old illiteracy and ignorance

Fifthly, it was unanimously authorized the Chairman of this public meeting to appeal the I.N.C. to pass at its forthcoming session a distinct and independent resolution in favour of the Depressed Classes so that they could remove all the disabilities imposed by religion and custom upon them that were prohibiting them from admission into public schools, hospitals, courts of justice and public offices, and the use of public wells, etc. These disabilities social in origin, amount in law and practice to political disabilities and as such fall legitimately within the political mission and propaganda of the Indian National Congress.

Sixthly; it was further resolved to appeal especially the higher castes, who demanded political rights and treated it as the only way out for the purpose of removing the blot of degradation from the Depressed Classes, which had subjected those classes to the worst of treatment in their own country.

The second meeting under the Chairmanship of one Bapuji Namdeo Bagade, a leader of the Non-Brahmin party was also summoned in November, 1917 and unanimously adopted the following resolutions<sup>16</sup>:

Firstly, it was resolved to remain loyal to the British throne.

Secondly, it was resolved not to give its support to the Congress-League Scheme.

Thirdly, it was resolved that Colonial India should remain under the control of the British administration till the improvement of all classes and specially the Depressed Classes to participate in the administration of the country

Fourthly, it was further resolved that the British Government must had to provide special grant to the untouchables relating to their own representatives in the various legislative bodies to ensure their civil and political rights.

Fifthly, it was approved the objectives of the Depressed India Association (Bahiskrit Bharat Samaj) and supported the deputation to be sent on its behalf to Mr. Montagu.

Sixthly, there was an appeal to the British Government that they should take special measures to fulfill the needs of the Depressed Classes, make their primary education both free and compulsory and to give special facilities by way of scholarship to the students of the Depressed Classes.

Seventhly, it was further resolved unanimously to authorize the President of this meeting to forward the above resolution to the Viceroy and the Government of Bombay.

Under these circumstances, the Indian National Congress, under the Presidentship of Mrs. Annie Besant, passed a resolution in the Annual Session held in Calcutta in 1917. The Indian National Congress appealed to the people of India for understanding the necessity and righteousness of removing all disabilities upon the Depressed Classes imposed by custom, the disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience.

The representative from Madras, G.A. Natesan also highlighted this resolution at that meeting and pointed out that the question of justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities. The Subjects Committee realized the necessity and unique character of this Congress after obtaining self-government in colonial India. The first duty of the Congress was to remove all inequalities and injustice. He also pointed out that without injuring their religious feelings, without giving up all that was best in their religious tradition; the Congress had a right to ask of them and others elsewhere that such absurd restrictions as the non-admission of these people to schools should be removed. These people were refused even the use of common well. Naturally, these restrictions should be disappeared. When Responsible Self-Government was to be given to them they should be in a position to say that Indians of all classes, of all creeds, had the fullest rights, to all institutions so that Indian manhood may develop in all its truest, best the noblest traditions<sup>17</sup>.

Ambedkar critically discussed the activities and intention of Mrs. Annie Besant in this regard. According to him, she had a strong dislike for the Untouchables. Ambedkar pointed out about an article on 'The Uplift of the Depressed Classes' had written by Mrs. Annie Besant which was published in the Indian Review, February, 1909. Mrs. Annie Besant expressed her views on the matter of social reforms relating to the uplift of the Depressed Classes. She said that a large section of the people who were ignorant, degraded, unclean in language, habits and others remained as the social pyramid in every nation of the world. But they performed many tasks which were necessary for society. In spite of that, they were neglected by the very society to whose needs they fulfilled. In England, she treated this class as 'submerged tenth'. It was formed by the one-tenth of the total population of England. They suffered severely from starvation, malnutrition, weak nervous system and their children had to die premature due to ill-nourishment, rickety, and often malformation and other

causes. They chiefly consisted of unskilled labourers and were compelled to perform the roughest work like that of the scavengers, sweepers, navies' casual dock-labourers, costermongers. It was forming its worse type; drift all the wastrels of society, the drunkards, the loafers, the coarsely dissolute, the tramps, the vagabonds, the clumsily criminal, the ruffians. In India, this class was formed by one sixth of the total population. They were called by the generic name of the 'Depressed Classes'. They emerged from the aboriginal inhabitants of the country, conquered and enslaved by the Aryan invaders. They were drunken and utterly indifferent to cleanliness whether of food, person or dwelling etc. But Criminal communities, such as hereditary thieves, lived apart and did not mingle with the scavengers, sweepers, husbandmen and the followers of other simple crafts who made up the huge bulk of the depressed. They were gentle, docile, as a rule industrious, pathetically submissive, merry enough when not in actual want, with a bright though generally very limited intelligence; of truth and the civic virtues they were for the most part utterly devoid how should they be anything else? But they were affectionate, grateful for the slightest kindness, and with much 'natural religion'. In fact, they offered good material for simple and useful though humble civic life. She said that only through education their condition would be developed. But a difficulty arose at the outset, for one class of the community, moved by a noble feeling of compassion and benevolence, but not adding thereto a careful and detailed consideration of the conditions, demands, for the children of the pariah community admission to the schools frequented by the sons of the higher classes, and charges with lack of brotherhood those who were not in favour of this policy. Naturally, they could not develop themselves up to the mark due to the lack of brotherhood of the caste Hindus, educational facilities and other required privileges in the then caste-ridden society. Their demands were fulfilled to lead their livelihood. She also pointed out that they should forfeit the hardly won fruits of the education of generations, in order to create an artificial equality, as disastrous to the progress of the future as it would be useless for the improvement of the present. The children of the Depressed Classes needed, first of all, to be taught cleanliness, outside decency of behaviour, and the earliest rudiments of education, religion and morality. Their bodies, at present were ill-odorous and foul with the liquor and strong-smelling food out of which for generations they had been built up. Naturally, it would be needed for them some generations of purer food and living to make their bodies fit to sit in the close neighbourhood of a school-room with children who had received bodies from an

ancestry trained in habits of exquisite personal cleanliness and fed on pure food-stuffs. That is why; the novel mission would have to raise the Depressed Classes to a similar level of physical purity, not to drag down the clean to the dirty. This should be done for close association. Realizing the hard reality, she pointed out that they were not blaming these children, or their parents for being what they were. This was stating a mere palpable fact. The first daily lesson in a school for these children should be a bath and the putting on of a clean cloth. The second should be a meal of clean wholesome food. The primary needs could not be supplied in a school for children who took their daily bath in the early morning and who came to school well-fed. She also highlighted the fact that another difficulty that the teachers had to face of these children was the contagious diseases that were bred from first. She cited eye-disease as for example that was occurred wholly due to neglects. It was one of the most common and 'catching' complaints among them. In the Panchama schools in Madras, the teachers were ever on the alert to detect and check this, and the children's eyes were daily washed and disease was thus prevented. But was it to be expected that fathers and mothers, whose daily care would protect their children from such dirty disease should deliberately expose them at school to this infection? Naturally, the manners and habits of these children were not in a position to be imitated by gently-nurtured children. Children learnt manners chiefly by imitation from well-bred parents and teachers. They should be trained in continual and rigid self-control for the comfort and convenience of themselves as the cultured children. If, at the school, they were to be made to associate with children not thus trained, they would quickly fall into the ways which they would see around them. So they should be rendered good habits until fixed by long practice. It was far easier to be slipshod than accurate and to be careless than careful. That is why; the children of good families in which good manners and courtesy were hereditary had a vital importance in this respect. Gentle speech, well-modulated voice, pleasant ways, these were the valuable results of long culture, and to let them be swamped out was no true brotherhood. In England, it had never been regarded as desirable to educate boys or girls of all classes side by side, and such grotesque equalizing of the unequal would be scouted. Eton and Harrow were admittedly the schools for the higher classes; Rugby were Winchester were also schools for gentlemen's sons, though somewhat less aristocratic. Then come a number of schools, frequented chiefly by sons of the provincial middle class. Then the Board schools, where the sons of artisans and the general manual labour classes were taught;

and below all these for the waifs and strays, were the ragged schools, the name of which indicates the type of their scholars, and the numerous charitable institutions. A man in England who proposed that ragged school-children should be admitted to Eton and Harrow would not be argued with, but laughed at. Here, when a similar proposition was made in the name of brotherhood, people seem ashamed to point out frankly its absurdity, and they did not realize that the proposal is merely a violent reaction against the cruel wrongs which had been inflicted on the Depressed Classes, the outcry of an awakened conscience, which had not yet had time to call right reason to guide its emotions. It was sometimes said that Government schools paid no attention to social differences; therein they show that they were essentially 'foreign' in their spirit. They would not deal so with the sons of their own people, though they may be careless of the sons of Indians, and lump them all together, clean and dirty alike. It was very easy to see the differences of 'tone' in the youths when only the sons of the cultured classes were admitted to a school, and it was to the interest of the Indians that they should send their sons where they were guarded from coarse influences as Englishmen guard their own sons in England<sup>18</sup>.

As a Bombay representative, Bhulabhai Desai expressed his views in support of this resolution and pointed out that their brethren suffered much under numerous social evils and disabilities that blew to the equality, goodwill and unity of man. How did they approach the British Democracy or any other power to uplift their own brethren? They could do it only by self-help. It was needless to approach any other power for these reasons. The Congress had taken a bold decision to allow this resolution for the benefit of the Depressed Classes. The existence of the social evils and disabilities was the great bane that was an insult to the name of Hinduism. Therefore, both on the ground of necessity and on the ground of justice, as well as on the ground of righteousness, for the truth that they cherished, how could they deny them what this resolution demands, when the justice lies in their own hands? In addition, if you failed to do that, with what justice, with what face, would they demand Self-Government?<sup>19</sup>.

Rama Iyer of Malabar expressed his views on the social reform issues and pointed out that this resolution urged for social freedom by which they would break the shackles that bind the lower classes that were the foot of the nation. If anyone would like to

climb the hill of Home Rule, they must have to break first the shackles on their feet and then only would Home Rule come to them. He also noted the fact that none could not be political democrats and at the same times social autocrats. A social slave could not be politically a free man. Their motto was to make united India, not only politically united but also united all along the line. He urged the Brahmins, who belonged to the higher castes and appealed to them to go to their villages and shatter the shackles of the low castes people who were struggling against their own men - the social bureaucrats of their own land<sup>20</sup>.

Asaf Ali of Delhi supported that resolution and delivered his observations on social reforms. Mr. Ali said that the Depressed Classes were severely suffered from numerous social problems. They were crying upon the autocratic actions of the bureaucratic bunglers. They were victimized for many misfortunes. They were forced to do their degraded trades in utter muteness for thousands of years. They never got opportunity to emerge from the abyss of degradation into which the cruel and utterly unjustified customs of the country had hurled on them who were vociferously clamouring for the attainment or preservation of human rights for themselves. However, it was not fair to leave a large section of humanity into a damp of sufferings and evil social wrongs. Others were shedding their blood in the battlefield for their redress. The 'untouchables', were forced to subject themselves as the sub-human beings and children of the soil, in whose veins coursed the self-same 'red-blood' as in the veins of those who arrogated superiority to themselves. The Depressed Classes demanded special privileges for their betterment in worldly circumstances. They could not be debarred from the birth right of man. It was a standing reproach to the Indians that they had any Depressed Classes at all, and it was for the extinction of this reproach that they prayed.<sup>21</sup>

### **7.3. Caste Politics after the Emergence of Gandhiji and Ambedkar in the Political Arena**

Gandhian charisma spellbound the common people in Indian politics. Under his leadership, Indian freedom movement got a new dimension and impetus. His supremacy and position in the congress was absolute and unchallenging. The Indian freedom movement was centered on the versatile personality and genius of Gandhiji

during the year of 1919–20 to 1947. He was the only person among the Indian leaders who was successful in organizing the vast mass movement under the umbrella of the Indian National Congress against the British imperialism. In fact, he applied the blue-print of the South African experiences in Indian politics which ushered an epoch-making event in Indian Independence movement. Rothermund, a German historian, entitled Gandhiji as a creative politician. According to him, “Gandhiji had to create almost everything; a political organization, the means of communication, the ways and means of articulating political protest and the solidarity of the people whom he was supposed to lead. This was a challenge...”<sup>22</sup>. Louis Fischer stated about Gandhiji that “No ism held him (Gandhi) rigid in its grip. No theory guided his thoughts or actions. He strove to keep his mind open. He reserved the right to differ with himself....Gandhi was independent, unfettered, unpredictable, hence exciting and difficult.”<sup>23</sup> Rajoni Palm Dutta pointed out that “Gandhiji was the chosen representative and ablest leader of bourgeois nationalism.”<sup>24</sup> Judith Brown said that “Gandhiji was the enigmatic national leader as well as the erratic leader.”<sup>25</sup> Gandhiji himself opined that “Do I contradict myself? Consistency is a hobgoblin.”<sup>26</sup> That is the question. In fact, Gandhiji became a national leader in Indian politics in 1919 immediately after the beginning of the Rowlatt Satyagraha movement against the British Government. The blue-print of his South African experiences during the period of 1893 to 1914 played a vital role in this context. He gathered experiences beyond direct political involvement in India as per the instruction of his political guru, Gopalkrishna Gokhle. He got an opportunity to take part in the regional movement of Ahmedabad, Champaran and Kheda (Kaira) which hastened the process of confidence building among the common people about his strategy of fighting against the British imperialism. Besides, a large number of influential leaders of the Congress were either already passed away or became politically less important at this juncture. Under this turmoil conditions, Gandhiji became a popular leader in Indian political scenario. Therefore, his political activities in India were based on the principle of Ahimsa (non-violence), Satyagraha (truthfulness) etc. Gandhiji derived the idea of non-violence (Ahimsa) from Buddhism and Jainism. He gathered knowledge by reading ‘The light of Asia’ of Edwin Arnold, ‘The song celestial’, ‘New and old Testament’, ‘Heroes and Hero-worship’ of Carlyle etc. which stirred the mind of Gandhiji at a large. To him, “Truth is the law of our being.”<sup>27</sup> “The truth was absolute and not dynamic and consequently changeless.”<sup>28</sup> On the way of living a truthful life he derived deductively

“non-violence” as a creed and ‘satyagraha’ (practice of truth) as a changeless behaviour. Gandhiji applied this non-violence creed to politics against the British for the freedom of India. Faith in non-violence was his first and the last article.<sup>29</sup> According to him, only moral force or soul force of ‘Ahimsa’ or non-violence or the practice of truth could help others in arousing the inner soul-force or the call of the truth. That is why; he used the creed of non-violence as a moral force to change the minds of the evil doers. As he stated that, no man is basically an evil doer. In fact, Gandhiji was perhaps the first man to politicize the concept of non-violence and eternal truth in order to change society and the state. He evinced and renewed the philosophy of mercy and non-violence of Buddhism<sup>30</sup> and Jainism<sup>31</sup> and the idea of love as inlaid in the Bible<sup>32</sup>. According to Gandhiji, “Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life and captivated me: Raichand Bhai by his living contact, Tolstoy by his book, ‘The kingdom of God is within you’ and Ruskin by his Unto the Last.” He also derived the idea of Satyagraha and Civil disobedience from Henry David Thoreau’s book of ‘Civil disobedience’. That is why, it can be said that Gandhiji derived the idea of non-violence (Ahimsa) from Buddhism and Jainism. For the application of this idea in politics and for the development of the idea of Civil disobedience; he was profoundly impressed by three eminent western thinkers’ viz., Ruskin Bond<sup>33</sup>, David Thoreau<sup>34</sup> and Leo Tolstoy<sup>35</sup>. Bond’s idea of good work and sacrifice, Thoreau’s view on Civil Disobedience and passive resistance and Tolstoy’s ideas of non-violence and the “Kingdom of heaven” influenced Gandhiji to be more convinced in his already cherished ideas of non-violence and civil disobedience. Judith Brown pointed out that “South-Africa taught him the techniques with which he was to combat the might of British imperialism in India...There he gained the experience which was critical for his later career in India and the explosive effect he was to have in Indian politics.”<sup>36</sup> But Mridula Mukherjee said that “South Africa built up his faith in the capacity of the Indian masses to participate in and sacrifice for a cause that moved them.”<sup>37</sup> In the meantime, Gandhiji gathered bitter experiences about the inhuman, untouchable behaviour during his South-African journey. So it can be said that Gandhiji was treated then as like the Indian untouchable by them. Therefore, he realized the actual status and position of untouchables. In spite of it, his attitude towards the Indian untouchables was very much surprising and astonishing. He was a traditional bearer of the Brahmanical Hindu Caste System. He profoundly believed in the norms and principles of the Caste System. Naturally, he never came

forward to launch a direct or indirect political movement against the Caste System. He kept himself almost silent relating to these issues. After becoming an undisputed leader in the Indian National Congress Gandhiji followed the principles and traditions of his predecessors to deal with these issues. He never proposed to annihilate the Caste System. He even never took necessary measures to promote the 'constructive programmes' of the historic 'Bordali resolution' adopted by the Congress relating to the ill-fated conditions of the Depressed Classes. The prime objective of the Congress behind this historic resolution was to set up schools, construct ponds, wells, roads and to make arrangements for other requirements for the development of the Depressed Classes. In fact, this was the first ever historic attempt on the part of the Indian National Congress to solve the caste-ridden and poverty stricken problems of the lower caste people of India. Practically speaking, this historic resolution remained in paper and not in practice. The role of Gandhiji was very discouraging and astonishing here. He vehemently opposed to the concessions given to the Depressed Classes through the 'Communal Award' declared by the then British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald and launched hunger strike until death against this privileges. Ambedkar responded to the call of humanity to save his life by signing the historic Poona Pact of 1932. However, Gandhiji failed to keep his promises in the near future given at the time of the Poona Pact due to his helplessness position in the Indian National Congress. But some scholars have pointed out that Gandhiji was ultimately forced to start anti-untouchability movement for the sake of national interest and national unity under some political compulsion. He earned name and fame to deal with the issue of the Harijans. In the last phase of his political activities, Gandhiji emerged as a saviour of the Harijans in India. He left politics after prolonged political struggles against the British Government and ultimately decided to sacrifice more and more time to uplift the ill-fated conditions of the Harijans. He came forward to serve the Harijans at the call of humanity. Even numerous programmes were introduced by him to develop the socio-religious, political and economic condition, position and status in the society. He also proposed a scheme for separate education for the Harijans. He chalked out the learning of cleanliness, applied hygiene, sanitation and needle-work. They would also be taught through conversation lessons as simple knowledge of history, geography and arithmetic<sup>38</sup>. But he never came forward directly or indirectly to launch temple Satyagraha movement against the caste-Hindus to open the Hindu temples to the untouchables. He did not take initiative to establish the rights and privileges of the

untouchables in the caste-Hindu temples. Even he did not support the Kalaram and Nasik temple entry movements of the untouchables. However, it can be said that in spite of numerous limitations, Gandhiji played a vital role to ameliorate the ill-fated conditions of the Harijans. Gandhiji first took up the issue of the Harijans very seriously and ultimately decided to devote his life for establishing the rights and privileges of the Harijans. Some scholars pointed out that Gandhiji was very much active in social service leaving the political activities in the later part of his life with a vision and mission of establishing the concept of social justice among the Harijans in the society. He was identified as the saviour of the Harijans in India. The name and fame of Gandhiji as the 'Saviour of the Harijans' and the 'Father of the Indian Nation' was not confined only in the history of Indian Sub-continent but also in the history of the world. He was the main guardian of the Indian Independence movement. So he had to reorganize the Indian National Congress to bring the common masses under a united platform irrespective caste, class, creed, sex and religion to fight to finish the entity of the colonial government in India.

But on the contrary to the above Ambedkar was influenced chiefly by Marx in connection with the theory of class-struggle. He highlighted the differences between class and caste. He observed that the downtrodden people in India were the last to be hired and the first to be fired. However he differed from Marx on one point that the suffering is not only due to economic exploitation but also due to social exploitation. He was also inspired by Dewey's method of inquiry and activist epistemology. He fully endorsed Dewey's emphasis on education as a means to change the world. That is why, he established The People's Education Society in Bombay in 1946 for the Depressed Classes. Dewey's ideas provided the basis for a systematic analysis of problems relating to politics, economics, society, religion and history. He was very much encouraged by the political philosophy of Ranade who gave precedence to social, economic and religious reforms over political reform. He was also influenced by the doctrines (Anicca and Annatta) of Lord Buddha. He was influenced by Mill, like Mill he was also convinced that unless men are free to form and maintain their own opinions, they can not develop that mental well-being on which everybody depends.

Ambedkar was unquestionably the great Untouchable leader in India. None of his followers comes to him in terms of prestige. But his political career began from zero. He had to fight for existence in the caste-ridden Hindu society since the childhood. Keeping in mind the hard reality of the Caste System and Untouchability in the Hindu society, Ambedkar firmly decided to fight to finish all sorts of caste-ridden inhuman treatments from the society. He always fought for justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. But after the completion of his education, Ambedkar resolved to start ceaseless struggle against the tyranny, oppression, exploitation, humiliation and suppression of the caste Hindus. His only aim was to eradicate the Caste Institution and Untouchability from the Hindu society. He had done an extensive research work on 'Annihilation of Caste' in this respect to open up the real truth in the world. None dared to disprove his scientific explanation and logical analysis relating to the abolition of the Caste System except illusionary Gandhi through his childish talking and illusionary spiritual thinking that was published in the Harijan. However, Ambedkar started writing a manuscript with the help of the Maharaja of Kolhapur on January 31, 1920, under the title of Mook Nayak (Leader of the Dumb) with a novel vision and grater mission to organize the untouchables to raise their voice for restoring their lost dignity, status, position, self-respect, self-confidence, liberty, equality, fraternity from the Brahmanical Hindu society. It was his mouthpiece although Ambedkar was not its official editor. In order to save the Depressed Classes from perpetual slavery, poverty and ignorance some Herculean efforts had to be made. Ambedkar asserted, to awaken them to their disabilities. It was further highlighted that it was not enough for India to be an independent country. She must rise as a good state guaranteeing equal status in matters of religious, social, economic and political, to all classes, offering every man an opportunity to rise in the scale of life and creating conditions favourable to his advancement. It was noted that if the protections of the colonial government were withdrawn without providing them fundamental and civic rights their condition would remain in the same as before under the Brahmanical rule. In another article, Ambedkar pointed out that the Swaraj wherein there were no fundamental rights guaranteed for the Depressed Classes, would not be a Swaraj to them. It would be a new slavery for them<sup>39</sup>. Ambedkar was not satisfied with the role of Lokmanya Tilak and other caste-Hindu reformers who raised voice for the upliftment of the untouchables as he realized very well that such sympathy of them within the framework of the existing social structure of Hindu

society could not bring about any radical change in the situation. That is why; he demanded separate electorates and reservations of seats for Depressed Classes in proportion to their population when the Montford Reforms of 1919 were going to be formulated. He also emphasized on the need of social equality before the demand of Home Rule and pointed out that it was the duty of the advanced classes to put the Lower and Depressed Classes on social equality who belonged to the same religion, followed the same customs, lived within the same borders, with the same aspirations for Liberty and Home Rule. So it was the first duty of them was to educate, enlighten and elevate the low caste ill-fated ignorant poor people. Unless and until such an attitude was adopted, the day on which India would gain Home Rule would remain in far distant<sup>40</sup>. Under his constant fighting the colonial Government ultimately recognized the existence of the Depressed Classes in India by the Act of 1919. But Gandhiji and Savarkar started their work in April 1924 for the consolidation of the Hindu society and invariably for the upliftment of the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar also prepared himself in March 1924 to launch his social movement for the upliftment of the Untouchables. That is why; Ambedkar took initiative to establish an organization known as 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha' and he was made the chairman of this organization. It was an association for the welfare of the ostracized that was continued up to 1928. The main motto and objective<sup>41</sup> of this organization are given below:

To promote the spread of education among the Depressed Classes by opening Hostels or by employing such other means as may seem necessary or desirable.

- i. To promote the spread of culture among the Depressed Classes by opening libraries, social centres and classes or study circles.
- ii. To advance and improve the economic condition of the Depressed Classes by starting Industrial and Agricultural schools.
- iii. To represent the grievances of the Depressed Classes.

The organization therefore focused on two key demands to help integrate Untouchables into the Hindu world; firstly for entrance into temples and secondly, to find access to wells, ponds, schools etc. which they were often denied<sup>42</sup>.

A conference was held at Mahad in March 1927 organized by Ambedkar and supported by some non-Dalit leaders. His address delivered at Mahad was in step with the principles of Sanskritisation: "No lasting progress can be achieved unless we put ourselves through a three-fold process of purification. We must improve the general tone of our demeanour, re-tone our pronunciations and revitalize our thoughts. I, therefore, ask you now to take a vow from this moment to renounce eating carrion"<sup>43</sup>. However, under the direction of the Sabha the students conducted a monthly magazine named Saraswati Vilas for the Depressed Classes students. Ambedkar inspired the people to fight for their liberty, human rights and civic rights against the existing Hindu social structure. He encouraged them to send their children to school. He remarked that primary education should be compulsory and mandatory for all children. He took numerous steps to reform the ill-fated poor conditions of the untouchables. He spread the gospel of liberty, equality and fraternity among the toiling masses so that they could rise themselves in a dignified position in the society. He moved all over India to arouse the caste-ridden sleeping people from all sorts of yoke of the Brahmanical rule and their age-old traditions. Apart from these, Ambedkar always opposed to the illusionary programmes of Gandhiji relating to the ameliorating scheme of the untouchables. He presided over a conference of the Untouchables at Mangaon in the Kolhapur state where Shri Shahu Maharaj was personally present. Maharaj delivered a speech in that conference and said, "You have found your saviour in Ambedkar. I am confident that he will break your shackles...a time will come when Ambedkar will shine as a front-rank leader of all-India fame appeal"<sup>44</sup>. He also raised his voice in the Nagpur Conference which gave him an opportunity of turning the eyes of the Untouchables from Depressed Classes Mission. It was the First All-India Conference convened by the Untouchables. At the end of the meeting inter-caste dinner was held to violate the Hindu norms. Therefore the movement against the established social order and for the rights of untouchables started in two phases, the first in the form of petitions and protests, and the second, in the form of direct action to use wells, schools, buses, railway etc. In the first conference of untouchables in March 1927, at Bombay he asked them to fight for their rights, give up dirty habits and rise to manhood. Ambedkar was a man of versatile genius. Among the twentieth century leaders of India, Ambedkar held a prominent position. After comprehensive study on different subjects like history, culture, religion, society, economy etc. Ambedkar understood very early in his career

that distortion of religion and misinterpretation of history and culture did more harm to Indian social life than foreign invasions and domination for centuries. A society internally divided and suffering from innumerable contradictions could not grow into a strong nation. With this understanding Ambedkar adopted numerous task of fighting for religious, social and economic equality in the Indian society. Millions of people living in extreme poverty, social discrimination and injustice saw a hope of new life in the personality and work of this great humanist. According to him, democracy was the only form of government which ensured liberty and equality in the society. That is why; Ambedkar expresses his opinions in the First Session of the Round Table Conference in 1930 as follows: "The bureaucratic form of government in India should be replaced by a government which will be the government of the people by the people and for the people"<sup>45</sup>. Being conscious that without self-government a country can not make any progress, Ambedkar pointed out that "We must have a government in which the men in power will give their undivided allegiance to the best interest of the country. We must have a government in which men in power, knowing where obedience will end and resistance will begin, will not be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life which the dictates of justice and expediency so urgently call for"<sup>46</sup>. According to him, "No share of political power can come to us so long as the British Government remains as it is. It is only in a Swaraj Constitution that we stand any chance of getting the political power in our own hands without which we can not bring salvation to our people"<sup>47</sup>. He said, "Hindu society as such does not exist. It is a collection of castes, each caste is conscious of its existence. It is not even a federation"<sup>48</sup>. According to him, "There can not be a more degrading system of social organization than Chaturvarnya. It is a system which deadens paralyses and cripples the people from help activity"<sup>49</sup>. The Hindu religion ceased to be a missionary religion due to the growth and development of the Caste System. He also pointed out that Hinduism is a very liberal religion in all matters, yet it gave sanction to complete segregation of a class known as untouchables. According to him it amounted to declaring that untouchables were not human beings and not fit for social association<sup>50</sup>. Hinduism has not only been based on merely principle of inequality but principle of graded inequality. Ambedkar differed with Mahatma Gandhi who opposed untouchability without opposing Chaturvarnya. He said, "Hindu law declared that the untouchable was not a person, Hinduism refused to regard him as a human being fit for comradeship"<sup>51</sup>. There was untouchability because there was Caste

System and without destroying the Caste System untouchability could not be reviewed. He fought for the political, social, educational and economic rights and privileges of the Depressed Classes... According to Ambedkar, "Democracy is more than a government. It is a form of the organization of society. There are two essential conditions which characterize a democratically constituted society: Absence of stratification of society into classes; a social habit on the part of individuals and groups which are ready for continuous readjustment or recognition of reciprocity of interests"<sup>52</sup>. He also said, "If the mental disposition of the individuals is not democratic then a democratic form of government may easily become a dangerous form of government"<sup>53</sup>. Even a democratic government would not be able to do anything if our society remained divided into classes and sub-classes. In such society each individual with class consciousness would place class interest above everything. In that condition there would not be justice and fair play in the functioning of the government. That is why, the democratic attitude of mind is very essential, and for this proper socialization is needed a democratic society. Ambedkar pointed out that "Democracy is more than a social system. It is an attitude of mind, a philosophy of life"<sup>54</sup>. Ambedkar was very much influenced by the impact of the French Revolution and pointed out that in democracy, equality and liberty ensured by the Constitution could not be considered sufficient without the existence of fraternity. Without fraternity, equality destroys liberty and liberty destroys equality. According to him, fraternity implies true religious spirit which is the basis of any democratic system. That is why; the people must recognize the importance of fraternity with equality and liberty. So we must not only preach democracy but it must be made obligatory for all. He delivered a speech on democracy in the Constituent Assembly at New Delhi on December 17, 1946 and remarked that they must seek mandate to rule after every five years those who are in place of authority in democracy. Secondly, strong opposition is urgently required to protect democracy. Thirdly, the essence of equality must be ensured for all in the eyes of law and administration. Fourthly, formation of a democratic government is needed. Ambedkar said, "In my judgement for the successful working of democracy an important condition is observance of constitutional morality"<sup>55</sup>. The party in power must resist temptations in the larger interest of society and country. Again, "in the name of democracy there must be no tyranny of the majority over the minority". He profoundly believed in the Parliamentary system of government due to three inherent traits; viz., negation of

hereditary rule, laws applicable to public life has public approval and rulers can not stay in power without the confidence of the people. According to him, "In Parliamentary democracy there is the legislature to express the voice of the people; there is the executive who is subordinate to the legislature and bound to obey the legislature. Over and above the legislature and executive there is the judiciary to control both and keep them both within prescribed bounds. Parliament democracy has all the marks of a popular government"<sup>56</sup>. But he pointed out that in spite of constitutional assurance of equality and liberty the Parliamentary system is bound to fail if it takes no note of economic inequalities in the society. Even political democracy can not succeed with social and economic democracy. According to Ambedkar, "Democracy is another name of equality. It never made even a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality; with the result that liberty swallowed equality"<sup>57</sup>. As an architect of Indian Constitution Ambedkar did whatever was possible to ensure political and economic rights of the Depressed Classes. Apart from these, he stressed on true concept of nationalism. According to him, 'Nationalism is a fact which can neither be eluded nor denied...it is a potent force which has a dynamic power to disrupt empires. Whether nationalism is the cause or the threat to nationalism is the cause, is a difference of emphasis only'<sup>58</sup>. He regards nationalism as a real force in human life. National unity was the fundamental aim of his political thought. The spirit of his nationalism started with the humanistic cause of the poorest of poor in the world. He wanted equality and civil rights for those who were deprived for centuries past. He emerged as the champion of the downtrodden people. He wanted not only freedom from foreign domination, but also internal freedom for the people to whom it was denied. Nationalism does not mean communalism to him. It means the spirit of oneness in the people. His spirit of nationalism took a definite shape through the struggle against the British rule. The struggle against foreign domination and love for the community in which he was born, brought in his mind the real implications of nationalism. He stressed on the freedom of a country together with the freedom of the people living in that country. According to him, nationalism becomes a means of internal slavery, forced labour and organized tyranny for the poor and servile classes without the freedom of people. He stressed on spiritual unity of the people. According to Ambedkar, "Nationalism is not a matter of political nexus or cash nexus, for the simple reason that union can not be

the result of calculation of mere externals. Where two communities live a life which is exclusive and self-enclosed for five years, they will not be one, because, they are made to come together on one day in five years for the purposes of voting in an election”<sup>59</sup>. He lays a stress on the need of fighting against separatism, provincialism, linguism, casteism and communalism. Casteism is against the spirit of nationalism. It has weakened India socially and nationally. He said that ‘Caste has killed public spirit. It has destroyed the sense of public charity. It has made public opinion impossible. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious. There is no charity to the needy...There is charity but it begins with the caste and ends with the caste. There is sympathy but not for men of other caste’<sup>60</sup>. To him, nationalism means the negation of caste-spirit and caste-spirit is nothing but a deep-rooted communalism.

Therefore, the Caste, Politics and activities of Gandhiji and Ambedkar may be discussed under the following heads. Ambedkar marked the Bardoli Resolution of the Indian National Congress of 1917 as ‘a strange event’ and raised the following questions to justify the attitude of the Indian National Congress towards the Untouchables:

1. *“Why did the Congress think it necessary to pass such a resolution in the year 1917?”*
2. *“What made it take cognizance of the Untouchables?”*
3. *“What did it want to gain?”*
4. *“Whom did it want to deceive?”*
5. *“Was it because of a change in its angle of vision or was it because of some ulterior motive?”*

But at the same time the ‘Depressed’ classes were very much politically conscious about the pros and cons of the resolution of 1917. Ultimately, they became Anti-Congress. Their Anti-Congress movement was rapidly increasing due to the inactive role of the Congress leaders regarding the violent attitude of Tilak and his followers against the Social Reform group for using the pandel of the Congress as the platform of the Social Reform Conference in 1895. But their undefined unrest and agitation had

been increasing day by day regarding in extreme point. Naturally, the Social Reform group organized a demonstration against the Congress and burned its effigy. Ambedkar remarked on this issue that “This antipathy to the Congress has continued ever since. The resolutions passed by both the meetings of the Depressed Classes held in Bombay in 1917 give ample testimony to the existence of this antipathy in the minds of the Depressed Classes towards the Congress”<sup>61</sup>. In the meantime Montague, the then Secretary of State for India declared on August 20, 1917 that “in the House of Commons the new policy of his Majesty’s Government towards India, namely, the policy of gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire”<sup>62</sup>. Under these circumstances, different types of schemes such as “the Congress-League schemes (Lucknow Pact, 1916” etc.) were made by the Indian National Congress. The main objective behind it was to provide the Congress-League scheme the status and character of a ‘National Demand’. It would come true only if the scheme would get support and assistance from all communities in India. So the utmost necessity of the Indian National Congress was to get unanimous support of the Depressed Classes in this regard. Besides, the Congress was very much interested in seeing that its own scheme would be accepted by His Majesty’s Government. So Congress was bound to make a contract with the Depressed Classes. This contract was practically negotiated between the two through Sir Narayan Chandavarkar who was the President of the Depressed Classes Mission Society and the Ex-President of the Congress. He exercised considerable influence over the Depressed Classes in this matter. But they agreed to support the Congress on that issue on a condition that the Congress would pass a resolution for the removal of the social disabilities of the Untouchables. As a result, the Congress passed the resolution of 1917 in connection with the demand of the Depressed Classes. So, it can be noted that there was an ulterior motive of the Congress behind the passing of the resolution of 1917. Their motive was quite political and not a spiritual one at all. Hence, Ambedkar clearly stated that the Depressed Classes in their resolutions had called upon the “higher castes, who claim political rights to take steps for the purpose of removing the blot of degradation from the Depressed Classes, which has subjected these classes to the worst of treatment in their own country”<sup>63</sup>. In fact, under the undergoing impact Congress was bound to organize a drive against Untouchability. But Congress had done nothing in this perspective willingly. Ambedkar traced out the problem and said

that "It was a formal fulfillment of a condition which the Depressed Classes had made for giving their support to the Congress-League scheme. Congressional representatives did not appear to be charged with any qualms of conscience or with any sense of righteous indignation against man's inhumanity to man, which is what untouchability is. They forgot the Resolution the very day on which it was passed. The Resolution was a dead letter. Nothing came out from it."<sup>64</sup>

In the meantime Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa in January, 1915. In his book *Hind Swarajaya*, written in 1909, he interpreted Swaraj (self-rule) in a much broader sense. His constructive work began with the foundation of the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad in May 1915. It was through involvement in two agrarian disputes; Champaran (in North Bihar) and Kaira (in Gujarat) and the labour dispute in Ahmedabad in 1917-18, that Gandhi emerged as an influential political leader. At all the three places Gandhiji used his technique of Satyagraha or passive resistance. During the last two years of the First World War (1917-18), he maintained close contact with the Congress and the Home Rule League and with the Muslims leaders. But it was the repressive policy of the British Government which dragged him away from the shell of political isolation and made him launch the anti-Rowlatt Bills Satyagraha. He criticized the so-called Rowlatt Acts as "unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and destructive of elementary rights of the individual". A Satyagraha Sabha was established, with Gandhiji as its President, to organize the campaign. In the first stage of the anti-Rowlatt Satagraha, volunteers courted arrest through formal defiance of the law. The second stage was to launch a countrywide 'hartal' or strike on April 6, 1919. This was followed by mass protest and mob violence in Bombay, Ahmedabad and several other places. But after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre on April 13, 1919, the anti-Rowlatt movement 'Satyagraha' lost momentum. It transformed the Congress into a national body, with a new ideology and a new strategy under a new leader who was none other than Gandhiji. To protest against the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy Rabindranath Tagore surrendered the knighthood conferred on him by the British Government, and Sir Sankaran Nair, one of the former presidents of the Indian National Congress, resigned his membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council. So the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy introduced a dramatic change in the Indian political situation, which became further surcharged with the initiation of the Khilafat Movement. The Amritsar Session of the Indian

National Congress, held in December 1919, reflected the new aggressive mood of the people. In fact, Judith Brown stated that “Tension between Gandhi’s ideal of Satyagraha and the Khilafat leaders’ adoption of it as a political technique remained a constant feature of the Khilafat Movement as long as the Muslims needed Gandhi as a guarantee of Hindu support”<sup>65</sup>. “After the Rowlatt Satyagraha Gandhi’s standing in Congress had risen considerably, but the leadership of Khilafat agitation gave him real power among Hindu and Muslim politicians, enabling him to exert leverage on both because he was the guarantor of the hopes and fears of both”<sup>66</sup>. According to Judith Brown, “The mechanism by which Gandhi had gathered widespread Muslim support was also a political boomerang”<sup>67</sup>. In addition to that Gandhi stated that “In my humble opinion, the attainment of Swaraj is the quickest method of righting the Khilafat wrong. Hence, it is that for me the solution of the Khilafat question is the attainment of Swaraj and vice versa.”<sup>68</sup> On realizing the importance of the situation, Gandhiji made a statement on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1920, in the Young India that “If the acts of the Punjab government be an insufferable wrong ...it is clear that we must refuse to submit to this official violence. If we are worthy to call ourselves a nation, we must refuse to uphold the Government by withdrawing co-operation from it”<sup>69</sup>. As a result, Non Co-operation Movement was started under the guidance and leadership of Gandhiji. In fact, he became an undisputed leader by that time. Most of the established leaders, such as, Gokhale, Mehata, Tilak, Annie Besant, Surendranath Banerjee etc., of the Indian National Congress either passed away or their position rapidly deteriorated at that very moment. At this juncture, Nehru and Chitranjan Das came out as a leader of the Indian National Congress without any national importance and recognition. Under this unavoidable political environment, Gandhiji established himself as a national leader in Indian politics. In fact, the Nagpur Annual Session of the Congress was a historic session which, apart from ratifying the Non co-operation resolution, also undertook two important amendments to the constitution of the Congress. First, the goal of the Congress, which in the existing constitution was “self-government within the British Empire”, was replaced with the word Swaraj. Secondly, revolutionary changes were brought about in the Congress organization and a constructive programme was chalked out. These included:

1. Opening of Congress membership to all adults;
2. The formation of an All-India Congress Committee (AICC) of 300 members;

3. Creating a hierarchy of district, taluka and village Congress Committees;
4. Reorganization of the provincial Congress committees on a linguistic basis;
5. Promotion of Swadeshi, particularly hand-spinning and weaving;
6. Removal of untouchability among the Hindus; and
7. Promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and use of Hindi as far as possible. In other ways too, the organizational structure was both streamlined and democratized.

Therefore, the Non Co-operation Movement, which was the first mass movement launched under the leadership of Gandhiji, started to emphasize three main demands:

1. The Khilafat issue;
2. The redressal of the Punjab wrongs; and
3. The attainment of Swaraj.

But Gandhiji's ambition to achieve Swaraj within a year of launching the movement was not fulfilled. The 'Chauri Chaura' incident convinced Gandhiji that the country was not yet ready for the mass civil disobedience. For this reason, he prevailed upon the Congress Working Committee, which met at Bardoli on February, 12 to call the movement off. But the communal situation became far worse during the years 1921-27 than it had been before. In fact, the historical importance was laying in the fact that the Congress Working Committee adopted a 'Constructive Programme' of social amelioration at its meeting in Bardoli held in February, 1922. This constructive programme of social amelioration was also known as the historic 'Bardoli Programme'. Gandhiji made the Congress a mass organization by opening its membership to all, irrespective of their caste, class, creed, sex, and religion. His main target was to secure active support and co-operation of the common people for strengthening the political movement in India. That is why; Gandhiji took initiative to make the Congress a country-wide organization. To finance the Bardoli Programme, Congress made a fund, i.e., the 'Tilak Swaraj Fund' of Rs. 1 Crore. Congress, by this time, made up its mind to execute and complete the constructive programme of social amelioration of the untouchables. The members of the Working Committee took up the untouchable case and discussed the matters in detail in February, 1922 at Bardoli and unanimously adopted and passed a historic resolution in this context to fulfill the necessity of the Bardoli Programme. Therefore, the Working Committee advised all Congress Organizations to be engaged in the following activities:

1. To enlist at least one crore members of the Congress.
2. To popularize the spinning wheel and to organize the manufacture of hand-spun and hand woven khaddar.
3. To organize national schools.
4. To organize the Depressed Classes for a better life, to improve their social mental and moral condition, to induce them to send their children to national schools and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which the other citizens enjoy.
5. To organize the temperance campaign amongst the people addicted to the drink habit by house to house visits and to rely more upon appeal to the drinker in his home than upon picketing.
6. To organize village and town Panchayats for the private settlement of all disputes, reliance being placed solely upon force of public opinion and the truthfulness of panchayat decisions to ensure obedience to them.
7. In order to promote and emphasize unity among all classes and races the establishment of which is the aim of the movement of non-co-operation, to organize a social service department that will render help to all, irrespective of differences in times of illness or accident.
8. To continue the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund collections and upon every Congress Man or Congress sympathizer to pay at least one-hundredth part of his annual income for 1921. Every province to send every month twenty-five percent of its income from the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund to the All- India Congress Committee.

That is why; the All India Congress Committee confirmed the Bardoli Resolution at its meeting held in Delhi on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1922 and the matter of the 'Depressed Classes' was remitted to the Working Committee for action and the Working Committee took up the matter of the Bardoli programme which related to the uplift of the Untouchables at its meeting held in Lucknow in June 1922 and passed a resolution relating to this issue. It was unanimously passed in this resolution to form a Committee and Swami Shradhanandji, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Messrs. I.K. Yajnik and G.B.Deshpande were appointed its members to formulate a scheme for practical measures for bettering the condition of the so-called Untouchables throughout the country. Their proposal should be placed before the next meeting of this Committee

for its consideration and the amount to be raised for their scheme only Rs.2 lakhs at present. The All India Congress Committee accepted the scheme of its Sub-Committee relating to the development of the Depressed Classes all over India and the amount was raised for the scheme of Rs. 5 lakhs only for the present instead of 2 lakhs mentioned in the previous resolution of the Working Committee. As a result, Swami Shradhanandji had shown keen interest to take part in this noble service. So he applied for advance of Rs. 10000/ to fulfil the mission of the Depressed Classes' beneficial works. But he was denied the advance. That is why; he resigned from the post of Convener of that Sub-Committee dated 8<sup>th</sup> June 1922 and Mr.Gangadhar Rao B. Deshpande was appointed convener of that Sub-Committee for the same purpose and he was requested to convene a meeting at an early. As a result the Committee convened a meeting in Bombay in July 1922 and passed a resolution that the General Secretary be asked to request Swami Shradhanand to reconsider his resignation and withdraw it and a sum of Rs.500 be remitted to the Convener, Syt. G. B. Deshpande, for the contingent expenses of the Depressed Classes Sub-Committee. In fact, nothing was done in the year 1922 for ameliorating the condition of the Untouchables except the same vague resolution. The Congress Working Committee took up the issue of the Untouchables for discussion at its meeting held at Gaya in January 1923 and the passed a resolution in reference to Swami Sradhananda's resignation that the remaining members of the Depressed Classes Sub-Committee would form the Committee and Mr. Yajnik be the convener. The All-India Congress Committee once again convened a meeting held in Bombay in May 1923 on the question of the Untouchables which was the end of the Second Stage in the history of resolution remitting the question of the Untouchables to a Special Committee and passed a resolution in connection with the question of the condition of the Untouchables and it was decided to refer to the working for necessary action. That is why; the Committee of India National Congress ultimately passed the following resolution that was the third stage in its history for taking resolution on this burning issue of ameliorating the ill-fated conditions of the Depressed Classes in India at its meeting held in Bombay in may, 1923:

“Resolved that while some improvement has been effective in the treatment of the so-called Untouchables in response of the policy of the Congress, this Committee is conscious that much worked remained yet to be done in this respect and in as much as

this question of untouchability concerns the Hindu Community particularly, it requests the All-India Hindu Mahasabha also to take up this matter and to make strenuous efforts to remove this evil from amidst the Hindu Community.”<sup>70</sup>

Ambedkar criticized the role and activities of the Indian National Congress and Gandhiji for the implementation of the Bardoli resolution as it were directly related to the question of upliftment of the ‘Depressed Classes’ in India. That is why; Ambedkar raised the following questions to prove the actual intention of the Indian National Congress and the attitude of Gandhiji relating to the question of improvement of the Untouchables through the historic Bardoli resolution:

- I. Why did the congress abandon the work of social amelioration of the untouchables of which it had made so much show?*
- II. Did the Congress abandon the programme because it was revolutionary?*
- III. Did the Congress abandon the programme because it had no funds?*
- IV. How much money did the Congress collect?*
- V. How was this huge amount spent by the Congress?*
- VI. Was this expenditure regulated by any principle?*
- VII. Was it distributed according to the needs of the provinces?*
- VIII. Was it distributed on the basis of cultural units and their relative size?*
- IX. How much of the grant was actually appropriated for the salvage of the Untouchables?*
- X. Where is the desire of the Congress to undertake the uplift of the Untouchables?*
- XI. Would it be wrong to say that the Bardoli resolution was a fraud in so far it related to the Untouchables?*
- XII. Where was Mr. Gandhi when all this was happening to the cause of the untouchables in the Congress camp?*

Ambedkar pointed out that the Hindu Mahasabha was the most unsuitable body to take up the work of the upliftment of the Untouchables. It was quite unfit for addressing itself to the problem of the untouchables as it was completely an orthodox as well as conservative Hindu organization. It was a militant Hindu organization. Its aim was to conserve in every way everything that was Hindu, religious or cultural. It was not a social reform association. It was a purely political organization, whose main objects and aims were to combat the influence of the Muslims in Indian politics. It was completely a communal body of the caste Hindus. Its main motto was just to preserve its political strength, social solidarity and Hindu traditions and religion that

were based on caste, untouchability and several age-old religious dogmas and pernicious norms and others. That is why; it was completely not suitable to deal with the problems of caste and untouchability and its eradication. So it can be said that Congress somehow wanted to get relief while handing over the responsibility of the ameliorating schemes for the ill-fated Depressed Classes to the Hindu Mahasabha. The resolution adopted by the Congress was nothing but a cheating to the toiling masses of India. Practically, the Indian National Congress wanted somehow to get rid of an inconvenient problem and washed its hands without taking any responsibility for the betterment of the Depressed Classes. . The Hindu Mahasabha of course did not come forward to undertake the work for it had no urge for it and also because the Congress had merely passed a pious resolution recommending the work to them without making any promise for financial provision. So the project came to an inglorious and an ignominious end. In fact, the intention of the Congress was clear from the above noted facts relating to the improvement programme for Depressed Classes. The leaders of the Congress wanted to show that it was a modest scheme to adopt a pious resolution for the amelioration of the untouchables not costing more than two or five lakhs rupees. But they ultimately felt that they had made a great mistake in including Swami Sradhananda in the Committee and rather than allow the Swami to confront them with a huge scheme which the Congress could neither accept nor reject. That is why; the leaders of the Congress thought it better in the first instance to refuse to make him the convener and subsequently to dissolve the Committee and hand over the work to the Hindu Mahasabha. But Ambedkar criticized the Congress and its leaders not to help Swami Sradhananda for the reformative works of the untouchables. They did not like to leave matters in the hands of Swami Sradhanand as he had honestly come forward to complete this noble mission. They selected Mr. Deshpande who was an Orthodox Brahmin. He was also not advocating the essence of social reforms for the benevolence of the Depressed Classes. This selection by the Congress made it clear that they did not want anything to be done relating to the untouchables for the simple reason that Mr. Deshpande was an Orthodox Brahmin who had taken no interest in the welfare of the Untouchables. In fact, Swami Sradhananda was the greatest and the most sincere champion of the Untouchables. Naturally, it was beyond doubt that if he would get opportunity to work on the Committee he would have produced a very big scheme. So the Congress tactfully adopted a policy of non-co-operation with him and made an arrangement to

drop his name as the Convener from that Sub-Committee. Besides, the leaders of the caste Hindu leaders of the Congress were very much afraid regarding his big demand from the Congress funds for the cause of the Untouchables. This assertion would clearly be proved from the correspondence held between Swami Sradhananda and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the then General Secretary of the Congress. Swami Shradhanand wrote a letter<sup>71</sup> to Pandit Motlilal Nehru, General Secretary of the Congress with a great pain regarding the acknowledgement of receipt of his letters Nos.331 and 332. He reminded him that these letters were embodying resolutions of the Working Committee and of the All-India Congress Committee about Untouchability. But he observed with great disappointment that the noble mission of those resolutions adopted by the All India Congress Committee was in a very discouraging position and it remained only in papers not in the practical field due to non-co-operative, non-reformative as well as conservative role and attitudes of the caste Hindu Congress leaders and politicians. He simply cited the facts of a letter sent to Mr. Vithalbhai Patel (the then) General Secretary on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1922, on the issue of the untouchables to realize a true picture of this disappointing situation relating to the reforms of the Depressed Classes. Besides, he cited the example of Gandhiji who put the question of Unthouchability in the forefront of the Congress programme. But it seemed to him that the question of uplifting the Depressed Classes had been relegated to an obscure corner and a liberal sum had been sanctioned for Khadi works. Even a strong Sub-Committee had been appointed to look after national education and a special appeal for funds to be made for the same. But the question of the removal of Untouchability had been shelved by making small grants in Ahmedabad, Ahmednagar and Madras. He said that the Khadi scheme could not succeed completely. The Members of the Working Committee perhaps did not know about the suppressed brethren who were leaving off khadi and taking to buy cheap foreign clothes. He also highlighted the fact that a Sub-Committee consisting of three members of the All-India Congress Committee be appointed to give effect to the resolution about the so-called Depressed Classes and a sum of five lakhs of rupees be placed at their disposal for propaganda work and that in future all applications for grants be referred to the said Sub-Committee for disposal. But Mr. Patel asked him to accept the Working Committee's proposed resolution in toto in connection with the question of untouchables. But he denied and noted the fact that in the very first sitting of the All-India Congress Committee substituted 5 lakhs for 2 lakhs with the condition that one

lakh of the same be allotted by the All-India Congress Committee out of the funds in its hands, in cash and an appeal be made for the balance. But Mr. Rajagopalchariar, on behalf of the Working Committee proposed not to fix up the amount that would be given out of the Congress funds. After accepting the scheme by the Working Committee fund should have to allot as much cash as it could then spare for this purpose. But there arose a demand from all sides that the cash balance in the hands of the All-India Congress Committee ought to be announced. As a result the President called him aside and told him in confidence that the Congress possessed very little cash balance. It would harm for the movement if the Congress fund was opened up publicly. So it was not possible practically as outsiders and even C.I.D. people were also present there. So he was impressed by Mr. Rajagopalachariar in spite of protests from his seconder and supporters. But he was very much surprised in practice when he found the resolution in the dailies, as reported by the Associated Press shorn of Mr. Rajagopalachariar's amendment. On the issue of selecting convener of that Sub-Committee, Mr. Vithalbai patel (the then General Secretary) got up and said: As Swami Shradhanand's name occurs first, naturally he will be the convener and therefore there was no need of moving any fresh resolution at all. He also pointed out that members from all parts of the country began to give him information about Untouchability in their Provinces and asked him to visit their parts. On this occasion he made some promises. So he realized it very well that without some cash for preliminary expenses, no enquiries on the spot could be made and hence no proper scheme could be formulated. He also came to know that Rs. 25,000 had been voted by the Working Committee for 'the Independence' of Allahabad and that an application for grant of Rs. 10,000 to the Urdu daily. That is why; he wrote a letter addressed to the President, asking him to give the Untouchability Sub-Committee an advance of Rs. 10,000 for preliminary expenses. But he was very much surprised when he read the resolution adopted by the Working Committee forwarded by his letter No. 331. After all the following resolution of the Working committee forwarded by him in letter no. 331 presents a very interesting reading:

“Read letter from Swami Shradhanand dated 8<sup>th</sup> June 1922 for an advance for drawing up a scheme for Depressed Class work. Resolved that Mr. Gangadharrao B. Deshpande be appointed convener of the sub-committee appointed for the purpose

and he be requested to convene a meeting at an early date, and that Swami Shradhanand's letter be referred to the Sub-Committee.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite the honest and noble intentions to better the lot of the Depressed Classes Swami Sradhananda failed to reach to his desired goal and here he was basically discouraged and belittled by some noted Congress leaders among whom Gandhiji stands most prominent. This humiliation all the more encouraged him and all by himself he traveled throughout the country almost and tried to ameliorate the condition of the untouchables.

Therefore, the above noted correspondence that was held between Swami Sradhananda and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the then General Secretary of the Congress relating to the issue of the Depressed Classes that the leaders of the Indian National Congress did not favour the abolition of Untouchability. It accepted the policy of separate schools and separate wells for the untouchables. This was clear from the following note which the working committee had appended to the resolution and which the All India Congress committee had approved so the Bardoli programme was no sense revolutionary:

“Whilst therefore in places, where the prejudice against the Untouchables is still strong separate schools and separate wells must be maintained out of Congress funds, every effort should be made to draw such children to national schools and to persuade the people to allow the Untouchables to use the common wells.”<sup>73</sup>

Keeping in mind the above noted facts it can be pointed out that the Congress formed the ‘Tilak Swaraj Fund’ in 1921 to carry out Congress propaganda and to finance the ‘Constructive Programmes’ of the Congress as drafted by the Working Committee at Bardoli. In fact, the Congress made an arrangement for funding the ‘Constructive Programmes’ of the historic Bardoli resolution with a novel mission of reformatting the Depressed Classes. But the ill-intension of the leaders of the Congress behind the fund management was very irritating and discouraging in connection with the upliftment programmes of the untouchables. The following tables<sup>74</sup> will give a clear cut idea about the public contribution to the ‘Tilak Swaraj Fund’ and its misappropriation by the leaders of the Indian National Congress.

Table 20: TILAK SWARAJ FUND RECEIPTS

	1921	1922	1923	Total
	Rs..... a p.	Rs..... a. p.	Rs..... a. p.	Rs..... a. p.
General Collections Annexure No-1 Specific (ear-marked) Donations or Grants Annexure No.II	64,31,779 15 10	3,92,430 2 6½	2,64,288 9 1	70,88,498 11 5½
	37,32,230 2 10½	9,45,552 1 4½	7,10,801 10 3	53,88,583 14 6
Add-Miscellaneous Receipts, Interest, other Funds, Famine, Flood, Provincial membership, Delegation Affiliation, etc. For 1921-23....	1,01,64,010 2 8½	13,37,982 3 11	9,75,090 3 4	1,24,77,082 9 11½
				5,42,332 5 7½
				1,30,19,415 15 7

Source: The Indian Annual Register – 1923, (p-112)

Table 21: Amount granted from Tilak Swaraj Fund to different provinces.

Provinces	Amount Granted (Rs.)	Population†	Percentage Grant due on the basis of Population ratio to total Population	Percentage of Grant actually paid
General – All India*	4,94,000			
Bombay ... ..	26,90,381	227,238,000	-	10
Madras ... ..	5,05,000	16,012,623	8	54.3
Bihar and Orissa	5,65,000	42,319,000	18	10.1
...	3,11,200	33,820,000	15	11.3
U.P. ... ..	1,13,000	45,376,000	20	6.26
Sind ... ..	51,080	3,279,337	-	2.2
Assam ... ..	50,000	6,735,000	3	1.1
Bengal ... ..	47,000	46,241,000	20	1.0
C.P. ... ..	45,000	12,780,000	5	.95
Punjab ... ..	40,000	20,675,000	9	.9
Hyderabad ... ..	25,000	-	-	.81
Ajmer ... ..	14,000	-	-	.5
Foreign ... ..		-	-	.28
Total ...	49,50,661			

\* Excluding Burma and Native States.

†These figures are taken from the Simon Commission Report, Vol. I and refer to the year 1921.

**Table 22: Total grant allotted to different provinces**

Linguistic Areas	Total Grant (Rs.)	Amount of Grant (Rs.)	Percentage of the Total Grant to the Province	Percentage of the Population of the Area to the Population of the Province
Bombay	26,90,381	26,22,381	97.4	
Presidency...	...	43,000	1.6	100
Gujarath ...	...	25,000	0.93	18
...	...	10,000	-	69
Maharashtra	... 47,000	37,000	21.2	13
...	...	1,03,000	78.7	100
Karnatak...	...	3,02,000	-	45
...	... 5,05,000	1,00,000	20.4	55
Central Provinces	...	-	60.0	100
...	...	5,15,000	19.6	38
Marathi Districts	...	50,000	-	52
Hindustani Districts	... 5,65,000		91.0	10
Madras Presidency	...		0.9	100
Tamil Nad	...			73
Addhra ...				27

It is clearly found from the above noted tables that the role played by the leaders of the Indian National Congress was very much discouraging regarding distribution of funds for different programmes. They kept themselves silent to grant the fund for the 'Constructive Programmes of the Bordauli resolution relating to the question of bettering the ill-fated conditions of the untouchables except few exceptions. The shameful favouritism in the distribution of the Tilak Swaraj Fund exposed the real intension of different Congress leaders and politicians relating to developmental programmes of the untouchables all over India in connection with the historic Bordouli resolution adopted by the Congress in 1917. The following tables will give some idea regarding some cases about the reckless plundering committed by the predatory leaders of the Congress of public money for nursing their own constituencies without any qualms of conscience. There was no cheek, no control, no initiative of knowing for what purposes money was voted and to whom it was granted.

Table 23: Misutilization of Tilak Swaraj Fund

Moneys allotted but kept at the Disposal of Individuals without Appropriating	Moneys allotted without Appropriation to any purpose without naming the guarantee
Moulvi Badrul Hassan.....40,000	To Gujrath ... .. 3,00,000
T.Prakasam ... .. 7,000	To Gujrath ... .. 18,00,000
C. Rajagopalachariar ... 1,000	To Gujrath ... .. 3,00,000
Barajaj ... .. 20,000	
Mr. Gandhi ... .. 1,00,000	

All these plundering of the Tilak Swaraj Fund happened in the presence of Gandhiji who was then one of the vital leaders of the Indian National Congress. He was basically then very much busy in collecting fund for his cherished plan and programmes without considering the needs and demands of the ill-fated untouchables in India. That is why; the leaders of the Congress got opportunity to shift from their policy of improving the lot of the toiling masses to foster their other agenda adopted then by them. They proposed to establish a separate fund relating to the issue of the untouchables and by which the amelioration of the Untouchables would be done. The All India Congress Committee fixed up the amount of separate fund at five lakhs whereas the Working Committee reduced it's among up to Rs. 2 lakhs. Therefore it can be said that the allotment of Rs. 2 lakhs for the amelioration of the Untouchables by the Congress Working Committee for sixty millions Untouchables was a very low in comparison to the total population of the untouchables. However, the following amount was actually appropriated for the salvage of the Untouchables out of the grand sum of Rs. 2 lakhs.

Table 24: Amount Sanctioned for Depressed Classes Welfare Scheme

Purpose	Amount Sanctioned (Rs.)
Rajamuhendry Depressed Class Mission ... ..	1,000
Antyaj Karyalaya, Ahmedabad ... ..	5,000
Antyaj Karyalaya, Ahmedabad ... ..	17,381
Depressed Classes Work in Andhra ... ..	7,000
National Social Conference for Depressed Classes Work ...	3,000
Tamil District P.C.C. for Depressed Classes Work ... ..	10,000
Total. Rs	43,381

That is why; Ambedkar raised the question against the partiality done by the leaders of the Indian National Congress in connection with the distribution of the 'Tilak

Swaraj Fund'. He said that the fund was not distributed on the basis of cultural units and their relative size. The above mentioned Table<sup>75</sup> (No-2) shows that a province like Bombay with a population of 16012623 got as much as Rs.2690381 while U.P. and Madras with a population of 45376000 and 42319000 respectively got Rs.311200 and 505000 not more than that. Not only that but also the Bombay Presidency included three cultural units Maharashtra, Gujrath and Karnatak and it was highlighting the following features (table no.3). Out of the total grant of Rs.2690381 given to the Bombay Presidency, Gujrath with only 18% of the population of the Province got as much as Rs. 2622381 i.e. 97.4% and Maharashtra with a population of 69% got only Rs.43000 or 1.6% and Karnataka with a population of 13% Rs. 25000 or .93% of the grant. But in the case of C.P. out of a total grant of Rs. 47000 the Hindustani districts having 55% of the population got Rs. 37000 or 78.7% while the Marathi speaking districts having 45% of the population got only Rs. 10000 i.e. 21.2%. In Bihar and Orissa out of the total grant of 565000 Bihar got Rs 515000 or 91% with a population of 73% and Orissa got only 50000 or 0.9% while its population was as much as 27%. Even the same principle was noticeable in the distribution of grants in the three areas of the Madras Presidency. From the above noted discussions it can be pointed out that there was shameful favouritism was done in the distribution of the Tilak Swaraj Fund. While Mr. Gandhi's Province (Gujrath) got of Rs. 2622381/- , the rest of India got 23 lakhs. That is why, it can be highlighted the fact that a population of Gujrata numbering 29½ lakhs got 26¼ lakhs while the rest of India numbering about 23 crores got 23 lakhs and Gandhiji was completely inactive to play a vital role for increasing fund allocation relating to the issue of the untouchables. That is why , Ambedkar pointed out that "it is unnecessary to pursue the story of the organized and systematic loot by the Congressmen of the balance of 1 crore and 30 lakhs which was spent in subsequent years. It is enough to say that never was there held such an organized loot of public money. However, it is clearly found from the above noted tables that the scrutiny of this list of grants failed to show the ameliorations of the Untouchables, which had been one of the purposes for which money had been advanced from the Swaraj Fund. Ambedkar pointed out that without considering the needs and demands for ameliorating the ill-fated socio-religious, educational and economic conditions of the untouchables thousands of rupees were spent on feeding briefless lawyers who were alleged to have given up practice in the cause of the nation without even an inquiry whether they had any, when thousands of rupees were spent to feed toddy

drawers who had given up their profession for living on alms from public fund and many other wild cat schemes carrying the marks of dishonesty on their faces. But it did nothing of the kind. But Gandhiji was very much attentive to manage financial help for layers those who had lost their professions to take part in the nationalist activities against the British. Naturally, necessary resolution was passed under the influence of Gandhiji by the Working Committee at its meeting held in the Calcutta on January 31<sup>st</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 1921 with vision to support those lawyers. So it was resolved that 'Rs.100000 was to remain at the disposal of Mahatma Gandhi for the support of lawyers who gave up their practice and stood in need of support (iv)'<sup>76</sup>. However, it can not be denied that the Congress could find only Rs.43381 out of Rs.49½ lakhs which it spent for carrying out the constructive otherwise known as the Bardoli Programme in which the uplift of the Untouchables was given so much prominence. But it is very much interesting to note the fact that Gandhiji expressed his positive views in the Young India on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1921 as follows brushing aside his earlier attitude towards the ill-fated conditions of the untouchables:

“Untouchability can not give a secondary place on the programme. Without the removal of the taint, Swaraj is a meaningless term. Workers should welcome social boycott and even public execration in the prosecution of their work. I consider the removal of untouchability as a most powerful factor in the process of attainment of Swaraj.”<sup>77</sup>

Gandhiji addressed the Untouchables in the following terms<sup>78</sup>. He said about the untouchables that there were three options open to these down-trodden members of the nation. Firstly, they might take help from the slave-owning Government for their impatience and they would get it, but they would fall from the frying pan into the fire. They were slaves of slaves at present. They would be used for suppressing their kith and kin if they would take Government aid. So they would make themselves the sinners if they took the Government assistance. The Musalmans tried it and failed. Their condition became worse than before. The Sikhs did it unwittingly and failed. So there was no more discontented community in India than the Sikhs at present. That is why; Gandhiji noted the fact that the Government assistance was not a matter for its solution.

Secondly, Gandhiji said about the rejection of Hinduism and wholesale conversion to Islam or Christianity. He advised without hesitation that a change of religion be accepted if it could be justified for worldly betterment. He also said that no physical inconvenience can warrant abandonment of one's own religion as religion is completely a matter of self choice. Therefore, the inhuman treatment of the Panchamas in connection with Hinduism might be abandoned straightway by both of us. He would not make a fetish even of religion and condoned every evil in its sacred name. But he believed that untouchability is no part of Hinduism which was rather its excrescence to be removed by every effort. And there was quite an army of Hindu reformers who had set their heart upon ridding Hinduism of this blot. Conversion therefore, Gandhiji hold, was not remedy whatsoever.

Thirdly, Gandhiji said that there must have to remain self-help and self-dependence with such assistance as the non-Panchama Hindus would render of their own motion, not as a matter of duty but they should come forward to use the Non-co-operation strategy. Therefore, by way of protest against Hinduism, the Panchamas might certainly stop all contact and connection with the other Hindus so long as the special grievances were maintained. But this means organized intelligent effort. And so far as he could notice that there was no leader among the Panchamas who could able to lead them to victory through Non-co-operation. That is why; Gandhiji pointed out that it was perhaves the better way for the Panchamas heartily to join the great national movement. It was right way for throwing off the slavery of the present Government. So the Panchama friends should give an option to join the Non-co-operation movement against this evil Government and it seemed to him that pre-supposes co-operation between the different sections would be made for forming the Indian nation. In the same article, Gandhiji said the Hindus as follows:

“The Hindus must realize that, if they wish to offer successful Non-co-operation against the Government they must make common cause with the Panchamas, even as they have made common cause with the Musalmans.”<sup>79</sup>

Gandhiji repeatedly appealed to the people of India through the Young India as follows:

“Non-co-operation against the Government means co-operation among the governed, and if Hindus do not remove the sin of untouchability, there will be no Swaraj whether in one year or in one hundred years.... Swaraj is unattainable without the removal of the sins of untouchability as it is without Hindu Muslim unity.”<sup>80</sup>

But Ambedkar criticized the role and activities of Gandhiji on the question of ameliorating the condition of the Untouchables in India relating to the resolution adopted by the Congress in the Bardoli. It seemed to him that he was very much interested in the fruitful historic Bardoli programmes. But in practice, Gandhiji did not take the slightest interest in the programme for the amelioration of the downtrodden people in India at that very moment. Although it was expected from all corners of the Depressed Classes that Gandhiji would come forward to give utterance to pious platitudes. But he did not do anything for the betterment of the untouchables at that very juncture. As an undisputed leader, he had greater opportunity to work for the amelioration of the untouchables. That is why; it can be pointed out that if he was so minded, he could have appointed another Committee. If he was so minded, he could have saved a large part of the Tilak Swaraj Fund from the organized loot that was being carried on by Congressmen and reserved it for the benefit of the Untouchables. But Gandhi tried to justify his indifference to the cause of the Untouchables by the following strange arguments published in the Young India:

“Should not we the Hindus wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs? This is proper question reasonably put. And if a member of a slave, nation could deliver the suppressed classes from their slavery, without freeing myself from my own I would do so today. But it is an impossible task. A slave has not the freedom even to do the right thing.”<sup>81</sup> Gandhiji concluded by saying the following:

“That process has commenced and whether the Panchamas deliberately take part in it or not, the rest of the Hindus dare not neglect them without hampering their own progress. Hence though the Panchama problem is as dear to me as life itself, I rest satisfied with the exclusive attention to national non-co-operation. I feel sure that the greater includes the less.”<sup>82</sup>

But Ambedkar played a vital role to criticize the role, attitude and activities of Gandhiji and other prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress relating to the burning problems of the untouchables. He said that Gandhiji always created illusions due to use the untouchables through his illusionary arguments and advised the untouchables that they must not act against the Hindus as because the Hindus were their kith and kin. Once again Gandhiji was creating an illusion by saying that the Hindus regarded the untouchables as their kith and kin. But Ambedkar said that the Hindus never came forward spontaneously to remove untouchability from the Hindu society. In fact, there was a band of Hindu Reformers keenly interested to do nothing but remove untouchability was to conjure an illusion to fool the untouchables and to fool the world at a large. Ambedkar then pointed out that he had an interview with Gandhiji in Bombay before going to the First Session of the Round Table Conference, in which Gandhiji had told him that he was not in favour of regarding the Untouchables as a separate entity for political purposes.<sup>83</sup>

#### **7.4. Caste Politics between Gandhiji and Ambedkar in connection with the 'Communal Award' and the Historic 'Poona Pact' of 1932**

The politics of Caste relating to the Institution of Caste, Untouchability, and Hindu temple entry movement for the Harijans etc. worsened the situation of the socio-political environment of India. Gandhiji and Ambedkar – the two shining pillars of Indian political arena in the colonial India tried to address these problems in their own ways. However; Gandhiji stressed on freedom movement rather than social integration of the caste-ridden Hindu society. Realizing the hard reality of social disintegration among the Hindu society, he came forward to deal with the problems of untouchability, ill-fated socio-religious, educational and economic conditions of Harijans and other Depressed Classes. But all these he had done on the line of his traditional convictions relating to the issue of Caste. But he had a grave tension because Ambedkar had already launched social reform movements for the amelioration of the Depressed Classes in connection with the same factors. Ambedkar preached the gospel of liberty, equality and fraternity among these ill-fated poor untouchable and Depressed Class Hindus and encouraged them to fight against the evil socio-religious system that was imposed upon them from generation after

generation by the caste-Hindus in the name of God. He always inspired them to restore their self-respect and self-dignity in the caste-ridden Hindu society. His main aim was to unite them under one united front so that they could liberate themselves from the age-old bondage, slavery and yoke of the Brahmanical Hindu society on the one hand and foreign rule on the other hand. At that very moment, Ambedkar prayed to the colonial Government to address the problems of their people in the caste-ridden Hindu society and recognize them as a separate community. They could not take water from wells, ponds, use Hindu temples for worship, use roads to move from one place to another and their children had no chance in the schools etc. But the British Government was watching these ill-treatments and inhuman acts imposed upon the untouchables by the caste-Hindus on the hand and the programmes of Hindu-Muslim unity (Lucknow Pact, 1916) and role of Gandhiji on the other hand. Realizing the aspirations of the nationalists, extremists and Gandhiji against the colonial rule, the Government of Britain adopted some measures to satisfy the discontentment of the Indian leaders. As the Minto-Morley reforms of 1909 (Indian councils Act) failed to satisfy the Indians, the moderates were greatly disappointed with the reform. The growing discontent of the people resulted in the revolutionary activities. The introduction of communal electorates for Muslims under the Act of 1909 greatly shocked the mind of the Indian Nationalists. Congress demanded for self-government. Coupland said that the concessions made by the Congress were for more substantial than the Muslims had been given by the Morley and Minto to secure acquiescence in the Reforms of 1909. But the Indians supported the British Government during the war with a hope of gaining self government for India after the war. But the British Government was not willing to give any such sovereignty. As a result leaders like Tilak, Anne Besant etc. insisted on the demand for Home Rule for India immediately. All these developments convinced the British Government of the need of further constitutional reforms without any further delay. That is why, the recommendations of Montague, the secretary of State for India, formed the basis of the government of India Act 1919 (Montague Chemsford reforms of 1919). The Act clearly defined its objectives in the preamble which was attached to it. The Preamble read, 'Whereas it is the declared policy of the Parliament to provide for the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration and for gradual development of self governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the Empire'. But it can be noted that

the Communal or separate electorate, injected into the body politic of India under the Morley Minto reforms of 1909, was further extended to the Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Christians in provinces where the influence of these communities could be weighty. Despite its various limitations it cannot be denied that it was the first milestone on the highway leading to the acquisition of self Government. It marked the beginning of a new era of responsible government. Thompson and Garrat pointed out that the reforms were far from being complete failure. Useful work was done in the provinces by the Indian ministers, and there was no break down during the first three years. The process of Indianisation within the Government was proceeding quickly if unostentatiously. Besides, there was a provision in the Act of 1919 which had imposed an obligation and responsibility on His Majesty's Government to appoint at the end of ten years a Royal Commission to enquire into the working of the Constitution and it gave an instruction to make report upon such changes as may be found necessary. As a result, a Royal Commission was appointed in 1928 under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon Birkenhead, the secretary of State for India opposed to the inclusion of Indians in the Royal Commission. That is why; Gandhiji, alongwith other liberal leaders of the Indian National Congress treated this event as an insult and boycotted this Commission with strong agitation. In fact, officially the objective of the appointment of Simon Commission was described as inquiry into the working of system of government, the growth of education and development of representative institutions in British India and matters connected therewith, and to report as to whether and to what extent it was desirable to establish the principle of responsible government or to extend, modify , or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing therein, including the question whether the establishment of second chambers of the local legislatures, was or was not desirable. Under this situation, Ambedkar submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission on 29 May, 1928 relating to the issue of safeguards for the protection of the Depressed Classes as a minority in the Bombay Presidency. Regarding the representation for the Depressed Classes, Ambedkar stated that the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha was opposed to the principle of nomination. Ambedkar demanded the protection through the following guarantees<sup>84</sup> as given below:

- i. That the education of the Depressed Classes shall be recognized as the first change on the revenue of the province and that an equitable and just proportion

- of the total grant for education should be earmarked for the benefit of the Depressed Classes.
- ii. That the right of the Depressed Classes to unrestricted recruitment in the army, navy and the police shall be recognized without any limitations as to cost.
  - iii. That for a period of 30 years the right of the Depressed Classes for priority in the matter of recruitment to all posts, gazetted as well as non-gazetted in all civil services shall be recognized.
  - iv. That the right of the Depressed Classes to the appointment of a special inspector of police from amongst themselves for every District shall be recognized.
  - v. That the right of the Depressed Classes to effective representation on the local Bodies shall be recognized by the Provincial Governments.
  - vi. That the right of the Depressed Classes to appeal to the Government of India in case of violation of these rights by the Provincial Governments shall be recognized and the Government of India shall be given the powers to compel the Provincial Governments to conform to the law in the matter.

Realizing the gravity of the discontentment, the Simon Commission proceeded with its works and report was issued on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1930. Its chief recommendations were as follows:

1. Federal constitution for India.
2. Full autonomy in the Provinces subject to the overriding powers vested in the Governor.
3. Enlargement of the Provincial legislative councils.
4. The Lower House of the Central legislature to be enlarged and elected by the provincial councils but no responsible government in the centre.
5. Separation of Burma from India.

But the Report of Simon Commission was bitterly criticized and condemned by the Indian politicians. The British Government did not respond favourably and branded Nehru Report, 1928 as too progressive. Jinnah who was opposed to the constitutional scheme proposed by Nehru Committee suggested 14<sup>th</sup> points to safeguard the interests of the Muslims. Though his plan could hardly offer a solution of the communal problem, it found its way in Mac Donald's Award practically speaking; the labour Government under Ramsay Mac Donald in 1929 raised high hopes in the minds of Indians, because while in the opposition the labour party had also sympathized with the Indian aspirations and supported their cause. The policy of Labour Government towards India was expressed by Lord Irwin in his statement of October 1929. He said

that in view of the doubts which had been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the statute of 1919, he was authorized on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment, it was implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as there contemplated was the attainment of the Dominion Status. He also announced that His Majesty's Government had accepted the suggestion of Simon Commission that a conference should be convened in which his Majesty's Government most the representatives both of British India and of the States for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measures of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of his Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament. Therefore, in accordance with the Viceroy's declaration of 31 October, 1929 there was a conference of the representatives of his Majesty's government and those of India. It was the First Round Table Conference that was inaugurated by His Majesty the King Emperor (George V) in London on 12 November, 1930. The session continued till 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1931 under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. The conference was attended by 89 members, 16 from the British parties, 16 from the Indian states and 57 from British India. As most of the Congress leaders were in jail, the government nominated 'safe' men of other parties, communities and services to represent India. Some representatives of the Indian states were also invited to take part in the deliberations. After prolonged discussions the conference accepted three basic principles viz. (1) the form of new government in India should be All-India federation, (2) the federal government with certain reservations should be responsible to the federal legislature; and (3) the provinces must enjoy autonomy. At the end of the conference Ramsay Mac Donald announced that the view of His Majesty's government was that responsibility for the government of India should be placed upon legislature Central and provincial with such provisions as may be considered necessary to guarantee during the period of transition, the observance of certain obligation and to meet other special circumstances and also with such guarantees as were required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights. In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers were so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own government. Pledge after

pledge had been given to India that British Raj was there not for domination. He hoped, and he trusted, and he prayed that by their labours together India would come to possess the only thing which she now lacked to give her the status of a Dominion amongst the British Commonwealth of Nations. What she now lacked for that—the responsibilities and the cares, the burdens and difficulties, but pride and the honour of responsible self government. In fact; from the point of view of Indians, the First Round Table Conference played a vital role in the context of recognition by His Majesty's government of the right of Indians to be consulted in the matter of framing a constitution for India. So a new complication was added with the demand of B.R. Ambedkar that for electoral purposes the Depressed Classes should be treated as a separate community. That is why, the Muslim delegation as a whole before the conference was closed, made a formal statement to the effect that no advance was possible or practicable, whether in the Provinces or in the Central Government, without adequate safeguard for the Muslims of India, and no constitution would be acceptable. As the Governor General must be responsible for the observance of the constitutional rights of Minorities, he must be granted the necessary powers for these purposes. As a result, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Dewan Bahadur R.Srinivasan were for the first time allowed to represent separately the Untouchables in the First Round Table Conference for the protection of their rights and privileges which was treated as a landmark in the history of the Untouchables. Under this situation, the work of the First Round Table Conference was distributed among nine Committees. Among these Committees the Minorities Committee was the most important Committee. Ramsay Mac Donald, the then Prime Minister himself assumed its chairmanship. The main task of the Minorities Committees was to find out a solution of the Communal question. In this context it can be noted that the Act of 1919 had recognized them as statutory minorities and provisions to their safety and security were embodied in it. But the Montague Chelmsford Report mentioned that provision must be made in the Constitution for their protection. In fact the Government of India Found it difficult to devise any protective measures and provisions for the protection of the Depressed Classes except to give them (to ken) representation in the legislatures by nomination. But Ambedkar raised his voice against this policy and demanded to formulate the safeguards deemed necessary by is why; B.R the Untouchables for their protection against the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus. He formulated a scheme of constitutional safeguards for the protection of the Depressed Classes in the Future

Constitution of a self-governing India. He submitted a Memorandum to the Minorities Committee of the First Round Table Conference. The following are the headings of the terms and conditions<sup>85</sup> of the Memorandum on which the Depressed Classes will consent to place themselves under a majority rule in a self governing India:

Condition No. i: EQUAL CITIZENSHIP

Condition No. II: FREE ENJOYMENT OF EQUAL RIGHTS.

Condition No. III: PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION.

Condition No. IV: ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATURES.

Condition No. V: ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION IN THE SERVICES.

Condition No. VI: REDRESS AGAINST PREJUDICIAL ACTION OR NEGLECT OF INTERESTS

Condition No. VII: SPECIAL DEPARTMENT CARE.

Condition No. VIII: DEPRESSED CLASSES AND THE CABINET.

However, the members of the Minorities Committee met themselves to discuss above noted demands of the Untouchables. They came forward to submit a report on these burning issues to the First Round Table Conference. Some points<sup>86</sup> are noted below as a ready reference to understand the real condition:

- i. A demand was raised by different committees for communal representation and for fixed proportions of seats in connection with the number of population of different minority communities through the process of nomination, electorates and separate electorates. - (Extract No. 5).
- ii. Nomination was unanimously deprecated – (Extract No. 6).
- iii. Joint electorates were proposed by the Minorities Committee with the proviso that a proportion of seats should be reserved to the communities. The election of minority representatives was held by the majority communities. - (Extract No. 7).
- iv. It was evident from the discussion of the Minorities Committee that the demand which remained as the only one which would be generally acceptable was separate electorates. But the problem was that what should be the proportion of communal representation in the various provinces and in the Centre if practically the whole of the seats in a legislature were to be assigned to communities. Practically speaking, that there would be no room for the growth of independent political opinion or of true political parties, and this problem would naturally receive a serious complication by the demands of the Depressed Classes. That is why; there was only one way either they should have to be deducted from the Hindu population for electoral purposes or identified themselves as a separate community. (Extract No. 8)
- v. Only a proportion should be assigned (say 80 per cent. or 90 per cent) in connection with the objection of the ear-marking of seats to communities and that the rest should be filled by open election. However, this was not accepted by some of the communities as giving them the guarantees they required. (Extract No.9)
- vi. A scheme was proposed by Maulana Muhammad Ali, a member of the Sub-Committee, that no communal candidate should be elected unless he secured at least 40 per cent according to arrangement of the votes of the other community as far as possible was also considered. It was so open to objections similar to those urged against separate electorates. (Extract No. 10)

- vii. It was unanimously resolved by the Minorities Committee that no claim for separate electorate or for the reservation of seats in joint electorates was made on behalf of women. They would take in election as male. It was further noted the fact that 5 per cent. of the seats in the first three Councils should be reserved for women and it was suggested that they should be filled by co-option by the elected members voting by proportional representation. (Extract No. 11)
- viii. It was unanimously resolved that the representation on the Provincial Executive of important minority communities was a matter of the greatest practical importance for the successful working of the new constitution in connection with the recommendation of Sub-Committee No II (Provincial Constitution). On the same grounds, Muhammadans should be represented on the Federal Executive. A claim was put forward on behalf of the smaller minorities for their representation, either individually or collectively, on the Provincial and Federal Executives or that, if this should be found impossible, in each Cabinet there should be a Minister specially charged with the duty of protecting minority interests. (Extract No. 12)
- ix. It was noted that the recruitment to both Provincial and Central Services should be entrusted to Public Service Commissions in field of administration, with instructions to reconcile the claims of the various communities to fair and adequate representation in the Public Services to maintain proper standard of efficiency. (Extract No. 13)
- x. It was further noted that failing to reach a unanimous agreement on the part of the British Government, separate electorates, with all their drawbacks and difficulties, would have to be retained as the basis of the electoral arrangements under the new constitution. Naturally, the claims of Depressed Classes would have to be considered adequately. (Extract No. 16)
- xi. The Minorities Committee unanimously reached to decision that the Minorities and 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. (Extract No. 18)

Now the First Round Table Conference appointed another Committee known as the Federal Structure Committee to discuss the form and functions of the Central Government had also to consider the question of the Untouchables in connection with the composition of the Federal Legislatures. In the report it made clear to the conference as follows:

“Opinion was unanimous in the sub-committee that, subject to any report of the Minorities Sub-Committee, provision should be made for the representation, possibly in both Chambers and certainly in the Lower Chamber of certain special interests, namely, the Depressed Classes, Indian Christians, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Landlords, Commerce (European and Indian) and Labour.”<sup>87</sup>

Naturally, the reports of both the Committees were placed before the first session of the Round Table Conference was completed. After thorough discussions of that reports it was unanimously accepted that the Untouchables were entitled for recognition as a separate entity for political and constitutional purposes. But the

attitude of the Indian National Congress was not known relating to this decision adopted by the house of the First Round Table Conference. The Congress was the only party which was not present at the time of taking such a vital decision in the First Round Table Conference. It happened because the Congress had taken a decision for boycotting the First Round Table Conference and the Congress was busy to carry on the Civil Disobedience Movement against the British Government. So the First Round Table Conference failed to accomplish anything because of the absence of Congress. According to Dr. Ishwari Prasad, 'After nine weeks of vague and varied talks, the First Round Table Conference concluded its labours after having achieved nothing except the intentional advertisement of India's communal differences'. In March 1931 at the instance of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar, the famous Gandhi-Irwin pact was concluded. As a result of this Pact, all the political prisoners were released and Gandhiji called off his Civil Disobedience Movement. It was accepted by the Government that any reservation of safe guard in the transfer of power should be in the interest of India. The Congress on its part agreed to take part in the Second Round Table Conference. The Second Round Table Conference was convened in September, 1931. But there was a change of Government in England before the Second Round Table Conference could take place. The Labour Government of Mac Donald fell and was replaced by a National Government containing representatives of the liberal and conservative parties under Mac Donald. At this conference Gandhiji represented Congress as the sole representative, while Jinnah was the representative of the Muslim League. But the attitude of Mahatma Gandhi to the demands of the Untouchables at the Second Round Table Conference was clearly stated in the very first speech which he made in the Federal Structure Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1931 as follows:

*"The Congress has, from its very commencement, taken up the cause of the so-called 'Untouchables.' There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade dedicated his energies, among his many other activities. Headed by him you will find in the programme of the Social Conference, reform in connection with the 'Untouchables' taking a prominent place. But, in 1920, the Congress took a large step and brought in the question of the removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, making it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered the*

Hindu-Muslim unity—thereby meaning unity amongst all the classes—to be indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of the curse of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom. The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains the same today; and so you will see the Congress has attempted from its very beginning to be what it described itself to be, namely, national in every sense of the term.”<sup>88</sup>

But Ambedkar vehemently criticized the above noted statement made by Gandhiji relating to the ameliorating measures of the Untouchables adopted by his predecessors and some leaders of the Indian National Congress. Ambedkar had already proved this assumption in the earlier phase of this chapter to disapprove this above statement of Gandhiji and showed how the Congress leaders, politicians and Gandhiji himself were aloof in making the pious as well as historic Bardoli resolution a successful mission to uplift the ill-fated low caste peoples. Not only that but also the Indian National Congress failed to carryout the Bardoli programme of 1922 to the uplift the Untouchables and ultimately it was resolved by the Congress to hand over this charge to the Hindu Mahasabha for improving the conditions of the untouchables. So the above mentioned facts are very urgent in approving or disapproving the above mentioned statement of Gandhiji. Under these unavoidable circumstances, a Supplementary Memorandum<sup>89</sup> in connection with the above noted memorandums on the claims of the Depressed Classes for Special Representation was submitted to the Round Table Conference by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur R.Srinivasan relating to the establishment of their political safeguards for protection in a constitution for a self-governing India under the following points:

### ***POLITICAL SAFEGUARDS FOR DEPRESSED CLASSES***

1. Extent of Special Representation:
  - A. Special Representation in Provincial Legislatures.
  - B. Special Representation in the Federal Legislature.
2. Method of Representation:
3. Necessity of Defining the Depressed Classes:
4. Nomenclature:

After leaving the responsibility of the amelioration programmes to the Hindu Mahasabha, relating to the untouchables, the caste Hindu leaders of the Indian National Congress washed their hands in this perspective. But Gandhiji knew it very

well that Hindu Mahasabha was nothing but an organization of the orthodox as well as conservative Hindus. So Gandhiji and his Congress left this responsibility of uplifting the untouchables without considering the needs and demands of the ill-fated poor untouchables. Even he vehemently opposed to the demand of their identity as a separate community and separate electoral process. However, Gandhiji's role in the meeting of the Federal Structure Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1931 on the subject of election of members of the Federal Legislatures was very much interesting as follows:

“I come to sub-head (v) – representation by special constituencies of special interest. I here speak for the Congress. The Congress has reconciled itself to special treatment of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh tangle. There are sound historical reasons for it but the Congress will not extend that doctrine in any shape or form. I listened to the list of special interests. So far as the Untouchables are concerned, I have not yet quite grasped what Dr. Ambedkar has to say: but of course the Congress will share the honour with Dr. Ambedkar of representing the interests of the Untouchables. They are as clear to the Congress as the interests of any other body or of any other individual through out the length and breadth of India. Therefore I would most strongly resist any further special representation”<sup>90</sup>

According to Ambedkar, Gandhiji and his Congress made a declaration of war against the demand of the Untouchables for special representation. In any case it may be resulted in a war between the two. Realizing the importance of this situation, Gandhiji made a plan to bypass the demands of the Untouchables. His main motto was to close the chapter of the Communal problems by bringing about a settlement between the there parties; the Hindus, the Muslims the Sikhs. So he was earnestly trying to get support of the Muslims on this issue. So he took initiative to make a negotiation privately with the Muslims before the Minorities Committee's meeting. But ultimately he failed. The Minorities Committee met on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1931 and Sri Ali Imam deliberated a speech on behalf of the Nationalist Muslim point of view on this issue. But Aga Khan said in the house that Mahatma Gandhi was trying to make a possible negotiation with their Muslim Delegation so far as the question of special representation of the Untouchables was concerned. But Ambedkar raised his voice and pointed out that they had already reached a negotiation with the members of the minority communities so far as the questions of the Depressed Classes were

concerned and they had presented in the meantime their case to the Minorities Sub-Committee. He also pointed out that he had only thing with him to place before this Committee that was a short statement suggesting the quantum of representation which we wanted in the different Legislatures. But he was very much anxious at the very outset that he had heard with great pleasure that further negotiations was going to take place for the settlement of the communal issue, but he would like to make their position clear at the very beginning. But he said that those who were negotiating ought to understand that they were not plenipotentiaries appointed by the Committee to negotiate a settlement; that whatever would be the representative character of Gandhiji or of the other parties with whom he wished to negotiate, they certainly were not in a position to bind them certainly not. That is why; Ambedkar strongly opposed to any settlement which would take place between one minority on the one hand and the Congress or any other party for the matter of that on the other hand, without taking into consideration the claims which had been put forward by other minorities, could have no binding force as far as he was concerned. Not only that but also Ambedkar pointed out that he had no quarrel with the question whether any particular community should get weightage or not, but he would like to say most emphatically that whoever claims weightage and whoever was willing to give that weightage he might not give it - he could not give it - out of his share. That is why; he liked to make that absolutely plain. Apart from these, Ambedkar had made his position absolutely clear on this burning question. But Gandhiji completely failed to make a negotiation on that burning question with the members of the Minority Committees during the adjournment of the meeting. As a result of it, the Minorities Committee met once again on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1931. Ambedkar said that he did not wish to create any difficulty in their making every possible attempt to arrive at some solution of the problem with which this Committee had to deal, and if a solution could be arrived at by the means suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, he, for one, would have no objection to that proposal if the question of the Depressed Classes be considered. So Gandhiji told them on the first day that he spoke in the Federal Structure Committee that as a representative of the Indian National Congress he was not prepared to give political recognition to any community other than the Muhammadans and the Sikhs. Even Gandhiji was not prepared to recognize the Anglo Indians, the Depressed Classes, and the Indian Christians. Not only that but also Gandhiji said in plain terms that the attitude that he had taken in the Federal Structure Committee was a firm and well

considered attitude. What he would like to say was that unless at the outset he knew that the Depressed Classes were going to be recognized as a community entitled to political recognition in the future Constitution of India. He did not know whether it would serve any purpose for him to join the committee that was proposed by Mahatma Gandhi to be constituted to go into this matter. Unless, therefore, he have an assurance that this Committee would start with the assumption that all those communities which the Minorities Sub-Committee last year recommended as fit for recognition in the future constitution of India would be included. After utter failure in reaching a peaceful solution at that informal meeting held during the adjournment, Gandhiji dissolved that meeting. As a result of it, the Minorities Committee again met on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1931 and the Prime Minister asked Gandhiji to deliver his speech first. That is why, Gandhiji delivered his speech as follows:

“Prime Minister and friends, it is with deep sorrow and deeper humiliation that I have to announce utter failure on my part to secure an agreed solution of the communal question through informal conversations among and with the representatives of different groups. I apologise to you, Mr. Prime Minister, and the other colleagues for the waste of a precious week. My only consolation lies in the fact that when I accepted the burden of carrying on these talks I knew that there was much hope of success and still more in the fact that I am not aware of having spared any effort to reach a solution.

“But to say that the conversations have to our utter shame failed is not say the whole truth. Causes of failure were inherent in the composition of the Indian Delegation. We are almost all not elected representatives of the parties or groups whom we are presumed to represent; we are here by nomination of the Government. Nor are those whose presence was absolutely necessary for an agreed solution to be found here. Further, you will allow me to say that this was hardly the time to summon the Minorities Committee. It lacks the sense of reality in that we do not know what it is that we are going to get. If we knew in a definite manner that we going to get the thing we want, we should hesitate fifty times before we threw it away in a sinful wrangle as it would be if we are told that the getting of it would depend upon the ability of the present Delegation to produce an agreed solution of the communal tangle. The solution can be the crown of the Swaraj constitution, not its foundation-if

only because our differences have hardened, if they have not arisen by reason of the foreign domination. Differences will melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom.

“I propose to use the failure as a stepping-stone to success, and I invite you all to do likewise; but, should all effort at agreement fail, even when the Round Table Conference reaches the end of its labours, I would suggest the addition of a clause to the expected constitution appointing a judicial tribunal that would examine all claims and give its final decision on all the points that may be left unsettled.”<sup>91</sup>

Gandhiji made it clear that the delegates of the Round Table Conference were nominated by the colonial Government who were not the real representatives of the people. Even they did not represent the views their respective communities for whom they stood. But Ambedkar said that instead of confining himself to his proposition, namely, that the Minorities Committee Gandhiji started casting certain reflections upon the representatives of the different communities who were sitting round this table. Ambedkar claimed that he fully represent the claims of his community whereas Gandhiji had demanded that the Congress always stood for the Depressed Classes, and that the Congress only represented the Depressed Classes. To Ambedkar, the claim of Gandhiji was not true at all relating to the representation of the Untouchables. So he cited resolution adopted by the Depressed Classes Union, Kumaun, and Almora, which he believed was in the United Provinces, and which contained the following resolution:

“This Meeting declares its non-confidence in the Congress movement which has been carried on in and outside the country, and condemns the methods adopted by the Congress workers.”<sup>92</sup>

Realizing complexity of Gandhiji, Ambedkar said that the Minorities Committee either should solve the problem or the British Government should undertake the solution of the problem relating to the question and special demands of the Depressed Classes. He was completely unwilling for arbitration by the third parties relating to the question of Untouchables. Even he had no confidence to others except the sense of responsibility of the British Government in this respect. He also noted the fact that the position of the Depressed Classes were not clamouring for transfer of political power.

Their position was to put it plainly that they were not anxious for the transfer of power; but if the British Government would be unable to resist the forces that had been set up in the country which would do clamour for transference of political power and they knew the Depressed Classes in their present circumstances were not in a position to resist that. So they asked the British Government that if the Government would make that transfer, that transfer would be accompanied by such conditions and by such provisions that power should not fall into the hands of a clique, into the hands of an oligarchy, or into the hands of a group of people, whether Muhammandans or Hindus; but that that solution should be such that the power should be shared by all communities in their respective proportions. After a long deliberations relating to the issues of the Depressed Classes and others, the Prime Minister of Britain said that British Government would take its action if the delegates could not find out the solution because they were determined to make such improvements in the Government of India that would make the Government of India consistent with their own ideas, as would make the Government of India something that was capable of greater and greater expansion towards liberty. That is why; the Prime Minister of England appealed to the Delegates for representing all communities. On the basis of the Prime Minister's suggestion, the Minorities Committee met and met a settlement which was submitted to the Prime Minister in the evening before next meeting of the Minorities Committee which took place on thirteenth November, 1931 and the Prime Minister opined that the work of this Committee, therefore, was from the very beginning of supreme importance, and he was sorry to say that the delegates were unable to present the British Government to an agreed plan. Even he received a deputation representing the Mohammedans, the Depressed Classes, at any rate a section of the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the British Community and they met him with a document which embodied an agreement that they had come to amongst themselves which covered something in the region of 46 per cent. of the population of British India. His Highness The Aga Khan got up and read that document in the house and said that they had been arrived at between them with regard to the intercommunal problem with which the Round Table Conference in general and the Minorities Committee in particular were concerned. They said that this agreement had been arrived at after careful and anxious consideration of this difficult and complicated problem and might be taken as a whole. All parts of the agreement were interdependent and agreements stood or fall as a whole. This

agreement was known as 'Minorities Pact' and the Provisions of which was put forward jointly by Muslims, Depressed Classes, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans to the British Prime Minister. It was nothing but a Settlement of the Communal Problem agreed and signed by the HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN (Muslims Delegate), DR. AMBEDKAR (Depressed Classes representative), RAO BAHADUR PANNIR SELVAM (Indian Christians leader), SIR HENRY GIDNEY (Anglo-Indians representative) and SIR HUBERT CARR (Europeans delegate). The main claims<sup>93</sup> of the Minorities Communities were as follows:

- i. No person should be prejudiced by reason of his origin, religion, caste or creed in the field of employment, education, civic rights and the exercise of any trade or professions.
- ii. Statutory safeguards should be incorporated in the constitution with a view to protect against enactments of the Legislature of discriminatory laws affecting any community.
- iii. Right to Liberty should be guaranteed to all communities in the sphere of religion, worship, observances, propaganda, associations, education, social institutions, schools etc.
- iv. Right to Constitution guarantee should be implemented in the field of adequate safeguards for the protection of religion, culture and personal law, and the promotion of education and for their due share in grants-in-aid given by the State and by the self-government bodies.
- v. Right to the enjoyment of Civic Rights by all citizens should be guaranteed by making any act.
- vi. Right to adequate representation of the Mussalman community and other minorities by convention in the formation of Cabinets in the Central Government and Provincial Government.
- vii. Right to protect minority communities and to promote their welfare by the establishing the Statutory Department under the Central and Provincial Governments.
- viii. No change to joint electorates and reserved seats should be made until after 20 years' experience of separate electorates and until direct adult suffrage for the community had been established with regard to the Depressed Classes.

10. In every Province a Public Service Commission shall be appointed, and the recruitment to the Public Services in such a way as to secure a fair representation to the various communities consistently with the considerations of efficiency and the possession of the necessary qualifications.
11. If a Bill is passed which, in the opinion of two-thirds of the members of any Legislature representing a particular community, affects their religion or social practice based on religion, or in the case of fundamental rights of the subjects in one-third of the members object, it shall be open to such members to ledge their objection thereto, within a period of one month of the Bill being passed by the House.

### **SPECIAL CLAIMS OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES**

- A. ----- The constitution shall declare invalid custom or usage by which any penalty or disadvantage or disability is imposed upon or any discrimination is made against any subject of the State in regard to the enjoyment of the civic rights on account of Untouchability.
- B. ----- Generous treatment in the matter of recruitment to Public Service and the opening of enlistment in the Police and Military Service
- C. ----- The Depressed Classes in the Punjab shall have the benefit of the Punjab Land Alienation Act extended to them.
- D. ----- Right of Appeal shall lie to the Governor or Governor General for redress of prejudicial action or neglect of interest by any Executive Authority.
- E. ----- The Depressed Classes shall have representation not less than set forth in the Annexure.

But Gandhiji attacked everybody who had taken part in producing the Minorities Pact. He was particularly furious against the special recognition given to the Untouchables as a separate political entity. He said that the Congress would not accept the demands for special electorates of the Untouchables. Even Gandhiji told that he would not sell the vital interests of the Untouchables for the sake of winning the freedom of India. He repeatedly claimed himself in his own person to represent the vast mass of the Untouchables. He also noted that he spoke not merely on behalf of the Congress, but on his own too. Besides, he said that he would work from one end of India to the other to tell the Untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation was not the way to remove this bar-sinister, which was the shame, not of them, but of orthodox Hinduism. Therefore, with all his regard for Ambedkar, and for his desire to see the Untouchables up lifted, with all his regard for his ability, Gandhiji said that here the

great wrong under which Ambedkar had laboured and perhaps the bitter experience that he had undergone had for the moment warped his judgment. It hurts him to have said this, but he would be untrue to the cause of the Untouchables. He was speaking with a due sense of responsibility, and he told that it was not a proper claim which was registered by Dr. Ambedkar when sought to speak for the whole of the Untouchables of India. According to him it would create a division in Hinduism which he could not possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever. He did not mind Untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity. The Chairman of the Round Table Conference made a suggestion to the delegates that he had asked several sections-at least, individuals-from time to time for that, and he had never got it. He also said in opening of this meeting-that the Government would not allow community differences to prevent it from carrying out its pledges and producing a constitution. Therefore they were asked not to make the community difference more important than it was. Although it was noted further that Gandhiji was ready to give recognition to the demands of the Muslims and the Sikhs except the demands of the Untouchables. That is why; Ambedkar said that whenever they asked for an explanation. Gandhi did nothing except to get angry. Gandhiji himself could not give a logical and consistent defence of his opposition to the Untouchables. Inside the Round Table Conference his defence was that the Hindus had seriously taken up the cause of the Untouchables and that therefore there was no reason to give them political safeguards. Outside the Round Table Conference he gave totally different reasons. Further Gandhiji told in a speech in defence of his position as follows:

“Muslims and Sikhs are all well organized. The Untouchables are not. There is very little political consciousness among them and they are so horribly treated that I want to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates their lives would be miserable in villages which are the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. It is the superior class of Hindus who have to do penance for having neglected the ‘Untouchables’ for ages. That penance can be done by active social reform and by making the lot of the ‘Untouchables’ more bearable by acts of service, but not by asking for separate electorates for them. By giving them separate electorates you will throw the apple of discord between the ‘Untouchables’ and the orthodox. You must understand I can tolerate the proposal for special representation of the Musalmans and the Sikhs only as a necessary evil. It would be a positive danger for the ‘Untouchables.’ I am certain

that the question of separate electorates for the 'Untouchables' is a modern manufacture of Government. The only thing needed is to put them on the voters list, and provide for fundamental rights for them in the constitution. In cases they are unjustly treated and their representative is deliberately excluded they would give them complete protection. It should be open to these tribunals to order the unseating of an elected candidate and the election of the excluded men.

"Separate electorates to the 'Untouchables' will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Musalmans will never cease to be Musalmans by having separate electorates. Do you want the 'Untouchables' to remain 'Untouchables' for ever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of untouchability, and when you have done it, the bar-sinister which had been imposed by an insolent 'superior' class upon an 'inferior' class will be destroyed. When you have destroyed the bar-sinister, to whom will you give the separate electorates? Look at the history of Europe. Have you got separate electorates for the working classes or women? With adult franchise, you give the 'Untouchables' complete security. Even the orthodox would have to approach them for votes.

"Now then you ask, does Dr. Ambedkar, their representative, insist on separate electorates for them? I have the highest regard for Dr. Ambedkar. He had every right to be bitter. That he does not break our heads is an act of self-restraint on his part. He is today so much saturated with suspicion that he cannot see anything else. He sees in every Hindu a determined opponent of the 'Untouchables' and it is quite natural. The same thing happened to me in my early days in South Africa, where I was hounded out by Europeans wherever I went. It is quite natural for him to vent his wrath. But the separate electorates that he seeks will not give him social reform. He may himself mount to power and position but nothing good will accrue to the 'Untouchables.' I can say all this with authority, having lived with the 'Untouchables' and having shared their joys and sorrows all these Years."<sup>94</sup>

Ambedkar said that Gandhiji felt considerably disturbed when he heard that at the suggestion of the Prime Minister, the minorities were about to produce a settlement. That is why; Gandhiji devised a scheme to isolate the Untouchables from other Minorities, especially the Muslims. For this reason, he decided to buy out the

Mussalmans at any cost. Ultimately Gandhiji agreed to their 14<sup>th</sup> points on condition that the Mussalmans might withdraw their support from the Untouchables and a secret agreement was signed between Gandhi and Mussalmans representatives. This agreement was known as the 'DRAFT OF GANDHI-MUSLIM PACT'. The main issue of discussion was centered on the question of the withdrawal of the Mussalmans support from the demands of the Untouchables at any cost. That is why; the proposals made by the Muslim for safeguarding their rights and privileges and the proposals made by Gandhiji regarding the Congress policy to isolate the Untouchables from obtaining Mussalmans support by hook and cook. Ambedkar said that Gandhiji did not hesitate to approach the Musalmans and turn against the Untouchables by accepting their 14<sup>th</sup> points which the Congress, the Hindu Maha Saba and even Simon Commission had rejected. Under these circumstances, the Second Round Table Conference was dissolved and the Minorities Committee accepted the proposal of the Prime Minister to put in a signed requisition authorizing him to arbitrate and give his decision on the 'Communal' issue. Many delegates did it including Gandhiji of the Untouchables were so reasonable that no arbitration was necessary. That is why, the Prime Minister appointed a Committee with the late Lord Lothian as its Chairman. Its main object was to devise a system of franchise and his instructions the Chairman was as follows:

"The legislatures to which responsibility is to be entrusted should be representative of the general mass of the population, and that no important section of the community may lack the means of expressing its needs and its opinions."<sup>95</sup>

For doing its work the Committee took the help of the Provincial Governments and of the Provincial Franchise Committees. But the Lothian Committee had close relation with the political demands of the Untouchables.

That is why; the duty and responsibility of the Committee was to find out the exact population of the Untouchables in British India. But it was irony of fate that witness after witness came forward to say that the exact populations of the Untouchables in his Province were very small. Some witness said that there was no Untouchables at all. Even Hindu witnesses were denying the existence of the Untouchables or reducing their number to a negligible figure. Not only the members of the Provincial

Franchise Committee were a party to this plan but also some of the Hindu members of the Lothian Committee were in the game. The total populations of the Untouchables before the Round Table Conference were 70 to 80 millions as per the census figures. But Ambedkar opined that “In the United Provinces, the Census Commissioner in 1931 had estimated the total population Government at 6.8 millions but the Provincial Franchise Committee at .6 millions only!! In Bengal, the Census gave the figures of 10.3 millions; Provincial Government fixed it as 11.2 millions but the Provincial Franchise Committee at .07 millions only!”<sup>96</sup> That is why; Ambedkar raised the following question: “Why did then the Hindus start suddenly to challenge this figure when the question was taken up by the Lothian Committee?”

As an explanation he said that the population of the Untouchables had no value before the formation of the Lothian Committee. After the Round Table Conference, the Hindus had come to know that the Untouchables were demanding separate allotment of their share of representation that such share must come out of the lump which the Hindus had been enjoying in the past and that the measure of the share must depend upon the population of their interest. That is why; Gandhiji and Congress did not mind sacrificing truth and decency and decided to adopt the safest course, namely, to deny that there were any Untouchables in India at all, and thereby knocked out the bottom of the political demands of the Untouchables and left no room for argument. After returning India with empty hand from the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji threatened to revive his campaign of Civil Disobedience Movement in India. But he was ultimately arrested. Without getting no way of obtaining their position and decision relating to the burning issue of the Untouchables, Gandhiji addressed from the jail on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1932 in a letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, the then Secretary of State for India and reminding him regarding his opposition to the claim of the Untouchables. Gandhiji told Sir Samuel that he would perhaps recollect that at the end of his speech at the Round Table Conference when the Minorities’ claim was presented, he said that he should resist with his life the grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes. So far as Hinduism was concerned, separate electorates would simply vivisect and disrupt it. So the question of these classes was predominantly moral and religious. But he pointed out that no penance that the Hindus would do can in any way compensate for the calculated degradation to which they had consigned the Depressed Classes for centuries. So it seemed to him that separate electorate was

neither penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they had groaned under. That is why; Gandhiji, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, he must/ might fast unto death. He also was hoping, however, all his fears were wholly unjustified and the British Government had no intention whatever of creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. As a result of it, the Secretary of state for India sent the following reply to Gandhiji. He said that he realized fully the strength of his feeling upon the question of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. But he could only say that their intension was to give any decision that would be necessary solely and only upon the merits of the case. He said that Lord Lothian's Committee had not yet completed its tour and it must be some weeks before they could receive any conclusions at which it might have arrived. However, the main motto of Gandhiji was to paralyze the British Government and prevent them from accepting the claim of the Untouchables for special representation. As the Indian leader had failed to come to an agreement; British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonalld announced his 'Communal Award' on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1932. While announcing his award, he also declared that "If the Government were satisfied that communities concerned were mutually agreed upon an alternative scheme, they would be prepared to recommend to Parliament that the alternative should be substituted for the provisions outlined in the Communal Award". The main provisions<sup>97</sup> of the Award were given below:

### ***Communal Decision by His Majesty's Government, 1932***

#### ***Main Provisions:***

"1. In the statement by the Prime Minister on 1<sup>st</sup> December last on behalf of his Majesty's Government at the close of the second of the Round Table Conference, which was immediately afterwards endorsed by both Houses of Parliament, it was made plain that if the communities in India were unable to reach a settlement acceptable to all parties on the communal question which the Conference had failed to solve, His Majesty's Government were determined that India's constitutional advance should not on that account be frustrated, and that they would remove this obstacle by devising and applying themselves a provisional scheme.

2. On the 19<sup>th</sup> March last His Majesty's Government having been informed that the continued failure of the communities to reach agreement was blocking the progress of

the plans for the framing of a new Constitution, stated that they were engaged upon a careful re-examination of the difficult and controversial questions which arise. They are now satisfied that without a decision of at least some aspects of the problems connected with the position of minorities under the new Constitution, no further progress can be made with the framing of the Constitution.

3. His Majesty's Government has accordingly decided that they will include provisions to give effect to the scheme set out below in the proposals relating to the Indian Constitution to be laid in due course before Parliament. The scope of this scheme is purposely confined to the arrangements to be made for the representation of the British Indian communities in the Provincial Legislatures, consideration of representation in the Legislature at the Centre being deferred for the reason given in paragraph 20 below. The decision to limit the scope of the scheme implies no failure to realize that the framing of the Constitution will necessitate the decision of a number of other problems of great importance to minorities, but has been made upon the basic questions of method and proportions of representation the communities themselves may find it possible to arrive at modus vivendi on other communal problems, which have not received the examination they require.

4. His Majesty's Government wishes it to be most clearly understood that they themselves can be no parties to any negotiations which may be initiated view to the revision of their decision, and will not be prepared to give consideration to any representation aimed at securing the modification of it which is not supported by all the parties affected. But they are not desirous to close no door to an agreed settlement should such happily be forthcoming. If, therefore, before a new Government of India Act has passed into law, they are satisfied that the communities who are concerned are mutually agreed of any one or more of the Governors' Provinces or in respect of the whole of the British India, they will be prepared to recommend to Parliament that that alternative should be substituted for the provisions now outlined.

5. \* \* \* \*

6. \* \* \* \*

7. \* \* \* \*

8. \* \* \* \*

9. Members of the "depressed classes" qualified to vote will vote in general constituency. In view of the fact that for a considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure any adequate representation in the Legislature, a number of special seats will be assigned to them as shown in the table. These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the "depressed classes" electorally qualified will be entitled to vote. Any person voting in such a special constituency will, as stated above, be also entitled to vote in a general constituency. It is intended that these constituencies should be formed in selected areas where the depressed classes are most numerous, and that, except in Madras, they should not cover the whole area of the Province.

In Bengal it seems possible that in some general constituencies a majority of the voters will belong to the Depressed Classes. Accordingly, pending further investigation, no number has been fixed for the members to be returned from the special Depressed Class constituencies in that Province. It is intended to secure that the Depressed Classes should obtain not less than 10 seats in the Bengal Legislature.

The precise definition in each Province of those who (if electorally qualified) will be entitled to vote in the special Depressed Class Constituencies has not yet been finally determined. It will be based as a rule on the general principles advocated in the Franchise Committee's Report. Modification may, however, be found necessary in some Provinces in Northern India where the application of the general criteria a untouchability might result in a definition unsuitable in some respects to the special condition of the Province.

His Majesty's Government does not consider that these special Depressed Classes constituencies will be required for more than limited time. They intend that the Constitution shall provide that they shall come to an end after 20 years if they have not previously been abolished under the general powers of electoral revision referred to in paragraph 6."

Realizing the content relating to the terms and conditions of the 'Communal Award' of 1932, Gandhiji became furious against the colonial Government. That is why; he sent a protesting letter to the Prime Minister on August 18, 1932 from the Yeravda

Central Prison and highlighted that in pursuance of his letter Sir Samuel Hoare and his declaration at the meeting of the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1931 at St; James' Palace, he had to resist their decision with his life. The only way he could do so was by declaring a perpetual fast unto death. This would cease only if during its progress the British Government revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise, no matter how wide it was. He strongly pointed out that the proposed fast would come into operation in the ordinary course from the noon of 20<sup>th</sup> September next, unless the said decision was meanwhile revised in the manner suggested above. In response to the reactions of Gandhiji, the Prime Minister of England expressed his views on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1932 and said that Gandhiji had written this letter to him under a misunderstanding as to what the decision of His Majesty's Government as regards the Depressed Classes really implied in connection with the permanent segregation of the Depressed Classes from the Hindu community. He noted the fact that Gandhiji made his position very clear on the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference and expressed it once again. Under this unavoidable circumstance, he replied to Gandhiji that they would take it into most careful account when they were considering the question of representation of the Depressed Classes. Keeping in mind of the numerous appeals they had received from Depressed Class Organizations and the generally admitted social disabilities under which they laboured and which they had often recognized, they felt that it was their duty to safeguard what they believed to be the right of the Depressed Classes. But under the Government scheme the Depressed Classes would remain part of the Hindu community and will vote with the Hindu electorate on an equal footing but for the first twenty years they would receive a limited number of special constituencies. Thus, in every way was the unity of Hindu society preserved. Under this unavoidable condition, the special advantage initially given under the scheme for the Depressed Classes was wholly different in conception and be effective in the same method as that of the representation adopted for a minority such as the Moslems by means of separate communal electorates. However, he said that Gandhiji opposed to the demands of the untouchables very interestingly who would adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes should have joint electorate with Hindus, because this right was already recognized. In

response to this general request the Indians, after they had failed to produce a settlement the Govt. undertook to give a decision on the minorities' question. They had now given this privilege, and they could not alter it. It seemed to him unfair if his present internment were to deprive him of opportunity of explaining to the public the reason why you intend to fast. However, once again he urged Gandhiji to consider the actual details of Government's decision and ask himself seriously the question whether it would really justify him in taking the action he had already declared<sup>98</sup>.

Realizing the attitude of the British Government towards the question of the Untouchables, Gandhiji wrote a letter to the P.M. of Britain on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1932. that the mere fact of the Depressed Classes having double votes did not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. In the establishment of separate electorate all was calculated to destroy Hinduism and did no good whatever to the Depressed Classes. He should not be against even over-representation of the Depressed Classes. What he disliked was their statutory Separation even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. He asked that if his decision stood and the constitution would come into being, he would arrest the marvellous growth of the work of Hindu reformers, who have dedicated themselves to the uplift their suppressed brethren in every walk of life. That is why; Gandhiji said that he had been compelled reluctantly to adhere to the decision conveyed to him. Under this unavoidable circumstance, Gandhiji commenced his 'Epic Fast' unto death on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1932 as a protest against the grant of separate electorates to the Untouchables.

Ambedkar made the statement on Gandhiji's attitude at the Round Table Conference to the Untouchables and their demand for Constitutional Safeguards on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1932. It was possible for Ambedkar to read the correspondence held between Gandhiji, Sir Samuel Hoare and the Prime Minister, which was published recently in the Newspaper, in which Gandhiji had expressed his determination to starve himself unto death till the British Government of its own accord or under pressure of public opinion revise their opinion and withdraw their scheme of communal representation for the Depressed Classes. But a question stirred into Ambedkar's mind; why would Gandhi stake his life on an issue arising out of the communal question which he, at the Round Table Conference, said was one of a

comparatively small importance. So it was very painful and surprising to him that Gandhi should single out special representation for the Depressed Classes in the Communal Award as an excuse for his self-immolation. It was well known to all that separate electorates were granted not only to the Depressed Classes, but to the Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, as well as to the Mohammedans and the Sikhs. It was also noted that separate electorates were granted to landlords, labourers and traders. But Gandhiji had declared his opposition to the special representation of every other class and creed except the Mahomedans and the Sikhs. All the same, Gandhiji chose to let everybody else except the Depressed Classes retain the special electorates given to them. Gandhiji expressed his grievances against the consequences of the arrangements for the representations of the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar also said that it was nothing but purely an imaginary opinion of Gandhiji. If the nation was not going to be split up by separate electorates to the Mahomedans and the Sikhs, the Hindu society could not be said to be split up if the Depressed Classes were given separate electorates. His conscience would not be aroused if the nation was split by the arrangements of special Electorates for classes and communities other than the Depressed Classes. Some scholars and politicians felt that if there was any class which deserved to be given special political rights in order to protect itself against the tyranny of the majority under the Swaraj constitution, it was the Depressed Classes which was undoubtedly not in a position to sustain itself in the struggle for existence. Further the religion, to which they were tied up, instead of providing for them an honorable place, brands them as lepers. This class was entirely dependent economically upon the high-caste Hindus. The only path for a community so handicapped to succeed in the struggle for life against organized tyranny, some share of political power in order that it might protect itself was a paramount necessity. So Ambedkar fought as a well-wisher of the Depressed Classes for securing as much political power as might be possible in the new Constitution while Gandhiji strangely opposed to his noble mission. Therefore, he endeavoured to augment the scanty political power which the Depressed Classes had got under the Communal Award. The opposition from Gandhiji seemed to Ambedkar that he completely dished the Depressed Classes out of political existence. He even tried to enter into an agreement with the Muslims and the Congress by offering the Muslims all the 14 claims which they had put forth on their behalf, and in return asked them to join with him in resisting the claims for social representation made by him on behalf of the Depressed

Classes. So the credit should be given to the Muslim delegates as they refused to be a part to such a black act. But Gandhiji said that the Communal Award had separated the Depressed Classes from the Hindu Community. Dr. Moonje, a much stronger protagonist of the caste Hindus had been insisting on the fact that the Communal Award did not create any separation between the Depressed Class and the Hindus. But it was very much interesting to note that Dr. Moonje was surprised about Gandhiji that he was a nationalist and not known to be a communalist should read the Communal Award, in so far as it relates to the Depressed Class, in a manner quite contrary to that of communalists like Dr. Moonje. According to Ambedkar, the Communal Award should not only satisfy the Hindus, but also those among the Depressed Classes such as Rao Bahadur Rajah, Mr. Baloo or Mr. Govai, who were in favour of Joint Electorates. But it was very much interesting to say that although Gandhiji was opposed to the system of separate electorates, he was not opposed to the system of Joint Electorates and Reserved Seats. Once again it can be said that he was totally opposed to any system of Special representation for the Depressed Classes whether by joint Electorates or by Separate Electorates in the Round Table Conference. Beyond the right to vote in a general electorate based upon Adult Suffrage, Gandhiji was not prepared to concede anything to the Depressed Classes by way of securing their representation in the legislatures. Gandhiji proposed a scheme which was purely conventional without any constitutional sanction behind it and without any single seat being reserved for the Depressed Classes in the electoral law. But the scheme was mentioned as follows:

“Depressed Class candidates might stand in the general electorate as against other high caste Hindu candidates. If any Depressed Class Candidate was defeated in the election, he should file an election petition and obtain the verdict that he was defeated because he was an Untouchable. If such a decision was obtained, the Mahatma and he would undertake to induce some Hindu members to resign and thus create a vacancy. There would be then another election in which the defeated Depressed Class candidate or any other Depressed Class candidate might again try his luck as against the Hindu candidates. Should he be defeated again, he should get similar verdict that he was defeated because he was an Untouchable and so on ad infinitum. I am disclosing these facts as some people are even now under the impression that the joint

Electorates and Reserved States would satisfy that there is no use discussing the question until the actual proposals of the Mahatma are put forth.”<sup>99</sup>

But Ambedkar was not satisfied about the assurances of the Mahatma relating to question of the Untouchables that he and his Congress would come forward to do the needful. So Ambedkar did agree to leave the most important question as the protection of his people to conventions and understandings. Instead of that he highlighted the fact that there had been many Mahatmas in India whose sole object was to remove Untouchability and to elevate and absorb the Depressed Classes, but every one of them had failed in this mission. This is why; Ambedkar was bound to insist on a statutory guarantee for the protection of his people. Ambedkar also concluded his statement regarding the ‘Epic Fast’ of Gandhiji by assuring the public that although he was entitled to say that he regarded the matter as closed, he was ready to consider the proposals of Gandhiji. However, Ambedkar believed that Mahatma Gandhi would not drive him to the necessity of making a choice between his life and the rights of his people. That is why; he could never consent to deliver his people bound hand and foot to the Caste Hindus for generations to come. But the Prime Minister of England had made it quite clear that the British Cabinet would not withdraw the ‘Communal Award’ on alter it of its own, but that they were ready to substitute for it a formula that may be agreed upon by the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables. Under these unavoidable circumstances, Ambedkar had to face two types of problems such as the political rights for the Untouchables which the Prime Minister had given them and to save the life of Gandhiji from sure death. Ambedkar ultimately responded to the call of humanity and save the life of Gandhiji through an agreement i.e. known as the ‘Poona Pact’ of 1932. As a result of it; a public meeting of the Hindus was called on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1932 in Bombay to accord to it their support and the following resolution<sup>100</sup> was passed in this meeting:

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

to the leaders of the communities concerned to realize the implications of the agreement and of this resolution and to make earnest endeavour to fulfill them.

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

It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called Untouchable Classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.”<sup>101</sup>

However, the historic Poona Pact was signed between Gandhiji and Ambedkar on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1932. The following relevant texts<sup>102</sup> of the Poona Pact are given below:

(1) “There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of the general electorate seats in the Provincial Legislatures as follows:

Madras 30; Bombay with Sind 15; Punjab 8; Bihar and Orissa 18; Central Provinces 20; Assam 7; Bengal 30; United Provinces 20; Total 148. These figures are based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils, announced in the Prime Minister’s decision.

(2) Election to these seats shall be by joint electorates subject, however, to the following procedure; all the members of the Depressed Classes, registered in the general electoral roll in a constituency, will form an electoral college, which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes for each of such reserved seats, by the method of the single vote; the four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election, shall be candidates for election by the general electorate.

(3) Representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in Clause 2 above, for their representation in the Provincial Legislatures.

(4) In the Central Legislature, eighteen per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes.

(5) The system representation of the Depressed Classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislature as herein before mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years, unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of Clause 6 below.

(6) The system of representation of the Depressed Classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislature as provided for in Clauses 1 and 4 shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in the settlement.

(7) Franchise for the Central and Provincial Legislature for a Depressed Classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee Report.

(8) There shall be no disabilities attaching to any one on the ground of his being a member of the Depressed Classes in regard in any elections to local bodies or appointment to the Public Services. Every endeavour shall be made to secure fair representation of the Depressed Classes in these respects, subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to the Public Services.

(9) In every province out of an educational grant, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing for providing educational facilities to the Members of the Depressed Classes.”

Therefore it can be highlighted the fact that the Poona Pact gave the Untouchables 148 seats, while the Award had only given them 78 seats. The Communal Award gave the Untouchables only two benefits<sup>103</sup> viz.

- I. A fixed quota of seats to be elected by separate electorate of Untouchables and to be filled by persons belonging to the Untouchables.
- II. Double vote, one to be used through separate electorates and the other to be used in the general electorates. If the Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats it also took away the right to the double vote. This increase in seats can never be deemed to be a compensation for the loss of the double vote. 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 strength free to be used in the election of caste Hindu candidates, the Untouchables would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate, the issue of the General Election. No caste Hindu candidate could have dared to neglect the Untouchables in his constituency or be hostile to their interest if he was made dependent upon the votes of the Untouchables. Not only that but also if the Communal Award with its system of double voting had remained the Untouchables would have had a few seats less but every other member would have been a member for the Untouchables. The increase in the number of seats for the Untouchables is no increase at all and was no recompense for the loss of separate electorate and the double vote...Disliked by the Hindus and disfavoured by the Untouchables; the Poona Pact was given recognition by parties and was embodied in the Government of India Act.

However, the Poona Pact was concluded in a hurry that it left many things undefined. The most important things that were left undefined were two namely:

- i. Did the 'panel of four' to be elected at the primary election imply four as a maximum or a minimum?
- ii. What was intended to be the method of voting in the final election?

The Hindus wanted that the distributive system of voting should be made compulsory so that a caste Hindu voter whether he wants it or not can have no option but to vote

for the Untouchable candidate who may be the nominee of the Hindus, and thus make his election sure and certain.

That is why; Ambedkar had been pressing in the discussion in the Round Table Conference that the Untouchables might not only have the right to be represented in the legislature, they might also have the right to be represented in the Cabinet. So it was to introduce a clause in the Instrument of Instructions to the Government imposing an obligation upon them to see that in the formation of the Cabinet representatives of the Minorities were included. The clause ran as follows:

“In making appointments to his Council of Minister our Governor shall use his best endeavours to select his Ministers in the following manner, that is to say, to appoint in consultation with the person who in his judgment is most likely to command a stable majority in the Legislature those persons (including so far as practicable members of important minority communities) who will best be in a position collectively to command the confidence of the Legislature. In so acting, he shall bear constantly in mind the need for fostering a sense of joint responsibility among his Ministers.”<sup>104</sup>

That is why; the Congress could not use it to defend its conduct in excluding the Untouchables from the Cabinet for the following two reasons:

Firstly; the Congress was bound by the terms of the Poona Pact to give representation to the Untouchables in the Cabinet.

Secondly; the Congress could not say that there were no Untouchables in the Legislatures who were not members of the Congress Party. On the contrary, there were as many as 78 Untouchables returned on the Congress ticket and pledged to the Congress policy. So Ambedkar raised a question, why then did the Congress not include them in the Cabinet? It seemed to him that the only answer was that it was a part of the Congress policy not to admit the right of the Untouchables to be represented in the Cabinet and this policy had the support of Mr. Gandhi. Ambedkar cited the instance that was imbedded in the story of the expulsion of the Hon'ble Dr. Khare from the Congress Ministry who was the Prime Minister in the Congress Ministry in the Central Provinces. However, Dr. Khare was bound to form a Cabinet

under the unavoidable circumstances. But Dr. Khare's new Cabinet was different from the old one as it included Mr. Agnibhoj, an Untouchable, who was a member of the Central Provinces, who belonged to the Congress Party and who by his education well qualified to be a Minister.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1938, the Congress Working Committee met in Wardha and passed a resolution condemning Dr. Khare on the ground that in tendering the resignation of his colleagues in the old ministry he was guilty of a grave error of judgment and that in forming a new Ministry he was guilty of indiscipline. In explaining what was behind this charge of indiscipline in forming a new ministry, Dr. Khare openly said that Gandhiji told him that it was wrong on his part to have raised such aspirations and ambitions in the Untouchables and it was such an act of bad judgment that he would never forgive him. This statement was repeatedly made by Dr. Khare from platforms. But Gandhiji never came forward to contradict it<sup>105</sup>. It was nothing but more direct evidence on this point. In 1942 there was held All-India Conference of the Untouchables. In that Conference resolutions setting out the political demands of the Untouchables were passed. An Untouchable of the Congress Party who attended the Conference went to Gandhiji to ascertain what Gandhiji had to say about these demands and put him the following five questions:

“1. What will be the position of the Harijans in the future constitution to be framed?

“2. Will you advise the Government and the Congress to agree to fix the five seats from a Panchayat Board upwards to the State Council on population basis?

“3. Will you advise the Congress and the leaders of the various majority parties in the legislatures in the provinces to nominate the Cabinet members from among the Scheduled Caste legislators who enjoy the confidence of the majority of Scheduled Caste members?

“4. In view of the backwardness of the Harijans, will you advise the Government to make a provision in the Act that Executive posts in the Local Boards and Municipal Councils be held on communal rotation? So as to enable the Harijans to become Presidents and Chairman?

“5. Why do you not fix some percentage of seats for Harijans from District Congress Committee upwards to the Working Committee of the Congress?”

But Gandhiji answered of these questions as follows:

“1. The constitution, which I could influence, would contain a provision making the observance of untouchability in any shape or form an offence. The so-called ‘untouchables’ would have seats reserved for them in all elected bodies according to their population within the elected area concerned.

“2. You will see that the answer is covered by the foregoing.

“3. I cannot. The principle is dangerous. Protection of its neglected classes should not be carried to an extent which will harm them and harm the country. A cabinet minister should be a topmost man commanding universal confidence. A person after he had secured a seat in an elected body should depend upon his intrinsic merit and popularity to secure coveted positions.

“4. In the first place, I am not interested in the present Act which is as good as dead. But I am opposed to your proposal on the ground already mentioned.

“5. I am opposed for the reason mentioned. But I should like to compel large elective Congress organizations to ensure the election of Harijan members in proportion to their numbers on the Congress register. If Harijans are not interested enough in the Congress to become 4 anna members, they may not expect to find their names in elective bodies. But I would strongly advise Congress workers to see that they approach Harijans and induce them to become members of the Congress.”<sup>106</sup>

It was beyond doubt that Gandhiji and the Congress were determined on principle not to recognize the right of the Untouchables to be represented in the Cabinet. As to the question of qualifications, there would have been some sense if Gandhiji had that limiting condition applicable to all minorities. Nobody had claimed that an unqualified Untouchable should be made a Minister. It only confirmed the inner

feeling of opposition that lies locked in the heart of Gandhi. But it was very much disgusting to mention that the series of acts which the Congress perpetrated to nullify the Poona Pact. First, it was related to the policy adopted by Congress Parliamentary Board in selecting candidates' for election. This question had not yet been studied as deeply as its importance demanded. Practically, speaking, communal principle played a very great part in it. In a constituency where there were two candidates to choose from, the Congress did not feel it necessary to choose the one more worthy. It chose the one who belonged to a caste which was more numerous. Considerations of wealth also played their part. But there were other principles followed which reveal a deep-seated plot. Different classes of qualifications were set down for different classes of candidates. From candidates who came from high caste Hindus as Brahmins and the communities those with the highest qualifications were selected. In the case of the Non-Brahmins those with low qualifications were preferred to those with higher qualifications. And in the case of the Untouchables those with little or no qualifications were selected in preference to those who had. There seems to be a deep laid game behind it. Any one who studies it carefully will find that it is designed to allow none but the Brahmins and the allied castes to form the main part of the ministry and to secure for them the support of a docile unintelligent crowd of non-Brahmins and Untouchables who by their intellectual attainments could never dream of becoming rivals of the minister-folk but would be content to follow the lead for no other consideration except that of having been raised to the status of members of the Legislatures. If the present system of election continues the Congress could always prevent educated Indians from becoming members of the Legislature which was the stepping-stone for becoming a member of the Cabinet. It was a very grave prospect and some steps would have to be taken to retrieve the position. In the meantime, it is enough to say that the scheme of selecting candidates adopted by the Congress dealt the Untouchables a severe blow by depriving them of Executive power under the cover of there being no qualified men to hold it which it created for itself by such clandestine and subterranean means. The second of the Congress was to subject the Untouchable Congressmen to the rigours of party discipline. They were completely under the control of the Congress Party Executive. They could not ask a question which it did not like. They could not move a resolution which it did not permit. They could not bring in legislation to which it objected. They could not vote as they chose and could not speak what they felt. They were there as dumb driven cattle. One of the objects of obtaining representation in the

Legislature for the Untouchables is to enable them to ventilate their grievances and to obtain redress for their wrongs. The Congress successfully and effectively prevented this from happening. To end his long and sad story, the Congress sucked the juice out of the Poona Pact and threw the rind in the face of the Untouchables<sup>107</sup>.

### **7.5. Caste Politics between Gandhiji and Ambedkar relating to the Question of Harijans and their Temple Entry Movement**

The Caste Politics between Gandhiji and Ambedkar relating to the questions of Harijan emancipation heralded an epoch-making event in the history of Harijan Human Rights Movement in India. Both of them played a vital role to liberate the Harijans from age-old traditional customs, manners, believes, numerous religious dogmas and evils of the so-called Hindu society. All these obnoxious matters gauged the life of Harijans in all sphere of their individual as well as national life. Realizing the hopeless position of its political mission, Gandhiji hurriedly came forward to reform the Harijan community with a motto to uplift their socio-economic, cultural, educational, religious and political conditions within the periphery of the Hindu religion as well as Hindu society. All these reformative and parametric measures were adopted by Gandhiji to abolish the stain of Untouchability from the Hindu society. He had done much more rather than his predecessors for improving the lot of the Harijans. But he did not believe in eradicating the Institution of Caste which was much more necessary before proceeding to the abolition of Untouchability. However, it was well known to all the liberal scholars and thinkers of science and humanities in the contemporary world that the abolition of the Caste System was of the source of automatic abolition of the Untouchability from the so-called Hindu society. But Ambedkar, the leader of the millions of dumb in India dedicated much more time to emancipate the Sudras, Depressed Classes, Untouchables and Harijans from the age-old traditional and hereditary slavery, yoke and curse of the Brahmins and their society and religion. He strongly voiced to annihilate the inhuman Institution of Caste and Untouchability from the so-called Brahmanical Hindu religion and society with a novel mission to emancipate the ill-fated poor, ignorant, weak toiling masses who were named by Sudras, Untouchables, Depressed Classes, Harijans etc. in different ages. That is why; Ambedkar stressed on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity to stir their mentality so that they could raise themselves in a position of

self-dignity, self-respect in the so-called Brahmanical Hindu society. Since the inception of his childhood, Ambedkar struggled against all sorts of injustice, inequality, tyranny, oppression, suppression and humiliation imposed upon the low caste Hindus from generation to generation hereditarily in the form of socio-religious norms, customs, manners of the Brahmanical Hindu religion and society. He fought for establishing the basic civic rights of these classes. Ambedkar also impressed the British Government by his scientific explanation and logical analysis to abolish the Caste System and Untouchability. His human rights movement for protect the interest of the Untouchables, Depressed Classes, Harijans ushered a new hope in their life to live in the society with honour. But he opposed to the scheme of Gandhiji in connection with Harijan Movement as he profoundly believed in the Caste System which is the core concept of emerging the Untouchability in the Brahmanical Hindu society.

As a consequence of the 'Communal Award' of Sir Ramsay Macdonald, the then Prime Minister of England, Gandhiji ultimately launched his 'Epic Fast' until death to resist Depressed Classes separate and double electoral rights and privileges given in the 'Communal Award' i. e. completely distinct from the caste Hindus electoral rights. Realizing the hard reality of the situation; Ambedkar, the leader of the Depressed Classes, had to sacrifice the priceless value of double electoral privileges of the Depressed Classes only to save the life of Gandhiji. As a result, the historic Poona Pact was signed between Gandhiji–Ambedkar in 1932 which heralded an epoch making event in the British Indian history. In response to keep his word in connection with the essence and provisions of the Poona Pact, Gandhiji came forward to uplift the ill-fated conditions of the Harijans through numerous social works and social services. In course of time Gandhiji left politics and started numerous plans and programmes in connection with the reforms of the Harijan society within the Hindu fold. He was the first leader of the Indian National Congress Camp as well as caste Hindu leaders of India who ultimately launched direct developmental schemes and programmes for the emancipation of the Untouchables in India. That is why; his contribution in the field of Harijans was praised globally. Practically speaking; Gandhiji started 'Harijan Movement' in response to the call of humanity. The main motto of his Harijan project was to uplift the Untouchables in the sphere of their individual as well as national life. In spite of it; it can not be denied that the Harijan

Movement was really the out come of the 'Poona Pact' (1932). As a result of it, a public meeting of the Hindus was called on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1932 in Bombay to accord to it their support and the following resolution<sup>108</sup> was passed in this meeting:

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

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

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

After getting acquitted from jail at that very moment, Gandhi propagated against Untouchability in different regions of India. But his project of 'Harijan Movement' was ultimately started through the establishment of 'All-India Anti-Untouchability League' under the Presidentship of Pandit Malaviya on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1932 in the Cowasjee Jahangir Hall in Bombay. Therefore, the 'All India Anti- Untouchability League' was established with branches in different provincial centres. It was also decided that the headquarters of it were to be in Delhi and G.D.Birla was to be the President and Amritlal V. Thakkar, General Secretary. Frankly speaking that the All-India Anti- Untouchability League was the direct outcome of the Poona Pact of 1932

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and it was also a long cherished project of Gandhiji. Therefore, he always encouraged and inspired for the establishment of such an organization. But Gandhi changed the name of it and expressed his views in a press report on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1932 and stated that this League would henceforth be known as 'Servants of the Untouchables Society'. Ultimately he also changed this name and entitled it as the 'Harijan Sevak Sangh' which meant a society of those engaged in service to the Untouchables. In fact, Gandhi was really accused of sectarian partiality in choosing the name Harijan. But it would be noted here that the term 'Harijan' came from the words 'Hari' and 'Har'. "Hari is one of the hundred names of Vishnu, while Har is one of the hundred names of Shiva"<sup>109</sup>.

After signing the Poona Pact, it was not known that if it had any impact on Gandhi's mind or not. He chose a word 'Harijan'. After then he started a publication of a Journal called 'Harijan'. But Gandhi explained it in maintaining his own style. That is why, it can be noted here the facts of God Basudeva in this matter, who himself was the originator of 'Chaturvarna' i.e., Brahmana, Kshtriya, Vaisha and Sudra according to the version of the Bhagvata Gita. Not only that, Basudeva was entitled as the incarnation of Krishna. In the same way, Gandhi himself was the creator and propagator of the 'Harijan', the fifth Varna<sup>110</sup> of the Hindu society in this dynamic Koli Yuga. So his followers entitled Gandhiji as the incarnation and saviour of the Harijan. Therefore, this fact was not based on imaginary ideas because Ray Bahadur Meher Chand Khanna, the follower of Gandhiji, propagated the incarnation theory in respect of Harijan since long days. So it seemed to Ambedkar that this type of interpretation of the word Harijan was innocent and irresponsible matter. He said that the motive of it was diplomatic. Ambedkar said that the Untouchables were killing by mercy and sympathy in every sphere of their individual as well as national life. They had no self respect, no status and position according to the orthodox version. They would have to live by the will, sympathy and mercy of others.

Therefore, Ambedkar pointed out that Gandhiji had given the name Harijan to the Untouchables to blaster up Vaishnavism. But Gandhiji replied in this connection that the term Harijan was used to mean God and not Vishnu and that Harijan simply meant 'Children of God'. That is why; Ambedkar mentioned the following grounds of objection against the name Harijan instead of Untouchables:

“In the first place it has not bettered their position. It has not bettered their position. It has not elevated them in the eyes of the Hindus. The new name has become completely identified with the subject matter of the old. Every body knows that Hirajans are simply no other than the old Untouchables. The new name provides no escape to the Untouchables from the curse of untouchability. With the new name they are damned as much as they were with the old. Secondly the Untouchables say that they prefer to be called Untouchables. They argue that it is better that the wrong should be called by its known name. It is better for the patient to know what he is suffering from. It is better for the wrong doer that the wrong is there still to be redressed. Any concealment is fraud upon the Untouchables and a false absolution to the Hindus. Thirdly there is also the feeling that the name Harijan is indicative of pity. If the name meant ‘chosen people of God’ as the Jews claimed themselves to be it would have been a different matter. But to call them ‘children of God’ is to invite pity from their tyrants by pointing out their helplessness and their dependent condition. The more manly among the Untouchables resent the degrading implications of this new name. How great the resentment of the Untouchables against this new name is can be seen from the fact that whole body of the representatives of the Untouchables in the Bombay Legislative Assembly walked out of the House in protest when the Congress Government introduced a measure giving to the name Harijan the sanction of law.”<sup>111</sup>

#### Aims and Objective of the Harijan Sevak Sangh:

The following aims and objectives were adopted in framing the constitution of the ‘Harijan Sevak Sangha’ in the meeting held in Cowasjee Jehangir Hall in Bombay on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1932 which were all contradicted the proposals given by Ambedkar in this context for accomplishing the task of the Sangh:

“Carrying propaganda against Untouchability and taking immediate steps to secure as early as practicable that all public wells, dharmashalas, roads, schools, crematoriums burning ghats and all public temples be declared open to the Depressed Classes, provided that no compulsion or force shall be used and that only peaceful persuasion shall be adopted towards this end.”<sup>112</sup> A.V. Thakkar and G.D.Birla made an

announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1932 to the Press about the programme of the Harijan Sevak Sangha and the set up of the machinery to carry out the following programmes:

“The League believes that reasonable persons among the Sanatanists are not much against the removal of Untouchability as such, as they are against inter-caste dinners and marriages. Since it is not the ambition of the League to undertake reforms beyond its own scope, it is desirable to make it clear that while the League will work by persuasion among the caste Hindus to remove every vestige of Untouchability, the main line of work will be constructive, such as the uplift of Depressed Classes educationally, economically and socially, which itself will go a great way to remove untouchability. With such a work even a staunch Sanatanist can have nothing but sympathy. And it is for such work mainly that the League had been established. Social reforms like the abolition of the caste system and inter-dinning are kept outside the scope of the League.”<sup>113</sup>

In fact, the above mentioned aims and objectives were described in one of the Annual Reports of the Sangh. It stated as follows:

“According to its constitution the aim and object of the Society is the abolition of untouchability by reason of birth and the acquisition of equal rights of access of public temples, wells schools and other public institutions for Harijans as enjoyed by other Hindus. The achievement of this object has led the Society to undertake work of a two-fold kind. First, the Society has to bring about such a radical change in the sentiments and opinions of Caste Hindus that they may willingly, as a matter of course, allow the enjoyment of all civic rights to Harijans. Secondly, the society has to put forth its efforts and devote its funds for the educational, economic and social uplift of Harijan.”<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, we have to mention first of all the proposals sent by Ambedkar to Mr. A. V. Thakkar, the Secretary of the ‘Harijan Sevak Sangh’ on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1932 on Board the Ship M.V. “Victoria” through a letter after expressing his views regarding the policy and programme which the Sangha should adopt for accomplishing this task. So Ambedkar wrote a letter accordingly from the steamer but this letter was not even acknowledged by the Secretary of the Sangha. But his

suggestion was not accepted at all in framing the aims, objectives and constitution of the Sangha. Even Gandhiji did not consider it. That is why; Ambedkar released a letter to the Press so that the general public might know his views due to consider the said proposals. The brief content of this letter is given below to understand the real truth.

Ambedkar proposed to lead the programmes jointly of the Anti-Untouchability League. That is why; he said that there were two distinct methods that could be adopted for uplifting the Depressed Classes. School of social workers concentrated all its efforts and its resources on fostering personal virtue by adopting a programme which included items such as temperance, gymnasium, co-operation, libraries, schools, etc., which were adopted to make the individual a better and virtuous individual. He also noted that the fate of the individual being was governed by his environment and the circumstances he was obliged to live under, and if an individual was suffering from want and misery it was because his environment was not propitious. His view of the aim of the Anti-Untouchability League was that it had come into existence not for helping a few individuals at random or a few selected boys belonging to the Depressed Classes but for raising the whole class to a higher level. So he would not like the League to dissipate its energies on a programme calculated to foster private virtue. He would like the Board to concentrate all its energies on a programme that would effect a change in the social environment of the Depressed Classes. That is why; Ambedkar asked the vital members of the Anti-Untouchability League to reform the Harijan society after considering the following facts and conditions<sup>115</sup>.

- i. A CAMPAIGN TO SECURE CIVIL RIGHTS.
- ii. EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY.
- iii. SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.
- iv. AGENCY TO BE EMPLOYED.

#### **A CAMPAIGN TO SECURE CIVIL RIGHTS:**

That is why; Ambedkar proposed that the League should undertake a campaign all over India to secure to the Depressed Classes civic rights such as taking water from the village wells, entry in village schools, admission to village chawdi, use of public conveyance, etc. Such a programme, if carried into villages would bring about the necessary social revolution in the Hindu Society, without which it would never be

possible for the Depressed Classes to get equal social status in the society. So the League might have to gather experiences before going to start a campaign to establish civic rights of the Harijans. Ambedkar also said that he knew it very well that the Depressed Classes Institute and the social equality League had to face numerous obstacles before launching such a plan in the Kolba and the Nasik district of the Bombay Presidency. It would create riots between the Depressed Classes and the caste Hindus. In this struggle, the Depressed Classes would suffer badly

**Secondly**, the villages would proclaim a complete boycott of the Depressed Classes, the moment they saw the latter were trying to reach a status of equality along with them. Ambedkar mentioned that only two of the many obstacles which the League would have to overcome, if this campaign of civic rights was to be successful and the League would have to have an army of workers in the rural parts, who would encourage the Depressed Classes to fight for their rights and who would help them in any legal proceedings arising therefrom to a successful issue. But he did not think that it could be avoided. All the caste Hindu liked all human beings would follow his customary conduct in observing untouchability towards the Depressed Classes. Naturally, it can be pointed out that ordinarily people did not give up their customary mode of behaviour because somebody was preaching against it. The salvation of the Depressed Classes would come only when the Caste Hindu was made to think and was forced to feel that he must alter his ways. The direct action in respect of Chawdar Tank in Mahad, the Kalaram Temple in Nasik and the Gurwayur Temple in Malabar had done in a few days what million days of preaching by reformers would never have done. He therefore strongly recommended this campaign of direct action for securing civic rights of the Depressed Classes for adoption by the Anti-Untouchability League.

### **EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY:**

Ambedkar would like the Anti-Untouchability League to work for bringing about equality of opportunity for the Depressed Classes. The absence of equal opportunity accelerated the ill-fated poverty-stricken miserable conditions of the Depressed Classes ultimately led to the position of untouchability. He said that the Depressed Classes in villages and even in towns could not sell vegetables, milk or butter ways of earning a living which were open to all and sundry. A caste Hindu would have far

more scope to buy these things from a non-Hindu, but he was not ready to buy them from the Depressed Classes. In the matter of enjoyment, his condition was the worst. In Government Departments the bar-sinister operated and he was denied the place of a constable or even a messenger. In industries he fared no better. Like the Negro in America he was the last to be employed in days of prosperity and the first to be fired in days of adversity. In the Cotton Mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad he was confined to the lowest paid department where he could earn only Rs.25 per month. More paying departments like the weaving department were permanently closed to him. Even in the low paid departments he could not rise to the highest rung of the ladder. The place of the boss was reserved for the caste Hindu while the Depressed Classes worker might slave as his underdog, no matter how senior or how efficient. In departments where the earning depends on piece work, he had failed to earn as well as Caste Hindu employees because of social discrimination.

He had given only a few of the instances of the gross inequality of opportunity from which the Depressed Classes were suffering mainly at the hands of the Hindus. He thought that it would be fit and proper, if the Anti-Untouchability League were to take up this question by creating public opinion in condemnation of it and establishing bureaus to deal with urgent cases of inequality.

### **SOCIAL INTERCOURSE :**

He said that the League should attempt to dissolve that nausea, which the Touchables felt towards the Untouchables and which was the reason why the two sections had remained so much apart as to constitute separate and distinct entities. He proposed to establish closer contact between the two in this connection. Only common cycle participation could help people to overcome the strangeness of feeling which one had, when brought into contact with the other. The admission of the Depressed Classes to the houses of the caste Hindus as guests or servants was very much horrible. The role of many caste Hindus who had shown themselves responsive were not prepared for this. He told that the League that the Depressed Classes would never be satisfied of the bondfides of these caste Hindu sympathizers until it was proved that they were prepared to go to the same length of fighting against their own kith and kin in actual warfare if it came to that for the sake of the Depressed Classes as the Whites of the

North did against their own kith and kin, namely, the Whites of the South for the sake of the emancipation of the Negro. That is why; the League should endeavour to inculcate upon the mind of Hindu public the necessity of establishing contact and social intercourse between the touchables and the untouchables in the different way.

### **AGENCY TO BE EMPLOYED:**

He said that the League might have to employ a very large army of workers to carry out its programme. But the social workers might have human values to take part in this mission. As Tolstoy said; "Only those who love can serve." This mission might be fulfilled if the workers of its organization were drawn from the Depressed Classes. So the League should give importance in deciding upon the selection whom to appoint and whom not to appoint. In spite of several limitations, a worker drawn from the Depressed Classes might regard the work as love's labour—a thing which was so essential to the success of the League.

**Secondly**, there were many agencies which were already engaged in some sort of social service without any confined as to class or purpose and might be prepared to supplement their activity by taking up the work of Anti-Untouchability League in consideration of a grant-in-aid. Ambedkar said that this hire purchase system of work could produce no lasting good for the League. An agency was required which was a single-minded devotion to one task and one task only. The work it was to be assigned must be assigned to those who might undertake to devote themselves exclusively to the work of the Depressed Classes. He said that what could hold the British Empire together was love and not law. It should be applied equally to the Hindu society. The touchables and the untouchables could not live together by law certainly not by any electoral law substituting joint electorates for separate electorates. The only thing that could hold them together was love. Only justice and fair play would open the possibility of love, and it should be the duty of the Anti-Untouchability League to implement this novel notion.

Apart from these, a budget was made to lead the amelioration programmes of the Untouchables in India. However, a rough idea of the minimum total amount which

would have to be spent for the whole of India was settled down from public collection. So the scheme was of course modest enough in view of the gigantic nature of the work and it should not be difficult for the public to raise the required fund. Every pie contributed to the fund would make a valuable contribution and therefore an appeal to be made to the public to make some sacrifices for the cause. The number of units proposed for each province was only a tentative proposal. The final decision, of course would have to be taken by the Provincial Boards themselves. This amount would have to be made up both from the Central Fund as well as from funds raised by provinces and districts. It is found that a sum of six lakhs of rupees was intended to be collected and spent per year in the whole country for the removal of Untouchability and ameliorative work of Harijans. This programme particularly if the ameliorative work was to be effective should continue at least for 5 years. When spread out over 22 Provinces, including States and 4 crores or 400 lakhs of Harijans in the country, this budget had its much importance to uplift the Harijans<sup>116</sup>.

In order to success the mission, Gandhiji started an All-India tour on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1933 and completed it on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1934 to collect money for the fund of the Sangha's work. The motto behind it was to inspire the Hindus for the cause of the Untouchables. As per the report of the 'Harijan Patrika' on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1934, Gandhiji ultimately collected Rs.8 lakhs from different corners of India to begin its work. He came forward to spend the fund for the amelioration programmes of the Untouchables. Even the Secretary of the Sangh invited many Americans to highlight the 'unrivalled piece of social work that is being done by Mr. Gandhi for the welfare of the Untouchables'<sup>117</sup>. Therefore, the role of Gandhiji to emancipate the Untouchables was very much important in this connection.

But Ambedkar criticized the works done by Gandhiji and his Sangha. He said that if any one who would go through the 'Annual Reports of the 'Harijan Sevak Sangh' the following features can be seen:

"First of all it can be said that the Sangha encouraged higher education among the Untouchables by instituting scholarships for the Arts, technical and professional courses in the field of education. It made numerous measures to provide scholarships to high school students. It also established hostels for Untouchable students attending colleges and high schools. It took necessary steps maintain separate schools for

primary stage children where there were no common school in the vicinity or where common schools were closed to them.

**Secondly**, the Sangha made numerous arrangements for the welfare activities of the Untouchables. Even the medical aid which the Sangh had given to the Untouchables falls under this head. This was done by intendant workers of the Sangha who go in Harijan quarters to give medical aid to the sick and ailing among the Untouchables. The Sangh also maintains a few dispensaries for the use of the untouchables. However, this was a very small activity of the Sangha. The more important part of the welfare activity of the Sangh was related to water supply. The Sangh did this by (1) sinking new wells or installing tube wells and pumps for the use of the untouchables, (2) repairing old ones and (3) persuading local Government and bodies to sink and repair wells for the Untouchables. The third line activity undertaken by the Sangha was economic. The Sangha seemed to run a few industrial schools and it was claimed that the industrial schools run by Sangha produced a number of trained artisans who had taken to independent living. But according to the report, more successful and substantial work was done by way of organizing and supervising cooperative societies among the Untouchables.”<sup>118</sup>

In fact, it would be noted here as per the record of the work done by the Sangh that the work of it was largely directed by the Caste-Hindus and not by the Untouchables. It would be noted here from the above discussion that the Sangh had completely changed its views in the context of removal of Untouchability. Even it took up the constructive works as the main part of its programme. But this was not done without the knowledge and consent of Gandhiji. Therefore, removal of Untouchability as a programme of action of the Sangh was a good intention but it was bound Gandhiji very unpopular with the Hindus. He preferred the programme of the Constructive work instead of it as it had all advantage and no disadvantage. Therefore, it can be said that it was a complete departure on the part of Gandhiji as he did not mind to take positive steps to execute the provisions of the ‘Poona Pact,’ 1932. Therefore, Gandhiji stressed on the work of the Constructive programme which had the possibility of being converted into ‘a plan to kill Untouchables by kindness’. Not only that, but also the Sangh did not bother and tolerate any movement of the Untouchables against the Caste-Hindus and the Congress. Even he did not like to appoint other Untouchables

into the management of the Sangh after the retirement of the first batch of the Untouchables. Instead of it, he encouraged the policy of exclusion the Untouchables from management and higher direction of the Sangh. As a result of it, a deputation was submitted to Gandhiji by the Untouchables for appointing their members to the managing body of the Sangh. So Gandhiji propounded a new doctrine to console the deputations. According to him, "The Welfare work for the Untouchables is a penance which the Hindus have to do for the sin of Untouchability. The money that has been collected has been contributed by the Hindus. From both points of view the Hindus alone must run the Hindus. From both points of view he Hindus alone must run the Sangh. Neither ethics nor right would justify Untouchables in claiming a seat on the Board of the Sangha."<sup>119</sup> Therefore, it was pertinent to ask: "Why at one time he was anxious to have Untouchables on the governing Body of the Sangh and why he is determined now to exclude them?" But the Hindus and Untouchables both worked together in perfect harmony towards furthering the work of the 'Depressed Classes Mission Society' and Mission had always included a certain number of Untouchables of its Managing Committee. Therefore, it can be said that the Mission had no political objectives behind its works but the Sangh had. Although the real intention was to keep the Sangh scrupulously aloof from politics that was mentioned in the statement issued on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1932 as follows:

The League may be able to carry on its work on a nonparty basis; it has decided not to associate itself with politics or religious propaganda of any kind. The heads of Provincial as well as Central Executive will, therefore, have to be very careful in the selection of their active worker. With this object in view it is necessary that all whole time paid workers of the League should not take part in politics or in any sectional or religious propaganda"<sup>120</sup>

Therefore, Ambedkar highlighted the following instances to trace out the real intention and attitude of the Congress and Sangh towards the Untouchables as follows:-

"The Bombay Branch of the Harijan Sevak Sangh had followed the policy of black listing some of the Untouchable communities residing in Bombay on account of its Anti-Congress attitude. Students from communities which were black listed were

refused scholarships and other educational aids. The Mahar Community, which forms the spearhead of the political movement of the Untouchables and has all along fought with the Congress, was black listed and Mahar students were generally subjected to discrimination unless the student proved that he did not share the Anti-Congress sentiments of the Community.”<sup>121</sup>

Ambedkar also mentioned another instance regarding the mentality and attitude of their in this context. Mr.A.V.Thakkar, the General Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and a member of the ‘Backward Classes Board’ of the Bombay Government which was formed in 1929. The main motto of it was to advise the Government on matters affecting the Untouchables and other Backward Classes. But Mr.Thakkar in this case “brought a resolution in the meeting of the Board recommending to Government that scholarships set apart by Government for Untouchable boys should not be given to the Mahar boys alleging that the Mahar Community had become very much advanced in education and was appropriating- or according to him misappropriating – the share of Government funds which ought to be reserved for other Untouchable Communities. The resolution was sent down for investigation of the facts on which it was found. The inquiry showed that the facts were wrong and that Mahars instead of being forward were really backward in education as compared with other Untouchable Communities. The resolution was nothing but a political manoeuvre by no less a person than the General Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to punish the Mahars for their Anti-Congress politics.”<sup>122</sup>

In fact, the Harijan Sevak Sangh was treated a charitable organization in name. Ambedkar said that the main target of it was to ensnare the Untouchables and to make them the camp-followers of the Hindus and the Congress. Frankly speaking, the aim and object of the Sangh and the Congress was just like a public show as it did not free the Untouchables from the age old socio-religious, politico-economic bondage and supremacy of the Hindus. Therefore, Ambedkar also highlighted the fact that ‘the object of the Sangh was to kill the Untouchables by kindness’. Apart from the above mentioned facts in connection with the role, activities and attitude of Gandhiji, Congress and the Harijan Sevak Sangh towards the Untouchables, can not be denied that the labours of the Harijan Sevak Sangh “must be so planned that out of it, will come the destruction of Untouchability.” The Sangh was openly supporting the

establishment of separate schools, hostels, dispensaries and wells for them without abashment. Therefore, Ambedkar pointed out that that was the surest way of perpetuating Untouchability. Even Gandhiji himself sanctioned a line of activity which perpetuated this segregation. Therefore, Gandhiji and the Sangh paid little attention to them. They wanted the rights for the admission to common schools, common dispensaries on equal terms, draw water from a common well etc. In fact, Gandhiji and his Sangh ultimately were not mentally ready to accept the demands of them on equal terms except the line of the Orthodox Hindus. As a result the Sangh had neither sought to remove untouchability nor had it help to alleviate the sufferings of them. According to Ambedkar, "The Sangh has failed because of its wrong politics." But Gandhiji had always resented such an allegation and repudiated it as being false. The General Secretary of the Sangh had stated in view of the fact that "The Sangh, though a sequel of a Political Pact, has no politics." But Ambedkar clearly expressed his views in this context as follows: "I insist that not only the Sangh has a definite line of politics and that that line of politics is wrong because it is prejudicial to the cause of the Untouchables."<sup>123</sup> That is why, Ambedkar mentioned the following clause of the Sangh's constitution as a piece of evidence in support of his contention. This clause adopted by Sangh for removing Untouchability and for securing equal rights to the Untouchables along with the Caste Hindus: "That no compulsion is to be used for securing rights, but that peaceful persuasion is to be adopted as the only means"<sup>124</sup>. But it would be noted here that this clause was adopted by the Sangh only to pretend for the removal of untouchability and securing equal rights to the untouchables along with the Caste Hindus.

Therefore, Ambedkar raised the following questions in connection with above mentioned works done by the Sangha, Congress and Gandhiji towards the Untouchables:

- 1) "Why has the Sangh limited itself to peaceful persuasion of the caste Hindus as the one and only means of removing Untouchability?"
- 2) "Why do they not resist the injustice of the Caste Hindus by direct action?"
- 3) "Why does not Mr. Gandhi ask the Sangh to launch Satyagraha by the Untouchables against the Caste Hindus for the abolition of the injustice against the Untouchables?"
- 4) "Why is the answer of Mr. Gandhi to this question?"

In response to these questions raised by him Ambedkar said, "The only answer I can see is that it comes in the way of his politics. Mr. Gandhi must remain at the head of the nation. I wonder if life would be worthwhile to him if for some reason he ceased to be at the head of the nation. He is, I think, the most ambitious politician. I know he regards as his rivals those whom he calls as friends. To be at the head of the nation means that he must preserve the integrity of the Congress. The Congress is ninety nine per cent composed of Hindus. How can Gandhi succeed in maintaining the integrity of the Congress if he were to direct the Sangh to carry on Satyagraha against the Hindus for the sake of the Untouchables. The Hindus would leave the Congress and the Congress would disrupt. This is detrimental to the interests of Mr. Gandhi. This is the explanation why Mr. Gandhi and the Sangh have adopted peaceful persuasion as the only means of removing untouchability. It is a means which is least likely to hurt the Hindus and the Congress. Not only in big matters but even in small matters the Sangh is careful to see that the Hindus are not hurt or annoyed. I am told that in distributing scholarships for instance the Sangh makes inquiries into the political affiliations of the applicant and if it is found that the applicant belongs to a community which is against the Congress or the Hindus, he gets no aid from the funds of the Sangh"<sup>125</sup>

Practically speaking Gandhiji was at best merely a sympathizer and nothing more. His sympathy for the Untouchables was limited by considerations such as social aims and politics. Therefore Ambedkar mentioned the following two instances in this regard. As an instance of the first, Ambedkar referred to the Khare episode. The Prime Minister Dr. Khare demanded the resignation of other ministers in the Central Provinces and forces them to do that and ultimately he formed another Congress Cabinet and filled the ministerial offices with men of his choice. He included an untouchable as a minister in the new Cabinet without consulting the Congress Parliamentary Board. So the Congress Working Committee took drastic action against him and he was ultimately deposed from his Premiership. Gandhiji too was very much offended to him owing to include and Untouchables in his new ministry. The following was the full text about this fact said by Gandhiji to Dr. Khare:

"Mahatmaji took me to task for including a Harijan in my second cabinet. I retorted by saying that it was a Congress programme of uplift of Harijans for which

Mahatmaji fasted unto death and that I did what I could in furtherance of that programme when opportunity offered itself and I think I have done nothing wrong in doing so. Thereupon Mahatmaji charged me of doing this for my selfish ambition. I repudiated this charge saying that any selfish motive is disproved by my resignation. Then Mahatmaji said that by my action I have thrown an apple of discord among the members of that simple community and have rendered disservice to the Congress cause by throwing this temptation in their way.”<sup>126</sup> This statement was repeated by Dr. Khare at a meeting held in Servants of India society’s Hall in Bombay in support of his cause. In fact, the untouchable who was chosen by Dr. Khare for ministership in the Central Provinces was a graduate, was a Congressman and was a strong party man. Yet Gandhiji did not like it. Therefore it can be said that if Gandhiji was genuine in his professions regarding this untouchable ministership case, he would have instructed all Congress Prime Ministers to include at least one Untouchable in their Cabinets. Although he was in favour of making coalitions with other non-Congress parties in provinces where it was not in a majority in order to secure offices. Even he did not care and bother about the qualifications and political faith in this context. That is why, a crowd of Untouchables moved to Shegaon to Gandhiji for an explanation on that untouchable’s issue. Anticipating this he had remained silent and kept himself silent, so that no explanation could be given. At that juncture, the Untouchables launched Satyagraha against Gandhiji for not including an untouchable in the Central Provinces Congress Cabinet. At that very movement Gandhiji left Shegaon due to start a tour to the North Western Frontier Provinces for teaching non-violence to the Pathans. That is why? Ambedkar said, “I am sure Gandhi’s silence on this occasion was not commensurate with God. It was taken on as a convenient excuse for not being driven under the fire of cross examination to disclose his inner most thoughts about the Untouchables. In any case we have no answer to this question from Mr. Gandhi. To my mind there can be only one answer and that even if Gandhi had opened his mouth he could give no better. That answer is that Mr. Gandhi’s ideal for the untouchable is a very low ideal and that all that he cares for is that the untouchable should be touched and that if he is touched without anybody taking a bath nothing further needs to be done about them. If Gandhi had tried and failed he would have been excused. But how can he be excused for entertaining so low an aim? Not failure but low aim is a crime.”<sup>127</sup>

Secondly, Ambedkar highlighted the fact that actually happened with an untouchable girl namely, Bachuma. Bachuma, a small girl, 12 years old and belonged to an untouchable family which was living in Wordha. One evening she was decoyed into the house of a Mahomedan who was the Sub-Inspector of Police. She was kept in his house and during the night this small child was raped by three Mahomedans, one was the Superintendent of Police himself, second a Sub-Inspector of Education and third a Layer. The three Mahomedans were tried in a Court of Law and two of them were sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment and the lawyer was acquitted as the girl was not able to identify him. The two who were convinced appealed to the High Court but the High Court rejected their appeals and confirmed their convictions and sentences. From jail they sent a petition to the Governor-in-Council for mercy. But they were also rejected. This happened before the Congress came into office. After the Congress came into office they submitted fresh applications for mercy to the Minister-in-charge. The Minister-in-charge, who was also a Mahomedan thought that there was nothing wrong in a Mahomedan committing rape on an untouchable girl and decided to set the culprits free. He granted the application of one—that of the Inspector of Education who is now a free man and is employed on a big job in the Education Department of a Mahomedan State. He released the other culprit also but in the meantime the agitation against him was so great that he had to resign his office. Every body expressed his resentment against the shameless act of the Minister but Mr. Gandhi<sup>128</sup> has kept mum. So far he has not uttered a word of condemnation against this Minister. On the country he is even now engaged in the confabulations that are going on over the question of the reinstatement of this dismissed minister in his office which is still kept vacant. One likes to ask if Gandhi would have remained so silent and so unmoved if the little girl Bachuma who was raped by he three Mahamodans instead of being the daughter of an Untouchable had been Mr. Gandhi's own daughter. Why is Gandhi not able to make Bachuma's case his daughter's case? There are two answers. One is that Mr. Gandhi is not an untouchable. One must be born to it. Secondly Mr. Gandhi feels that by condemning the Muslim Minister for the sake of Bachuma he might destroy Hindu-Moslem Unity the maintenance of which is a fundamental creed of Congress politics. Does this now show that Mr. Gandhi's sympathies for the Untouchables are limited by his politics? What good is a man who is not even free sympathizes according to his conscience?

### **Temple Entry Movement**

Apart from these, Gandhiji encouraged the people to come forward to uplift the conditions of the Untouchables. In consequence of the Poona Pact of 1932, Gandhiji established the 'Harijan Sevak Sangh' on 1932 to complete his mission. He made an arrangement of a public meeting relating to the question of Untouchables. This meeting was held in Bombay on 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1932. It was very clearly and unanimously resolved in the meeting that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one should be regarded as an Untouchable by reason of his birth and other reasons. Even those people who had been so regarded hitherto as untouchables would have the same right as the caste Hindus in all aspects of life. Not only that but also they had given every rights in regard to the use of public wells, public school, public roads and all other public institutions and the caste Hindus were asked to co-operate the Untouchables in these context. However, it was further noted that this right should have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and should be one of the earliest Acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it should not have received such recognition before that time. It was further unanimously resolved in the meeting that the prime duty of all the Hindu leaders to secure by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities that was now imposed by custom upon the ill-fated poor and ignorant Untouchable classes. They were also asked to co-operate the Untouchables in the context of admission to the Hindu temples<sup>129</sup>.

As a result, numerous measures were adopted by Gandhiji and his Sangh to propagate the content of this historic resolution adopted in the above noted meeting. The Hindus initially declared to throw open Temples to the Untouchables in consequence of the meeting. But in practice this policy was not unanimously followed and executed on equal terms in the case of the admission of the Untouchables into the Temples. Realizing the hard reality, Gandhiji started a weekly paper namely 'Harijan' and asked the caste Hindus to come forward to build up temples, throw open wells, opened school, started educational facilities etc. In response to his appeal, the following temples were either constructed or opened to the untouchables, wells were made, numerous welfare activities were done, and schools<sup>130</sup> were built up etc.

Practically speaking, Gandhiji was then very busy to build up temples in different parts of India. He also mentioned the names of those places where temples were built up. Among them one was in North Calcutta, one in village Bhapur, district Ganjam, Madras and one Thakurdwar temple at Naurania, in Jullundar, Punjab etc. One Municipal well was made at Guriapur in Jaipur town, district Cuttack, Orissa, two wells in Wazirpura and Nikigali, Agra, U.P. and in Trichinopoly (Madras) an orthodox Brahmin had offered expenses necessary for digging three wells for the common use of Harijans and caste Hindus etc. Apart from these, different schools were established for untouchable students such as a free school in Bachrota district Meerut, U.P.; one school at Metah district in Rajputana; three schools a Fatehpur, district Farukhabad, U.P.; three night schools in Mutta night schools in Sjt. V.R.Shinde; President, All-India Anti-Untouchability League and Founder-Trustee of the Depressed Mission Society of India played a vital role in these connection and Gandhiji was the pioneer behind this mission. Apart from these, Poona had addressed an open letter to the members of the Legislative Assembly on Sjt. RangaIyer's Untouchability Bills, strongly urging them to support the two measures. In Taikalwadi in 'G' Ward of Bombay, there was an outbreak of fire recently which caused very serious damage to the huts and belongings of 48 Mahar families. It was further noted that educational arrangements were made easier by establishing three reading rooms for Harijans in the North Arcot District by the S.U.S.; in the Madura District S.U.S. workers got Harijan children admitted into the Viraganur taluq board school; Banians, towels, slates etc. were distributed free to the children of the Melacheri School established by the Madura S.U.S.; two Harijan students of Ramjas college, Delhi had been allowed free scholarship and free lodging and one free scholarship by Princhnal Thadani of the College. One night school for adult Harijans was opened. Decision was taken to start a hostel for harijan students in Uravakonda. Some provisions were made and money had already been collected to start the hostel with 20 students. Owing to the unremitting efforts of the district Harijan Seva Sangham, Guntur, Harijan boys had been allowed into the Savarna schools. Gorakhpur Town U.P. One night school in Hata Tehsil district Gorakhpur, U.P, one night school at Sakhonia. Besides, it was found that wells were made in different parts of India, such as three wells in Coimbatore district which were in a bad condition, were cleaned and made available for use. The District Board President, South Arcot, had promised to dig four wells in cherries selected by the S.U.S. During the fortnight ending 31-5-33 no less

than 125 wells in all were opened to Harijans and 5 new ones constructed in Andhradesh. To meet the purpose of general requirements a shop had been opened in a bustee near Hogg market (Calcutta) where Doms live, for supplying them with articles of food at cheap rates. Rs.60 has been paid by the S.U.S. Bengal for paying up the debts. Of a Harijan family at Bibi Bagan bustee (Calcutta). The Amrita Samaj (Calcutta) had given service to some Harijans, 450 Harijans of Bolpur (Birbhum) etc. Apart from these, the Palitana State (Kathiawar) assembly has passed a resolution relating to the facilities to be given to the Harijans. A standing committee has been appointed by the Government of Sandhur State, Madras, to concert measures calculated to ameliorate the condition of the Harijans in the state. The Harijans in various villages near kashia in Gorakhpur district have given up carrion eating. On the occasion of the Basantpanchami festival 'Basantotsava' was celebrated at Muzaffarpur (Bihar) under the auspices of the Harijan Seva Sangh in the temple of Sri Chaturbhujnathji in which all castes of Hindus took part. A.V. Thakkar, General Secretary, of Untouchables society sanctioned Rs. 500 for giving relief to these families, and the relief was organized by a sub-Committee of the 'G' Ward Committee of the Society. A sum of Rs.402-8 was distributed as an urgent measure of help to the 48 families, containing in all 163 persons. The Bombay Government had issued orders that requested from local bodies for assignment of Government lands for wells, tanks, dharamshalas, etc. on condition that all castes alike will have equal use of such wells tanks, etc.

But the owners or trustees of different temples were not prepared to throw open their temples to the Untouchables. So the Hindus took the Policy of Satyagraha against them and tried to convince them for opening their temples to the Untouchables. But most of them did not do that. Therefore, Mr. Kelappan started Satyagraha against them for securing entry in the temple at Guruvayur for the Untouchables. Although many Hindu legislators came forward, tumbling over one another with Bills requesting the trustees to throw open temples to the Untouchables. But they could not compel them to accept their temple entry proposal as most of the Hindu worshippers voted in favour of the Congress. Even Gandhiji was against the favour to allow Untouchables to enter Hindu Temples before 1932. Gandhiji said in his own words on this issue in the book 'Gandhi Shikshan' (vol-II, p-132) as follows:

“How is it possible that the Antyajias (Untouchables) should have the right to enter all the existing temples? As long as the law of caste and ashram has the chief place in Hindu Religion, to say that every Hindu can enter every temple is a thing that is not possible today.”<sup>131</sup> But Dr. Subbaroyan raised a Temple Entry Bill in the Madras Legislative Council. In connection with this fact; the four Temple Entry Bills were introduced in the Central Assembly, one by Mr. C. S. Ranga Iyer, two by Mr. Harabilas Sarda, third by Mr. Lalchand Navalrai and the fourth one by Mr. M.R. Jayakar. Under these unavoidable circumstances, Gandhiji surprisingly joined to the Temple Entry Movement at that very moment. Ambedkar clearly stated that the target of Gandhiji in joining the Temple Entry Movement was to destroy the basis of the claim of the Untouchables for political rights by destroying the barriers between them and the Hindus which made them separate from the Hindus. In the temple entry movement, he got a great chance to add his name a frame. Gandhiji asked Ambedkar at that moment about the attitude of the Untouchables for the Temple Entry Movement and requested him to support to the movement for temple entry. But Ambedkar denied to do so and issued a statement<sup>132</sup> on that subject to the press as follows:

***Ambedkar's Statement on Temple Entry Bill on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1933***

The question of Temple Entry in respect to the Untouchables was confined to the Sanatanists, Mahatma Gandhi, and the Depressed Classes. They played a vital role in this respect. But their distinctive attitude towards this issue should be discussed. First of all, it can be said that the Depressed Classes could not possibly give support to the draft relating to the Temple-Entry Bill of Mr. Ranga Iyer. As it was clearly noted in the draft that if a majority of Municipal and Local Board voters in the vicinity of any particular temple on a referendum decided by a majority that the Depressed Classes should be allowed to enter the temple, the Trustees or the Manager of that temple should give effect to that decision. It was further mentioned in the Bill that the principle was an ordinary principle of Majority rule. So there was nothing radical or revolutionary about the Bill, and if the Sanatanists were a wise lot, they would accept it without demur. That is why the Depressed Classes did not give support to this Bill. However, there were two more reasons behind it.

*Firstly*; this Bill could not work for opening up the temples for the Depressed Classes. The Minority would not have the right to obtain an injunction against the Trustee, or the Manager who threw open the temple to the Depressed Classes in accordance with the decision of the majority under this Bill. However, one might first of all feel assured that when the question was put to the vote, there would be a majority in favour of Temple Entry. Once the majority was definitely opposed and was conceded by the author of the Bill himself through his correspondence with the Shankracharya. But Ambedkar reminded the results of the referendum with regard to the Guruvayur Temple in this context.

*Secondly*, this Bill did not regard Untouchability in temples as a sinful custom. It highlighted Untouchability merely as a social evil not necessarily worse than social evils of other sorts. But it did not declare Untouchability as such to be illegal. It was completely dependent on the decision of majority. In the view of the Depressed Classes untouchability might be eliminated without any hesitation even if it was acceptable to the majority. This was the way in which all customs were dealt with by Courts of Law, if they would find them to be immoral and against public policy. According to Ambedkar, the author of the Bill did not take more serious view of the evil custom of untouchability. He did the temperance reformer of the habit of drinking. His method was advocated by temperance reformers to eradicate the evil habit of drinking, namely, by local option. He reminded Mr. Ranga Iyer that if he had not forgotten that only a few months ago Mahatma Gandhi had prepared himself to fast unto death if Untouchability was not removed, he would have taken a more serious view of this curse and proposed a most through going reform to ensue its removal lock, stock and barrel. However, the Depressed Classes could expect was for the Bill to recognize the principle that Untouchability was a sin. Even Gandhiji who had been insisting that Untouchability was a sin could not satisfy the Depressed Classes. It seemed to Ambedkar that the Depressed Classes might be elevated through higher education, higher employment and better ways of earning a living. He even said that once they were well placed in the scale of social life, they were respectable and once they were respectable the religious outlook of the orthodox towards them was sure to undergo change, and even if this did not happen, it could do no injury to their material interest. So they had no time to spend their resources on such an empty

thing as Temple Entry. There was also another reason why they did not care to fight for it. That argument was the argument of self-respect. This was the reason of the Depressed Classes people who were interested in his material welfare. He was prepared to say to the Hindus as follows:

“... to open or not to open your temples is a question for you to consider and not for me to agitate. If you think, it is bad manners not to respect the sacredness of human personality, open your temples and be a gentleman. If you rather be a Hindu than be gentleman, then shut the doors and damu yourself for I don't care to come.”<sup>133</sup>

Secondly Ambedkar raised the following spiritual questions:

Is temple entry to be the final goal of the advancement in the social status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold? Or is it only the first step and if it is the first step, what is the ultimate goal? In fact, the Temple Entry Bill as a final goal, the Depressed Classes could never support. They would not only reject it, but they would then regard themselves as rejected by Hindu Society and free to find their own destiny elsewhere. On the other hand, if it was only to be a first step in the direction they be may be inclined to support it. The position would then be analogous to what was happening in the politics of India to-day. All Indians had claimed Dominion Status for India. The actual constitution would fall short of Dominion Status and many Indians would accept it as because if the British had not accepted the goal of Dominion Status, no one would have accepted the partial reforms which many were now prepared to accept. In the same way, if Mahatma Gandhi and the reformers were to proclaim what the goal which they had set before themselves was for the advancement of the Social Status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold, it would be easier for the Depressed Classes to define their attitude towards Temple Entry. The goal of the Depressed Classes might as well be stated here for the information and consideration of all concerned. The Depressed Classes liked a religion, which would give them equality of social status. The Depressed Classes might not be able to overthrow inequities to which they were being subjected. But they had made up their mind not to tolerate a religion that would lend its support to the continuance of these inequities. If the Hindu religion was to be their religion, then it must become a religion of Social Equality. The mere amendment of Hindu religion code by the mere

inclusion in it of a provision to permit temple entry for all; could not make it a religion of equality of social status. They would thereby reach a position where they would be free and equal, without being above or below any one else, for the simple reason that the Hindu religion did not recognize the principle of equality of social status; on the other hand it fostered inequality by insisting upon grading people as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, which now stand towards one another in an ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt. If the Hindu religion was to be religion of social equality then an amendment of its code to merely provide temple entry was not enough. What was required was to purge it of the doctrine of Chaturvarna. That was the root cause of all inequality and also the parent of the caste system and Untouchability. Unless it was done not only would the Depressed Classes reject Temple Entry, they would also reject the Hindu faith. Chaturvarna and the Caste system were incompatible with the self-respect of the Depressed Classes. So long as they stand to be its cardinal doctrine the Depressed Classes must continue to be looked upon as low. The Depressed Classes can say that they were Hindus only when the theory of Chaturvarna and caste system was abandoned and expunged from the Hindu Shastras. Did the Mahatma and the Hindu reformers accept this as their goal and would they show the courage to work for it? But whether Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindus were prepared for this or not, let it be known once for all that nothing short of this will satisfy the Depressed Classes and make them accept Temple Entry. To accept temple entry and be content with it was to temporize with evil and barter away the sacredness of human personality that dwells in them<sup>134</sup>. In connection with these facts it can be said that even Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasan did not support the movement for Temple entry. Although, he represented the Untouchables along with Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference. Instead of it, he made an announcement to the press regarding the temple entry matter of the Untouchables as follows:

“When a Depressed Classes member is permitted to enter into the caste Hindu temples he would not be taken into any one of the four castes, but treated as a man of fifth or the last or the lower caste, a stigma worse than the one to be called an Untouchable. At the same time he would be subjected to so many caste restrictions and humiliations. The Depressed Classes shun the one who enters like that and exclude him as caste man. The crores of Depressed Classes would not submit to caste restrictions. They would be divided into sections if they would do. It was further

noted that ‘Temple entry could not be forced by law. The village caste men openly or indirectly defy the law. To the village Depressed Class man it would be like a scrap of paper on which the “sugar” was written and placed in hands for him to taste, the above facts are placed before the public in time to save confusion and disturbance in the country.’”<sup>135</sup>

In response to the above noted statements made by Ambedkar and Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasn respectively, Gandhiji gave a straight reply that although he was against untouchability but he was not against casteism. So he clearly stated that it was impossible on his part to carry out social reform beyond removing untouchability. This was enough for all to understand about Gandhiji’s attitude towards the caste problem and untouchability. Dewan Bahadur Rajah could not do anything on this issue with the Congress neither inside nor outside the Assembly. He was the only nominated member from the Untouchable community of the Central Assembly for 1927. In fact, he was in favour of separate electorates for the Untouchables. But the Congress was deadly against it. In spite of it, he suddenly changed his decision and supported the Congress in the crisis of 1932 and ultimately became the spearhead of the Congress movement for joint electorate and temple entry. The motive behind it was quite personal. The Government did not nominate him as a delegate to the Round Table Conference to represent the Untouchables as he was a “member of the Central Legislative Committee. Instead of it, Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasan was nominated for the same by the Government. But ultimately he made out the situation and thought about these wrong decisions when the Congress Ministry took office in Madras and Poona Pact was practically being trampled upon in different concerned issues. Yet he took care not to fall out in the race for legislation against Untouchability. But he played a vital role and sponsored two Bills such as the removal of Untouchability Bill and the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill. But Gandhiji did not mind the objection and opposition which came from the Orthodox Hindus and the Untouchables. Instead, he remained indifferent and kept himself quite silent towards these issues. Ambedkar highlighted the fact that the Hindu heart was very rapidly stricken with palsy. He also noted that a large part of the news that was published in the “week to week” “was fake and was nothing but a lying propaganda engineered by Congressmen to deceive the World that the Hindus were determined to fight untouchability. As a result, most of the temples that were opened to the Untouchables were “dilapidated and deserted

temples which were used by name except dogs and donkeys.”<sup>136</sup> So the Guruvayur Temple Satyagraha and the legislation for securing Temple Entry for the Untouchables ultimately discarded by Gandhiji and Congressmen which really revealed their true mentality towards the Untouchables. A temple of Krishna was situated at Guruvayur in the Ponnani taluk in Malabar. Mr. Kelappan, a Hindu, started a movement to acquire the rights of Temple Entry for the Untouchable. He fought for the cause of Untouchables of Malabar in that case. But the Zamorin of Calicut, the trustee of that temple denied to throw open the temple to the Untouchables. He also mentioned the action cited in Section 40 of the Hindu Religious Endowments Act. This Act clearly stated that no trustee could do anything against the custom and usage of the temples entrusted to him. Under this situation, Mr. Kelappan started a fast in protest against the Zamorin in front of the temple. In spite of it, he did not throw open the temple to them. He appealed to Gandhiji to make an arrangement to withdraw Mr. Kelappan's fast in respect to it. Thus under the influence and request of Gandhiji he suspended the fast on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1932 for three months. Gandhiji made an arrangement to issue the following statement to the Press:

“There is another fast which is a near possibility and that in connection with the opening of the Guruvayur temple in Kerala. It was at my urgent request that Mr. Kelappan suspended his fast for three months, a fast that had well nigh brought him to death's door. I would be in honour bound to fast with him if on or before 1<sup>st</sup> January 1933 that temple is not opened to the Untouchables precisely on the same terms as to the Touchables, and if it becomes necessary for Mr. Kelappan to resume his fast.”<sup>137</sup>

But the Zamorin denied to throw open the temple for the Untouchables and a counter statement on this issue was given to the press as follows:

“The various appeals that are being made for throwing open the temples to Avarnas proceed upon an inadequate appreciation of such difficulties. In these circumstances, there is hardly any justification for thinking that it is in my power to throw open the Guruvayur temple to the Avarnas as desired by the supporters of the temple-entry campaign”<sup>138</sup>

Under this unavoidable situation, Gandhiji changed his policy and stated that he would refrain from fasting if a referendum was taken from that area and if the referendum would prove that the majority of that Ponnani taluk in which temple was situated was against the throwing open of the Temple to the Untouchables. But the rights of voting was confined to those who were actual temple goers and others who were not allowed to enter the temple were excluded from this privilege and ultimately their names were omitted from the Voter's list. As a result of it 73% of eligible voters got opportunity to cast their votes. But the result of the poll was very important in this context as it was 56% who were in favour of temple entry, 9% were against, 8% were neutral and 27% refrained from casting their votes. So Gandhiji was bound to resume the fast. Even the Viceroy gave permission to the moving of the Temple Entry Bills in the legislature. But Gandhiji did not agree. Instead, he made a statement to the press on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1932 in this regard:

“In view of the official announcement that the Viceregal decision as to sanction for the introduction, in the Madras Legislative Council, of Dr. Subbaroyan's permissive Bill with reference to the temple-entry could not possibly be announced before the 15<sup>th</sup> January, the fast contemplated to take place on the second day of the New Year will be indefinitely postponed and in any case up to the date of the announcement of the Viceregal decision. Mr. Kelappan concurs in this postponement.”<sup>139</sup>

Gandhiji also expressed his views on this issue as follows:

“If the report is an intelligent anticipation of the forthcoming Viceregal decision, I can only say that it will be a tragedy... I emphatically repudiate the suggestion that there is any political objective behind these measures. If court decisions had not hardened a doubtful custom into law, no legislation would be required. I would myself regard State interference in religious matters as an intolerable nuisance. But here legislation becomes an imperative necessity in order to remove the legal obstruction and based as it will be on popular will, as far as I can see, there can be no question of clash between parties representing rival opinions.”<sup>140</sup>

But Lord Willingdon did not promote Dr. Subbaroyan's Temple Entry Bill in the Madras Council, but His Excellency allowed the introduction in the Legislative

Assemble of Mr. Ranga Iyer's Untouchability Abolition Bill. Now realizing the importance of this fact, the Governor-General and the Government of India stated that it was deemed necessary to find out a way out after ascertainment of Hindu opinion before the Government could decide what attitude to adopt through the examination in all their aspects. But Gandhiji was not satisfied with their activities and pointed out:

"I must try to trace the hand of God in it. He wants to try me through and trough. The sanction given to the All India Bill was an unintentional challenge to Hinduism and the reformer. Hinduism will take care of itself if the reformer will be true to him. Thus considered the Government of India's decision must be regarded as God-send. It clears the issue. It makes it for India and the world to understand the tremendous importance of the moral struggle now going on in India. But whatever the Sanatanists may decide the movement for Temple-Entry now broadens from Guruvayur in the extreme south to Hardwar in the north and my fast, though it remains further postponed, depends not now upon Guruvayur only but extends automatically to temples in general"<sup>141</sup>

Mr. Ranga Iyer formally introduced the Bill in the Assembly on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1933. He also took initiative so that the Temple Entry Bill be circulated to elicit public opinion by the 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1933. But the objection came from Raja Bahadur Krishnamachari, Mr. Gunjal and others and ultimately this Bill was postponed.

But the Government of India suddenly declared to dissolve the Assembly and ordered new election. As a resulted, there was a sudden change in the attitude of the Congress members in the Central Legislature towards Mr. Ranga Iyer's Temple Entry Bill and they ultimately refused to give any further support to the Bill at this Juncture. To solve this problem the great Mahatma wanted to tour the country but the Congress, betrayed him first and had further betrayed him with the assistance of his own samandhi, Rajagopalachariar. They said that they were not going to proceed with the Untouchability question and the Temple Entry Bill without a mandate from the people. But Gandhiji's strong reaction was issued on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1932 in a statement that read as follows:

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

“But if these vital conditions of the Pact are not carried out by caste-Hindus, could I possibly live to face God and man? I ventured even to tell Dr. Ambedkar, Rao Bahadur M.C. Raja and other friends belonging to the suppressed group that they should regard me as a hostage for the due fulfillment by caste-Hindus of the conditions of the Pact. The fast, if it is to come, will not be for coercion of those who are opponents of reform, but it will be intended to sting into action those who have been my comrades or who have taken pledges for the removal of Untouchability. If they believe their pledges or if they never meant to abide by them and their Hinduism was a mere camouflage, I should have no interest left in life.”<sup>142</sup>

But it was an irony of fate that Gandhiji did not blame RajaGopalachari on the issue of Temple Entry Bill. He blamed Ranga Iyer for his violent denunciation of the Congress Party for withdrawing its support to the Bill. Therefore, he made a statement in this context as follows:

“The ill fated Temple Entry Bill deserved a more decent burial, if it deserved it at all, than it received at the hands of the mover of the bill. It was not a bill promoted by, and on behalf of, the reformers. The mover should, therefore, have consulted reformers and acted under instructions from them. So far as I am aware, there was hardly any occasion for the anger into which he allowed himself to be betrayed or the displeasure which he expressed towards Congressmen. On the face of it, it was, and was designed to be, a measure pertaining to religion, framed in pursuance of the solemn declaration publicly made in Bombay at a meeting of representative Hindus, who met under the chairmanship of Pandit Malaviyaji on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1932. The curious may read the declaration printed almost every week on the front page of Harijan. Therefore, every Hindu, caste or Harijan, was interested in the measure. It was not a measure in which Congress Hindus were more interested than the other Hindus. To have, therefore, dragged the Congress name into the discussion was unfortunate. The Bill deserved a gentler handling.”<sup>143</sup>

In view of the above mentioned role and activities of Gandhiji towards the Temple Entry Movement it can be pointed out that he played a strange game of political acrobatics. He took part in it as an opponent. But he changed his position and became an active supporter of the Temple Entry Movement under the pressure of the-then political situation as the Untouchables were demanding for political rights at that time. However, Gandhiji once again changed his position to defeat the Congress in the election. Under this unavailable situation, Gandhiji made up his mind and cleared his position and ultimately gave up the Temple Entry Movement due to preserve political power in the hands of the Congress. That is why; Ambedkar raised the following questions in this regard: Is this sincerity? Does this show conviction? Was the 'agony of soul' which Mr. Gandhi spoke of more than a phrase?

### **7.6. Conclusion**

The role, ideas and activities of Gandhiji and Ambedkar towards the issue of Caste were completely opposite to each other. Gandhiji could not do anything without the affiliation to the traditional beliefs and convictions. He never dared to break the norms of the caste-based traditions. But Ambedkar fought for the destruction of the Caste Institution and Untouchability. Both of them came forward to each other to uplift the ill-fated conditions of the Untouchables. Gandhiji was treated as an untouchable in South Africa. But he launched a direct purification movement for the betterment of the Indian untouchables in the later part of his life. Some scholars pointed out that Gandhiji would not come forward to uplift the untouchables if there was no political compulsion. He was first caste-Hindu leader of the Indian National Congress who ultimately took initiative in the later part of his life to launch a direct anti-untouchability movement for bettering the condition of the ill-fated people in India. He made arrangements to set up tube wells, digging of ponds, establishment of schools, and construction of roads etc. for the Harijans. All sorts of beneficial measures were taken by him to uplift the socio-economic, educational and cultural conditions of the Harijans. His liberal and reformative zeal for temple entry movement could not be denied. That is why; the role and activities of Gandhiji towards the emancipation of the untouchables was very much important. He played a vital role to establish the concept of social justice among the Harijans. In spite of

numerous limitations, the greatness of Gandhiji towards the upliftment of the Harijans heralded a new dimension in the history of India. Naturally, he became the champion of the Harijan movement in India. But it can not be denied that the colonial government determined to render the concept of Social Justice among the Depressed Classes, Minorities and others by declaring the 'Communal Award' of 1932. Ramsay MacDonald, the-then Prime Minister of England played a vital role in this respect. Gandhiji was furious against the special recognition given to the Untouchables as a separate political entity. Therefore, it can be pointed out that the active participation of Gandhiji in the Second Round Table Conference made his position clear relating to the issue of Caste and Untouchability. He never expressed his woes regarding the ill-fated conditions of the Untouchables at that very moment. Instead of that he vehemently opposed the concessions and special privileges given to the Untouchables by the 'Communal Award'. However, Gandhiji founded the Harijan Sevak Sangha to uplift their socio-economic and educational status and position of the Harijans. But the ideas, roles and activities of Ambedkar relating to these issues were much more attractive and encouraging. He fought for the abolition of the inhuman Caste Institution and Untouchability and tried to establish the concept of liberty, equality, fraternity, nationality, democracy, and socialism with a mission to build up the India Nation on the basis of liberalism, nationalism, humanism, justice in all aspects such as social, political, economic etc. His role for the progress of the Harijans as human being in India was very much reformatory and energetic. However, Gandhiji and Ambedkar ultimately came forward to establish the concept of liberalism, social reforms, human rights and social justice in the Indian socio-political and economic arena. They worked for the betterment of the downtrodden, toiling masses of India in their own ways. Gandhian political philosophy was mainly based on the ideologies of Ahimsa (Non-Violence) and Satyagraha (Truthfulness) whereas the political ideology of Ambedkar was based on the principles of humanity, liberty, equality, fraternity, social democracy, political democracy, human rights, social justice, and nationalism. He disapproved of proletarian dictatorship of the Communists and also of Parliamentary Democracy. Practically speaking, Gandhiji tried to introduce the doctrines of Ahimsa and Non-violence in the field of political arena to liberate the country from the foreign suzerainty and bondage. But he did not come forward to implement these ideologies in the field of caste-politics to liberate the toiling masses from age-old traditional thoughts and beliefs of the Caste Institution. The Institution

of Caste practically wrecked all sorts' of rights, privileges and liberty of the low-born peoples. But Ambedkar was the chief architect of several Hindu temple entry movements in India. His main motto was to establish the rights and privileges of the untouchables in the Hindu temples. But the Harijan Sevak Sangh of Gandhiji refused to incorporate abolition of Caste System in its programmes. Gandhiji used Satyagraha against Britishers but did not favour it for untouchables against the caste Hindus. He wanted to abolish untouchability but not at the cost of offending caste Hindus. Thus he had his own reservations on the issue of rights of the Depressed Classes. But Ambedkar wanted reorganization of the Hindu society with complete abolition of the Caste System and untouchability on the principle of liberty, equality and justice. The prime object of Ambedkar was to liberate the low-born people from the yoke of age-old evil Brahmanical traditions and believes to lead a free life in the society.

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