

WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES

CHAPTER X WHAT DO THE UNTOUCHABLES SAY? Beware Of Mr. Gandhi

Congressmen never hesitate to impress upon the Untouchables that Mr. Gandhi is their saviour. Not only do Congressmen all over India hold out Mr. Gandhi as a real saviour but they go forth to persuade the Untouchables to accept the fact that he is their only saviour. When pressed for evidence, they tell the Untouchables that if any one ever took a vow to go on a fast unto death for the sake of the Untouchables it was Mr. Gandhi and none else. Indeed, without any compunction they tell the Untouchables that whatever political rights the Untouchables have got under the Poona Pact, they are the result of Mr. Gandhi's efforts. As an illustration of such propaganda I refer to what one Rai Bahadur Mehrchand Khanna is reported [\[f.1\]](#) to have said at a meeting of the Untouchables held at Peshawar on April 12, 1945 under the auspices of the Depressed Classes League :

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

If I refer to the statement of Rai Bahadur Mehrchand Khanna it is not because he is worth taking notice of. For there cannot be any one guilty of bigger blackguardism in Indian politics than this man. In the course of one year—not in very remote time but in 1944—he successfully played three different roles. He started as Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, turned agent of British Imperialism, went abroad to explain India's war effort to the British and American people and is now agent of the Congress in N.W.F. Province. The opinion of a man like Rai Bahadur Khanna, who, to use Dryden's language, is so various as to be everything by starts, and nothing long, and who in the course of one revolving moon, can be a chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon, must be beneath contempt. If I refer to him it is only because I wish to illustrate what sort of propaganda [\[f.2\]](#) friends of Mr. Gandhi are carrying on in order to beguile the Untouchables.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In these five years, Mr. Gandhi was completely absorbed in transforming the Congress into a militant organisation—a war machine fit to fight and shake British Imperialism. He took up the

cause of the Khilafat with a view to bring the Muslims to join the Congress and did his level best to rally the Hindus for the support of the Khilafat.

What did Mr. Gandhi do for the Untouchables during this period ? Congressmen will of course refer to the Bardoli Programme. It is true that in the Bardoli Programme the uplift of the Untouchables was an item. But what is important is to know what happened to it? To tell the story in a summary[f.3] form the Bardoli Programme was not a programme for the removal of Untouchability. It was a programme of amelioration which was defined by Disraeli as a combination of ancient institutions and modern improvements. The pro-programme, openly recognised Untouchability and planned to do no more than provide separate wells and separate schools for the Untouchables. The Sub-Committee appointed to draw up a programme for the uplift of the Untouchables consisted of persons, who had never shown any interest in the Untouchables and some of them were even hostile to them. Swami Shraddhanand, the one and only person in the Sub-' Committee who can be said to be charged with the desire to do something substantial for the Untouchables, was forced to resign. A paltry sum of money was allotted for carrying on the work of the Committee. The Committee was dissolved without meeting even once. The work of the uplift of the Untouchables was declared to be a work best suited to the Hindu Mahasabha. Mr. Gandhi took no interest in that part of the Bardoli Programme, which related to the Untouchables. On the contrary instead of siding with Swami Shraddhanand he sided with the reactionaries and opponents of Swami Shraddhanand, knowing full well that they did not want anything on a big scale done for the Untouchables.

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

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

" 1924 was released from prison; Forged a compromise between the two wings of the Congress who in his absence were fighting over the issue of Council Entry versus Constructive programme; 1929 proclaimed complete independence as the political goal of India ; 1930 launched Civil Disobedience movement ; 1931 went to London to represent Congress at the Round Table Conference. 1932 was imprisoned. Declared fast unto death against the Communal Award of His Majesty's Government and saved his life agreeing to the Poona Pact 1933 planned a campaign in favour of temple-entry for Untouchables and established the Harijan Sevak Sangh; 1934 ceased to be a member of the Congress; 1942 planned 'Quit India' movement and was imprisoned; 1934 went on fast and was released; 1944 engaged in correspondence with Lord Wavell and in issuing statements explaining away the 8th August 1942 Resolution; 1945 occupied with Kasturba Fund."

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

The years between 1922 and 1944 have a special significance in the history of Congress politics. The Programme of non-cooperation was accepted by the Congress at a special session held in Calcutta in September 1920. The programme included the well known five boycotts : the boycott of the Legislature, boycott of foreign cloth etc. The resolution on non-cooperation was opposed by the leaders of the intellectual classes, namely Bepin Chandra Pal, C. R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai to mention only a few names, but was passed notwithstanding their opposition. The regular Annual Session of the Congress was held in Nagpur in December 1920. The resolution on non-cooperation again came up for discussion. Strange as it may seem the same resolution was moved by Mr. C. R. Das [f.4] and seconded by Lala Lajpat Rai and confirmed. The result was that 1921 saw non-co-operation galore. On 19th March 1922, Mr. Gandhi was tried for sedition and

sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Immediately Mr. Gandhi was put behind the prison bars, Mr. C. R. Das seems to have recovered his balance and started a campaign to lift the boycott of the Legislature. In this he was joined by Vithalbhai Patel, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Malaviya. This move was opposed by the followers of Mr. Gandhi, who were not prepared to abate a jot or a tittle from the terms of the resolution on non-co-operation passed in Calcutta and confirmed in Nagpur. This led to a schism in the Congress. In 1924, Mr. Gandhi on account of his illness was released from gaol, before his time. When he came out, Mr. Gandhi found that the Congress was divided into two warring camps on the issue of the boycott of the Legislature. The quarrel was a bitter one and both sides were engaged in slinging mud at each other. Mr. Gandhi knew that if the quarrel continued the Congress would be weakened and wanted to patch it up. Neither side was prepared to give in. There were statements and counter statements. Ultimately, Mr. Gandhi made certain proposals for restoring peace between the two wings which were accepted by both sides. The proposals were intended to please both sides. To please the protagonists of Council Entry he proposed that the Congress should recognise entry in the Legislatures as legitimate part of Congress activity and the opponents of Council Entry should stop their propaganda against it. To please the opponents of Council Entry he proposed that the Congress should accept a new basis for franchise namely: (i) the Congress franchise instead of being 4 annas per annum should be a tender of 2,000 yards of hand-spun and self-spun yarn with the penalty clause attached to it by which any default in this behalf would automatically disqualify a person from being a member of the Congress and that (ii) the observance of five boycotts, of foreign cloth, Government Law Courts, schools and colleges, and of titles should be deemed as a qualification for a post within the Congress organisation and any person who did not believe in the principle of boycott and who did not carry them out in his own person must be deemed to be disqualified as a candidate.

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

After 1924 till 1930 there is a complete blank. Mr. Gandhi does not appear to have taken any active steps for the removal of Untouchability or got himself interested in any activity beneficial to the Untouchables during this period. While Mr. Gandhi was inactive the Untouchables had started a movement called the satyagraha movement. The object of the movement was to establish their right to take water from public wells and public temples. The satyagraha at the Chowdar Tank situated in Mahad, a town in, the Kolaba District of the Bombay Presidency, was organised to establish the right of the Untouchables to take water from public watering places. The satyagraha at the Kala Ram Temple situated in Nasik, a town in the Nasik District of the Bombay Presidency, was organised to establish the right of the Untouchables to enter Hindu temples. There were many minor satyagrahas. These were, however, the two principal ones over which the efforts of the Untouchables and their opponents, the Caste Hindus, were concentrated. The din and noise caused by them were heard all over India. Thousands of men and women from the Untouchables took part in these satyagrahas. Both men. and women belonging to the Untouchables were

insulted and beaten by the Hindus. Many were injured and some were imprisoned by Government on the ground of causing breach of the peace. This satyagraha movement went on for full six years when it was brought to a close in 1935 at a Conference held in Yeola in Nasik District in which the Untouchables as a result of the adamant attitude of the Hindus in refusing to give them equal social rights resolved to go out of the Hindu fold. This satyagraha movement was no doubt independent of the Congress. It was organised by the Untouchables, led by the Untouchables and financed by the Untouchables. Yet the Untouchables were not without hope of getting the moral support of Mr. Gandhi. Indeed they had very good ground for getting it. For the weapon of satyagraha—the essence of which is to melt the heart of the opponent by suffering—was the weapon which was forged by Mr. Gandhi, and who had led the Congress to practise it against the British Government for winning Swaraj. Naturally the Untouchables expected full support from Mr. Gandhi to their satyagraha against the Hindus the object of which was to establish their right to take water from public wells and to enter public Hindu temples. Mr. Gandhi however did not give his support to the satyagraha. Not only did he not give his support, he condemned it in strong terms.

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

In 1980 came the Round Table Conference. Mr. Gandhi joined the deliberations of the Conference [\[f.5\]](#) in 1981. The Conference was concerned with a vital question of framing a constitution for a self-governing India. It was unanimously held that if India was to be a self-governing country then the government must be a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Everybody agreed that only when a government is in a real sense a government by the people that it could be a government of the people and for the people. The problem was how to make it a government by the people in a country rent into communities, majorities and minorities, who are charged not merely with social cleavages but also with social antagonisms. Having regard to these circumstances it was agreed that in India there was no possibility of government by the people unless Legislature and the Executive were framed on the basis of communal representation. The problem of the Untouchables loomed large at the Conference. It assumed a new aspect. The question was; Should the Untouchables be left as they were to the tender mercies of the Hindus or should they be given the means to protect themselves by extending to them the principle of communal representation? The Untouchables strongly objected to be left to the pleasure of the Hindus and demanded the same protection as was given to the other minorities. The contention of the Untouchables was accepted by all. It was just and logical. They contended that the chasm between the Hindus and Muslims, between Hindus and Sikhs, between Hindus and Christians is nothing as compared with the chasm between the Hindus and the Untouchables. It is the widest and the deepest. The chasm between the Hindus and the Muslims is religious and not social. That between the Hindus and the Untouchables is both religious and

social. The antagonism arising out of the chasm existing between Hindus and Muslims cannot spell political disaster to the Muslims because the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims is not that of master and slave. It is one of mere estrangement. On the other hand, the chasm between Hindus and the Untouchables must spell political disaster for the Untouchables because the relationship between the two is that of master and slave. The Untouchables contended that the attempts to close the gap between them and the Hindus by means of social process had been tried for ages. They had all failed. There was no hope of their success. Since power is being transferred into the hands of the Hindu majority they must have political safeguards of the same sort as, if not better, than those conceded to the Muslims and other minorities.

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

In 1933, Mr. Gandhi took up two movements. First was the Temple-entry Movement. [\[f.6\]](#) He took personal responsibility for seeing through these two measures. One was the opening of the Guruvayur temple. The other was the passing of the Temple-entry Bill sponsored by Mr. Ranga Iyer in the Central Legislature. Mr. Gandhi said that he would fast unto death if the trustee of the Guruvayur temple did not throw it open to the Untouchables by a certain date. The Guruvayur temple still remains closed to the Untouchables but Mr. Gandhi has not fulfilled his vow of going on, fast. Surprising as it may be he has done nothing to get the temple declared open to the Untouchables although it is now thirteen years since he took the vow. Mr. Gandhi virtually coerced the Governor-General to give his sanction to the introduction of the Temple-entry Bill. The Congress party in the Central legislature which was pledged to carry through the Bill refused to support it when the stage of referring it to a Select Committee came on the ground that the Bill gave offence to the Hindus and in the election that was pending the Hindus would seek revenge on the Congress and defeat it at the poll if the Congress supported the Bill. To the great chagrin of Mr. Ranga Iyer, the Congress party let him down, by leaving the Bill to die. Mr. Gandhi did not mind this. He even went to the length of justifying the conduct of the Congress Party.

The other movement which Mr. Gandhi sponsored in 1933 was the establishment of the Harijan Sevak Sangh [\[f.7\]](#) with a net-work of branches all over India. There were three motives which lay behind the organisation of the Sangh. First was to prove that Hindus had enough charitable spirit towards the Untouchables and that they would show it by their generous contributions towards their uplift. The second motive was to serve the Untouchables by helping them in the many difficulties with which they were faced in their daily life. The third motive was to create in the minds of the Untouchables a sense of confidence in the Hindus from whom they were estranged in matters political. None of the three objects has been realized. In the first flush the Hindus contributed a total of about 8 lakhs of rupees for the Sangh which is of course nothing as compared to the crores they have contributed for general political purposes. After that they have gone dry. The Sangh is now depending for its finances either on Government grants or on the income derived from the sale of Mr. Gandhi's autographs or on the munificence of some wealthy

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

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

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

(2) In 1922 there was drawn up the Bardoli Programme of constructive work. Uplift of the Untouchables was an important item in it. A Committee was appointed to work out the details. The Committee never functioned and was dissolved and the uplift of the Untouchables as an item in the constructive programme was dropped. Only Rs. 800 were allotted to the Committee for working expenses. Why did Mr. Gandhi not protest against this niggardly and step-motherly treatment of the Committee by the Congress Working Committee ? Why did not Mr. Gandhi support Swami Shradhanand who was fighting with the Congress Working Committee for large funds being assigned to the Committee ? Why did not Mr. Gandhi protest against the dissolution of the Committee ? Why did not Mr. Gandhi appoint another Committee ? Why did he allow the work for the Untouchables to drop out as though it was of no importance ?

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

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

(5) Mr. Gandhi has devised satyagraha as a weapon to redress wrongs and to win freedom and has practised it against the British Government. Why has not Mr. Gandhi started satyagraha even

once against the Hindus on behalf of the Untouchables for securing admission to wells, temples and other public places to which access is denied by the Hindus ?

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

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

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

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

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

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

(12) After having accepted the Poona Pact, why did not Mr. Gandhi keep faith with the Untouchables by telling the Congress not to despoil the politics of the Untouchables by contesting the seats reserved for the Untouchables by getting such Untouchables elected as were prepared to become the tools of the Hindus?

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

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

III

What is the explanation that Mr. Gandhi has to offer ? What is the explanation that Mr. Gandhi's friends have to offer? Mr. Gandhi's anti-untouchability campaign is marked by so many twists and

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

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

Do the Untouchables regard Mr. Gandhi as being in earnest? The answer is in the negative. They do not regard Mr. Gandhi as being in earnest. How can they? How can they look upon a man being in earnest who when in 1921 the whole country was aroused to put the Bardoli programme in action remained completely indifferent to the anti-untouchability part of it? How could they look upon a man as being in earnest who, when out of 1 crore and 25 lakhs of Swaraj Fund, found that only 43 thousands rupees were allotted to the cause of the Untouchables did not raise any protest at this niggardly treatment of a long neglected cause? How can they regard a man as being in earnest who when, in 1924 he got an opportunity to impose upon the Hindus the obligation to remove Untouchability did not do so even though he had the power and the occasion to enforce it? Such a step would have served three purposes. It would have put the nationalism of Congressmen to test. It would have helped to remove Untouchability, and it would have proved that Mr. Gandhi was sincere in his talks about the evil of Untouchability and its being a sin and a stigma on Hinduism. Why did not Mr. Gandhi do it? Does this not show that Mr. Gandhi was more interested in the spread of spinning than in the removal of Untouchability? Does this not show that removal of Untouchability was the least part of Mr. Gandhi's programme and that it was not even last? Does it not show that the statements by Mr. Gandhi that Untouchability is a blot on Hinduism and that there will be no Swaraj without the removal of Untouchability were just empty phrases with no earnestness behind them? How could they believe in the earnestness of a person who takes a vow to fast if the Guruvayar temple is not opened to the Untouchables but will not go on fast even when the temple remains closed? How could they accept a man to be in earnest when he sponsors a Bill for securing Temple-entry and subsequently becomes a party to dropping it? How could they accept the earnestness of a man who contents himself with saying the he will not go into a temple if it is not open to the Untouchables when what is required of him is to adopt every means to get the temples thrown open to the Untouchables? How could they believe in the earnestness of a man who is ready to fast for everything but will not fast for the Untouchables? How can they believe in the earnestness of a man who is prepared to practise dityagraha for everything and against everybody but who will not practise it against the Hindus for the sake of the Untouchables? How can they believe in the earnestness of a man who does nothing more than indulge in giving sermons, on the evils of Untouchability?

Do they regard Mr. Gandhi as honest and sincere? The answer is that they do not regard Mr. Gandhi as honest and sincere. At the outset of his campaign for Swaraj Mr. Gandhi told the Untouchables not to side with the British. He told them not to embrace Christianity or any other

religion. He told them that they could find salvation in Hinduism. He told Hindus that they must remove Untouchability as a condition precedent to Swaraj. Yet in 1921 when only a paltry sum out of the Tilak Swaraj Fund was allotted to the Untouchables, when the Committee to plan the uplift of the Untouchables was unceremoniously wound up Mr. Gandhi did not raise a word of protest.

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

How can they regard Mr. Gandhi as honest and sincere if they consider Mr. Gandhi's conduct towards them and towards the Muslims and Sikhs in the matter of constitutional safeguards?

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

Mr. Gandhi is never so much disgusted as he is when he is confronted with the question of Majority versus Minority. He would like to forget it and ignore it. But circumstances will not let him do either and he is often forced to deal with the issue. The last time he dealt with it was on the 21st October 1989 in the form of an Editorial in the Harijan under the heading "The Fiction of Majority." The article is full of venom and Mr. Gandhi has not hesitated to pour all the ridicule he could on those who were constantly raising the question. In the article he vehemently denied that the Muslims are a Minority. He denied that the Sikhs are a Minority and denied that the Indian Christians are a Minority. His contention was that they were not minorities in the technical sense of Oppressed Communities they were minorities they were to in the numerical sense only, which meant that they were no minorities at all. What did Mr. Gandhi have to say about the Scheduled Castes ? Could he deny their contention that they are a Minority? Let me quote Mr. Gandhi's own

words. Mr. Gandhi said :— "I have endeavoured to show that there is no such things as real minorities in India whose rights can be endangered by India becoming independent. With the exception of the Depressed Classes there is no minority which is not able to Take care of itself."

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

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

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

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

After having gone on a fast unto death, he signed the Poona Pact. People say that Mr. Gandhi sincerely believed that political safeguards were harmful to the Untouchables. But how could a honest and sincere man who opposed the political demands of the Untouchables who was prepared to use the Muslims to defeat them, who went on a Fast unto Death, in the end accept the very same demands—for there is no difference between the Poona Pact and the Communal Award—when he found that there was no use opposing, as opposition would not succeed ? How can an honest and sincere man accept as harmless the demands of the Untouchables which once he regarded as harmful ?

Do the Untouchables regard Mr. Gandhi as their friend and ally ? The answer is in the negative. They do not regard him as their friend. How can they ? It may be that Mr. Gandhi honestly believes that the problem of the Untouchables is a social problem. But how can they believe him to be their friend when he wishes to retain caste and abolish Untouchability it being quite clear that Untouchability is only an extended form of caste and that therefore without abolition of caste there is no hope of abolition of Untouchability ? It may be that Mr. Gandhi honestly believes that the problem of Untouchables can be solved by social processes. But how can the Untouchables regard a man as their friend who develops a fanatic and frantic opposition to political processes being employed when everyone was agreed that the use of political processes cannot mar the effect of social process and may be depended upon to help and accelerate the solution of the problem. How could a man be regarded as the friend of the Untouchables when he does not believe the Untouchables reaching to places of power and authority in the State. In this controversy over political safeguards Mr. Gandhi could have pursued any of the following courses. He could have been the champion of the Untouchables. As such, he should not only have welcomed their demand for safeguards but he should have proposed them himself without waiting for the Untouchables to do so. Not only should he have proposed them himself but he should have fought for them. For, what could give greater happiness to a genuine champion of the Untouchables than to see that provision was made to enable them to become members of the Legislature, Ministers of Executive, and occupants of high offices in the State ? Surely, if Mr. Gandhi is a champion of the Untouchables these are the very provisions he should have fought for. Secondly, if he did not wish to be the champion of the Untouchables, he could have been their ally. He could have helped them by giving them his moral and material support. Thirdly, if Mr. Gandhi did not like to play the part of a champion and was averse to be even an ally of the Untouchables, the next thing he could have done consistent with his proclaimed and much advertised sympathies for the Untouchables, was to be their friend. Again as a friend he could have taken up the attitude of benevolent neutrality—declining to fight but ready to render all help for getting the demand for safeguards accepted. Failing benevolent neutrality he could have taken the attitude of strict neutrality and could have told the Untouchables to get the safeguards if the Round Table Conference was prepared to give them and that he would neither help nor hinder. Abandoning all these sober considerations Mr. Gandhi came out as an, open enemy of the Untouchables. How can the Untouchables regard such a man as their friend and ally?

IV

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

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

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

"The Untouchability of the 'Harijans' in the matter of entry into schools persists nowhere so much still as in Gujarat." [f.8]

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

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

On 27th August 1948, Mr. M. M. Nandgaonkar, a leader of the Untouchables residing in Thana in the Bombay Presidency and ex-Vice President of Thana Municipality was refused tea in a Hindu hotel. The Bombay Chronicle commenting upon this incident in its issue dated 28th August 1948 said :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The true reasons why Mr. Gandhi will not go beyond sermons were revealed to the Untouchables for the first time [\[f.9\]](#) in, 1929 when the Untouchables in the Bombay Presidency opened a campaign of satyagraha against the Hindus for establishing their civic rights in the matter of temple-entry and taking water from public wells. They hoped to get the blessings of Mr. Gandhi in as much as satyagraha was Mr. Gandhi's own weapon to get wrongs redressed.. When appealed to for support, Mr. Gandhi surprised the Untouchables by issuing a statement condemning their campaign of satyagraha against the Hindus. The argument urged by Mr. Gandhi was very ingenious. He stated that satyagrahs was to be used only against foreigners ; i it must not be used against one's own kindred or countrymen and as the Hindus were the kindred and countrymen of the Untouchables by rules of satyagraha the latter were debarred from using the weapon against the former ! ! What a fall from the sublime to the ridiculous ! By this Mr. Gandhi made nonsense of satyagraha. Why did Mr. Gandhi do this ? Only because he did not want to annoy and exasperate the Hindus.

As a second piece of evidence, I would refer to what is known as the Kavitha incident Kavitha is a village in the Ahmedabad District in Gujarat. In 1935, the Untouchables of the village demanded from the Hindus of the village that their children should be admitted in the common school of the village along with other Hindu children. The Hindus were enraged at this outrage and took. their

revenge by proclaiming a complete social boycott. The events connected with this boycott were reported by Mr. A. V. Thakkar, who went to Kavitha to intercede with the Hindus on behalf of the Untouchables. The story told by him runs as follows :—

"The Associated Press announced on the 10th inst. that the Caste Hindus of Kavitha agreed to admit Harijan boys to the village school in Kavitha and that matters were amicably settled. This was contradicted on the 13th instant by the Secretary of the Ahmedabad Harijan Sevak Sangh, who said in his statement that the Harijans had undertaken (privately of course) not to send their children to the school. Such an undertaking was not given, voluntarily, but was extorted from them by the Caste Hindus, in this case the Garasias of the village; who had proclaimed a social boycott against poor Harijans-weavers, chamars and others, who number over 100 families. They were deprived of agricultural labour, their animals of grazing in the pasture land and their children of buttermilk. Not only this, but a Harijan leader was compelled to take an oath by Mahadev that he and others would not hereafter even make an effort to reinstate their children in the school. The so-called settlement was brought about in this way.

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

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

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

This was a report made to Mr. Gandhi. What did Mr. Gandhi do ? The followings ⁶⁴ [f.10] is the advice Mr. Gandhi gave to the Untouchables of Kavitha:-

"There is no help like self-help. God helps those who help themselves. If the Harijans concerned will carry out their reported resolve to wipe the dust of Kavitha off their feet, they will not only be happy themselves but they will pave the way for others who may be similarly treated. If people migrate in search of employment how much more should they do so in search of self-respect ? I hope that well-wishers of Harijans will help these poor families to vacate inhospitable Kavitha." Mr. Gandhi advised the Untouchables of Kavitha to vacate. But why did he not advise Mr. Thakkar to prosecute the Hindus of Kavitha and help the Untouchables to vindicate their rights?" "Obviously, he would like to uplift the Untouchables if he can but not by offending the Hindus. What good can such a man do to promote the cause of the Untouchables ? All this shows that Mr. Gandhi is most anxious to be good to the Hindus. That is why he opposes satyagraha against the Hindus. That is why he opposed the political demands of the Untouchables as he believed that they were aimed against them. He is anxious to be so good to the Hindus that he does not care if he is thereby becoming good for nothing for the Untouchables. That is why Mr. Gandhi's whole programme for the removal of Untouchability is just words, words and words and why there is no action behind it.

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

The work of the Sangh reminds one of the mythological demoness Putana described in the Bhagvat—a companion to the Mahabharat. Kamsa the king of Mathurra, wanted to kill Krishna, as it was predicted that Kamsa will die at the hands of Krishna. Having come to know of the birth of Krishna, Kamsa asked Putana to undertake the mission to kill Krishna while he was yet a baby. Putana took the form of a beautiful woman and went to Yashoda, the foster mother of Krishna and having applied liquid poison to her breast pleaded to be employed as a wet nurse for suckling the baby Krishna and thus have the opportunity to kill it. The rest of the story it is unnecessary to pursue. The point of the story is that the real purpose is not always the same as the ostensible purpose and a nurse can be a murderess. The Sangh is to the Untouchables what Putana was to Krishna. The Sangh under the pretence of service is out to kill the spirit of independence from among the Untouchables. The Untouchables, in the early stages of their agitation, had taken the support of some well-meaning Hindus and had followed their leadership. By the time of the Round Table Conference, the Untouchables had become completely self-reliant and independent. They were no longer satisfied with charity from the Hindus. They demanded what they said was their right. There is no doubt that it is to kill this spirit of independence among the Untouchables that Mr. Gandhi started the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The Harijan Sevak Sangh by its petty services has collected a swarm of grateful Untouchables who are employed to preach that Mr. Gandhi and the Hindus are the saviours of the Untouchables. Daniel O'Connell the Irish leader once said that no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no country can be grateful at the cost of its liberty. The Untouchables are too simple-minded to know that the cost of the service which the Harijan Sevak Sangh offers to render is loss of independence. This is exactly what Mr. Gandhi wants.

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

Bhishma and Kacha, in my opinion, are typical of the morally depraved characters who know no other purpose but to serve their own interests for the time being. The Untouchable students in the

Harijan hostels are acting the part of both Bhishma and Kacha. During their stay in the hostels they play the part of Bhishma by singing the praises of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress. When they come out of the hostels they play the part of Kacha and denounce Mr. Gandhi and the Congress. I am extremely pained to see this. Nothing worse could happen to the youth of the Untouchables than this moral degeneration. But this is the greatest disservice which his Harijan Sevak Sangh has done to the Untouchables. It has destroyed their character. It has destroyed their independence. This is what Mr. Gandhi wants to happen.

Take a fourth illustration. The Sangh is run by the Caste Hindus. There are some Untouchables who have demanded that the institution should be handed over to the Untouchables and should be run by them. Others have demanded that the Untouchables should have representation on the governing Board. Mr. Gandhi has flatly refused to do either on two very ingenious grounds which no man with the greatest cunning could improve. Mr. Gandhi's first argument is that the Harijan Sevak Sangh is an act of penance on the part of the Hindus for the sin of observing Untouchability. It is they who must do the penance. Therefore¹ the Untouchable can have no place in running the Sangh. Secondly Mr. Gandhi says the money collected by him is given by the Hindus and not by the Untouchables and as the money is not of the Untouchables, the Untouchables have no right to be on the Governing Body. The refusal of Mr. Gandhi may be tolerated but his argument's are most insulting and a respectable Untouchable will be forgiven if he refuses to have anything to do with the Sangh. One should have thought that the Harijan Sevak Sangh was a Trust and the Untouchables its beneficiaries. Any trio in law would admit that the beneficiaries have every right to know the aims and objects of the Trust, its funds and whether the objects are properly carried out or not. The beneficiaries have even the right to have the Trustees removed for breach of trust. On that basis it would be impossible to deny the claim of the Untouchables for representation on the Managing Board. Evidently Mr. Gandhi does not wish to accept this position. A self-respecting Untouchable who has no desire to cringe and who does not believe in staking the future of the "Untouchables on the philanthropy of strangers cannot have any quarrel with Mr. Gandhi, He is quite prepared to say that if meanness is a virtue then Mr. Gandhi's logic is superb and Mr. Gandhi is welcome to the benefit of it. Only he must not blame the Untouchables if they boycott the Sangh.

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

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

V

To sum up, can it be said that Mr. Gandhi has recovered the title deeds to humanity which the Untouchables have lost ? Obviously not. Those title deeds are still with the Hindus. He has done nothing to recover them. Nor has he helped the Untouchables to recover them. On the contrary, Mr. Gandhi has put every obstacle in their way. The Untouchables feel that their title deeds to humanity—"which means their emancipation from their thralldom of the Hindus can be secured by them by political power, and by nothing else. Mr. Gandhi, on the other hand, believes that his preaching and the charity and zeal of the Hindus are sufficient panacea for all the ills of the Untouchables. Can the Untouchables rely on a sustained flow of Hindu charity and Hindu zeal ? Charity which has its fury is worth talking about. Zeal which has its vengeance is worth building upon. But which friend of the Untouchables can ask them to depend upon the miserable measure 'of Hindu charity and the Hindu zeal ? Untouchability has been in existence for the last two thousand years during which period the Hindus have day in and day out sucked the very blood of the Untouchables and have mutilated them and trodden upon them in every way. During these two thousand years what amount of charity have the Hindus done to the Untouchables ? Only 8 lakhs and that too when Mr. Gandhi personally went round the country with a begging bowl ! ! ! Having put his programme to test, Mr. Gandhi might have shown, his willingness to concede the Untouchables' demand for political power as their only means of salvation. Indeed so obvious is the justice of this demand that a man with no more than common sense could have understood that executive power in the hands of the Untouchables could do more in a year than the whole order of preaching friars could be relied upon, to do in, a century. But. the very idea of political power to the Untouchables is hateful to Mr. Gandhi. Why should not the Untouchables say "'Beware of Mr. Gandhi' when they know that he would not allow the use of political processes for the emancipation of the Untouchables though Mr.Gandhi is fully alive to the fact that the social processes on which he laid so much store for helping them have completely failed.

In this connection. one is reminded of the attitude of President Lincoln in the American Civil War towards the two questions of union and slavery. This attitude is well revealed by the correspondence [\[f.11\]](#) that passed in 1862 between, Mr. Horace Greeicy and President Lincoln., In, a letter addressed to the President entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," Mr. Greeley said :

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

'To this, President Lincoln's reply was :

"If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them.

" If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them.

"My paramount object is to save the Union, and not wither to save or to destroy slavery.

"If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it. If I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

These were the views of President Lincoln about Negro slavery and its relation to the question of Union. They certainly throw a very different light on one who is reputed to be the liberator of the Negroes. As a matter of fact he did not believe in the emancipation of the Negroes as a categorical imperative. Obviously the author of the famous Gettysberg oration about Government of the people, by the people and for the people would not have minded if his statement had taken the

shape of government of the black people by the white people and for the white people provided there was union. Mr. Gandhi's attitude towards Swaraj and the Untouchables resembles very much the attitude of President Lincoln towards the two questions of the Negroes and the Union,. Mr. Gandhi wants Swaraj as did President Lincoln want Union. But he does not want Swaraj at the cost of disrupting the structure of Hinduism which is what political emancipation of the Untouchables means as President Lincoln did not want to free the slaves if it was not necessary to do so for the sake of the Union. There is of course this difference between Mr. Gandhi and President Lincoln. President Lincoln was prepared to emancipate the Negro slaves if it was necessary to preserve the Union. Mr. Gandhi's attitude is in marked contrast. He is not prepared for the political emancipation, of the Untouchables even if it was essential for winning Swaraj. Mr. Gandhi's attitude is let Swaraj perish if the cost of it is the political freedom of the Untouchables.

Some Untouchables are probably under the impression that all this is a matter of the dead past and that Mr. Gandhi having accepted the Poona Pact cannot now oppose the political demands of the Untouchables for as a party to the Poona Pact Mr. Gandhi must be assumed to have conceded that the Untouchables are a separate element in the national life of India, This is a complete misunderstanding. For there are grounds to,, believe that the Poona Pact has made no difference in Mr. Gandhi's view and he still maintains the same attitude to the Untouchables' claim for political safeguards as he did at the Round Table (conference and before the Poona Pact. These grounds have their foundation in. the fact that when His Majesty's Government declared in 1940 that the Untouchables are a separate element in the National life of India and that their consent to the Constitution, is necessary Mr. Gandhi came out with "a protest. When the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow referred to the Untouchables as a separate element and said that their consent to the Constitution was necessary, Mr. Gandhi said [\[f.12\]](#) -"

"I felt that the putting up by the Viceroy, and then the Secretary of State of want of agreement by the Congress with the Princes, the Muslim League and even the Scheduled Classes as a barrier to the British recognition of India's right to freedom was more than unjust to the Congress and the people".

"The introduction of the Scheduled Classes in the controversy has made the unreality of the case of the British Government doubly unreal. They know that these are the special care of the Congress, and that the Congress is infinitely more capable of guarding their interests than the British Government. Moreover, the Scheduled Classes are divided into as many castes as the Caste Hindu Society. No single Scheduled classes member could possibly and truthfully represent the innumerable castes."

The argument advanced by Mr. Gandhi is puerile. It may be pointed out that in the hurry he made in stating his opposition to the position assigned to the Scheduled Castes by the Viceroy, Mr. Gandhi forgot that if the Scheduled Castes are divided into many wastes and no single caste could represent them all, the case of the Muslims and the Indian Christians is in no way different. The Muslims are divided into three groups: (1) Sunnis; (2) Shias and (8) Momins each of which consists: of many castes who interdine but do not intermarry. Indian Christians are divided into (1) Catholics, and (2) Protestants. Catholics are again sub-divided into (1) Caste Christians and (2) Non-caste Christians. Both Catholics and Protestants have castes which do not intermarry and caste Christians and Non-caste Christians do not even interline or go to the same church. This shows that Mr. Gandhi not with-standing his being a party to the Poona Pact is determined not to allow the Scheduled Castes being given the status of a separate element and that he is prepared to adopt any argument however desperate to justify his attitude of opposition.

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

Contents

Chapter XI

[f.1] *Free Press Journal*, dated 14-4-45.

[f.2] Another illustration of such propaganda is that carried on by one Parsi gentleman by name Prof. A. R. Wadia. The views of Prof. Wadia have been critically examined and exposed by Mr. E. J. Sanjana in a series of articles in the *Rast-Rahabar*—a Gujarathi Weekly published in Bombay from 29th October 1944 to 15th April 1945 under the heading of "Sense and Nonsense in Politics."

[f.3] For details see Chapter II.

[f.4] This is not with standing the fact reported by Mr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the Official Historian of the Congress namely that:—
"Mr. C. R. Das brought a contingent of about 250 delegates from East Bengal and Assam, bore their expenses to and fro, and spent Rs, 36,000 from his pocket to undo what was done in Calcutta. There was even a small fight between his men and those of Jitendralal Banerjee, his opponent." *The History of the Congress*, p. 347.

[f.5] For details see Chapter III.

[f.6] For details see Chapter IV.

[f.7] For details see Chapter V.

[f.8] Quoted from Sanjana's *Senss and Nonsense in Politics*.

[f.9] In 1924 in the Satyagraha at Vaikom the object of which was to get a public road in Travancore open to the Untouchables, Mr. Gandhi objected to the Sikhs opening a kitchen for the satyagrahis. The reason given by Mr. Gandhi was not stated quite so explicitly.

[f.10] *Harijan*, dated 5th October 1935.

[f.11] *Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. XI, pp. xii-xiii,

[f.12] *Harijan*, dated 13th October 1940.