Ambedkar was one of the few statesmen-politicians in India who took active part in all the deliberations of constitution making, from the Montford Reforms (1919) to Cabinet Mission Scheme (1946). During this period he was the leader of his Community.

Before the Morley-Minto Reforms, the Muslims had requested the Government not to register the untouchables as Hindus. In 1916, the Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim League accepted the system of separate electorates. This Pact was defended by Tilak and opposed by Malaviya. The Lucknow Pact made the great error of accepting as inevitable the communal electoral division initiated by Lord Minto and Lord Morley.

The Franchise Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Southborough was appointed to deal with franchise problems in the light of Montford Reforms. This Committee consisted, among others, of Srinivas
Sastri and Surendranath Banerjee as members and top-ranking nationalist leaders like Rajendra Prasad, Motilal Nehru, and Malaviya as witnesses. Ambedkar was called upon to give evidence before them. He demanded separate electorates and reserved seats for the Depressed Classes in proportion to their population. In addition, he demanded that representatives of the unouchables must be elected by the votes of untouchables only. The Committee did not admit the claim of the untouchables to separate electorates. It allowed communal representation to Muslims, and nomination in the case of the Depressed Classes.

A Statutory Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon on November 8, 1927. The non-Indian composition of the Commission roused the nationalist sentiment. A Conference of the leaders of the Congress, the Responsivists, the Moderates, the Nationalists led by Lajpat Rai and the Independents under Jinnah, passed a resolution recommending the boycott of the Commission. The Jinnah group in the Muslim League opposed and the Shafi group co-operated with the Commission.

The central Government appointed a Committee for British India, and every Legislative Council elected its Provincial Committee to work with the Simon Commission. Ambedkar was elected on the Bombay Provincial Committee on August, 3 1928. His students in the Law College, Bombay boycotted his lectures. He was dubbed a British stooge.
Ambedkar remarked that there was really no link between the Hindus and the Depressed Classes. Therefore, they must be regarded as a distinct and independent community. He emphasised that seats should be reserved for them in the Legislatures and that the present practice of nominating one or two members should cease to exist. He said they should have at least 22 out of 140 seats in the Bombay Legislative Council. He claimed reservation of seats, accompanied by adult suffrage, and in the absence of such an arrangement, separate electorates. Lord Burnham, a member of the Simon Commission, asked him if he had any other proposal if he did not get either adult suffrage or separate electorates. Ambedkar replied that he must have either, adding that adult suffrage would counter mischief, if any. He differed with the Committee and did not sign the Committee’s Report. He submitted a separate report on May 17, 1929. Eighteen Depressed Class associations gave evidence, 16 pleaded for separate electorates.

THE NEHRU REPORT

The All-Parties Conference convened by the Congress Party met in February and later in May 1928, and appointed a Committee under Pandit Motilal Nehru to draft a Swaraj Constitution for India. The Nehru committee worked from June to August 1928 and drafted a constitution. This was a first attempt at Constitution-making. It mainly aimed at closing the Hindu-Muslim breach. In the Report no special provisions were made for the representation of the Depressed Classes in the legislatures. The
Report regarded special electorates and reservations of seats as 'unsound and harmful' and opposed nomination. It concluded, "adult suffrage will automatically raise their level and increase their political power." The Simon Commission opined that the Nehru Report was not an agreed solution. Ambedkar criticized the constituencies formed in the Nehru Report and said that this arrangement was 'to preserve the upper class hegemony and Brahmanical rule in society.' He criticized the plan to keep the Hindus in the Muslim majority provinces at the mercy of Muslims as dangerous and said it was better to grant them separate electorates. He also criticized the demand of the Muslims for the grant of residuary powers to the constituent states, agreed to by the Nehru Report.

**THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES**

The British Government convened a Round Table Conference (R.T.C.) in London in 1930 to frame a Constitution for India, with a view to satisfying the demands of the people of India. The Round Table Conference consisted of 89 members, out of which 16 were representatives of the three British parties, 53 Indian members representing various different interests, except the non-cooperating Congress, and 20 of the Indian Princely States. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar remarked that in a way it was a recognition of the independent position of the Scheduled Classes.
Ambedkar suggested that the untouchables should be named as non-caste Hindus, Protestant Hindus, or non-conformist Hindus. He clarified that the untouchables had a separate existence from Hindus. They were actually on a level between serfs and slaves. The Hindus called them their men only to usurp their rights. He thought of placing the problem of untouchables before the League of Nations.

The First Session of the Round Table Conference opened on November 12, 1930. Ambedkar wanted the Dalits to be politically empowered and insisted during the first Round Table Conference that the issue must be looked upon in that manner. He explained: we are often reminded that the problem of the Depressed Classes is a social problem and that its solution lies elsewhere than in politics. We take strong exception to this view. We hold that the problem of the Depressed Classes will never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands. If this is true, and I do not think that the contrary can be maintained, then the problem of Depressed Classes is, I submit, eminently a political problem and must be treated as such. In his speech Ambedkar attacked the British Raj in India. He posed the question: “Has the British Government done anything to remove untouchability?” and remarked that the wrongs against the untouchables had not been righted, although 150 years of British rule had passed. He upheld the cause of Dominion Status. He said that the consent of the people should be the touchstone of the new constitution. The Round Table Conference appointed nine sub-committees. Ambedkar served on the
Minorities Sub-Committee, the Provincial Constitutions Sub-Committee, and the Services Sub-Committee. He demanded that the Depressed Classes should be regarded, for electoral purposes, as a separate community, and 'that they could not consent to any self-governing constitution for India unless their demands were met in a reasonable manner.' 8 He demanded common citizenship, free use of common rights and adequate representation in the legislatures, government services and in the cabinet.

As a result the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on March 5, 1931, the Civil Disobedience Movement was withdrawn and Gandhiji promised to attend the Second Session of the Round Table Conference in London. Gandhiji, Sarojini Naidu and Malaviya represented the Indian National Congress at the Round Table Conference. The Second Session began on September 7, 1931. The Conference was to re-examine and amplify the reports prepared by the Federal Structure Committee and the Minorities Committee. Ambedkar stressed that power should be shared by all communities in their respective proportions. He presented to the Minorities Committee a Supplementary Memorandum on the claims of the Depressed Classes for special representation. He advocated separate electorates. The leading representatives of the Muslims, the Depressed Classes, a section of the Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians jointly submitted a Memorandum. This was known as the Minority Pact. This Pact enraged Gandhiji. In the course of his speech he said that he had regard for Ambedkar’s ability but added that Ambedkar’s bitter experiences in life had warped his judgment.
He said that he would not mind the untouchables being converted to Islam or Christianity and asserted that he would resist political rights of untouchables with his life (sic). Ambedkar did not reply to this argument of Gandhiji. He also did not sign the requisition of the members of the Minorities Committee authorizing the British Premier to settle the communal problem. Gandhiji signed it. In Provincial Constitutions sub-Committee, Ambedkar demanded complete Provincial Autonomy.

The Rajah-Moonje Pact based on joint electorates with reservation of seats was criticized and opposed by Ambedkar. It was also repudiated by the All-India Depressed Classes Congress held at Kamptee in May 1932. This Congress stood behind Ambedkar and the minorities. The question of defining the Depressed Classes arose. The Indian Legislature Committee in its decision in 1916, the Educational Commissioner under the Government of India, and the Southborough Franchise Committee had grouped the Depressed Classes with the aboriginals, or Hill Tribes, or Criminals or others; but the Lothian Franchise Committee declared that the term should be applied only to those who were untouchables. This was the result of Ambedkar's efforts.

THE COMMUNAL AWARD

On August 17, 1932, Ramsay MacDonald announced a provisional scheme of minority representation, commonly called the Communal Award. The scheme determined the number of seats in the provincial legislatures at
approximately double the number in the existing councils. Separate electorates were retained for the minority communities, and for the Muslims both in Bengal and Punjab, despite their numerical majority. Weightage was also conceded to the Muslims in the Provinces in which they were in a minority and to the Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab. The Depressed Classes were now recognized as a minority community entitled to separate electorate. While creating a number of specially reserved constituencies for Depressed Classes, it gave them an additional right to contest seats in the general constituencies with this provision that special electorate and reservation of seats would lapse after 20 years, automatically. For the first time, untouchables were given an independent political existence and the legal right to shape the future of the motherland. This can be recorded as a victory of Ambedkar’s ideology of uplifting the untouchables.9

The Congress leaders at a meeting of the Working Committee in Bombay declared that the Congress Party neither accepted nor rejected the Communal Award.

According to Ambedkar, ‘the Communal Award gave the untouchables two benefits: 1). a fixed quota of seats to be elected by a separate electorate of untouchables; 2). a double vote, one to be used through separate electorates and the other to be used in general electorates.10

As regards separate electorates, he remarked. “We mean no harm to Hindu Society when we demand separate electorates. If we choose separate electorates we do so in order to avoid the total dependence on the sweet will
of the caste Hindus in matters affecting our destiny.” He charged Mahatmaji with widening the gulf between the Hindus and the Depressed Classes.

Gandhiji resented particularly the recognition given to the untouchables as a separate political entity. He thought that it meant ‘the perpetual bar sinister’. He remarked, “I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India.” He emphatically said that separate electorates and separate reservations were not the ways to remove ‘the bar sinister.’ He regarded untouchability as being no part of Hinduism, He said, “I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived.” He thought the attitude taken by Ambedkar would create a division of Hinduism.

According to Gandhiji, if separate electorates were given then there would be a division among villagers and their lives as villagers would be miserable in villages, the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. So he thought it to be a “positive danger” to the untouchables. According to him, untouchability was a stigma on the Hindu religion and in the near future, it would vanish. But separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. He remarked, ‘separate electorates to the untouchables will ensure them bondage in perpetuity.’ Ambedkar thought that separate electorates, adult franchise and fundamental rights in the Constitution would give them complete security.
Gandhiji said, 'We do not want on our register and on our census untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Muslims, so may Europeans', He asked, 'would untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity?' He opposed every attempt at separating the untouchables from caste Hindus. He wrote a letter to Sir Samuel Hoare on March 11, 1932. He remarked therein that separate electorates would vivisect and disrupt the nation without doing any good to the Depressed Classes. Such electorates were neither a penance not any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. He said further, 'I informed His Majesty’s Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorates for the Depressed Classes I must fast unto death.'\textsuperscript{15} He said that the fast could only end if during its progress the British Government, of its motion, or under pressure of public opinion, revised their decision and withdrew their scheme of communal (separate) electorate for the Depressed Classes. The fast was to continue even if he was released.

Ambedkar described this proposed fast of Gandhi as a political stunt. In a statement he said that it would have been justifiable if Gandhi had resorted to this extreme step for obtaining independence. Gandhi remarked, 'for me the abolition of separate electorates would be but the beginning of the end, and I would warn all those leaders assembled at Bombay and others against coming to any hasty decision...My fast, I want to throw in the
scales of justice, and if it wakes up caste Hindus from their slumber, and if they are roused to a sense of duty, it will have served its purpose.16

As stated earlier, Gandhiji started his fast in Yeravada Central Jail. A conference of Hindu leaders was called in Bombay. Pandit Malaviya told the conference on September 19, 1932, to resolve the deadlock and save the life of Gandhiji and informed Ambedkar about it. To save the life of Gandhi it was necessary to alter the British Prime Minister’s Award, and to amend it, it was necessary to get the approval of Ambedkar. All eyes of the nation turned to Ambedkar. In a furious campaign, he was called a monster, a traitor and a hireling. On the eve of the Conference, he issued a statement. He said,... The Mahatma is not an immortal person, nor the Congress....Mahatmas have come and Mahatmas have gone. But the untouchables have remained as untouchables.17

Ambedkar with other leaders saw Gandhiji in Yeravade prison. Gandhiji suggested the application of the panel system to all the seats. Ambedkar accepted Gandhiji’s suggestion. He demanded 197 seats for Depressed Classes in the Provincial Assemblies and the leaders reduced the number to 126. He said that the system of primary election should terminate at the end of 10 years, but insisted that the question of reserved seats should be settled by referendum of the Depressed Classes at the end of another 15 years. The question of total number of seats was decided by granting 148 seats to the Depressed Classes in the Provincial Assemblies. It was also decided that 10 per cent of the seats of the Hindus from British India in the
Central Assembly should be given to the Depressed Classes. Devdas Gandhi made a strong personal appeal to Ambedkar not to hold up an agreement by pressing for a referendum. Gandhiji said with a finality—"five years or my life." But Gandhiji gave consent to 10 years. Instead of separate electorates granted under the Award, the Depressed Class leaders agreed to have elections in two phases. Four candidates would be elected from separate Depressed Class electorates and subsequently the general electorate would choose one of the four so elected earlier. The agreement was signed at 5 p.m. on Saturday, September 24, 1932. It went down in history as the Poona Pact. Ambedkar signed it on behalf of the Depressed Classes. This Poona Pact was accepted by the British Government thereby nullifying the ‘Communal Award’ of MacDonald, much to Gandhiji’s satisfaction. Ambedkar commented, “The second vote given by the communal Award was a priceless privilege.... 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.”

The Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats, but it also took away the right to the ‘double’ vote. The value of the second vote as political weapon, was beyond reckoning. Disliked by the caste Hindus and disfavoured by the untouchables, the Pact was given recognition by both parties and was embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935.
According to Ambedkar, the defeat of the Scheduled Castes candidates in the General Elections was due to the voting system of the Poona Pact. Ambedkar initiated a resolution in the Executive of the Scheduled Castes Federation (on September 23, 1944) demanding separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. In an interview he stated: “The Poona Pact must go. It has resulted in disenfranchising the 60 million untouchables. According to International Law no treaty was final and sacrosanct.” Ambedkar was convinced that his failure in the 1952 general elections was due to joint electorates. In a speech in the Rajya Sabha, on September 22, 1953 he said that he accepted the Poona Pact as inevitable because it was not possible for him to get more. He added, ‘The Poona Pact gave a death-blow to the self-reliant movements of the Depressed classes.’ Even the Cabinet Mission’s deliberations were disappointing to Ambedkar. He contended that the Congress did not represent the untouchables and demanded abrogation of the Poona Pact signed by him and Gandhiji had demanded the restoration of separate electorates as envisaged in MacDonald’s Communal Award.

The basic idea behind all the deliberations was to establish the untouchables as a minority. Ambedkar tried his level best to get basic rights for the minority. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly he said, “....A solution must be such that it will enable the majority and minorities to merge someday into one.” He remarked: “Minorities are an explosive force, which, if they erupt, can blow up the whole fabric of the state.”
About the nature of the majority he made the criticism. The minorities have accepted the role of majority which is basically a communal majority and not a political majority. It is for the majority to realise its duty not to discriminate against the minorities.” In the end he said, “The moment the majority loses the habit of discrimination against the minority, the minorities can have no ground to exist. They will vanish.”

The Poona Pact closed an epoch. But did the war which had been declared at Manibhuvan on August 14, 1931, come to an end? Or was it a second battle and the war was to continue even after the truce?

**HARIJAN MOVEMENT**

After the Poona Pact, the problem of the untouchables came to the forefront. The issue of untouchability became national issue. It was debated everywhere in the country. The whole country recognized this issue, which should be solved. This credit goes to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The Congress movement for the removal of the curse of untouchability was broadened. Gandhiji started the All-India Anti-Untouchability League in September 1932. Ambedkar suggested that there should be a majority of untouchables on its different committees. He expressed the view that the activities of the Anti-Untouchability League should be mainly directed to the economic, educational and social improvement of the Depressed Classes rather than to
the problem of temple-entry and inter-dining. He urged the League to launch a campaign for civic rights.

The Anti-Untouchability League was renamed 'Harijan Sevak Sangh,' and Gandhiji started a weekly called 'Harijan'. The new name was intended, it was said, to give new dignity to the untouchables and to impress on caste Hindus the need to give status and bring about their social amelioration.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh was humanitarian in its outlook. The exclusion of the Depressed Class leaders and workers from its executive gradually aroused suspicion in their minds as to its bonafides. According to them, the Sangh worked among Harijans as a branch of the Congress, without taking a different and independent line of action, and opposed political organizations of Ambedkar at every step. Gandhiji remarked that the welfare work of the Sangh meant a penance which the caste Hindu have to do for practising the sin of untouchability. Ambedkar emphasised the idea that the untouchables were not a sub-section of the Hindus, but a distinct element in the national life of India, as distinct and separate as the Muslims.

Ambedkar sent the following message to the first issue of 'Harijan' weekly started by Gandhiji. "I cannot give a message. The outcaste is a by-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. And nothing can emancipate outcaste except the destruction of the caste system." To this Gandhi replied, "Untouchability
is the product not of the caste system, but of the distinction of high and low, that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it. The attack on untouchability is an attack upon this high and lowness. The present joint fight is restricted only to the removal of untouchability.” Ambedkar’s views were endorsed by some Congress liberals and radicals including Nehru. Gandhiji wanted Hindu society to put an end to untouchability and revert to the original system of four varnas. What Gandhiji evidently wanted was not to abolish caste as such but to restore the ancient system under which there were only four large groups.29

It is observed here that Gandhi’s solution to the problem of untouchability is not rational. Ambedkar’s solutions are clear with scientific.

AWAY FROM HINDUISM

The social and religious struggle of the untouchables took a different turn after the Mahad satyagraha in 1927. In every Depressed Castes conference, held after that event, resolutions declaring renunciation of Hinduism were passed. At the Jalgaon Conference on May 29, 1929 a resolution was passed and called all members of the depressed classes to embrace any religion other than Hinduism. At the Yeola (Dist. Nasik, Maharashtra) Conference on October 13, 1935, Ambedkar declared that he would not die a Hindu.30 He visualised a separate community outside the Hindu fold carving out for them a future worthy of free citizens.
The reactions to his resolve of renunciation of Hinduism were varied. Gandhi remarked. ‘Religion is not a matter of barter.’\textsuperscript{31} The colleagues of Ambedkar, such as Sonlanki and Srinivasan expressed that untouchables should keep up their strength and fight for rights and principles. At the Maharashtra Untouchable Youth’s Conference on January 12 and 13, 1936 held under the Presidentship of Professor N.Shivraj, Ambedkar warned his people against the erroneous view that conversion would relieve them from hell and would lead them to the paradise of equality. They would be required to fight for liberty and equality. For sometime, Ambedkar favoured Sikhism because he thought that it meant remaining within the fold of Hindu culture. He said, ‘Conversion to Islam or Christianity will de-nationalise the Depressed Classes.’\textsuperscript{32} It was his conviction that the amelioration of the untouchables was not possible under Hinduism but could be brought about by conversion alone.

Anyhow Ambedkar decided to come out from the clutches of Hinduism. He did not say anything either to embrace Buddhism or not. One thing is very clear here that he did not die as a Hindu.

**INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY AND ITS ROLE**

The Depressed Classes were organized under the Depressed Classes Mission. The main features of the programme before the Depressed Classes were as under: to give vent to social grievances, raise a voice against the unjust treatment at the hands of caste Hindus, to make available educational...
facilities to depressed classes, ameliorate their economic conditions, etc. The Depressed Classes were not a political force in any form before the Montford Reforms of 1919. Representations on particular issues were made. There were no political demands. Ambedkar and Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conference. The Depressed Classes were not represented in any political conference before.

The year 1936 was drawing to a close, and the year 1937 was to witness the inauguration of the Provincial Autonomy under the Government of India Act, 1935. The coming elections aroused keen interest and contest. Every party was now busy making preparations for fighting the elections. The Indian National Congress was one of the biggest parties having a following in every province. There were all the Liberals, the Muslim League and others, but the untouchables had no political party of their own. At this critical time Ambedkar took the lead and formed the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) in August 1936.

The Independent Labour Party fought the General Elections in the old Bombay Presidency, because the Party functioned only in the Bombay Presidency. Out of the 15 seats assigned to the Scheduled Classes in Bombay Presidency, it captured 13 and in addition, it won 2 general seats. Ambedkar fought his election in Bombay and was elected after defeating the Congress candidate P.Balu (a Chamar), the famous cricketer. The Congress entered the legislatures with a view to wrecking the 1935 Constitution, but Ambedkar was determined to work it. The Independent
Labour Party drew its major following from the Mahars, because, as Ambedkar stated, they had a majority in the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar attempted to prove that the Congress did not represent the untouchables. The activities of Independent Labour Party were confined to Bombay presidency only. The candidates did not contest in the other part of the country. It was nothing but a regional part of Bombay presidency.

Ambedkar originally thought of organizing, exclusively, a party of the Depressed Classes. He realized, however, that the time for organizing communal parties was over. He had discussions with his friends and he thought that political cooperation between other classes and the Depressed Classes was a necessity. About the word, ‘Labour’, he clarified, “The Party was a labour organization in the sense that its programme was mainly to advance the welfare of the labouring classes.... The word ‘Labour’ is used instead of the words ‘Depressed Classes,’ because ‘Labour’ includes the ‘Depressed Classes’ as well.”

The Congress programme was based on the Karachi Congress Resolution (1931) on Fundamental Rights. Ambedkar assimilated these principles and formed his own programme which was comprehensive and radical. It was socialist in flavour, and its aim was ‘mainly to advance the welfare of the labouring masses.’ It revealed both Ambedkar’s attachment to the British system of parliamentary democracy, and his hope that the party would be more than a Scheduled Class group. It accepted the
principle of State management and State ownership of the people. The
programme was radical and ambitious.

The Congress formed Ministries in eight provinces in 1937. During its
tenure in office, the Independent Labour Party worked as an opposition
party in the Bombay Presidency. It vehemently criticized the policies of the
Congress regarding tenancy, the anti-strike Bill, the Khoti Bill etc.
Ambedkar’s speeches in the Bombay Council were well prepared, thought-
provoking and penetrating. The Independent Labour Party served as an
eye-opener and a guide to the people. There was no cooperation between
the Congress and the Independent Labour Party. It protested the Wardha
Scheme of Education. It failed to secure a base among the caste Hindu
workers.

Ambedkar had to fight Brahminism.* So he tried to organize separate
unions for the untouchable workers within the labour movement. He did
not build a systematic political organization. The Depressed Class people
had an emotional sense of identity.

*The religion of Brahminism is in fact a system of Varnashram. It was
supposed to be founded on the authority of the Vedas which were
considered infallible. There are four varnas in the hierarchy of the system
of the Varnashram with a fifth outside its pale. The first three castes, the
Brahmin, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya were recognized as twice-born
meaning that they went through upanayan—a ceremony of initiation.
The Industrial Disputes Bill, introduced in the Bombay Legislative Council (1938), was meant to make provision for the promotion of peaceful and amicable settlement of industrial disputes, by conciliation and arbitration. According to Ambedkar, a strike is nothing more than a breach of contract of service. This may be a civil wrong or a crime. He regarded it only a civil wrong and not a crime. According to him, a strike is simply another name for the right to freedom. He contended that the Industrial Disputes Bill was reducing workers to a state of slavery. He described the Bill as 'The Workers Civil Liberties Suspension Act.' This Bill was reactionary and retrograde and was described as a 'mockery of democracy'. Ambedkar called the Bill ‘bad, bloody and brutal.’ All the opposition parties opposed the Bill. To organize the support of the workers, a strike was declared on November 7, 1938. About 60 trade union organizations in Bombay gave the call for a general strike to protest against this Act. The Congress Socialists refused their support as they thought that Ambedkar was using the strike to strengthen his Party. The Communists supported the strike. Congress leaders arranged anti-strike meetings. It was the first successful strike launched against a popular Government by labour leaders in the teeth of opposition from the vested interests. It was an United front with the Communists. The Communist leaders were criticized for making common cause with 'communal' leaders like Ambedkar and Jamandas Mehta. This was the first and last occasion when Ambedkar and the Communists came together for joint action against the vested interests.
At the outbreak of the Second World War on September 1, 1939, the Government of India declared India a belligerent country. Different Indian leaders viewed it differently. The Indian Liberal leaders favoured unconditional help to Government in their war efforts. Jinnah stated that the British should create a sense of security and salvation in the minds of the Indian Muslims. On September 11, the Viceroy announced, that under the existing conditions, they had no choice but to hold the Federation in suspension. Jinnah was jubilant at this declaration. Ambedkar disagreed with those who held that England’s difficulty was India’s opportunity and added that Indians should not go in for new masters. According to him, India should remain within the British Commonwealth of Nations and strive to achieve the status of an equal partner therein. He reminded the British Government how they had agreed at the Round Table Conference that the defence of India was to be treated as the responsibility of India. On September 14, the Congress leaders declared that a free democratic India would gladly associate herself with the free nations for mutual defence and asked the British Government to declare their war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism, particularly with reference to India.

A statement was issued by seven leaders declaring that Government’s claim that the Congress was an all representative body, was a “fascist one and would prove a death blow to Indian democracy. The Viceroy of India had interviews with about 50 Indian Leaders, such as Gandhiji, Jinnah, Nehru, Savarkar, Patel, Rajendra Prased, Subhas Bose, Ambedkar and
Ambedkar met the Viceroy on October 9. He complained to him that the working of the Poona Pact had been far from satisfactory. In a statement, the Viceroy declared that at the end of the war the Government of India Act would be revised in consultation with all the leading parties in India and that no substantial political advance would be made without the consent of the minorities. He added that a consultative committee representing all parties would be formed during the war. The Working Committee of the Congress declared the Viceroy’s Statement to be wholly unsatisfactory. The Congress thought that any help to Great Britain would amount to endorsement of her imperial policy; so they asked all the Provincial Ministries to tender their resignations. Ambedkar had talks with Pandit Nehru in the third week of October. Immediately after this, discussions were held between Ambedkar and the Congress Leaders in Bombay. Mahadeo Desai had specially come from Wardha for these discussions.

The Congress Ministries introduced the War Resolution in all Provincial Assemblies. Ambedkar blamed the Bombay Ministry for not having tabled the demand in the name of the country, but in obedience to the Congress High Command. He said that he would not accept political dominance and remarked how the majority were denying liberty, equality and fraternity to the untouchables. He made clear that there was only a negligible number of members of the Depressed Classes in the administration. He said that he
would take precedence of untouchables' interests over the interests of the country.

The Congress Ministries resigned in the first week of November 1939, in obedience to the mandate of the Congress High Command. Jinnah appealed to his community to observe a 'Day of Deliverance' on December 22. Ambedkar joined Jinnah as he declared that the move was anti-Congress, and therefore purely political. Ambedkar and his Independent Labour Party also participated in the 'Day of Deliverance' function. In a statement to the press, he suggested the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate cases of tyranny and oppression by the Congress Ministries. Ambedkar did not participate in the activities of congress party; he was not at all a member of the congress party forever. Ambedkar never participated in freedom movement and also he was not imprisoned. So his contribution in the freedom movement is nil.
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