CHAPTER - VIII

POLITICAL ASCENDANCY
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The Question of Representation:

Despite a steady increase in popular control over Government, the claims of the Depressed Classes for adequate representation in the public bodies remained unfulfilled. It was alleged that not even a single seat was properly assigned to the Depressed Classes in the Local Boards and Municipal Councils. Even the few places given to members of the Depressed Classes were, when they became vacant due to the death of the incumbent (as in the case of Tiruvannamalai Municipal Council), or due to other causes (as in the case of Chingleput and Cuddalore Taluk Boards), were subsequently filled by members of other communities, especially caste Hindus. In many instances, it was stated that because of the non-availability of suitable persons, nominations were not made to several local bodies. It was stated on behalf of the Government in the Madras Legislative Council that there was no provision of law or
rule vesting the powers of recommending candidates for nomination in the hands of Presidents of the Union Boards. Such anomalies prompted the Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha to demand election instead of nomination. Section 48(1)(b) of the Madras District Municipalities Act, 1920 disqualified ladies from election to Municipal Councils. This applied to Depressed Classes also. Such claims were not even encouraged. Though popular representatives were admitted into the Legislative Councils as early as 1862, the Depressed Classes did not get an opportunity to serve on these Councils. The Madras Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha began making periodical representations to Government from its very inception about the problems of the Depressed Classes and their claims. The problem of the Depressed Classes came to the attention of a legislature for the first time when Sir Dadhaboy moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1916 asking for a survey of the problem. Consequently, the Government of India asked all the Provincial Governments to study and report. The replies received from the Provincial Governments revealed, for the first time, the magnitude of the problem of the Depressed Classes. In his quinquennial review of education for the period 1912-1917, Sir Henry Sharp, the
Education Commissioner, arrived at the figure of 31½ million Hindus as Untouchables. The figures collected by the Franchise Committee in 1919 gave the total as 42 millions. It was according to these figures that the Franchise Committee proceeded to apportion seats. The census enumeration of 1921 gave the figure of the Depressed Classes as 43 million for British India. This figure agreed with that given by J. Coatman in his book, "India in 1926-27". These figures were accepted by the Reforms Enquiry Committee of 1924. On 23rd February 1928, in the Legislative Assembly a resolution was moved by M.R. Jayakar, recommending the issue of instructions to Local Governments for providing special facilities for the education of the Depressed Classes and also for opening all public services to them, especially the police. Lala Lajpat Rai recommended the allotment of 5 crores of rupees for providing special educational facilities to the Depressed Classes. A dissenting note was sounded by the Government spokesman, G.S. Bajpai, who gave the total population of the Depressed Classes as 28½ millions. The accuracy of this figure was challenged and disproved later. In 1928, the Home Member of the Government of India estimated the total population of the Depressed Classes as 60 millions. This figure
tallied with the estimate of the census Commissioner, Martin. The following table proves that there were wide variations in the figures arrived at by different committees about the population of the Depressed Classes in the Provinces. (Please see page 267)

Muslims and the Question of Separate Electorates:

It is interesting to note that the grant of separate electorates to the Muslims in 1909, made the non-Brahmins move vigorous in their demand for special representation. As early as 1906, the Muslims met at Dacca and formed the 'All-India Muslim League' to safeguard their rights. The Muslims stated that they were for a Hindu-Muslim society but not for Hindu-Muslim unity in politics. The Muslims and Hindus did not hold identical political views. The Hindus were for the total expulsion of the British from the Indian soil and for the establishment of a democratic Government based on the principle of majority rule. The contention of the Muslims was that in such an eventuality, they who formed a minority would be nowhere in the political (Continued on page 268)
### Population of the Depressed Classes

*in millions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>44.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was stated in the Hartog Report that there were practically no Depressed Classes in Assam.

*(Vide page 218, Table XCI of the Report of the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission.)*
arena. Moreover, the Congress favoured the filling up of positions under Government by competitive examinations. This too did not find favour with the Muslims.

At the first anniversary of the All-India Muslim League held in Karachi on December 29, 1907, the League requested the Government of India to allot the Muslims at least four seats in the Central Legislature. This was conceded by the Government in 1909. Not satisfied with this, the Muslim League, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, demanded more seats in the Central and Provincial Legislatures. The League stated that if its demands were not conceded, it will not co-operate with the Congress. The Congress had no other alternative but to conclude a pact with the League in 1916, which came to be known as the 'Lucknow Pact'. As a result of this pact, Congress agreed to allot separate constituencies for the Muslims. Even in those provinces where there were no Muslims, separate constituencies were earmarked for them. The Lucknow Pact was immensely beneficial to the Muslims. Separate constituencies which numbered 25% of the total in 1909 rose to 50% later. Since seats in Bengal were allotted in proportion to population, the Muslims secured
75% of the total seats. By this arrangement, the Muslims got double the number of seats allotted to the Hindus. In the upper House, one-third of the members were Muslims. It was also agreed by the Lucknow Pact that if, in the legislature, a communal legislation was to be introduced, it has to be supported by three-fourths of the members of the concerned community. The provisions of the Lucknow Pact were incorporated in the Government of India Act of 1919.

The grant of separate electorates to the Muslims acted as a stimuli to the Depressed Classes to redouble their efforts at demanding communal representation for themselves. This cause of the Depressed Classes was championed by one of their leaders R. Srinivasan. The Government of India Act of 1919, made provisions for the grant of 10 nominated seats to the Depressed Classes in the Madras Legislature. The ten seats were filled from among the Parsiyās, Pallas, Valluvas, Mālās, Chakkilis, Tottiyan, Chōrumas and Holeyas.  

It was in 1919, the last year of the Morley Minto Councils, that Lord Willington, the then Governor of
Madras, nominated M.C. Rajah to his Council in Madras. M.C. Rajah was the first member of the Depressed Classes to be thus nominated in the whole of British India. In the Central Legislature, there was no member of the Depressed Classes till M.C. Rajah was nominated in 1927. The position in the local boards was no better. In many Local Boards the Depressed Classes had no representation at all.

Plea of the Depressed Classes for Separate Electorate:

In the opinion of the leaders of the Depressed Classes, the position of the Depressed Classes had to be safeguarded in the legislature and in public services. Under the Reform Act the number of Depressed Class members nominated to legislatures increased (Vide Table-XV). Many Councils contained members of the Depressed Classes to look after their interests. Increase in the number of members and change in the method of representation in consonance with democratic practice were demanded. It was customary for the Governor, on the advice of his
Executive Councillors, to nominate members of the Depressed Classes or these, in the opinion of these, in the opinion of the Governor, who might be expected to look after their interests. The Depressed Classes wanted a change in this as they were for the privilege of direct election. It was felt that the nominated member had no representative character and that he was prone to follow the lead of those who nominated him. Moreover, he was not eligible for the Ministry. In a predominantly elected chamber, the nominated members naturally tended to occupy the second place. Though there was no legal difference in the status of the members, their views did not carry weight, but their votes did. The defects in the system of nomination were not lost sight of by those who recommended it. The Franchise Committee and the Joint Parliamentary Committee also pointed out its defects.

One suggestion made by the representatives of the Depressed Classes before the Joint Conferences was nomination from a panel of members suggested by Communal Associations or Electoral Colleges. This method too had inherent defects.
Another suggestion was reservation of seats in Joint Electorates. This too harboured several defects. Hence, creation of separate electorates was suggested as the only means to ensure direct election and secure an adequate representation for the Depressed Classes. It was pointed out that the creation of separate electorates would perpetuate differences and hinder the growth of nationalism. But the proponents of separate electorates stated that the demand for the creation of such electorates was for only a short period and that the advantages secured by it counterbalanced the objections raised against it. Supporters of the move for the creation of separate electorates pointed out that similar electorates existed for the Muslims, the Sikhs, Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians, and Europeans. The Depressed Classes demanded the introduction of separate electorates to protect their interests. They felt that in the common electorate their interests did not receive representation. In such electorates the votes cast by the minority community were wasted. But in a separate electorate the minority community could feel secure. Political education would be rapid and the creation of self-confidence would render artificial protection unnecessary. In reply to the argument
that it was impossible to demarcate correctly the Depressed Classes in each Province, it was said that on the basis of lists of Depressed Classes prepared by the Provincial Governments constituencies could be carved out for them.

A suggestion that when the Depressed Classes are given separate electorates, there will be a scramble among the higher castes to be listed as "Depressed", was turned down as untenable by the leader of the Depressed Classes. It was pointed out that there were insufficient voters among the Depressed Classes and that since they were scattered, the creation of separate electorate would be next to impossible. It was also said that all Provincial Governments had not furnished data regarding the strength and location of the Depressed Classes. In the case of the Madras Presidency this complaint was untenable.

In 1930 there were 56,756 Depressed Class voters in the Madras Presidency. There were 63,626 voters among the Muhammadans, 24,860 among the Indian Christians and 2,816 among the Anglo-Indians. There were separate constituencies for the Muhammadans, Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians in the Presidency. The Muhammadans elected 13
representatives, the Indian Christians 7, and the Anglo-Indians one. At the same time the Depressed Classes, whose voting strength was 56,756, were denied the privilege of separate electorates.

In 1929 the Reforms Officer of the Government of Madras supplied the Indian Statutory Commission with a statement showing the total number of Depressed Class voters in each district of the Presidency. It is seen from this statement that the voting strength of the Depressed Classes in the districts of Cuddappah, South Kanara, Malabar and the Nilgiris was below 500; in Bellary, Coimbatore, Kurnool and Madras it was between 500 and 1,000; in Anantapur, North Arcot, Chittoor, West Godavari, Ramnad, Salem, Tanjore and Trichinopoly it was between 1,000 and 2,000; in South Arcot, Chingleput, Ganjam, Guntur, Krishna; Nellore and Tirunelvelly it was between 2,000 and 3,000; in Madura it was between 3,000 and 4,000; in East Godavari it was between 4,000 and 5,000; and in Vizagapatnam it was over 15,000. The total for the 26 districts was 56,756. It was contended that this figure could increase substantially in the event of an extension of the franchise for the Depressed Classes. It was
argued by the Depressed Classes that the Government of Madras would not face any administrative difficulty in the creation of separate electorates for them.

The Minority Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee signed by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Iyer, M.A. Jinnah and Dr. R.P. Paranjpe supported the formation of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes.

The Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha recommended the creation of separate electorates in the Madras Presidency for the Depressed Classes for ten years. In the case of the Madras Presidency, the Government itself had agreed that the creation of separate electorates was possible and that there was a sufficiently large number of voters making it possible to draw out separate constituencies. Moreover, the caste differences in the Presidency were acute than elsewhere and hence protection for the Depressed Classes was very essential. Since the ratio of voters to the total population of the Depressed Classes was very low (56,756 out of 6½ millions), it was recommended that the franchise should be lowered.
The following table (Please see next page) shows the representation of the Depressed Classes in the various legislatures as recommended by the Indian Central Committee in 1929.5

The plea for separate electorates for the Depressed Classes was turned down by the Simon Commission. The Simon Commission, whose official name was "The Indian Statutory Commission", was constituted to investigate the working condition of the Government of India Act of 1919 and reviewing its provisions. Eighteen Depressed Classes Associations gave evidence before the Commission and sixteen of them demanded separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan who represented the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conferences, reopened the question of separate electorates. But, the claim of the Depressed Classes for a separate electorate was unacceptable to the Indian National Congress and Mahatma Gandhi. The latter suggested a scheme of reservation of seats which was incorporated in the Poona Pact of September 26, 1932 and the same was incorporated in the Government of India Act of 1935. Thirty seats were assigned to the Depressed Classes in the Madras Legislative Assembly.
Representation of the Depressed Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Legislatures</th>
<th>Total population (in millions)</th>
<th>Population of Depressed Classes (in millions)</th>
<th>Total No. of seats allotted</th>
<th>Total No. of seats allotted for the Depressed Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Madras</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bombay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bengal</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. United Provinces</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. U.P. Second Chamber.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Punjab</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Central Provinces</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Assam</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>9**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Burma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. N.W. Frontier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Central Legislative Assembly</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>44(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Calculated on population basis.

** Includes seats for the Backward Classes and the indigenous Primitive Races.
The following were the number of seats which were allotted to the Depressed Classes as a consequence of the Poona Pact.\(^6\) (Please see next page).

Though the demand of the Depressed Classes for separate electorates was never realised, by 1930 in the Madras Legislative Council, representation was given to the Depressed Classes in proportion to their population. There were ten members of the Depressed Classes in the Council in 1930. Similarly, in the case of district boards, taluk boards and Municipalities also substantial improvement became evident during 1928-29. (Vide Table - XV).

**Demand for Political Representation**

The Round Table Conferences:

An obligation imposed on His Majesty's Government by the Government of India Act of 1919 was the appointment, at the end of ten years, of a Royal Commission to investigate and report on the working of the Constitution. In
Demands of Reservation for Depressed Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Hindus agreed to Prime Minister</th>
<th>Sanctioned by the allotment</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>United Province</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1928, a Royal Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon with no Indian as member. This was treated as an insult by the Congress and the liberals, who boycotted this commission. To assuage the feelings of opposition, His majesty's Government stated that after the completion of its work by the Commission, Indian representatives would be permitted to participate in a discussion. It was in accordance with this statement that the Round Table Conference was convened.

In 1929, M.C. Rajah wrote a note to the Report of the Indian Central Committee wherein he reiterated the demand of the Depressed Classes for adequate political representation. His note was quite exhaustive and gave relevant statistics. This note was taken into consideration by the Simon Commission. Similar notes were submitted from almost all Provinces of British India by the leaders of the Depressed Classes. From Bombay, it was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who submitted a similar note. The Government appointed M.C. Rajah as an associate member of the Simon Commission (Statutory Commission). The Simon Commission, in its report submitted to Government, stated that separate electorates may be created to uplift the Depressed Classes
and to provide them with constitutional safeguards and rights. The Commission observed:

"The failure to realise the success of democratic system of government depends on the majority securing the acquiescence of the minority is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of rapid progress towards self-government."

The Commission had this to say about the need for granting separate electorates for the Depressed Classes:

"Separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, means.... stigmatising each individual voter in the list and militates against the process which is already beginning and which needs to be in every way encouraged that of helping those who are depressed to rise in the social and economic scale. Our proposal, therefore, is that in all the eight provinces where shall be some reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes." 9

The report of the Simon Commission came under scathing attack by the members of the Depressed Classes in the Madras Legislative Council. V.I. Muniswamy Pillai, a member of the Depressed Classes, pointed out certain shortcomings in the report. It was stated in the report that District and Taluk Boards and Municipal Councils
were almost completely democratised and de-officialised. In fact, there were many Councils and Boards which had not been accorded representation. For the success of this scheme, proper safeguards must be provided so as to give the Depressed Classes a share in the political power of the land. Next, the Commission was not in favour of an extension of franchise to the Depressed Classes who then comprised only four per cent of the total electorate. It was pointed out that extension of franchise was the only way in which large numbers of Depressed Class people could be made to become members of Provincial and Imperial Legislatures. Another suggestion was for the recruitment of the Depressed Classes to services under Government according to population. It was pointed out that the Simon Commission did not recommend representation for agricultural labour, the bulk of whom were from the Depressed Classes. An appeal was also made to give, at the time of recruitment, special preference to the families of the Depressed Classes who had rendered meritorious service to the Crown. The question of proper representation to the Depressed Classes in the legislature was raised at the Round Table Conference held in London by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan.
The Round Table Conference was formally inaugurated on November 12, 1930 by H.M. King George V. There were eighty-nine members participating in the Conference, out of which sixteen were representatives of the three British Parties and the fifty-three Indian members represented various interests. The Congress Party was not represented. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur S. Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes. The Round Table Conference was an event of great significance for the Indians. It was a landmark in the history of the Depressed Classes, because it was the first time that the Depressed Classes were allowed to be represented separately by two delegates. The work of the Conference was distributed among nine committees. The most difficult task of finding a solution of the communal question was assigned to the Minorities Committee, whose Chairman was the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. The proceedings of the Minorities Committee are of great significance to the Depressed Classes.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan presented to the Conference a scheme of political safeguards for the
protection of the Depressed Classes in the future Constitution for India. They laid down certain terms and conditions to "consent to place themselves under a majority rule in a self-governing India". These terms and conditions were equal citizenship, free enjoyment of civic rights, protection against discrimination, adequate representation in the cabinet and special departmental care of the Depressed Classes. They suggested the incorporation of certain Fundamental Rights in the Constitution to guarantee the right to equality.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, speaking at the Conference, stated that the Depressed Classes were for replacing the existing (British) Government. R. Srinivasan pointed out that the Provincial Governments of Bombay, Madras and United Provinces have objected to Simon Commission's recommendations of joint electorates and certified candidates. It was the contention of R. Srinivasan, that in the matter of minority protection and the wishes of the minority should prevail. It must be admitted that both the representatives of the Depressed Classes, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan, made an impact upon the Conference by their forceful pleas and sound
arguments for a system of realistic political representation to the Depressed Classes.

In the report submitted to the Conference by the minorities sub-committee it was recorded that:

"the minorities and Depressed Classes were definite in their assertion that they could not consent to any self-governing constitution of India unless their demands were met in a reasonable manner." 11

The second Round Table Conference commenced its session in London on September 7, 1931. The Depressed Classes were again represented by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan. Mahatma Gandhi made his first speech at the Conference on September 15, 1931. He declared that the Congress represented all Indian interests and classes. According to him, the Congress represented the Depressed Classes because removal of untouchability was a plank on the political platform of the Congress. But he negatived the question of separate electorate for the Depressed Classes.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya said that had Government
utilised all resources and spent sufficient money on promoting primary education among the people, the words 'Depressed Classes' would have been a matter of history. To this, Dr. Ambedkar pointed out his own case and said that in spite of his education, he was still an Untouchable.

The Minorities Committee commenced its sittings on September 28, 1931. The Premier, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, stated that they were baffled by the problem of minorities in India. He stated that the delegates themselves had failed to agree on a solution to the problem. Mr. Aga Khan sought an adjournment stating that Mahatma Gandhi was meeting the Muslim delegates to arrive at a solution to the problem. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar made it clear that if the Depressed Classes were not going to be recognised in the future constitution of India, he would neither join that particular committee nor wholeheartedly support the proposition for adjournment.

On October 8, Gandhiji announced to the Minorities Committee his utter failure in finding a solution to the communal problem. He attributed the composition of the
Indian delegation as the cause for the failure and said that they were almost all not the elected representatives of the parties or groups whom they were presumed to represent, nor were those whose presence was absolutely necessary for an agreed solution. Gandhiji moved for an adjournment of the meeting since die. In the discussion that followed, everybody refused Gandhiji's allegation that the delegates were nominated by Government and did not represent the people.

Clarifying his position, Dr. Ambedkar said that he was the sole representative of his community and fully representing the claims of his community but not Mr. Gandhi or Congress. He pleaded that when power was transferred to Indians care should be taken, that transfer will be accompanied by such conditions and by such provisions that the power shall not fall into the hands of a clique, into the hands of an oligarchy or into the hands of a group of people, whether Muhammadans or Hindus; but that the solution shall be such that the power shall be shared by all communities in their respective proportion.\textsuperscript{12}

Acting on the suggestion of the Prime Minister the minorities met and produced a settlement which was
arrived at by the representatives of the Muhammadans, the Depressed Classes, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and the British community in India. When the Minorities Committee resumed its sittings on November 13, 1931, the Prime Minister asked "to treat this document as a document which is official to the records of this Committee." The document was known as the Minorities Pact.

Gandhiji was furious in his attack on everybody who had taken part in producing the Minorities Pact. He said:

"I would like to repeat what I have said before that, while the Congress will always accept any solution that may be acceptable to the Hindus, the Muhammadans and the Sikhs, Congress will be no party to the special electorates for any other minorities... I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of the Untouchables. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of Untouchables, their vote, and that I would top the poll... We do not want on our register and on our census Untouchables classified as a separate class.... I say that it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of the Untouchables of India... I will create a division in Hinduism... I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism."
It was crystal clear that no solution was possible on the question of Minorities before the adjournment of the Committee sine die. Thus, ended the efforts of the Minorities Committee to bring about a solution of the communal problem. Everybody felt that Gandhiji was the most determined enemy of the Untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar foretold that the Round Table Conference would end in a fiasco. In his opinion the responsibility for this was that of Gandhiji. The All-India Depressed Classes Conference, under the presidency of Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah, at its Gurgaon session, declared that Gandhiji was misrepresenting the case of the Untouchables and strongly denounced the claim made by Gandhiji that the Congress had been taking care of the Untouchables from the beginning and had championed the cause of Untouchables. The Conference also declared that no constitution would be acceptable to the Depressed Classes which did not include in it the system of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes.

Lothian Committee:

After the close of the second session of the Round
Table Conference, the Prime Minister thought it advisable to have the question of franchise examined by a committee. Accordingly, in December, 1931, he appointed a Committee with Lord Lothian as its Chairman. The Committee's main term of reference was to devise a system of franchise whereby:

"the legislatures to which responsibility is to be entrusted should be representative of the general mass of the population and that no important action of the community may lack the means of expressing its needs and its opinions."

The Committee started its work early in January 1932. The Prime Minister, in his letter of instruction to the Chairman requested to devise a method of separate representation for the Depressed Classes.

Poona Pact:

Gandhiji, soon after his return from England after attending the Round Table Conference, was arrested and lodged in the Yeravada Central Prison. While he was in prison, the decision of the Prime Minister on the Communal question was announced on August 17, 1938. This was known
as the 'Communal Decision by His Majesty's Government 1932' (Communal Award). According to this, the Government was for the creation of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. On August 18, 1932, Gandhiji wrote from the Yeravada Prison to the Prime Minister that he would fast unto death and that:

"this fast will cease if during its progress, the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise, no matter how wide it is."

The Prime Minister, in his reply of September 8, 1932, expressed surprise and regret at the decision of Gandhiji. The Prime Minister pointed out in this letter:

"As I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes should have joint electorate with other Hindus, because that is already provided, nor to maintain the unity of Hindus, which is also provided, but solely to prevent the Depressed Classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities to-day, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislatures which will have a dominating influence over their future."
On September 20, 1932, Gandhiji commenced his fast until death as a protest against the grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes.

This fast of Gandhiji raised a great problem. The problem was 'how to save Gandhiji's life?' The only way was to alter the Communal Award. The Prime Minister had made it clear that the British Cabinet would not withdraw it or alter it of its own, but that they were ready to substitute for it a formula that may be agreed upon by the caste Hindus and Untouchables. In the end, Dr. Ambedkar agreed to alter the Communal Award in a manner satisfactory to Gandhiji. This agreement is known as the Poona Pact. It was embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935. Accordingly, the Depressed Classes were given reservations.

In the Presidency of Madras, the Poona Pact did not receive whole-hearted approval from the leaders of the Depressed Classes. Resentment of the Depressed Classes to the provisions of the Poona Pact was expressed in the debates of the Madras Legislative Council. Taking part in the debate on the report of the Joint Committee regarding representation of the Depressed Classes, N. Sivaraj, a leader
of the Depressed Classes, tabled the following amendment.

"This Council is of the opinion that the scheme of representation for the Depressed Classes in the legislatures embodied in the report is injurious and not beneficial to the interests and welfare of the community and therefore requests His Majesty's Government through the Government of India to exempt Madras Province from the operation of the Communal Award as amended by the so-called Poona Pact and to restore the system of representation for the Depressed Classes proposed in the original Premier's award."

To impress upon the members of the Council the need for the acceptance of the amendment, N. Sivaraj said:

"Our justification for bringing forward this amendment is that our experience of the past and our fear of the future are such that we are obliged to bring to the notice of His Majesty's Government and to the notice of the Honourable members of this House the disappointment that we had within the years that passed between now and the days of the Poona Pact."

Though Gandhiji stated at the Round Table Conference that the Congress was championing the cause of the Depressed Classes, in practice what the Congress was to oppose the candidature of candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes. To substantiate this, N. Sivaraj said:
"Quite recently we had the sad spectacle of a Depressed Class candidate being opposed by the mighty Congress. We, on behalf of the Depressed Classes Federation, issued an appeal to the electorate of the Madras City constituency for supporting our candidate on the ground that he stood for the policy of supporting any Government in power and bringing constant pressure upon the Government from time to time to see that greater facilities and concessions were afforded to the Depressed Classes, irrespective of who constituted that Government... While we found that every other party ... thought it advisable to withdraw their candidates.... the Congress party alone would not do so." 

The Depressed Classes viewed the Poona Pact as nothing more than the addition of a panel system in a general electorate. Under this, the success of the Depressed Classes in winning an election would depend on the electorate. The amendment tabled by N. Sivaraj was accepted by the House. Thirtysight members voted for and twenty-one voted against the amendment.

On October, 16, 1932 a Special Conference of the Depressed Classes was held in Madras under the auspices of the Depressed Class Service Army. The following resolutions were adopted at the Conference.

1. "This Conference is of opinion that the communal award as given by the Secretary of State is more beneficial to the interests
of the Depressed Classes than 30 seats given to them according to the Poona Pact and request Their Excellencies the Governor and the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India that, if the principles enunciated in the Poona Pact were to be adhered to, the Panel of four mentioned in the Pact must be altered to two and seats for the Depressed Classes must be reserved in such division that may hereafter be formed in each district where the Depressed Classes are greatest in numbers."

2. "This conference is of opinion that in the future constitution single seat constituencies should be formed in each District and that the seats for the Depressed Classes must be reserved in one of such seats, where they are greatest in numbers."

3. "This conference do not approve of the formation of Harijana Associations now being recently formed at the instance of the Congressmen."

4. "This conference is of opinion that the temple entry to the Depressed Classes is of secondary importance and that the Depressed Classes should enter the temples only when they are invited into them by the Trustees and the caste Hindus."

Under the auspices of the Depressed Class Service Army a mass meeting of the Depressed Classes was held on October 23, 1932 at Madras to express misgivings about the provisions of the Poona Pact. One of the resolutions adopted at this meeting read:
"This Conference deplores that no serious endeavour is made to carry into practical operation the terms of the Poona agreement for removal of untouchability and no anti-touchable leagues, worth the name, are formed in Southern India with the untouchables in it and whereas reports of conferences of Hindus held at Bezwada, Tanjore, Kumbakonam, Madura and Tirupati unmistakably point to the determination of the Hindus to break the agreement in the most important condition of removal of untouchability and whereas the Untouchables apprehend the political aspect also will be nullified in actual working, this Conference appeals to Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar to modify the Poona Agreement."

On November 30, 1932, Gandhiji addressed a letter to T. Chinniah, the Secretary of the All India Adi-Dravida Mahajana Sabha wherein he expressed his opinion in favour of the Yerawada Pact and his opposition to the idea of special electorates (Vide Appendix - IV). Similar views were expressed by Gandhiji in another letter which he addressed to T. Chinniah on December 12, 1932 (Vide Appendix - V). Swamy Sahajananda, M.L.C., in a statement issued on January 31, 1935, countered the arguments of N. Sivaraj. He expressed his full support to the Poona Pact and to the views of Gandhiji. M. C. Rajah, termed the Poona Pact as the charter of freedom for the Depressed Classes and
strongly condemned the attitude and speech of N. Sivaraj. It must be pointed out here that M.C. Rajah, in the year 1932, had concluded a pact with Dr. Moonje, a Congress Leader, and telegraphically sent the details of this pact to the British Premier. The main point in this pact was joint electorates with reserved seats for the Depressed Classes. It is to be remembered that before this volte face, M.C. Rajah fully supported the demand of Dr. Ambedkar for separate electorates. At every annual session of the Depressed Classes Association, resolutions have been passed demanding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. As a matter of fact, in 1932, a resolution demanding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes was passed under the Chairmanship of M.C. Rajah. It is perplexing as to how this change came over Rajah. He was the only member of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature then and his omission from the Round Table Conference might have irked him.

Under the circumstances, there is nothing surprising in the attitude of M.C. Rajah towards N. Sivaraj and others who wanted separate electorates.
The doubts raised by N. Sivaraj and others about the benefit of the Poona Pact to the Depressed Classes was borne out by the results of the Madras Legislative Council election in January 1935. Before the election, J. Sivashanmugam Pillai and M.C. Rajah approached the Congress stalwart, Sathyamurthy and requested him not to field any congress candidate as the Depressed Classes wanted to field J. Sivashanmugam Pillai as their candidate. Sathymurthy said that in the event of the candidate of the Depressed Classes subscribing to the Congress policy, the Congress would extend its support. J. Sivashanmugam Pillai was not for joining the Congress and hence G. Muniswamy Pillai contested the election as the representative of the Depressed Classes. The Congress fielded Dr. Mallayya as its candidate. In the elections, out of 22,635 votes only 5,234 were polled. Dr. Mallayya secured 4,065 and Muniswamy Pillai polled 1,026 votes, and 133 votes were invalid. This election clearly demonstrated the attitude of the caste Hindu electorate and the real nature of the Poona Pact.

A feeling that was becoming widespread in the Presidency of Madras among the Depressed Classes was about
the usefulness of the Poona Pact in providing them adequate representation in the legislatures. It was also felt that the Poona Pact was in fact forced on the Depressed Classes. No wonder then that whatever charm this pact had, wore off as years rolled by and subsequent developments showed a picture to the contrary.

Government of India Act, 1935:

The Government of India Act of 1935, introduced provincial autonomy in six Governor's provinces, including Madras. Dyarchy was abolished and provincial government was vested in a Council of Ministers responsible to a bicameral legislature. The Governor remained the titular head of the provincial administration. In Madras, there were to be ten ministers in the Council of Ministers. A new provincial Legislative Assembly having 215 elective seats was created. Nominations were abolished and the Depressed Classes and minorities were represented through reserved seats. Sixty-nine seats were filled by special electorates of Muslims, Christians, Landholders, Chamber of Commerce, registered graduates of the University, women,
and labour. Backward or Scheduled Castes were allotted reserved seats in general constituencies. Franchise was considerably widened. In the rural areas the qualification for voting was reduced from a payment of ten rupees as land revenue to any amount. As a result, the electorate extended from roughly one and a half millions to roughly six and a quarter millions. The provincial Legislative Council, which was the second chamber, had forty-six members who were elected on a narrower franchise. The first elections under the Act of 1935, were scheduled for February 1937.

Justice Party and the Depressed Classes:

In the Presidency of Madras, in the first elections held to the Legislative Council under the Act of 1919, the Justice Party secured a big majority. In the second election also, the Justice Party continued to have a majority but the opposition consisted of both Brahmans and non-Brahmins. These non-Brahmins were the members of the Swarajist Party, a dissident Congress groups. By 1923, there developed a
split among the non-Brāhmīns. The split was between those who supported the leadership of the Justice Party and those who opposed it. In the third elections, the Swarajists secured 40 seats while the Justice Party could get only 20. The end of the Justice Party came in 1937 when it won only 12 seats out of 86 contested in a House of 215 members. Though the Justice Party declined at the polls, its ideology survived.

The Justice Party, as soon as it came to power, became the champion of caste-Hindus. It served its connections with the Untouchable groups. After assuming power it became entirely a caste Hindu Party. Earlier, under the leadership of Dr. T.M. Nāir Kandaswamy Chetty, and Natesa Mudaliar, the party had given opportunity atleast to the leaders of the Depressed Classes to express their opinion about Justice policy. But under the leadership of Thēgaraya Chetty and the Rājā of Panagal, the allegiance of Justicites became more pronounced to their own caste Hindu groups. By and by, the Depressed Classes were eliminated from the ranks of the party. The caste feeling in the party was so intense that it made the party oppose the Government of Madras in the question of labour disputes.
A series of violent incidents, locally known as 'Puliyanthōppu troubles' snapped the bond between the caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes. On May 11, 1921, the textile workers both caste Hindus and Depressed Classes, employed in the Carnatic Mills in Madras, went on strike. The workers of Buckingham Mills followed suit on June 20. The workers belonging to the Depressed Classes were hastily persuaded to return to work. But the caste Hindus were determined to continue the strike and they turned on the Depressed Classes. Police escorted the Depressed Class workers to the Mills and the strike was broken. In retaliation several huts of the Depressed Class workers were burnt down. Workers and innocent wayfarers were injured in clashes in which even swords and knives were used. Police resorted to shooting to quell the riot. In the shooting which took place on 28-8-1921, six men and one woman were killed and thirty were injured. All of them were caste Hindus. The Labour Commissioner appointed by the Government of Madras was accused by the caste Hindus as protecting the Depressed Classes and supporting the police. On September 7, 'Justice' said:

"Public opinion ..... holds (that) the present
deplorable state of affairs has been brought about partly at all events by the undue pampering of the Ādi-Dravidas by the officials of the Labour Department and partly by the, perhaps unconscious, encouragement given to them by a few police officers."23

The party tried to wash away the Ādi-Dravidas from the city of Madras.

The Justice Party felt that Government was conno-
ing the acts of violence unleashed against the caste Hindus. The Government dismissed a report on the situation by Theagaraya Chetty, Muhammed Usman, Ramaswāmy Mudaliar and Natēsa Mudaliar. Government viewed this report as no more than:

"reproduction of fears and anxieties expressed to the signatories by the members of the caste community in the Mill area .... The Government can hardly accept these apprehensions as proof that the responsibility for the disturbances rests on one side only. The history of these troubles is sufficient to rebut any such assumption and the Government are well aware that feelings of anxiety and terror are widespread in the Ādi-Dravida community in the city."

Sir Lionel Davidson, the Home Member, defended the position of Government and said, "it is no longer merely a labour
dispute confined to strikers and non-strikers, but a faction fight inflamed by caste prejudices. The Depressed Classes were in total agreement with the views of the Government.

M.C. Rajah, the principal representative of the Depressed Classes in the Legislative Council, said that the Untouchables would be obliged to sever their connection with the Justice Party. He stated in the Council:

"I am astonished.... at a section of the party which claims to stand for the Depressed and oppressed classes countenancing the persecution and the reign of terror to which my community is at present subjected. I do not believe that this section voiced the real opinion or attitude of the Council nor of the non-Brahmin Party throughout the Presidency. The position of my community is simply this. We believe at present the views of Mr. Thanikachalal Chettiar that the Government are siding(with) the Adi-Dravidas is not shared by the members of the wide non-Brahmin party in this country. If, however, they are, we have no option but to cut ourselves aloof from that party and in doing so, I appeal with all the force at my command to all the moderate members of this House, to the non-Brahmins, the Brahmins and the Europeans alike in this Council to say that this campaign to excite public feeling against my community, to deprive them of their legitimate rights and to reduce them once more to the political, social and economic bondage of ages, shall cease."
Shortly after this, the Depressed Classes led by M.C. Rajah, left the Justice Party. In mid-1923, at the second South India Adi-Dravida Conference at Kövilpatti in Tinnevely District, M.C. Rajah said that the animosity of the Justice Party towards the Depressed Classes was evident long before the Puliyanthōppu troubles. He said:

"It is the high-handed poisonous action of members of a party, who after inflicting all known and unknown injury on our community, shed Crocodile tears and pose as friends of the Depressed Classes."

The attitude of the Justice Party towards the Depressed Classes brings to light two significant facts. First, the party was unwilling to give any share to the Depressed Classes in the formulation of the party's policies. This means that the party wanted to keep the Depressed Classes at a distance while positions were kept open to the caste Hindus by whom it was intended to supplant the Brāhmīns. Second, after election to power, the party changed from the idealistic reform association to "a mere political mechanism, a broker for Government jobs for a select non-Brāhman caste Hindus."
As a sequel to the Puliyanthoppu troubles, the Government, in 1938, sought the abolition of the Labour Department and the transfer of its functions to the Revenue Department.

In 1929-1930, the Government provided Rs.16 lakhs for ameliorative work, in 1930-'31 it was Rs.17 lakhs and in 1931-32 it was Rs.14,37,800. In the year 1931-'32, Government proposed to surrender Rs.2,76,500. This worked out to 19 per cent of the total grant while other Departments were effecting only 8 per cent cut in their budgeted grant.

The transfer of the functions of the Labour Department to the Revenue Board goes to show the want of sincerity on the part of the Justice Party in alleviating the sufferings of the Depressed Classes and in raising them up to the level of the rest of the society. If this Party had been sincere towards the cause of the Depressed Classes, within the two decades during which it was in power, it could have done an immense amount of work in uplifting the Depressed Classes. The lack of sincerity on the part of the Party prevented it from implementing
meaningful social legislation for the betterment of the Depressed Classes. A cursory glance at the work of the Justice Party while in power would testify to this view.

The first and foremost cause for the downfall of the Justice Party was that it, by its own actions, forfeited the confidence and good will of the vast majority of the downtrodden Depressed Classes. Once the party came to power, it prostituted its position for providing jobs for caste Hindus. The party had no broad policy, no broad measures, that benefitted the masses of its followers the peasants and labourers who were its main support. Those men who were given jobs by the party, when put into the saddle, forgot the class from which they came and became as insolent and arrogant as any foreigner. No wonder that the Justice Party lost its moorings.27

Congress Party and the

Depressed Classes:

As per the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935 the Depressed Classes were eligible for thirty
elective seats in the Legislative Assembly. But in the elections only sixteen candidates of these classes were successful. The Congress Party fielded twelve candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes and all of them were returned. The Justice Party set up thirteen candidates of this category and only two were successful. None of the six Depressed Classes candidates fielded by the people's Party was successful. From among the ten candidates of the Depressed Classes who contested as independents, only two were elected. Out of the forty-four candidates, only sixteen were successful. From these statistics it may be inferred that joint electorates were not beneficial to the Depressed Classes in that they failed to secure to these people even the statutory minimum of representation.

In July 1937, C. Rājagopālaḥari became the Chief Minister and the other members of his cabinet were Dr. P. Subbaroyan, Dr. T. T. S. Rajan, V. I. Muniswāmi Pillai (Depressed Class), V. V. Giri, Yakub Hassan, S. Ramanathan, K. Raman Menon, B. Gopal Reddi and T. Prakasam. This Ministry, along with the Congress Ministries in other provinces, tendered its resignation in 1939.
Before quitting office, the Ministry managed to do some good work. In 1938 and 1939 the Malabar Temple Entry Act and a General Temple Entry Act were passed by the Assembly. The Government stated that it was its policy to remove disabilities imposed by custom or usage on certain sections of Hindus against entry into Hindu temples. In 1947, "A Bill to Authorise Entry into Hindu Temples in the Province of Madras and the Offer of Worship Therein by certain classes of Hindus who by custom or usage are excluded from such Entry and Worship" was introduced in the Madras Legislative Assembly by the Honourable Minister, Dr. T.S.S. Rājan. The bill received widespread support from the members of the House. V.I. Muniswāmy Pillai, a member of the Depressed Classes, viewed the day on which the bill was introduced as "a red-letter day in the annals of Harijan uplift." The Bill was passed into law with loud acclamation.

Depressed Classes and the

Freedom Struggle:

It was alleged by the Congress that the Depressed
Classes, being the tools of imperialism, did not join the 'Fight for Freedom'. The 'Fight for Freedom' waged by the Congress had included non-co-operation, boycott, civil disobedience and fast. Even the Muslim, excepting for the short-lived Khilafat agitation, did not participate in the 'Fight for Freedom'. And the Indian Christians also did not participate.

The reasons for the non-participation of the Depressed Classes in the 'Fight for Freedom' are outlined by Dr. Ambedkar:

"The Untouchables are not opposed to freedom from British Imperialism. But they refuse to be content with mere freedom from British Imperialism. What they insist upon is that free India is not enough. Free India should be made safe for democracy. In India there are minority communities pitted against a Hindu communal majority. If no provisions are made in the Constitution to cut the fangs of the Hindu communal majority, India will not be safe for democracy. The Untouchables therefore insist on designing a constitution which will take note of the special circumstances of India and contain safeguards which will prevent this Hindu communal majority in Indian Society from getting the Untouchables and which will invest the Untouchables with at least a modicum of political power to prevent their suppression and exploitation and to enable them at least to hold their own in their struggle for existence against the communal majority. In short, what the Untouchables want are safeguards in the constitution itself which will prevent the tyranny of Hindu Communal majority from coming into being."
Many people branded Dr. Ambedkar as an anti-nationalist and even as a traitor. Such allegations usually emanated from Congress sources. In his speech at the first session of the Round Table Conference, Dr. Ambedkar made it crystal clear that he was a patriotic nationalist. He said:

"As an Indian interested in the growth of Indian nationalism, I must make it plain that I am a strong believer in the unitary form of government and the thought of disturbing it, I must confess, does not please me very much. This unitary government has been the most potent influence in the building up of the Indian nation. That process of unification which has been the result of a unified system of Government has not been completed and I should be loathe to withdraw this most powerful stimulus in the formative period and before it has worked out its end." 28

On August 14, 1932, at a meeting between Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, the latter said:

"from the reports that have reached me of your work at the Round Table Conference, I know you are a patriot of sterling worth." 29

In spite of the allegations levelled against them, the fact remains that a number of men belonging to the
Depressed Classes in the Presidency of Madras actively participated in the freedom struggle and courted arrest. It is disconcerting to note that even in jails these unfortunate freedom fighters were segregated from the rest and assigned to do all the menial jobs. Among the office-bearers of the Pradesh Congress Committee in Madras from 1914 until 1922 there was domination by Brāhmins, both Tamil and Telugu. From 1922 onwards non-Brāhmin castes like Vellalās and Chettis began to register ascendancy. Until 1926-'27 there were none from among the Depressed Classes in the office-bearers of the Congress in the Presidency. It was in 1926-'27 that one M. Jayavelu from Madras became an A.I.C.C. Member, and K. Kamarej, a Nadar by community in 1931-'32. The Congress was willing to accommodate Muslim in its ranks but not the Depressed Classes. May be the Congress-men were more concerned about electoral adjustments which were possible with the Muslim than with identifying themselves with the Depressed Classes.

Depressed Classes and the Constitution of India:

When the Second World War was at its fiery peak
and when Japan was marching towards India, the British Government was more anxious to take \& consolidate the support of India to its cause. With this view in mind the British Government sent Sir, Stafford Cripps to India in 1942 with its proposals for discussion with the Indian Leaders. Dr. Ambedkar accompanied by M.C. Rajah interviewed Cripps on March 30, 1942. The object of the British Government was the creation of a new Indian Union which will constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom. It was proposed to frame new Constitution for India immediately upon cessation of hostilities. Regarding the composition of the constitution making body, the proposals of Cripps said, "Immediately upon the result being known or provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the lower House of Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the Constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college." Objecting to the proposals announced by Gripps, Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that the proposals were meant to win over the Congress and the Muslim and that the
Depressed Classes were offered nothing by the proposals. Dr. Ambedkar, after discussing the matter with the provincial leaders of the Depressed Classes, rejected the proposals of Cripps. He felt that the proposals were calculated to do greater harm to the Depressed Classes as they bound them hand and foot to the Hindu Rule.

Sir, Stafford Cripps was asked to convey to His Majesty's Government that the Depressed Classes would look upon it as a breach of faith if the British Government decided to force upon them a constitution to which they did not give their consent. Dr. Ambedkar described the attitude of the British Government to the Depressed Classes as a 'Munich Mentality', of trying to save one-self by sacrificing other.

"He further stated that the Cripps proposal had distinctly given to the League the right to create Pakistan. According to him the proposals were the result of a loss of nerve and of a sense of principle, a breach of faith and a sudden 'volte-face'." 32

The All India Depressed Classes Conference which met at Nagpur on July 18 and 19, 1942 was presided over by N. Sivaraj of Madras. At the Conference, Dr. Ambedkar
reviewed the situation in reference to the claims of the Depressed Classes from the days of the Round Table Conference to the Cripps proposals. He described the Cripps proposals as a great betrayal of the Depressed Classes. At this conference the formation of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation was announced. (It was from Nagpur that Dr. Ambedkar telegraphically took charge of the Labour Portfolio on the morning of July 20, 1942).

On September 23, 1944 the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, at Madras under the Presidentship of N. Sivaraj, passed number of resolutions outlining the safeguards for the Untouchables in the new Constitution. It was stated in the first resolution that:

"the Scheduled Castes are a distinct and separate element in the national life of India and that they are a religious minority in a sense for more real than the Sikhs and Muslims can be and within the meaning of the Cripps proposals."

By another resolution it was pointed out that no Constitution shall be acceptable to the Scheduled Castes if it has not the consent of the Scheduled Castes and unless it
recognises the Scheduled Castes as a distinct and separate element. It was also resolved that provision should be made in the Constitution for earmarking a definite sum in the budgets of the Provincial and Central Governments for the Secondary, University and Advanced Education of the Scheduled Castes. Representation for the Scheduled Castes was sought in the Legislatures, in the Executive, in Municipalities and Local Boards, in the public services and in Public Service Commissions. Another resolution strongly disapproved the secret negotiation between Gandhiji and Jinnah for a settlement between the Hindus and Muslims. It declared, :

"the committee expresses its emphatic opinion that the proper procedure to settle the communal question, which would give a sense of security and ensure fair and equal treatment to all is to discuss the demands put forth by each interest in public and in the presence of and with the representatives of other interests."

Regarding representation in the Legislatures and in the Executive, the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation stated in categorical and emphatic terms that the Scheduled Castes will not tolerate any discrimination between one community and another in
the matter of representation and will insist upon their claim for seats being judged in the same manner and by same principles that may be made applicable to the claims of the Muslim Community.

A resolution regarding electorates read:

"the experience of the last elections held under the Government of India Act has proved that the system of joint electorates has deprived the Scheduled Castes of the right to send true and effective representatives to the Legislatures and has given to the Hindu majority the virtual right to nominate members of the Scheduled Castes who are prepared to be the tools of the Hindu majority."

The Working Committee demanded the establishment of a separate electorate for the Scheduled Caste.

"The Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation unanimously resolves that it places its complete confidence in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and authorises him to negotiate on its behalf and on behalf of Scheduled Castes with other political parties or their leaders as and when necessary arises."

Thus, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar came to be the leader and sole representative of the Depressed Classes of India.
Under his leadership the Depressed Classes found their way of 'Political Ascendency' and it still shines alone and gaining their strength in their political arena.

Conclusion:

In the wake of awakening came the demand for adequate political representation. This demand was spearheaded by the leaders of the Depressed Classes, foremost among whom shone Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. To substantiate their legitimate claims, the Depressed Classes cited the question of separate electorates for the Muslims. As days went by, the demand for separate electorate gained momentum. This plea was very forcibly and effectively put forth by the leader of the Depressed Classes, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference held in London.

The Poona Pact had significant impact on the Depressed Classes because when it was put into operation it believed the fonc hopes of its creators, Gandhi. The Justice Party which was an offshoot of the Non-Brahmin movement of the Presidency, failed to do anything good
to the Depressed Classes. The performance of the Congress Party par with that of the Justice Party. When India became a Republic under a new Constitution, many safeguards were incorporated in its provisions to help the Depressed Classes in their onward march to equality and prosperity.
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25. Ibid., p.1013.
26. M.C. Rajah, 'The Oppressed Hindus', p.64.
31. Ibid.

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