CHAPTER TWO

DR. AMBEDKAR IN THE MOVEMENT OF WOMEN LIBERATION
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar -
A Biographical Sketch:

Babasaheb's ancestral village was Ambadave near Dapoli in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra.

Maloji, Babasaheb's grandfather was a retired military-man. Maloji recruited his son Ramji also in the British army in 1866, under the command of Subhedar-Major Laxman Murbadkar. Ramji was promoted in course of time as Subhedar, and he was head-master of an army normal school. The Murbadkars, too, were a family of army-men, belonging to the village of Murbad in the Thane district, near Bombay. Babasaheb's mother Bhimabai (1854-96) belonged to the well-to-do family of the Murbadkars. Subhedar Ramji had fourteen children of whom seven died young. Of the remaining were Babasaheb's brothers Balram and Anandrao and his sisters Ganga, Rama and Tulsa.

Babasaheb alias Bhimrao was affectionately called as Bhiva by other family members. He was the fourteenth son of Subhedar Ramji. Bhimrao was born on 14 April 1891 at Mhow (Military Headquarters of war) near Indore.
Ramabai was married to Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1906, when she was barely 10 years of age, and he was hardly 15 years old.

Gopal Krishna (alias Gopal Baba) Walangkar (1840-1900 A.D.) was born at Ravdal (near Mahad, in the present Raigad district). He was related to Ramabai Ambedkar. He, too, was an army man having retired from the army as Havaldar, in 1886, and settled down at Dapoli. He came under the dynamic influence of Jotiba Phooley. Gopal Baba was a pioneer of the movement for the emancipation of the untouchables in the nineteenth century. He founded the Anarya Dosh Parihar Samaj (society for the removal of evils among the non-Aryans), in 1886, and in 1889 he published his monthly Vital Vidhvansak (Destroyer of Brahmanical Ceremonial pollution) which was the first ever journal of the 'Untouchables'. Subsequently in 1889 he published his book entitled Vital Vidvan-sa (Annihilation of Ceremonial Pollution). Gopal Baba died at Ravdal in 1909. He was the 'link' between Jotiba Phooley and Dr. Ambedkar in the crusade against social inequality and injustice.

Shivram Janaba Kamble (1875-1941) of Pune was a contemporary of Mahatma Jotiba Phooley, Subhedar
Major Ramji Sakpal and Gopalbaba Walangkar. Shivram Janba Kamble started in 1903 the fortnightly Somavanshiya Mitra in which he launched an attack on the evil practices prevalent in the Mahar community. He convened two conferences of Mahars the first at Saswad in 1903, and the second at Jejuri in 1910 and sent memorials to the Government and the British Parliament, seeking redressal of the wrongs done to the untouchables by Kitchener's policy of banning recruitment of 'Untouchables' in army.

In the fitness of things, teachers played a crucial role in the Babasaheb's early development. When he was at school in Satara a teacher named Ambedkar changed Bhimrao's surname from Ambavadekar to Ambedkar.²

Subsequently, Krishnaji Arjun alias Dada Keluskar (1860-1934) sometime head-master of the Wilson High School, Bombay, developed an affection for young Bhimrao. The two used to meet frequently in the evenings at the Charni Road public garden where they spent their time reading books. Dada Keluskar's curiosity about the young lad grew, and he got himself acquainted with the boy. Himself a lover of books Dada had a growing collection of books in his personal library. Keluskar advised young Bhimrao in the matter of reading books systematically, and was instrumental in developing
in Bhimrao a passion for reading.  

It was Dada Keluskar who (on the occasion of Bhimrao Ambedkar's success in the Matriculation examination) presented the promising young student with a copy of 'Bhagwan Gautam Buddhache Charitra' (Life of the blessed Gautam the Lord Buddha) written by Dada Keluskar himself in 1898. Again, it was Dada Keluskar who introduced the industrious student, Bhimrao, to the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda and it was through his mediation that Ambedkar was awarded a Baroda State Scholarship for higher education at the Columbia University, U.S.A.

At the Columbia University, Professor John Dewey (1859-1952), the eminent American philosopher and educationist, was Ambedkar's teacher. Babasaheb acknowledges his debt to Dr. John Dewey in these words: "Professor John Dewey who was my teacher, and to whom I owe so much ..." Dr. Ambedkar entered the Columbia University in 1913, and became Dr. Dewey's student. "John Dewey", says Bertrand Russell in 1946, "is generally admitted to be the leading living philosopher of America. He has had a profound influence, not only among philosophers, but on students of the educational aesthetics, and political theory. He is a man of the highest character, liberal in outlook, generous and kind in personal relations,
indefatigable in work". 5

Professor Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman (1861-1939) was another notable teacher at the Columbia University. He was Ambedkar's teacher at Columbia University and was an expert on public finance. Dr. Ambedkar speaks thus of him, "My debt to Prof. Seligman, my teacher at Columbia University, is of course immense, for from him I learned my first lessons in the theory of Public Finance". Professor Seligman, on his part, writes thus about his student Ambedkar, in his Foreword to Dr. Ambedkar's doctoral thesis: The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India' ,

The problem discussed by Mr Ambedkar in his excellent dissertation is one that is arousing interest in all parts of the world. The values of Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to the discussion lie in the objective recitation of the facts and the impartial analysis of the interesting development that has taken place in his native country. The lessons are applicable to other countries as well; nowhere, to my knowledge, has such a detailed study of the underlying principles been made.

Further, in his letter dated May 23, 1916 to Sidney Webb of England Professor Seligman writes, "He (B.R. Ambedkar) is an excellent student and a nice fellow, moderate, broad, and able, and I know that you will
be glad to be of service to him in the prosecution of his studies.

Professor Goldenweiser was Ambedkar's teacher at Columbia University in whose Anthropological Seminar he read his well-known paper on Castes in India in 1916.

Subsequently, when Dr. Ambedkar joined the London School of Economics and Political Science, one of his professors was Edwin Cannon (1861-1935). Cannan taught at the London School of Economics from 1895 to 1926. Dr. Ambedkar acknowledges his debt to Professor Cannan in these words in the Preface to his 'Problem of the Rupee', his thesis for Doctor of Science of the London University: "I cannot conclude this Preface without acknowledging my deep sense of gratitude to my teacher Prof. Edwin Cannon of the University of London (School of Economics)". Another eminent economist needs to be mentioned here, namely, John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). Keynes was the author of Indian Currency and Finance acclaimed to be a masterly analysis of India's Financial structure, and of the country's Gold exchange standard. The book so impressed the authorities that he was asked to become a member of the Royal Commission on Indian Currency set up in 1913. And his work was so mature, so exhaustive that the Chairman, Sir Austin Chamberlain handsomely acknowledged that though he
was the Chairman, the credit for the report should go entirely to Keynes.  

We now come to Bertrand Russell (1872-1970). Bertrand Russell was "one of the most widely varied and persistently influential intellects of the twentieth century". That is how the Encyclopaedia Britannica describes him. Dr. Ambedkar came in contact with Bertrand Russell's intellectual powers on reading his principles of social reconstruction. Bertrand Russell and Dr. Ambedkar both had one common object in view, namely, the reconstruction of society. The problem with Bertrand Russell was of course, most unlike that with Dr. Ambedkar. Bertrand Russell passionately desired elimination of war by encouragement of impulses promoting growth. Dr. Ambedkar passionately described the annihilation of caste and the abolition of untouchability, liberty of Indian women and throughout his life he battled against odds for the reconstruction of Indian society on the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. These are the principles he built into the constitution of India, and these are the very principles underlying the principle of morality which he advocated.  

It seems Dr. Ambedkar was a student of Professor Harold Joseph Laski (1893-1950), the eminent political scientist. Professor Laski taught political science
at the London School of Economics and Political Science from 1920 to 1950 and his teachings impressed a future generation of leaders from Africa and Asia. When Dr. Ambedkar read his paper on responsibilities of a responsible Government in India, before the Students Union in 1923, Professor Harold Joseph Laski opined that the thoughts expressed in the paper were frankly of a revolutionary nature.

The year 1923 was again a very important year in Dr. Ambedkar's career, for it was in that year that he was called to the Bar.

Still in his twenties, he gave evidence of vital importance before the Franchise Committee constituted under Lord Southborough, as a step towards the forthcoming Constitutional Reform Act of 1919. He pleaded for communal representation saying "Communal representation is a device to ward off the evil effects of the divisions". By the words "evil effects of the divisions", he clearly meant the evil effect of caste and untouchability. He further stated that the interests of the untouchables "can be represented by the untouchables alone. They are distinctly their own interests and none else can truly voice them". In this manner, Dr. Ambedkar contradicted at the appropriate moment, the harmful proposal of Vithal Ramji Shinde had the audacity to
propagate that instead of having representative of untouchables from amongst themselves, their interests would be better safeguarded by caste-Hindus. It was this dangerous move on the part of the Savarna Hindus, that Dr. Ambedkar opposed and his efforts were rewarded.

The Government of India Act 1919 was passed by the British Parliament in December 1919, and subsequently Dnyandev Dhruvank Gholap was nominated from amongst the Depressed Classes, to represent them in the Bombay legislative Council, for a period of three years from January 1920. Later on, in December 1923, Dnyandeo Dhruvank Gholap and Ramchandra Satwaji Nikalje were nominated on the Council for three years from 1923 to 1926. And in December 1926 Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Purshottam Govindji Solanki were nominated under the provisions of the Act for the period from 1926 to 1929.

On 31 January 1920 Dr. Ambedkar started the weekly paper Mook Nayak (The leader of the Dumb or The Voice of the Dumb) and entrusted its management to P.N. Bhatkar who was succeeded by D.D. Gholap. The Mook Nayak was Babasaheb's first journalistic enterprise. In its first issue he wrote: "It is imperative to suggest ways and means to redress the wrong done to the depressed classes, and to discuss the measures for their upliftment."
A journal reaching the masses is the best means to 'achieve this end'. In this manner Dr. Ambedkar took upon himself the responsibility of rousing the social conscience of the people. The Mook Nayak did not, however, survive its journalistic vicissitudes after Dr. Ambedkar's departure for London in July 1920 to complete his halfway left studies in England. He started another paper after returning from England, the Bahishkrit Bharat (Outcaste India), in April 1927 soon after the historic Kolaba District Bahishkrit Conference at Mahad on 19 and 20 March 1927, when Babasaheb Ambedkar and his men and women followers exercised their right to take water from the Chavdar Tale (Tale = tank).

In September 1930 Dr. Ambedkar received an invitation to the Round Table Conference at London. He visualised the political importance of the conference, from the depressed classes point of view. On the eve of his departure for London, at a reception given in his honour, Babasaheb Ambedkar announced the launching of the fortnightly Janata (The People). The first issue of the Janata came out on 30 November 1930 and Deorao Naike was its editor. In 1955, the Janata was renamed as Prabuddha Bharat (India of the Self-Enlightened Buddha), with Babasaheb's son Yeshwantrao Ambedkar as its editor.
It was through the medium of these journals that Babasaheb endeavoured to educate the people on social, political, historical, religious, educational, economic and other problems of the downtrodden people and Indian women. His writings were based on thorough knowledge; they breathed rationalism and humanism, and they revolutionised the outlook of the Untouchables, completely, as never before.  

During this phase, Dr. Ambedkar addressed three important conferences of the depressed classes. The first at Mangaon in Kolhapur district on 20 March 1920 under the Presidency of Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur, the second at Nagpur for three days from 30 May to 1 June 1920 and the third at Nipani, now in Karnataka state. In the course of his presidential address at Mangaon, the Maharaja congratulated the depressed classes on their having found "their true leader from amongst themselves. The conference at Nagpur was also presided over by Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur. In the course of his address at Nagpur Babasaheb questioned the representative character of the Governor General's Council and thus initiated his political campaign. In course of his address at Nipani, he stressed the need of social reform to precede political reform and cited the case of the Vaikom struggle against the practice of
untouchability in the Travancore state.

The Satyagraha at Mahad was focussed on the untouchables' right to draw water from the Chavadar Tale (tank). The legal position in this regard must be understood. In 1923, Sitaram Keshav Bole, a councillor of the Bombay Legislature had moved a resolution regarding the rights of the untouchables, and the Council had adopted a resolution to the effect that "the Untouchable classes be allowed to use all public watering places, wells and Dharmashalas (rest houses) which were built and maintained by the government". Dr. Ambedkar and his followers were, therefore, absolutely within their rights when they scooped up the water of the Chavadar Tale, in their hands to demonstrate that everybody (including the depressed classes) had the right to draw water from the tank. The caste Hindus resented the act and started riots in vindication of their contention that the Untouchables had polluted the Chavadar Tale. Dr. Ambedkar, thereupon issued a call for a Satyagraha at Mahad. In August 1927 to make matters worse, the Mahad Municipal body revoked its own resolution of 24 January 1924. The Satyagraha committee fixed 26 and 27 December 1927 for the Satyagraha. On 12 December the caste Hindus of Mahad filed a suit against Dr. Ambedkar and others and obtained an injunction against
However, undeterred by the stance adopted by the orthodox caste-Hindus, Dr. Ambedkar arrived at Mahad and commenced the proceedings of the conference according to schedule on 25 December and had the infamous 'Manusmriti' burnt unceremoniously at the hands of Untouchable acetics. But in view of the matter relating to the Chavadar Tale being sub-judice, Dr. Ambedkar advised the delegates to postpone the implementation of the resolution.

Ultimately, the Chavadar Tale case was decided by the court in favour of the depressed classes, on 17 March 1927. So, we may rightly say, in retrospect, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar dipped his hands in the "caste-tained" waters of the Chavadar Tale and the waters became pure for ever.16

Dr. Ambedkar on securing social and political rights for the depressed classes vis-a-vis the caste rather than depending on the sweet will and mercy of the Hindus attained success in his objectives. To put these objectives in Dr. Ambedkar's own words in the course of speech at Mazgaon in Bombay on 18 February 1933, he said, "The object of our struggle is against
atrocities, injustice and false traditions, to put an end to the special privileges enjoyed by the caste-Hindus and to liberate the poor classes from their shackles". He spelt out these objectives in the evidence he gave before the Simon Commission, and subsequently during the deliberations of the Round Table Conference at London.

The Government of India Act 1919 embodying what were popularly known as the Montford Reforms, received Royal assent on 23 December 1919. The Act, however, received a mixed reaction in India. The radicals led by Motilal Nehru of the Indian National Congress, opposed it. Thus, in 1921 already the situation warranted a re-examination and revision of the constitutional provisions. In 1924, Motilal Nehru proposed in the central legislative Assembly that a round table conference be convened to outline a plan for a full-fledged responsible government in India. His move was carried by an overwhelming majority.

As a step in that direction the British Government decided in 1927 to set up a statutory commission. The announcement of names of the persons constituting the commission was made on 8 November 1927. Indian radical opinion was dismayed when it saw that the commission was made up of British members of Parliament. On
occasion, the congress and the liberals both decided
to boycott the Statutory Commission.

In February 1928, representatives of various
political parties in India met at Delhi, to draft a
constitution for India. A committee was constituted
for the purpose under Pandit Motilal Nehru. Jawaharlal
Nehru was its secretary. The committee produced in
1928, its Report - officially known as report of the
committee appointed by the conference to determine
the principles of the constitution for India, and popularly
known as the Nehru report.

What does the Nehru Report say about the depressed
classes? The problem of the 'Untouchables', the
committee thought, was a social or a religious problem,
but not a political problem. It says, the problem of
the depressed or suppressed classes has come to the
front in recent years. The solicititude of government
has so far brought little relief to these classes.
It has resulted in giving them some nominated seats
in the legislatures, and some minor conditions for
special school. For more serious and effective attempts
have been made by non-official Indian agencies to raise
these classes. The congress made abolition of untoucha-
bility as one of its principal planks, in 1920, and
as is well known, Mahatma Gandhi has thrown himself with all his great powers and energy into the movement.

In our suggestion for the constitution we have not made any special provision for the representation of the depressed classes in legislatures. This could only be done by way of special electorates or by nomination. We are not prepared to extend this unsound and harmful principle, if we can help it nor do we think that we will do any good to these classes by ensuring some seats for them in this way. 17

Dr. Ambedkar vehemently attacked the Nehru Report in his editorial in the Bahishkrit Bharat of 18 January 1929. He wrote:

If the problem of the untouchables is a social problem, is not that of the Muslims also a social problem? The Muslims, too, suffer from the consequences of the distorted vision of the upper castes of the Hindus, in the same manner as do the untouchables. It is our firm conviction that the Nehru Committee's Brahmanical strategy aims at perpetuating the Hindu social hierarchy in their struggle for political power. What else could be the reason for its extending certain facilities to the Muslims, and deny similar facilities to the backward and untouchable classes of the Hindus? It is evident that the Nehru Committee intends to perpetuate Brahminism. 18
The Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as the Simon Commission, arrived in India in early 1928. Dr. Ambedkar submitted to it a statement concerning the safeguards for the protection of the interests of the depressed classes as a minority in the Bombay Presidency, and the changes in the composition of and the guarantees from the Bombay Legislative Council necessary to ensure the same under provisional autonomy. He demanded protection through adequate representation for the depressed classes. "For, it must be admitted" he said, "that population is a measure by which to evaluate the representation that is to be granted to any community".

He further demanded,

It must, however, be recognised that the strength of the community cannot be taken as the sole factor in determining matter of this sort. The standing of a community is no less an important factor to be taken into account in determining its quota of representation. It follows from the recognition of the principle that the lower the standing of a community the greater is the electoral advantage it must get over the rest. There can be no two opinions that the standing of the depressed classes - both educational and economic - is the lowest in this country.
Further he demanded,

That the education of the depressed classes shall be recognised as the first charge on the revenues of the province ... That the right of the depressed classes to unrestricted recruitment in the army, navy, and police shall be recognised without any limitation as to caste. That for a period of 30 years the right of the depressed classes for priority in the matter of the recruitments to all posts, gazetted as well as non-gazetted, in all Civil services, shall be recognized. That the right of the depressed classes to effective representation ... On the local bodies shall be recognised by the provincial government.

And, finally, he said,

...surely the first essential of any scheme of reform is that adequate safeguard should be provided for the good government of the inarticulate masses of the population.

On 23 October 1928 Dr. Ambedkar gave evidence before the Simon Commission at Pune. In the course of the evidence, he agreed that the terms 'depressed classes' and 'untouchables', were synonymous, the term untouchable meaning those whose touch will pollute a high caste Hindu.
He emphatically stated before the Simon Commission the following:

The first think I would like to submit is that we claim that we must be treated as a distinct minority, separate from the Hindu community ... as a matter of fact there is really no link between the depressed classes and the Hindu community. Secondly, I should like to submit that the depressed classes minority needs far greater political protection than any other minority in British India, for the simple reason that it is educationally very backward, that it is economically poor, socially enslaved and suffers from certain grave political disabilities, from which no other community suffers.

As regards representation in the services, he said, "Our experience so far as the administration of the law is concerned is very bitter. I wish to say most emphatically that in many cases the law is administered to the disadvantage of the depressed class man." 21

Again, on 17 May 1929 he submitted a lengthy report on the constitution of the Government of Bombay Presidency "setting aside all considerations of brevity". 23 Among other things Dr. Ambedkar says,

The legislature should be wholly elective. ...
Reserved seats should be provided for Mohamedans, depressed classes, and Anglo-Indians. ...
The legislature should consist of 140 members, of these Mohamedans should have 33 and the depressed classes 15. There should be complete provincial autonomy. There should be a provincial Civil Service and a Provincial Civil Service Commission. Indianization of services should be more rapid, and arrangements should be made for the fulfilment of the claims of the Backward classes.

It would not be incorrect to infer that the police department of the Bombay Presidency opened its doors for the recruitment of the depressed classes in March 1931, as a result of Dr. Ambedkar's knocking at their doors in the course of the evidence he submitted to the Simon Commission.

While the Simon Commission was still touring in India, Dr. Ambedkar served on the Government of Bombay Depressed Classes, Aboriginal Tribes Committee popularly known as the State Committee. Alongwith Dr. Ambedkar, Dr. P.G. Solanki and A.V. Thakkar were among the ten members of the committee. The committee was constituted by the Government of Bombay, in November 1928, in order to enquire into the educational, economic, and social conditions of the depressed classes, and the Aboriginal Tribes in the Presidency and to recommend
measures for their uplift. The committee submitted its report to government in March 1930.

The committee stated that untouchability consisted in that in which a mere touch of the depressed class person is held to cause pollution which the orthodox Hindus are taught, in the name of religion to avoid as sin, thus obliging the depressed classes to live in isolation from the rest of the communities. Another characteristic of untouchability is servility.

The committee recommended scholarship and students' hostels for the economic uplift of the backward classes and it stressed the need to recruit the depressed class people in the police, and urged that the present bar to the recruitment of the depressed classes in the army should be removed, that a backward class officer (now redesignated as Director of Social Welfare) should maintain lists of qualified candidates from the Backward classes, and promote their recruitment, that hereditary services rendered by the backward classes should be enquired into; and that housing schemes for the backward classes should be promoted. On the social front, the committee recommended legislation to prevent dedication of Devadasis, and that social boycott be checked by propaganda and legislation.
It was during this phase that Dr. Ambedkar delivered his presidential address, in the All India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur-Kamtee, on 8 and 9 August 1930. As has been rightly observed by Khairmoday, that address contained the ground-plan of his movement in time to come. Thus spoke Dr. Ambedkar—

The best guarantee for the protection of your own interests, consists in having the power of control in your own hands so that you may yourselves be in a position not only to punish when the mischief to your interests is done, but to keep a watch over your interests, from day-to-day and prevent possible mischief from arising. This will never be secured by leaving the power in the hands of the third party – be it the Governor, Viceroy or the Leage of Nations. For, of what use will that power be to us, if those who will hold it in trust for we refuse to exercise it when we call for their intervention?26

We now come to the Round Table Conference in London in the year 1930-32. Historically speaking, those conferences were of immense importance, not only for the nation but also for the depressed classes and other weaker sections of the people. The first round table conference was held from 12 November 1930 to 19 January 1931, the second from 7 September 1931 to
1 December 1931, and the third from 17 November 1932 to 24 December 1932. Dr. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan represented the depressed classes at the Round-table Conferences during the first Round Table Conference. Dr. Ambedkar worked on the following sub-committees:

1. Sub-committee No. I: Federal Structure
2. -ditto- No. II: Provincial
3. -ditto- No. III: Minorities
4. -ditto- No. VI: Franchise
5. -ditto- No. VII: Defence

Though his work in almost all the sub-committees in which he worked was noteworthy he is specially remembered for his epoch-making contribution in the Minorities sub-committee.

In the sub-committee No. VIII relating to services first in the sixth sitting of this body, on 13 January 1931, he reiterated his demand for the recruitment of the depressed classes in the services. He moved this resolution: "The Sub-committee desires that a generous policy be adopted in the matter of the employment of the depressed classes in the public services, and it particularly recommends that the recruitments of the police and military, from which they are now
The chairman put the matter before the body to vote, and it was carried.  

The deliberations that took place in the Minorities Sub-committee were of a crucial nature and had far-reaching consequences. On the last day of the year 1930 Dr. Ambedkar spoke on his scheme of political safeguards for the protection of the depressed classes in the future constitution of India in regard to the depressed classes. He said, "They are a minority which comes next to the great Muslim minority in India, and yet their social standard is lower than the social standard of ordinary human beings". Continuing his speech, he said,

The depressed classes are not entitled under the present circumstances, to certain civil rights which other minorities by law enjoy. In other words, in the existing situation, the depressed classes suffer from what are called civic disabilities.

Take the case of employment in police or in the Army. In the Government of India Act it is provided that no subject of His Majesty shall be deprived of the right of being employed in any public service by reason of his caste, creed, or colour.
But, what do we find? We find this: if a depressed class man applies for service in the Police Department today, he is told point blank by the executive officers of the government that no member of the depressed classes can be employed in the police service, because he is an untouchable person. In the case of the military, the same situation obtains.

He, therefore, demanded that in the future constitution of India, the depressed classes should be given a fundamental right enacted in the constitution which will declare 'untouchability' to be illegal for all public purposes. Secondly, this fundamental right must also invalidate and nullify all such disabilities and all such discriminations as may have been made hitherto adequate representation in the legislature. Speaking on the controversial subject of joint versus separate electorates, he said,

We, the depressed classes, demand a complete partition between ourselves and the Hindus. We have been called Hindus for political purposes; but we have never been acknowledged socially by the Hindus as their brethren.

Coming to the seventh sitting of the Minorities Committee on 28 September 1931 when certain 'negotiations' were going on between M.K. Gandhi and the Muslims for
a settlement of the communal problem. In this behalf, Dr. Ambedkar said,

Those who are negotiating ought to understand that they are not plenipotentiaries at all. Whatever maybe the representative character of M.K. Gandhi or the Congress people, they certainly are not in a position to bind us—certainly not. I say that most emphatically in this meeting.

It seems Gandhi wanted to constitute a committee to resolve the communal problem. In this regard Dr. Ambedkar said,

I do not know whether in the position in which I am today, it would be any use for me or my colleague to work on the proposed committee. And for this reason Mahatma Gandhi told us on the first day that he spoke in the Federal Structure Committee that as a representative of the Indian National Congress he was not prepared to give political recognition to any community other than the Muhammadans and Sikhs. He was not prepared to recognise the Anglo-Indians, the depressed classes, and the Indian Christians. I do not think that I am doing any violence to etiquette by stating in this committee that when I had the pleasure of meeting Mahatma Gandhi a week ago and discussing the question of
the depressed classes with him, and when we as members of the other minorities had the chance of talking with him yesterday in his office, he told us in quite plain terms that the attitude he had taken in the Federal Structure was his full and well considered attitude. What I would like to say is that unless at the outset I know that the depressed classes are going to be recognised as a community entitled to political recognition in the future constitution of India, I do not know whether it will serve any purpose for me to join the particular committee that is proposed by Mahatma Gandhi.  

In October 1931 at 2 p.m. M.K. Gandhi had a secret meeting with the Muslim delegation. In the secret pact he made with the Muslims, Mahatma Gandhi acceded to their demands regarding reservations in the Punjab, Bengal and other provinces, but at the same time he stipulated the following condition, "No special reservation to any other community save Sikhs and Hindu minorities".  

As has been observed by Dr. Ambedkar,  

He (Gandhi) devised a scheme to isolate the untouchables. For this M.K. Gandhi planned to buy out the Muslims by giving to the Muslims their fourteen demands, which Gandhi was not in the beginning prepared to agree. When he found the Musalmans were lending their
support to the untouchables, Gandhi agreed to their fourteen points on condition that they withdrew their support to the untouchables.

At the Ninth sitting of the Minorities Committee on 8 October 1931, Gandhi admitted his failure to bring about a settlement among the minorities, as he wanted to be done. It was at that sitting also that Dr. Ambedkar vindicated his stand vis-a-vis that of Gandhi, in strong terms. Gandhi said,

In spite of appearances to the contrary, especially in England, the Congress claims to represent the whole nation and most decisively the dumb millions among whom are included the numberless untouchables, who are more suppressed than depressed. It is impossible to conceive that with untouchability fast disappearing nominees of these voters can be boycotted by others, but what these people need more than election to the legislatures, is protection from social and religious persecution.

Dr. Ambedkar replied

The Mahatma has been always claiming that the congress stands for the depressed classes more than I or my colleague can do. To that claim I can only say that it is one of the
many false claims which irresponsible people keep on making, although the persons concerned with regard to those claims have been invariably denying them. 34

In the concluding part of his speech, Ambedkar said,

But to be true to facts, the position is that the depressed classes are not clamouring for transfer of political power. Their position, to put it plainly, is that we are not anxious for the transfer of power, but if the British Government is unable to resist the forces that have been set up in the country which do clamour for transference of political power and we know the depressed classes in their present circumstances are not in a position to resist that their own submission is that if you make that transfer, 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 any oligarchy, or into the hands of a group of people, whether Muhammadans or Hindus, but that solution shall be such that the power shall be shared by all communities in their respective proportion. 35

Nu ( $euvelm 6816 ac rvtxohhcz hb hac 2bvuz Table Conference a Supplementary Memorandum on the claims of the depressed classes for special representa-
Ambedkar demanded for the depressed classes' representation in proportion to their population as estimated by the Simon Commission and the Indian Central Committee. As regards the methods of representation he demanded that —

... the depressed classes shall have the right to elect their representatives to the provincial and Central Legislatures through separate electorates"

To hit the nail squarely on the head, he said,

*But in order to leave no loophole for defeating the purpose of their special representation, we claim that the depressed classes shall not only have the right to their own separate electorates, but they shall also have the right to be represented by their own men.*

Finally, he stated that, the term 'depressed classes was contemptuous'. In stead, he suggested, that they may be officially known as 'Non-caste Hindu', 'Protestant Hindus' or 'Non-conformist Hindus'.

In the plenary session, eighth sitting, on 19 January 1931 he remubded the British Government of its responsibilities towards the depressed classes; he said —
The British Parliament and those who speak for it, have always stated that they are trustees for the depressed classes and I am sure that what they have been saying is not one of those conventional lies of civilization which we are all led to utter to keep human relations as pleasant as possible. In my opinion, it is the bounden duty of any government to see that, that trust is not betrayed, and let me tell you prime-minister, that the depressed classes would regard it as the greatest betrayal on the part of His Majesty's Government, if it were to leave us to the mercy of those who have taken no interest in our welfare and whose prosperity and greatness is founded on our ruination and degradation.  

Dr. Ambedkar's labour in the Round Table Conference bore fruits and Prime-minister MacDonald's 'Communal Award' of 17 August 1932 granting separate electorates for the depressed classes was announced. The next day on 18 August 1932 Gandhi announced his decision to fast unto death to 'resist Prime-minister's decision with his life'. "The proposed fast", he added, "will come into operation in the ordinary course from the noon of 12 September next, unless the said decision is meanwhile revised".  

In the course of his reply dated September 8, 1932, Prime-Minister Macdonald wrote to Mr Gandhi,
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 today, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislature, which will have a dominating influence over their future.

As the British Government did not reverse the decision, Gandhi commenced his fast on the appointed date. On 19 September, however, Dr. Ambedkar had released a statement vindicating his stand on the situation created by the 'coercive' fast. He said, "Separate electorates are granted not only to the depressed classes, but to the Indian Christians, Anglo Indians, Europeans, as well as to the Mohammedans and the Sikhs. All the same Gandhi chooses to let everybody else except the depressed classes retain the special electorates given to them". He concluded his statement with the following words: "I however, trust that the Mahatma will not drive me to the necessity of making a choice between his life and the rights of my people. For I can never consent to deliver my people bound hand and foot to the
caste Hindus for generations to come".

Ultimately, Dr. Ambedkar responded to the call of humanity, and saved the life of the future father of the nation, by agreeing to amend the communal Award, in a manner agreeable to Gandhi. That was the Poona Pact, signed by Dr. Ambedkar, Gandhi and others on 24 September, 1932, in the Yeravada prison. Commenting on the Poona Pact, Dr. M.R. Jaykar, one of the signatories to it, later observed, "It had to be accepted at the point of the bayonet, as it were".

What have observers and men of public affairs to say on this important episode of modern Indian history fraught with far-reaching consequences? To give just a few random observations. Glorney Bolton, in his Tragedy of Gandhi, says,

The truth is that M.K. Gandhi was lost in London and the old assurance and reliance was deserting him. Day after day in the conference which he had come to detest he faced the Mohammedan delegates who would yield none of their demands. Day after day Dr. B.R. Ambedkar came into greater prominence. He spoke for the 'Untouchables', and every speech on the welfare of India - whether from a conservative or a socialist - would contain references to the tragic plight of the 'untouchables'. It was a sentimental
rather than a practical concern. M.K. Gandhi, by representing the untouchables would have drawn eulogies from almost everyone in England, but now Dr. Ambedkar had destroyed this platform. He so opposed the Mahatma that the public began to believe that two personalities dominated the conference, M.K. Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. 41

Secondly, this is what Professor Edward Thompson wrote to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on 6 December, 1936:

I never thought M.K. Gandhi wrong until the round table conference, when he was both arrogant and irrelevant. Perhaps he should not have come at all. But having come, he was unjustified in refusing to regard the other Indians, many of them men who had paid a price for their opinions as men entitled to be consulted by him and regarded as friends in a common endeavour and hope. 42

Thirdly, to see what Dr. M.R. Jaykar has to say in this regard. Mahatma Gandhi's attitude at the Round Table Conference in England drove the minorities to adopt the notorious minorities pact. He denied to the depressed classes even a single seat by reservation, except through the medium of the congress. 43

Fourthly, James Halliday alias D. Symington,
retired from the Indian Civil Service and a former Backward Class Officer of the Bombay Province, comments in his 'A Special India' thus:

The demand for separate electorates was resisted by the congress to the utmost and by Gandhi himself to the point of a fast unto death. By means of which he succeeded in blackmailing the depressed class leaders into accepting a compromise, the Poona Pact of 1932.44

To conclude it in the words of Dr. Eleanor Elliot, she says:

One way of explaining the conflict between Ambedkar and Gandhi, perhaps an over-simplification, is to say that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar saw advancement for the untouchable in terms of using political means to achieve social and economic equality with the highest classes in a modern society, while M.K. Gandhi held to more traditional concept of a Varna system, cleansed of untouchability, in which untouchables would be Shudras and their unclean work made honourable.45

It may be observed that the prestige of Dr. Ambedkar began to grow. After the heart-rending victory over Hindu orthodoxy, at Mahad, the spirited manner in which he presented the case of the depressed classes at the Round Table conferences, had a tremendous effect
on the morale of the untouchables. As was observed by the Indian Daily Mail of 21 July 1931, "Dr Ambedkar made a tremendous impact at the Round Table Conference, and his speech at the opening session was of the finest bits of oratory delivered during the whole conference".

It is no wonder, if the depressed classes began to regard Dr. Ambedkar as a father-finger. Young men in Bombay, the noted biographer C.B. Khairmoday and his associates mooted the idea, in September 1927 to use the subriquet 'Babasaheb' alongwith Dr. Ambedkar's name, and the subriquet 'Aisaheb' (revered mother) with reference to Mrs Ramabai Ambedkar. These subriquets seem to have become current in 1930.

Likewise, the same group of young men was inspired to popularise the celebration of Dr. Ambedkar's birth anniversary every year on 14 April. The first such celebration took place at Bombay on 14 April, 1933.  

Dr. Ambedkar's quest for a 'religion' may be said to have begun when he was still a school-boy. To put it in his own words:

My father was a very religious person, and he brought me up under a strict discipline. Quite early in my career, I found certain contradictions in my father's religious way of life. He was a Kabirpanthi. As such, he
did not believe in 'Moorti-pooja' (idol worship). He read the books of his Panth. At the same time, he compelled me and my elder brother to read every day before going to bed a portion of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to my sisters and other persons who assembled at my father's house for hearing the Katha.

Subsequently, when the revered teacher Krishnaji Arjun alias Dada Keluskar presented him with a copy of 'Gautam Buddhache Charitra' (Life of Gautam the Buddha), written by himself, the young lady must have read it with profound interest. For he said later on:

He read the book with great interest, and was moved by it. ... I began to ask why my father did not introduce us to the Buddhist literature. I asked my father. Why he insisted upon our reading the Mahabharata and the Ramayana which recounted the greatness of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, and the degradation of the Shudras and the Untouchables. My father did not like the question. He merely said, "you must not ask such silly question. You are only twelve". After some time, I asked again the same question. This time my father had prepared himself for the reply".

But young Bhimrao was not satisfied with his father's reply. He said,
I did not like Bhishma, and Drona, and Krishna. Bhishma and Drona were hypocrites. They said one thing and did the opposite. Krishna believed in fraud. An equal dislike I have for Rama. Examine his conduct in the Shurpanakha episode, in the Vali-Sugriva episode, and his ghastly behaviour towards Sita. This is the origin of my interest in the Buddha and his Dhamma.

Subsequently, in his Castes in India written in 1916, during his Columbian days he put forth his own theory of the origin and growth of the castes in India from a casteless society to the development of the major castes of the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, in the Indo-Aryan society. It was the priests who first isolated, segregated themselves, and built, as if, a caste wall around themselves, to be there after emulated by the warriors and rulers. Thus, with the formation of the Brahman and the Kshatriya castes, the remainder of automatically became the Vaishya caste.47

The young scholar defined 'caste' as an enclosed class.48 He also observed that castes can exist only in the plural. This system of classification and stratification of the Indo-Aryans was given religious sanction by the Shastras. It was his endeavour to show the falsity
of the attitude that has exalted religious sanction to the position of scientific exposition. His study of castes in India led him, as time went by, to make a detailed study of Buddhism and he observed the vast ideological difference between Hinduism and Buddhism. Followed by the long drawn Kala Ram temple Satyagraha and the historic battle with Gandhian Hinduism at the round table conference in London, and the agonising days preceding the Poona Pact of September 1932, Ambedkar became an embittered man. He gave expression to his pent-up feelings at the Yeola Conference, on 13 October 1935. Yeola was again a turning point in his life, as well as in the movement of depressed classes, and liberation of Indian women. It was during that conference that he moved a resolution to this effect:

_We have made strenuous efforts to bring about a rapprochement between the so-called untouchables and the caste-Hindus, during the Mahad Chavdar Tale Satyagraha, and the Nashik Kala Ram temple Satyagraha. But the caste-Hindus have evinced no sign of change of heart. And so, this conference of the 'untouchables' do hereby resolve that efforts to persuade the caste-Hindus having proved futile, the 'Untouchables should no longer waste their energies on such efforts. Let us put a stop to Satyagrahas, get away from the Hindus, and achieve an honourable position of equality._
with all people of India. Because we call ourselves Hindus, we are unable to treat us thus, I had the misfortune of being born with the stigma of untouchability, that is not my fault but I will not die a Hindu, this is in my power.

That was an epoch-making decision bound to reverberate in the pages of Indian history. In December 1935 Ambedkar was invited by the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal (Society for the breaking up of castes), of Lahore to preside over its conference. The presidential address that he wrote for it, has come down to us in the shape of the famous, thought-provoking classic, namely, 'Annihilation of Caste'. In the Annihilation, he sought to destroy the very sanctity of the Shastras that gave religious sanction to the creation of castes and untouchability. He wanted to bring about a radical 'notional' change in the Hindu mind. These views were much too extreme to the Arya Samajist Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal's ideology. Dr. Ambedkar, however, was not prepared to alter his speech to suit the views of the organization. So, he preferred to have the conference cancelled altogether.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, however, published Annihilation of Caste in 1936. He distinguishes between a religion of rules and a religion of principles, and
advocates the Annihilation of the religion of rules.

He says -

I do not know whether you draw a distinction between principles and rules. But I do not only make a distinction but I say that this distinction is real and important. Rules are practical, they are habitual, they are habitual ways of doing things according to prescription. But principles are intellectual, they are useful methods of judging things. Rules seek to tell an agent just what course of action to pursue. A principle does not prescribe a specific course of action. Rules, like cooking recipes, do tell just what to do, and how to do it. A principle such as justice supplies a main head by reference to which he is to consider the bearings of his desires and purposes. This difference between rules and principles makes the acts done in pursuit of them different in equality and in content. The principle may be wrong, but the act is mechanical. A religious act may not be a correct act but must at least be a responsible act. To permit this responsibility religion must mainly be a matter of principles only.

Dr. Ambedkar goes on to say -

Now the Hindu religion as contained in the Vedas and the Smritis is nothing but a mass of sacrificial, social, political and sanitary
rules and regulations all mixed up. Religion in the sense of spiritual principles truly universal, applicable to all races, to all countries, to all times is not to be found in them, and if it is, it does not form the governing part of a Hindu's life.

While he condemns the religion of rules, he does not dispense with religion altogether. He says,

While I condemn a religion of rules, I must not be understood to hold the opinion that there is no necessity for a religion. On the contrary I agree with Burke when he says that true religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests and (gives them) both their sanction.

Consequently when I urge that these ancient rules of life be annulled, I am anxious that their place shall be taken by a Religion of Principles which alone can lay claim to being a true religion.

He finally concludes that -

You must give a new doctrinal basis to your religion, a basis that will be in consonance with liberty, equality and fraternity, in short with democracy. It means a complete change in outlook and in attitude towards men and things. It means conversion but if you do not like the word, I will say it means
new life. New life can enter in a new body. The old body must die before a new body can come into existence and a new life can enter into it. To put it simply, the old must cease to be operative before the new can begin to enliven and to pulsate. This is why I meant when I said you must discard the authority of the Shastras and destroy the religion of the Shastras.

In May 1936 he addressed another important conference in Bombay when he delivered his well known speech on Mukti Kon Pathe? (which way to emancipation?). In the course of the speech he stoutly vindicated his resolve for conversion. Define the term 'religion' as that which holds the people together; he said that was the real definition of religion. Then (perhaps raising his voice) he said "The religion which does not recognize the individuality of man, is not acceptable to me".

Every true religion, if it is going to serve humanity, will have to declare how it proposes to relieve the sufferings of the oppressed psychologically and ethically. The modern world needs religion more than ever before. But religion in the Modern world cannot afford to eulogise poverty, nor can it afford to be inconsistent with science. Buddhism is the religion
of the intellectuals, and spells out its social, economic and political objectives. To him Buddhism fulfils the need of the modern world.

Buddhism rejects the Hindu doctrine of Chaturvarnya, just as it rejects the belief in God, soul and Vedas. Buddhism as the religion of reasoning does not believe in idol worship. Buddhism gives every individual the liberty to examine everything in the light of reason.

The Buddha, says Dr. Ambedkar, was the only founder of a religion who claimed no more than that he was an ordinary man. Dr. Ambedkar declared that the doors of his religion were open to all, irrespective of race, cast and sex. He did not claim to be God. He claimed to only a 'Marga data' (one who showed the way). His religion was based on thought and experience. He expressly told his followers to believe a thing not because he was telling it but he urged them to examine it for themselves.

In 1950 he declared that the time was getting ripe for conversion. What is the object of conversion? And he replied,

*Our aim is to gain freedom. We are not interested in anything else, at the moment. If we can gain freedom by conversion, why should*
we shoulder the responsibility of reforming the Hindu religion? The object of our struggle is our liberation from Hinduism, and not reform of Hinduism.

Such, in effect, was Dr. Ambedkar's approach to the problem of conversion to Buddhism. There was nothing extra terrestrial, or supra-mundane or transcendental about it, at all. It was a down to earth healthy, robust, rational enlightened, scientific, cultured and human approach, to overcome the problems created by Vedicism, Brahminism and Hinduism, down the ages, that made life a misery for the Untouchables and women in India.52

Dr. Ambedkar expressed the view that Manu wanted to stem the tide of women flowing in the direction of Buddhism. It is for this that, Manu imposed these disabilities upon women and crippled them permanently. Those who doubt this might well consider the following injunctions laid down in the Manu Smriti.

V.88 Funeral rites and obsequies which are performed on the death of person shall be withdrawn (i.e., shall not be performed) from those who are born out of intermixture, from those who are addicted to asceticism and from those who have ended their lives by committing suicide.
V. 89 They shall also be withdrawn from women and who have joined a heretic sect, who behave too freely, who have injured a child in their womb or their husband and those drink wine.

This injunction is among other aimed at (1) those who are addicted to asceticism and (2) Women who have joined a heretic sect. In this injunction asceticism refers to Parivrajakas, i.e., those who have abandoned their homes and taken to Sannyas and in referring to a heretic sect. There is no doubt that, Manu has in mind the Buddhist religion. It is, therefore, clear that it shall not be performed on an ascetic or on a woman who has joined a heretic sect. This is the secret of the many inequalities which he heaped upon women. For he knew that if the home is to be protected against the invasion of Buddhism, it is the woman and he did it by this injunction. All responsibility for the decline and fall of woman in India must be fastened upon Manu. I have also endeavoured to offer an explanation as to who was the author of their fall and why he brought it about. I hope that the unprejudiced and the impartial will realise that it was not the Buddha who can be held responsible for the tragedy. If anything he did, it was that the Buddha endeavoured to ennoble the woman to raise her to the
level of man. 53

Dr. Ambedkar, while comparing the Muslim society to the Hindu society, says -

The Muslims have all the social evils that affect the Hindu society. Indeed, the Muslims have all the social evils of Hindus and something more. That something more is the compulsory system of Purdah (veil) for Muslim women. Behind the Muslim Purdah has a religious society.

Women in Islam are deprived of mental and moral nourishment owing to the Purdah system. This is a religious way of implementing social segregation. He observes that -

As a consequence of the Purdah system, a segregation of the Muslim women is brought about. Being deprived of healthy social life, the process of moral degeneration must and does set in being completely secluded from the other world. They engage their minds in petty family quarrels with the result that they become narrow and restricted in their outlook. Purdah women in particular become helpless, timid and unfit for any fight in life. A social system which cuts off all contact between the two sexes produces an unhealthy tendency towards sexual excesses and unnatural and other morbid habits and ways.
Such seclusion cannot but have its deteriorating effects upon the physical constitution of Muslim women. They are usually victims of anaemia, tuberculosis and diarrhoea. Their bodies are deformed, with their backs bent, bones protruded, hands and feet, crooked, crooked ribs, joints and nearly all their bones ache. Heart palpitation is very often present in them. The result of this pelvic deformity is untimely death at the time of delivery.

An impassionate appeal to cast off the evil practices and customs among certain sections of the depressed classes was made by Dr. Ambedkar at a meeting at Damodar Thakersey Hall Bombay on 15.7.1927. The meeting was largely attended by men and women belonging to Devadasi, Potraj, Aradhi and Jogati sects and was held to accord support to the mass conversion move inaugurated at Yeola. After several speakers, both men and women, he addressed the gathering on the need for a change of faith as a step towards social freedom. Dr. Ambedkar made a fervent appeal especially to the women most of whom had come from Kamathipura. Whether you change your religion along with us or not", said he addressing women, "it does not matter much to me. But I insist that if you want to be with the rest of us you must give up your disgraceful life. The Mahar
women of Kamathipura are a shame to the community. Unless you are prepared to change your ways we shall have nothing to do with you and we shall have no use for you. There are only two ways open. Continue to be despised and shunned, or you give up your disgusting profession and come with us". Dr. Ambedkar further said,

... you will ask me how I am to make your living. I am not going to tell you that. There are hundreds of ways of doing it. But I insist that you must give up this degrading life. You must marry and settle down to normal domestic life as women of other classes do. Do not continue to live under conditions which inevitably drive you into prostitution.

Most of you may be unmarried, while several might have got married. But what are you going to do after marriage? A heavy responsibility rests on your shoulders. In this respect I would illustrate the case of my father instead of yours. He had fourteen issues in all and amongst these I was the last one. But what was my condition while I was a student in the Elphinstone College? I had to go bare footed and put on a short of rough cloth and rough coat of my father. On entering this college you will find a photograph of Muller Sahib, who provided me with shirts for the last two years. I used to ponder, how nice it would have been
had my father only four children instead of fourteen! It was he and only he that was responsible for my misery. Once, while going to the college, I forgot the railway pass at home and on the same day passes were checked. The ticket collector hindered me. But I had not a single pie with men and had to wait at the station of Churchgate, upto 4 p.m. Afterwards my class-mate, named Kaikini came there and asked me why I was sitting there when I narrated to him what had happened. He paid four annas and relieved me from the place. He issued a ticket for me and sent me home.

Thus, I blame my father in this regard as he did not understand his responsibility. I don't feel it to be improper to point out this to my father when he was wrong. Now this responsibility rests on you, as well as on women. You should see that what I speak is meant, not only for males, but also for females. You will either into service, but I think most of you would become clerks and earn about 50 to 60 rupees per month. And with this pay if you have 14 issues, what would happen to them? Will you set this responsibility on the society? Consider deeply about this in your mind; you would not be ready to become Sanyasi and if somebody becomes one, it would be very nice (loud cheers). Don't laugh as this is a very serious and important thing. I had five children out of which four expired. Now I don't feel sorry
for this.

On the other hand I am happy. Had these issues remained alive, it would have been greatly troublesome to carry the burden of their food and education. Now I have got only one son and I have to shoulder his responsibility. If you show one hundredth part of this responsibility for your children, it would be well and good. This is a matter of social welfare. If you produce five or six issues, how will you afford to give them education and other facilities? I think it would be descending order, instead of ascending one. So, you must consider that living like a brute is against humanity. 56

He further said that mother is a first university of child. For a child and even for an adult family is a chief source of learning a variety of lessons of life; in the early stage child learns art of speaking and picks up language of the family. An individual has to show respect for elders and accept the authority. The traditions, belief and customs of the family are all acquired by the child. The sense of good and bad and basic moral values are also contributions of a family. It is again a source of learning importance of cooperation, service, sacrifice, tolerance and mutual love for each other. Throughout the course of one's
life family culture remains a permanent part of an individual's personality. Influence of family on an individual is a worldwide phenomenon. 57

India's population is very large in size. India ranks second in the world only to China. India's landscape is just 2.4 per cent of the total world area, whereas its population is nearly 15 per cent of the world population. India accounts for 20.6 per cent of the estimated population of developing countries in 1981 (3.3 billion). How alarming is the situation in this country can be easily followed by the fact that the national income of India is presently less than 1.6 per cent of the total world income. The rapidly growing population has posed many difficulties in the way of economic development. At present the population of India is more than 800 million.

According to the 1981 census the population of the country was 68.4 crores. It comes to around one-seventh of the world population which means that every seventh person in the world is an Indian. When compared to other countries, India's population in relation to land area far exceeds the population of many countries. It is so large that it is larger than the combined population of the U.S.S.R., U.S.A., England, Sweeden, Australia and Ghana. When we consider land
area we find that the U.S.A. alone has three times more land than that of India.  

Features of Indian Population:

High Growth Rate: Most outstanding feature of India's population charge during the past forty years is a very high net growth rate. This can be explained as follows:

1. Population size in India has been continuously growing in India since 1951. The total population has increased from 361 to 844 million between 1951-1991.

2. With large absolute size and high growth rate there is enormous addition to the total population from year to year. The decennial rate of growth of well above 20 per cent or annual rate of growth above 2 per cent is very high as compared to average rate of growth of 0.5 per cent in western advanced countries.

3. At this rate India's population increases by about 6 to 7 crores of people every year. This is the total size of the population of England or France.

4. The chief cause of the high growth rate of the
population in India is steeply falling death rate accompanied by very high birth rate which has remained almost static. It is, therefore, relevant to find out the factors responsible for high rate of birth in the country.

High Birth Rate:

No doubt, the birth rate in India is not above the average for the Third World countries, but it is surely higher than what the economy can sustain at the existing level of development. In India during the past three to four decades birth rate has not declined significantly because a number of economic and social factors continue to favour high fertility.

Economic Factors:

The occupational distribution of population has not significantly changed in India for a long time and even now a majority of the people are engaged in agriculture. In agriculture it is always possible to find some work or the other for children. It is for this reason that in agrarian societies children have never been considered an economic burden.

Though the process of industrialization has been going on in India, its pace is more or less the
same as it was at the time of Independence. Hence the decline in fertility that accompanies industrialization has not occurred in this country. Urbanization which has taken place in India has not been accompanied by the types of social change which favour lower birth rates.

(2) Poverty in under-developed countries is not the consequence of population explosion. On the contrary its economic compulsion results in high fertility. People are not poor because they have large families but on the contrary, they have large families because they are poor. The poor tend to associate economic security not with a reduction but with an increase in the number of children. The poor have no other economic asset than their own labour and the larger the number of earners in the family, the more the amount of family earning, thus poverty is definitely a major factor which works against the acceptability of family planning programme by the poorer sections of society.

(3) The joint family induces young couples to have children though they may not be in a position to support them because in a joint family the economic burden is carried by earning members.
Social Factors:

(1) Marriage in India is nearly universal. Presently, by the age of 50 only 5 out of 1,000 Indian women remain unmarried. Marriage is both a religious and social necessity. It is believed that with the spread of education, attitudes of people towards marriage would change and then an increased proportion of women might decide not to marry at all.

(2) Apart from the near universality of marriage, the relatively lower age of marriage in the country is also believed to be responsible for high fertility. It is claimed that women marrying between 20 and 24 years of their age have the same fertility as those marrying before the age of 20. It is only when marriage reaches 25 or over, that there is some reduction in fertility. But in India the average age of women at marriage is still around 18 years. The fertility is thus bound to remain high.

(3) Illiteracy is widespread in India. In 1981 37.17 per cent population was literate. The percentage of literacy among women is lower, i.e., 24.88 per cent as compared to 46.74 among men. As the mass population remains illiterate, it cannot be exposed to rational ideas and levels of having small families even if it
results in having a lowering standard of living. Though the government is carrying the idea of family planning to the rural population and contraceptives are made available to the villages, the response is not encouraging due to lack of education.

Religious Factors:

Most Indians, due to religious and social superstitions desire to have children regardless of their economic situation. Hindus desire to have a son to perform certain rites which only the male child can perform. They also have a daughter as giving of a daughter in marriage is a high religious merit. In India it is considered one's Dharma to have as many children as possible.\(^{59}\)

Mortality Rate (Death Rate):

Since the Independence there has been a rapid decline in mortality rate. Some factors are responsible in bringing down the death rate. They are:

1. Removal of famines was a major cause of high reduction in mortality. By 1966-70 the relief and preventive measures had become very effective. Famines since Independence have not occurred on a large scale. This factor in all probability is the most important single factor bringing down the mortality rate.
(2) Plague, cholera and small-pox were the three major epidemical diseases before Independence. Even now they have not completely vanished from the country, but they are very much under control. A major disease for which the picture has changed radically over the past is malaria. Malaria control has saved the lives of millions in India. But tuberculosis yet remains a major killer in India.

(3) Besides the above, sanitation and hygiene in cities or villages have helped in lowering down the mortality. The spread of education and expanded medical facilities have reduced the incidence of various diseases.

(4) Density of Population: This refers to the number of persons per square kilometre. It is arrived at by dividing the number of persons by the total land area of a region of country.

Since 1921 the density has been a rising figure. In 1981, the density was 217. This, however, is an all-India picture. But the change in density has varied from state to state. Even within the states there are differences in the density in the different regions. This is because India is primarily an agricultural country and factors like climate, rainfall, irrigation
facilities etc. vary considerably in various states and regions and, therefore, large differences are bound to exist in the density of population. In North India land is very productive and, therefore, density is high. As against this, in Rajasthan because of sandy soil and deficiency of water density of population is low. So is also the case with Jammu and Kashmir state with mountainous areas and of Madhya Pradesh with rocky land etc.

Another factor is the unequal development of industries in different states and regions. In some states there is great industrial progress and this has attracted large populations. As against this those states with less industrial growth have small density of population.

Thus, the human population inhabiting different states varies considerably. Uttar Pradesh has the largest population in India followed by Bihar and then Mahara­shtra. On the other hand Sikkim is with the smallest population density. Among the Union Territories the highest population is in Delhi. These variations indicate that the reorganization of the country into states and Union Territories has not been done on the basis of population but on other considerations like language, culture, administration etc.
(5) Age and Sex Composition:

The size of the labour in 1971 was 52 per cent. Children who fall in the age group of 0-14 years was 42 per cent. This percentage is higher compared to the proportion of children in developed countries at 20-25 per cent of the population. Both these are indicative of large number of unproductive consumers. This means that the burden of dependents on the population is excessive.

(6) Sex Composition:

This shows the male-female ratio. As per 1981 census there are 935 females for every one thousand males. The female to male ratio differs widely in different parts of the country. No generally acceptable satisfactory explanation can be given for the overall picture of a lower number of females. However, a few reasons can be indicated.

(i) Girls in India are not as adequately looked after as boys, as a result, infant mortality among girls is higher.

(ii) Burden of bearing children at a young age, frequency of births at short intervals led to death of many women.
(iii) It is doubtful if at the time of census women are counted correctly, because large illiteracy and social custom keep many behind the curtain and quite a number go unreported.

(7) Life Expectancy:

The number of years for which people of a country expect to live at the time of the birth is the average life expectancy of that country. If death rate is high and or death occurs at an early age, life expectancy will be low. But if death rate is low and death occurs at an early age, life expectancy will be low. But if death rate is low and death occurs at a late stage, life expectancy will be high. Till very recently, life expectancy in the country was very low. It started rising after 1921. The rise became substantial from 1951. This large increase in life expectancy has been caused by a fall in death rate and infant mortality rate.

(8) Literacy Rate:

The literacy rate has been on increase with a sharp step up in the 1971-78 decade. As per 1981 census, literacy rate was 36.2 per cent, literacy among females both in rural and urban areas being lower than that among males. In spite of this upward trend, the
literacy rate continues to be below and unsatisfactory when compared to Sweeden where it is 100 per cent. In England, U.S.A. and Australia it is nearly 100 per cent.60

Population and Economic Development:

Population explosion is a concrete reality in India and we must analyse its implication for future economic development. The relationship between population and economic development is very complex. The rapid population growth will result in an additional burden on the economy in the sense that it will make larger demand on resources for unproductive consumption leaving little for productive purposes. Further the growing population would necessarily arrest development by lowering down the land-man and capital-labour ratios.

Family Welfare:

Family welfare is the starting point of the welfare services. Most urgent and important family welfare service in India is that of family planning. Fast increasing size of population with death rate having substantially fallen can be arrested in further growth only by effectively bringing down the birth rate. A small size of the family is itself a guarantee of family welfare and progress. The growth rate of
population and high birth rate are caused by a variety of factors. Universal system of marriage, low mean age of 18.3 of women at the time of marriage, traditional desire for at least one or two male children accentuate birth rate. Family Planning programme and health centres have been successful to some extent in bringing down the birth rate. It has come down from 14.7 per cent in 1951 to 37.2 per cent in 1981 and to 32.4 in 1989. However, birth rate in the U.P., Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh tends to be 37 per 1,000. In rural areas the birth rate is higher than that in urban areas.

Therefore, concerted efforts on Family Planning programmes alone can help to effectively bring down birth rate. If the objective of 'Net Reproduction Rate of Unity' is to be achieved the birth rate will have to fall and stabilise around 20 per 1,000. The programmes of sterilization, IUD injections, Nirodh and oral pills have helped to avoid about 40 per cent pregnancies during past few years. But these activities will have to be further stepped up and more vigorously carried out. 61

Remedies for Population Explosion:

Attempt must be made to control the growing population so that the plight of those who are already
poor does not worsen in the event of some natural calamity befalling the country. To deal with the present population problem three-fold measures would be required.

Economic Measures:

To implement the economic measures is not so easy. It takes a rather long time to carry out economic programmes. This can be done by expansion of the industrial sector. The number of people employed in this sector is smaller than those employed in the agricultural sector. In the agricultural area children are assets to the family. But higher productivity in the industrial sector makes industrial workers conscious of their standard of living. Workers living in cities realize that to have a better standard of living they must restrict the size of the family.

Therefore, state should take radical measures to create conditions for rapid industrialization. In order to induce people to migrate from rural to urban areas the government must create conditions for job opportunities.

Thus, the housing problem and cost of up-bringing of children are the two factors which usually deter people from having big families. Once the poor people start getting basic amenities of life, they will have
no economic compulsion to have more children and their attitude towards their families will undergo a change. In this respect the state can guarantee the right to work and ensure a living wage to everyone.

Social Measures:

Population explosion is as much a social problem as it is an economic problem. Many of its causes are deep rooted in the social life of the country.

Therefore, in order to bring down the birth rate many of the social evils of our society must be removed. Education can bring about a change in the attitude of the people towards family marriage and number of children. Education also tends to delay the age of marriage since fertility depends to a great extent on the age of marriage; it is necessary that, every possible social, legal and educative measure is undertaken to raise it.62

Dr. Ambedkar had moved a non-official resolution regarding the measures for birth control in the Bombay Legislative Assembly on 10 Nov. 1938. He was the leader of the leader of the Independent Labour Party in the Assembly during this period. Immediately after the introduction of the 1935 Act of India elections to the Assembly were held and Dr. Ambedkar secured
14 out of 17 seats he had contested. His success in the 1937 election was outstanding and during the period of the Assembly he used the forum of non-official resolution to invite attention of the party in power to some of the fundamental problems in the country in general and Bombay Presidency in particular. The problem of birth control was one such problem. Gandhism and birth control. One of the distinguishing features of Dr. Ambedkar's leadership during this period is that he was probably the only leader in India who had strongly advocated the cause of birth control. Gandhism was the most dominant political philosophy in these days in India and the thinking of a large number of legislators was naturally profoundly influenced by the Gandhian approach to the problem. Gandhism was opposed to any artificial measures for birth control. Mahatma Gandhi had faith only in the concept of self-control or abstinence. The legislative party in the Bombay Assembly was committed to Gandhian philosophy and therefore, most of the members of the congress party in the Assembly were against the measures for birth control. The champion of Gandhian philosophy advanced a number of arguments to oppose the measures for birth control. Shri Morarji Desai who was a Revenue Minister, for example, said,
What I want to ask you all the while is that people should have self-control. Self-control is a very difficult thing. In this matter we do not expect that everybody will reach that high stage of Brahmacharya which Mahatma Gandhi expects for himself and for others. But in the matter of preventing the evil to the woman that stage of Brahmacharya is certainly not necessary. What self-control is necessary for man is that he should not approach his wife, that he should remain away, that he should have self-control over himself. It is just possible that he may have impulses in his own body periodically and if he loses the vital fluid at times it will not be evil as far as woman is concerned and even as far as he is concerned that will not deteriorate his health.

Muslim League, Christians and other nationalists were also opposed to the resolution. Their central theme was that British imperialism is responsible for the poverty and other consequential evil effects in the country. If the British Imperialism is responsible for the poverty and other consequential evil effects in the country, if the British imperialism is liquidated almost all the problems of our country would be automatically solved. So, it is futile to discuss the measures of birth control. There were a large number of nationalists who subscribed to this kind of thinking. As a
result of this, Dr. Ambedkar was probably the only political leader in India who thought of this problem very seriously and analysed and issued, in a very rational, scientific and pragmatic way in the context of the all India situation in those days. Dr. Ambedkar's thinking is not only very striking but it also places him far ahead of his contemporaries. What is important? Birth rate or survival rate? Dr. Ambedkar's approach becomes more impressive in the context of the situation in 1940's. Minority communities like the Scheduled Caste were getting reservation, on the basis of their number in the services as well as in the legislatures and other elected bodies. Limiting their population was apparently going against the interest of the Scheduled Castes. But Dr. Ambedkar convinced his followers that, birth-control was primarily in the interest of the poor people like untouchables and other groups. He argued brilliantly on this issue. He raised a very pertinent question in this regard, namely, what is more important? Birth rate or survival rate? Dr. Ambedkar therefore, said that survival rate is more important than the birth rate and birth control would go a long way in improving the health and financial condition of the scheduled caste people. This argument is not only convincing but it is almost a profound truth that
is universally applicable to all poor communities in
the world. Dr. Ambedkar has expressed profound faith
in the wisdom of the poor masses. It was said that
the masses in the rural areas are illiterate and ignorant
and therefore, they would not be able to follow birth
control measures intelligently. Dr. Ambedkar said that,
the masses in our country though illiterate, are intelli-
gent enough to know wherein their interest lies and
hence, there is no doubt that they will fully utilize
this invention also as soon as they are made aware
of its existence. Vasectomy would be found to be useful
in the case of such persons and hence government and
municipalities must provide facilities in this respect
in their hospitals. Dr. Ambedkar had also said that
the communities which need the measures of birth control
most are the poor communities like the scheduled castes
and scheduled tribes. 64

The new National Population Policy was announced
on April 16, 1976. Until the declaration of the New
Population Policy the family planning was entirely
voluntary but now there was change in the approach
because to wait for education and economic development
to bring about a drop in fertility is not a practical
solution.

Therefore, some more direct measures were conceived
and announced. Raising the minimum age of marriage to 21 years for males, and 18 years for females was a welcome measure but its implementation was a doubtful proposition. 65

In the first decade of twentieth century we find Shivram Janaba Kamble taking up the mission of removing the stigma of prostitution from the face of the untouchables. In 1908, through his magazine Somvanshi Mitra, he wrote articles asking his community to accept in marriage the hands of women who had been thrown into the degrading profession of prostitution through the practice of giving girls to Hindu temples as Devadasis (slaves of the God).

Besides writing articles Mr Shivaram Janaba Kamble conducted various meetings to awaken and enlighten people and appealed to them to abandon the practice of offering girls to the god and goddess of Jejuri known as Khandoba and Yellamma.

Mr Shivaram Janaba Kamble's efforts yielded positive results. One Devadasi named Shivubai responded to the call and wrote a very long letter explaining the miserable life of the wretched women and offering herself in marriage to any willing person. In response to her call, published by Shivaram Janaba Kamble in
his magazine, one of his associates, Ganpatrao Hanumantrao Gaiakwad agreed to marry Shivubai. Accordingly, the marriage was solemnized and was given wide publicity. Not only did Mr Shivaram Kamble encourage such marriages but he also saw to it that these women got respect and dignity in society. His propaganda against the Devadasi system was so effective that in the year 1909 not a single girl was offered to Khandoba as a Devadasi. It was also found that other slave girls of the God (Prostitutes) were accepted by the young boys of the Untouchable community as their wives.

The early movement of Untouchables in Maharashtra also led to increasing participation by women in conferences. A Nagpur woman, a nurse, described her experiences of untouchability in the All India Women's Conference of 1920. Other women were brought before audiences either to welcome the guest speakers in the conferences or to sing the welcome songs in the meetings.

The movement begun by Dr. Ambedkar generated even more enthusiastic participation. Dr. Ambedkar organized several conferences of the Untouchables. He saw to it that women's conferences were held simultaneously with those of men. By 1930 women had become so conscious that they started conducting their own meetings and conferences independently.
In Mahad in 1927, during the historic Satyagraha movement to claim the right of Untouchables to take water from the public tank, Dalit women not only participated in the procession with Dr. Ambedkar but also participated in the deliberations of the subject committee meetings in passing resolutions about the claim for equal human rights.

In the Nasik Satyagraha, started by Dr. Ambedkar in 1930 for the right of Untouchables to enter Hindu temples several hundred women conducted sit in agitations in front of the temples and courted arrest. Every batch of volunteers consisted of some women. Some of the women still alive have been interviewed during this research. This Satyagraha went on until it was terminated in Yeola conference of 1935 where Dr. Ambedkar declared that he is not likely to remain in Hindu fold since there was no chance of Hindus changing their hearts towards the Untouchables.

During this period, a woman named Shantabai Dani of Nasik and several other women addressed the meetings. Radhabai Kamble, a worker in a cotton mill, had come up as a labour leader in the Ambedkarite movement in the 1920s. She gave evidence before the Royal Commission of Labour in 1929. The Untouchable women also joined
the political agitations and courted arrest and underwent jail during the Scheduled Caste Federation's 1946 Satya-graha in Bombay Presidency. From all this it will be clear that women had made great strides in promoting political consciousness.

The research shows that women also were interested in reforming the marriage system. Among Untouchables there was already a practice permitting divorce, remarriage and widow marriage, but the women in the movement accepted several further reforms in the marriage system. They opposed child marriage. They tried to eliminate unnecessary rituals in the marriage. They even adopted marriages through advertisement which was not acceptable then even among higher classes. Even marriages among different untouchable sub-castes were welcomed.66
3 Ibid., p. 56.
11 M.P. Mangudkar (Ed.) Dr. Ambedkar and Parliamentary Democracy, Poona, p. 29.
12 Ibid.
16 Ibid., pp. 23-24.
20 Ibid., pp. 437-464.
21 Ibid., p. 465.
22 Ibid., p. 468.
23 Ibid., Preface.
28 Ibid., p. 595.
29 Ibid., pp. 529-533.
30 Ibid., p. 653.
31 Ibid., pp. 655-656.
32 B.R. Ambedkar. What Congress And Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables, p. 72, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay.
33 Ibid., p. 71.
35 Ibid., 662.


38 B.R. Ambedkar. What Congress And Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables, p. 82, Govt. of Maharashtra.

39 Ibid., pp. 85-86.


41 Ibid., p. 213.

42 Ibid., p. 218.

43 Ibid., p. 217.


46 Ibid., p. 40.

47 Ibid., pp. 41-42.

48 Ibid. Preface.


50 M.F. Ganjare (Ed.). Dr. Babasahebanchi Bhashane. Vol. 6, pp. 132-139.

51 Ibid., p. 139.


Ibid., p. 65.

Ibid., pp. 66-68.

Ibid., pp. 68-71.

Ibid., p. 37.

Ibid., p. 38.


Ibid., pp. 5-7.
