

# Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Approach towards Untouchability

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**Abstract – Ambedkar launched a single-handed attack on caste- system at a time where it was most needed. It was indeed a praiseworthy step. However, it would have been better, perhaps, to direct this attack against the system rather than against the individuals. Whatever he thought about Mahatma Gandhi (much is not known about it), his views on the ancient law-giver, Manu, and his famous 'Manusmriti' are well known. Ambedkar himself knew quite well that Manu was not the inventor of the Caste system; he merely codified the already existing rules of conduct. Manu's advocacy of "Chatur-Varna" was not the result of his individual thinking on the continuation of the Caste-System; he was only trying to systemize what was scattered in the Shastras and the Puranas. During the Mohad Tank Satyagraha, launched under the leadership of Ambedkar, a copy of the 'Manusmriti' was burnt, and Ambedkar approved of this act.**

**One may not approve Ambedkar's sociological ideas regarding the birth of the Caste system and may not like the idea of the "Manu Smriti" being burnt, but Ambedkar's deep concern for the depressed classes and his intense desire to work for their regeneration was, however, absolutely genuine. He was against the idea codified in the "Manusmriti" because these idea support the Caste system and regard the people of the depressed classes as the Untouchables. How can one be an Untouchable or depressed classes as the Untouchables. How can one be an Untouchable if one is a human being? All human beings are alike, made of the same clay, subject to the same emotions and feelings. How can, then, one class of human beings, be treated as inferior to the other?**

**Key Words – Caste-System, Untouchability, Shudra, Varna- Vyavashtha, Postulate, Genesis, Phenomena, Coplexion**

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## INTRODUCTION

The caste System is an ancient phenomenon of the Indian society. It got germinated perhaps after the Vedas. Prof. Max Muller observes, "The caste system was not present in the Vedic period".

Differences center round the origin of the caste system, but it is an admitted fact that it is a very ancient institution. Prof. Rapson confirms, The origin of the caste system is due to the distinction between the white and the dark complexion of the Aryans and the original residents.

Dr. V.A. Smith defines, 'A caste may be defined as a group of families internally initiated by peculiar rules for the observance of ceremonial purity, especially in the matter of diet and marriage.

Again, according to Reislely, Caste is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the hereditary calling regarded by those who are

competent to give and opinion on forming a single homogeneous community.

In his book Evolution of Caste has defined the caste system as follow : Organization of some people into a group for the purpose of several social matters like marriage and diet is called caste.

Dr. V.D. Mahajan, a renowned and reputed historian of national fame opines ", To an impartial students of history none of the above views seems to contain the whole truth."1

In support of his argument he presents the theory of the heterogeneous distinct society such as : free men and slaves in Greece and Rome confirming division in society Earlier epochs of history present complicated, heterogeneous division such as lord and serf, freeman and slave, oppressor and oppressed.

Controversy lies about the original home of the Aryans. Theories of Max Muller, Dayanand, B.G. Tilak, Morgan etc. are of much importance in this

connection. The Samhita of the Rigveda, being earlier literary production of the Aryans, dates the invasion of the Aryans from 2000 to 600 B.C. Prof. Max Muller, A German Scholar a Vedantist out and out, called, 'The Vedas are the first word spoken by the Aryan Men.

The non-Aryans and the Aryans were poles apart so far as colour, culture, civilization were concerned. Two different substance produce reaction. 'Dualism' of Descartes proves it.

The concept of the class struggles pertaining to Marx gripped the two races, the non-Aryans being black and the Aryans white. There was a mutual reaction producing class struggle. The class struggles gave birth to division of labour envisaging divergent functions. Their functions became stratified into castes.

The Vedic rituals needed a large number of priests. The ritual performance, the recitation of mantras gave birth to a caste, popularly known as the Brahmins. The caste engaged in wars and fighting was known as Kshatriyas. Ruling and administration, too, fell on their lot. Out of these two classes, the third caste emerged whose main profession was trade and commerce. This section of caste was known as Vaishyas. Below these three were the Sudras, slaves, labourers and unskilled workers.

The Sudras were placed at the bottom, service and slavery to the above three being their lot. They had no right to approach the sacred fire, perform sacrifice, to read the sacred scriptures. They were, so humiliating that marriage with the Sudras was looked down upon as most degrading. However, this caste system was not rigid during the Vedic period, rigidity fattened much later. J.L. Nehru says, 'These castes must have been in a fluid condition, rigidity came in much later'. [2]

Further, 'The Brahmanas attribute a divine origin to the caste system. According to them, Brhamanas were born out of the mouth of Brahma, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaishya from his stomach, and the Sudras from his feet.' [3]

According to the Mahabharata and the Puranas, all castes rose out of one progenitor, Manu, who was a powerful king of the solar dynasty having vast knowledge of ethics, philosophy and politics. We meet vast, broad description of the caste system in his Smriti known as Manu Smriti.

During the epic age, two remarkable epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata rank worth noting possessing the utmost significance.

There is no hard and fast demarcating line to separate the untouchables from other castes. However, the existence of the untouchables is more defined. In North India, persons engaged in

scavenging or unclean work, are considered untouchables. Their number in south India is larger. Fa-Hein tells us that when he came to India, the persons who removed human faces were untouchables.

Dr. Ambedkar published a provoking treatise in 1946 titled, who were the Sudras? How they came to be the Fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society: His postulate is different regarding the genesis of the Sudras, admitting the theory of chaturvarnya. After making deep analysis of the problem, Dr. Ambedkar opines that the Sudras were not dark skinned. They were not Sudras from the very beginning as envisaged in the Purusha Sukta in the Rig Veda. Dr. Ambedkar summarizes his thesis as follows:

- (1) The Sudras were one of the Aryan Communities of the Solar race.
- (2) There was a time when the Aryan Society recognized only three Varnas, namely, Brahmanas, Kashatriyas and Vaishyas.
- (3) The Sudras were not a separate Varna but formed a part of the Kahstriaya Varna.
- (4) There was a continuous feud between the Sudras kings and the Brhamanas.
- (5) A result of hatred towards the Sudras, the Brahmins refused to perform the upanayans of the Sudras.
- (6) Owing to the denial of upanayana, the Sudras became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the Vaishyas and thus came to form the fourth Varna.

Dr. Ambedkar presents quite original thesis on the origin and genesis of untohability.

According to Ambedkar, the Untouchables, the Scheduled Castes, were Buddhists in the distant pasts. They were dubbed as undoable by the Brahmins after the downfall of Buddhism. Ambedkar says, 'We can say with some confidence that untohability was born some time about 400 A.D.

567 B.C. is taken to be the date of birth of Buddha the innovator of Buddhism and 467 B.C. is taken to be the year of his death. But the concept of the untouchables is found in the Atharaveda, the most ancient sacred scripture of the Hindus. They were known as Chandal, Nishad, Ayogab, Ugra. In the Vedic Period, we come across the concept of Nishad. The untouchable Sabari also adorns the epic, the Valmiki Ramayana.'

Reference of Chandalas occur during the Gupta period.

Prof. V.D. Mahajan writes, 'The Chandals performed the meanest work Suhag as carrying unclaimed dead bodies and executing criminal.'[4]

Fa-hien writes, They lived outside the boundaries of town and market places. On approaching the town or entering it, they had to strike a piece of wood as a warning to others to avoid their touch. They were the aboriginal tribes like the Pulindas, Saharas and Kiratas.

In the present context, so far as my views are concerned, the origin of the caste originated due to division of labour. Their very touch and shadow would pollute the caste-Hindu. Temple-entry was closed for them.

Ambedkar took a vow to get the untouchables rid of the shackles of slavery, servitude, hatred and oppression. He said, My fight against unto ability is a fight against the impure in humanity.

He vowed again, 'If he failed to do away with the inhuman injustice under which the class, into which he was born, had been groaning, he will put an end to his life with a bullet'. He held that for the concept of untouchability in the society, the caste system is responsible through and through, Caste had killed public charity. It is a power of weapon into the hands of the fundamentalist orthodox for withholding all reforms. It is anti-national, because it creates jealousy between caste and caste, man and man, He observe, 'Annihilation of caste is a must'.[6]

Ambedkar was deeply impressed by the Bhakti-cult of Kabir, Jyotiba Phule's work for the Depressed Classes, and the philosophy of the Buddha, especially for the Buddha's tirade against Brahmins. He was a voracious reader and scholar. His stay in America, England and Germany convinced him that without equality no nation can progress. It was through his studies that he reached certain conclusions regarding the Depressed Classes in India, and finally became a hater of Brahmins in particular and other caste-Hindus in general.

When we study Ambedkar's personal life from the year 1900 (when he first entered school) to 1923 (when he was called to the Bar) we come across many such incidents which made him bitter towards caste-Hindus. During this period, he evolved a sociological theory which was not based entirely on historical facts alone. His opinions were deeply coloured by his personal experiences and he could never get out of them. When we study his thoughts, which he evaluated during this period, we are fully convinced that the bitter memories of his past life probably never allowed him to think impartially. However, he was absolutely clear about the fact that the Untouchability was a curse heaped upon the

depressed classes by the caste-Hindus, particularly Brahmins.

While giving his evidence before the Franchise committee in 1919, Ambedkar said:

"If one agrees with the definition of slaves as given by Plato, who defines him as one who accepts from another purposes which control his conduct, the Untouchables another purposes which control his conduct, the Untouchables are really slaves. The Untouchables are so socialized as not to complain of their low caste, still less do they ever dream of trying to improve their lot, by forcing the other classes to treat them with that common respect which one owes to another. The idea that they have been born to their lot is so ingrained in their mind that it never occurs to them to think that their fate is anything but irrevocable. Nothing will ever persuade them that men are all made of the same clay, or that they have the right to insist on better treatment than that meted out to them".

Whatever Ambedkar says here is true beyond doubt. However, when he comes to tracing the history of the caste system in India, his pronouncements are not absolutely authentic. His conclusion that the caste-Hindus have always conspired against the depressed classes is not quite correct, though their age-old habit of looking down upon the Untouchables is indeed a fact. In fact, Ambedkar had so many bitter experiences in his personal life that he did not hesitate indulging in generalizations, not sparing even Gandhi. Misunderstanding Gandhi's philosophy of rendering honest service to all without any caste-consideration, Ambedkar accused Gandhi of trying to perpetuate cast-system in India. He said:

"Gandhism is the philosophy of the well to do and the leisure class. It deluded people into accepting their misfortunes by presenting them as best of good fortunes. Gandhism seeks to perpetuate the system of scavenging as the noblest service to society. But these are evils that are deliberately imposed by one class over another".

This observation of Ambedkar would not have been so far away from truth if he had ascribed it to the mentality of the caste-Hindus at large, but, unfortunately, he ascribed it to a man (and his philosophy) whose intentions regarding regeneration of the Untouchables cannot be doubted. Ambedkar would better have said that it was only Gandhi, and probably no one else, who wanted the system of scavenging to be everybody's business rather than that of the Untouchables.

With these ideas ingrained in his mind, he tried to prove his points on the basis of history and evolved his sociological concepts. Whether Untouchables are really inferior to the caste-Hindus is a question

directly linked up with the early history of India. Who were the Aryans? Did they invade North-West India and then settled down in India? If Aryans were invaders, they must certainly have supplanted the original inhabitants of India and would also have enslaved them permanently. If such is the case, the Aryans, being a superior race, must have gradually treated the aboriginals as Untouchables. This is how the caste-system must have come into being. This indeed is the view of several Western historians along with some of the Indian historians. The Arya Samajists refuted this view and did not accept the opinion that the Aryans came into India from outside. If there was no Aryan invasion and if the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India, the so called Untouchables of today were never different from the Aryans and, as such, they cannot be treated as inferiors. According to Ambedkar, the so-called Untouchables were never enslaved by any foreign invader. In his tract "Who were the Shudras"?

Ambedkar interprets history in mythological terms, and all those portions of the 'Veda' which go against his theory, such as the "Purush Sukta" are declared as interpolation. To sum up, he clearly says that it was the system of four Varnas enunciated by Brahmins which excluded a certain section of society as the Untouchables and brought about inequality in Indian Society.

That the inequality in Indian society is the direct result of "Varnashram Dharma" cannot be questioned. However, it would be unwise to doubt the intentions of those who, at some time, devised this system in Indian society. There cannot be any doubt about the fact that the division of society into four sects was originally meant for the distribution of duties. As a great economist and a researcher, Ambedkar was fully aware of this fact. In the course of time this system brought about inequality in society, and the status of the individual began to be determined by the nature of the work he was supposed to do. The nature of work, in the course of time, became the determining factor. Those who were supposed to do intellectual work were called Brahmins. Those who were physically strong were chosen for the battlefield and were called Kshatriyas. Those who were supposed to work in the field of commerce and agriculture were called Vaishyas, and those who were supposed to do what is now called inferior work, scavenging etc. were called Shudras. However, in the beginning, this division of labour was not used for cast-discrimination. To what extent the Brahmins were responsible for later aberrations is definitely not acceptable by the fact that the four Varnas were originally created for division of work. If it was so, asked Ambedkar, why was this practice not followed in other countries? To say this is to refute the fact that every country has its own history. Why a certain development, good or bad, did take place only in this or that country and not in other

countries, is never an important question. Every country has its own character, depending on its historical and cultural heritage. That the system of four Varnas, was not evolved in any other country should not lead one to conclude that it was a mischief committed by someone or by a particular sect to enslave other men and other sects. It is true that this system finally resulted in economic exploitation of the lower castes and also created the idea of Untouchability. Is it not more sensible to lay the blame of the system itself rather than on the system-makers who, in the beginning, never meant what the system means now?

Even Mahatma Phule was not a Brahmin-hater. To hate a particular caste, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra, is in its ultimate analysis, an expression of one's personal grudge and it has nothing to do with history. Ambedkar, in spite of his unique intellectual stature, could not avoid being angry with those who he thought were the real culprit, responsible for the plight of the Untouchables.

Ambedkar's views on Indian Caste-system is not acceptable in the pure historical context, but his singular emphasis on only one aspect of it does not give us a full picture of the history of caste system in India. The caste-system, as it has existed for so many years in India, is definitely one of the major evils of our society and it has been the main obstacle in the progress of the country.

That Ambedkar launched a single-handed attack on it at a time where it was most needed was indeed a praiseworthy step. However, it would have been better, perhaps, to direct this attack against the system rather than against the individuals. Whatever he thought about Mahatma Gandhi (much is not known about it), his views on the ancient law-giver, Manu, and his famous 'Manusmriti' are well known. Ambedkar himself knew quite well that Manu was not the inventor of the Caste system; he merely codified the already existing rules of conduct. Manu's advocacy of "Chatur-Varna" was not the result of his individual thinking on the continuation of the Caste-System; he was only trying to systemize what was scattered in the Shastras and the Puranas. During the Mohad Tank Satyagraha, launched under the leadership of Ambedkar, a copy of the 'Manusmriti' was burnt, and Ambedkar approved of this act.

One may not approve Ambedkar's sociological ideas regarding the birth of the Caste system and may not like the idea of the "Manu Smriti" being burnt, but Ambedkar's deep concern for the depressed classes and his intense desire to work for their regeneration was, however, absolutely genuine. He was against the idea codified in the "Manusmriti" because these idea support the Caste system and regard the people of the depressed classes as the Untouchables. How can one be an

Untouchable or depressed classes as the Untouchables.

How can one be an Untouchable if one is a human being? All human beings are alike, made of the same clay, subject to the same emotions and feelings. How can, then, one class of human beings, be treated as inferior to the other? If our Vedas and Puranas approve of inequality among human beings, they need not be taken as authentic. Any cult which extols the Vedas as the final authority, acknowledging the existence of the Vedas as the final authority, acknowledging the existence of the four Varnas as a permanent system, is a hoax. It was on this ground that Ambedkar had a quarrel with Arya Samajists. He said:

“My conclusions have come in sharp conflict with their (Arya-Samajists) ideology at two most important points. The Arya Samajists believe that the four Varnas of the Indo-Aryan society have been in existence from the very beginning. The book (“Who were the Shudras?”) shows that there was time when there were only three Varnas in the Indo-Aryan society. The Arya Samajists believe that the Vedas are eternal and sacrosanct. The book shows that those portions or Vedas at any rate, particularly the Purush Shukta, which is the main of the Arya Samajists, are fabrications by Brahmins, intended to serve their own purpose. Both these conclusions are bound to act like atomic bombs on the dogmas of the Arya Samajists. The Arya Samajists have done great mischief in making the Hindu Society a stationary society-by preaching that the Vedas are eternal, without beginning, without end and infallible and that the social institutions of the Hindus being based on the Vedas are also eternal, without beginning, without end, infallible and therefore requiring no change.”

It is indeed true that the founder of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, did not condemn the existence of the four Varnas, but it was he who allowed all classes of people (including the so-called Untouchables) to read the Vedas, for he believed that the Vedas, if properly understood, lead towards the establishment of a harmonious and egalitarian society. He did not approve of Untouchability. He was, in fact, as much a friend of the Untouchables as Ambedkar himself. Where and how Ambedkar missed the essence of the philosophy of the Arya Semaj can be best understood in the light of what Tagore has to say about Dayanand Saraswati. Tagore said:

“Swami Dayanand, the great path-maker in modern India, who through bewildering tangles of creeds and practice – the dense undergrowth of degenerate days of our country-cleared a straight-path that was meant to lead the Hindus to a simple and rational life of devotion to God and service of man. With a clear sighted vision of truth and courage of determination, he preached and worked for self- respect and vigorous awakenment of mind that could strive for a

harmonious adjustment with the progressive spirit of the modern age and at the same time keep in perfect touch with that glorious past of India when it revealed its personality in freedom of thought and section, an unclouded radiance of spiritual realization.”

The Arya Samaj alone, if properly followed, would have done all the Ambedkar wanted to do. As Tagore has said, Swami Dayanand” cleared a straight path that was meant to lead the Hindus to a simple and rational life of devotion to God and service of man. “Ambedkar misunderstood Dayanand’s Vedic revivalism as an advocacy of the Untouchability.

Not only Dayanand and Tagore, Gandhi also made it clear, as early as in 1920, that the Untouchability cannot be given a secondary place in the Congress programme. Without the removal of the taint, Swaraj, is meaningless term. Even Mahatma Phule did not feel the necessity of antagonizing the Cast-Hindus. Why was it that Ambedkar virtually disagreed with almost all of them and ruthlessly carried on his tirade against the Caste-Hindus? To the extent one can understand a complex personality like Ambedkar, one is bound to feel that all his anger emanated, at least originally, from his bitter personal experiences. When he was in the court of Maharaja of Baroda he was looked down upon by all those caste- Hindus who surrounded the Maharaj, thought the Maharaja himself was not at all conscious of caste- distinctions. Of all those Caste-Hindus, the Brahmins were the most vocal in deriding Ambedkar’s work, simply because he was an Untouchable. Ambedkar could never forgot these experiences and his observation of the people around him only confirmed what he felt. He became a hater of the Brahmins. He felt that the Brahmins could learn all rights, but they could never be intellectuals in the real sense of the term. In the preface to “Untouchable” he said:

“Today all the scholarship is confined to Brahmins. But, unfortunately, no Brahmin scholar has so far come forward to play the part of a Voltaire who had the intellectual honesty to rise against the doctrines of the Catholic Church in which he was brought up, not is one likely to appear on the same in the future. It is a grave reflection on the scholarship of Brahmins that they should not have produced a Voltaire... The Brahmin scholar in only a learned man. He is not an intellectual....

Gandhiji, however, was not Brahmin, but even he could not convince Ambedkar that the Untouchables are as much a part of Hinduism as any other caste within its fold. In fact, not only Gandhi, Tagore and several others of Ambedkar’s own time, and Dayanand Saraswati and Phule before Ambedkar’s time a number of people had honestly taken up the cause of the depressed classes. One feels that perhaps it would have been better if Ambedkar had expressed solidarity with them instead of developing distrust against all of

them. It would certainly be wrong to call it sheer arrogance, but it has its roots in his personal experiences, rather than in his awareness of what was happening around him. One cannot underestimate his achievement as a great leader, and one cannot doubt his honesty either, but he would definitely have been more successful than he actually was if he had widened his field of activity and if, instead of passing judgements on others, he should have sought the co-operation of the likeminded people irrespective of their caste. His activities in this direction are, naturally, mixed up with his political activities. We, therefore, now pass on his political role. Whatever his intellectually conceived sociological concepts, Ambedkar had a vision of social equality. However, he was not an advocate of social Justice. He believed that everything, all organization, all institutions, all moral and ethical acceptances were bound to change. He felt that social equality was the need of the hour and all age-old traditions, however valuable they might have been when they were conceived, could be unvaluable they might have been when they were conceived, could be unhesitatingly sacrificed for the sake of social equality. The traditional caste system, he thought, was the greatest enemy of Indians at the present moment. He therefore, opposed all those men and institutions which wanted to perpetuate that rotten tradition of the past.

The first task before Ambedkar was to try to safeguard the rights of the Untouchables. He felt that unless the Untouchables were allowed free entry into public places, they would never be treated as equals of the Caste-Hindus. He got an opportunity to play his role in the regeneration of the Untouchables in 1923. In 1923, a leader of the non-Brahmin party Mr. S.K. Bole, moved a resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council to request to grant permission to the Untouchables to enter all water-places, wells and Dharmashalas. The Government accepted the resolution and a directive was issued to this effect. However the directive was not sincerely followed by all municipalities. Three years later, in 1926, Mr. Bole moved a more stringent resolution according to which all government grants had to be stopped to all those municipalities which tried to stop the Untouchables from entry to the public water places. In keeping with Mr. Bole's resolutions, the Mahad municipality opened the famous water tank, called Chowder, to the Untouchables. This move infuriated the caste-Hindus of Mahad and they tried to stop the new move. To counteract this Ambedkar and his followers arranged a conference at Mahad which was attended by some 10,000 delegates. The conference was addressed by Ambedkar. He forcefully stressed the need of granting the rights of equality to all Untouchables. Some caste-Hindu also supported the move, but Ambedkar had no trust in them. After the conference the delegates marched to Chudhar in order to assert their claims on the tank. This move is known as Mahad Tank Satyagrah. A number of caste-Hindus clashed with the delegates

and some people were injured. Most of the delegates took shelter in Muslim houses and Ambedkar himself had to run to a police station for shelter. The Mahad Tank Satyagrah, Though not a full success, proved beyond doubt that the Untouchables had got a new powerful leader and that it would not be possible to stop the movement any further. In 1927 Ambedkar led another batch of Satyagrahis to Mahad in order to assert their claims. This time the Untouchables had to face social boycott and at several places they were assaulted by the caste-Hindus.

Ambedkar was determined to launch Satyagrah at Mahad but the authorities requested him to postpone the move. This time he relented and there was no further confrontation. At Mahad, Muslims were successfully persuaded by Ambedkar and his party to help them. The Muslims accepted the request and provided a suitable site for the conference, though the conference did not take place at all. The same year in 1927. A copy of the "Manusmriti" was burnt by the followers of Ambedkar. In his several speeches he expressed his opinion that it would not be possible for the low caste people to assert their claim to equality unless and until they were ready to retaliate against all move launched by the caste-Hindus.

During this satyagrah the untouchables tried to impress upon the caste-Hindus that so long as they believed in obsolete Shastras and the "Manu-Smriti" it will not be possible for them to calm down the angry untouchables. They wanted that the Untouchables also must be allowed the opportunity to take up the profession of priesthood, if they desired. However the hospitality between the two groups- the Untouchables and the caste-Hindus continued. It seems that as a consequence of his experiences at Mahad, two things had been clear to Ambedkar: one, the power of the Untouchables was not adequate enough to resist the move of the caste Hindus, and it was, therefore, necessary to take the help of Muslims (This move on the part of Ambedkar complicated the whole issue later on and finally resulted in the partition of the country to which Ambedkar was agreeable), second, Ambedkar also realized that it would not be right to antagonize the government and that it would be better to seek the government's, cooperation to the extent possible.

On May, 1930, Ambedkar involved himself in several Temple Entry Movement which continued till 1935. The movement started at Nasik. Ambedkar succeeded in collecting a strong force of men and women Satyagrahis to enter Kala Ram Mandir in batches. The Satyagrahis reached the temple but found the door closed. From the temple they marched towards the ghats of River Godavari. At this stage the Caste Hindus started retaliating. What they did must certainly be treated as a blot. They pelted stones and shoes on the satyagrahis.

Finally, an agreement was reached. It was decided that the Chariot of Rama on the Ram-Navami day will be pulled by both the caste-Hindus did not allow the Untouchables to touch the chariot. This branch of promise, naturally, infuriated the Untouchables.

Ambedkar was now convinced that it would be wrong to accept any cooperation from the caste-Hindus. However, it has a new dimension to Ambedkar's personality. His name was now being mentioned all over England where the arrangements for the Round Table Conference were being made. It must go to the credit of Ambedkar that, at this time at least, he was trying to persuade the caste- Hindus to believe that the Untouchables were fighting for a right cause and that he had absolutely no intention to resort to violence. However, it was perhaps not a right move on his part to refuse to support the bill moved by a South Indian leader, Dr. Subramanyam, which was aimed at allowing the right of temple entry to the Untouchables. Even Gandhi could not prevail upon him. Ambedkar wanted not merely a right to enter temples but also the right to worship inside the temple to which the caste Hindus did not agree. Gandhi's opinion that even the right to enter temples would be a step in the right direction, did not appeal Ambedkar.

From 1928 to the end his life he fought vigorously for the abolition of the Mahar Watan Act which was first passed as the Bombay Hereditary Office Act in 1874. According to this Act, the Mahars were forced to work as servants. If somehow a Mahar was unfit to discharge his duties he had to send someone from his family to work in his place. As a reward or remuneration for this a small piece of land (Watan) was given to him. A small amount (Annas two to Rupee one per member) was also given to him. In 1928, Ambedkar introduced a bill in the Bombay Legislative Council for the amendment of the 1874, Watan Act. The Act provided for the commutation of the Watandars and specification of the Wantandar's duties. He made it clear before the council that the holder, better remuneration to the Watandars and specification of the Watandar's duties. He made it clear before the council that the Watanadaras were the greatest obstacle in the progress of the Maharas. Ambedkar's bill was referred to a select committee of twenty three members. The committee modified the bill considerably, so much so that in 1929 Ambedkar Withdrew the bil.l However, he again introduced a new bill for the abolition of the Watan Act in 1937 and later threatened to turn his agitation into a full-fledged Satyagrah if the deans of the Mahars were not legally and constitutionally conceded. It is a pity that he could merely swept the ball rolling and could not achieve the desired result in his life time. The Watan Act was abolished after his death only in 1959. There are example such as this to prove that Ambedkar all his life fought for the rights of his community. One thing that comes out of his activities during this period is that his wanted to achieve his goal through constitutional means and opposed violence. Whatever constitutional means and

opposed violence. Whatever his reservations about Gandhi, he at best accepted the Gandhism method of non-violence as the right one.

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