

THE OPPRESSED HINDUS

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I. INTRODUCTION

No epoch in the history of South India is so interesting or so important as the present period of transition after the Montagu Chelmsford dispensation of 1919 when forces which have lain quiescent during a hundred and odd years of the British Reign of Law have come up again to the surface with apparently renewed vigour and vitality. For whatever may be said about the sins of omission and commission of the British Administration during the period, the outstanding fact remains that from the prince to the peasant, the high-caste Brahmin to the 'Depressed Indian,' the people were made equally 'powerless' and subject to the same machinery for the administration of justice in its widest sense and the machinery itself was thoroughly imbued with the British notions of Justice, Equity and Good Conscience. The promise of absolute "religious neutrality" in the gracious Proclamation of Queen Victoria of blessed memory was the

first surrender which His Britannic Majesty's Indian Government has had to explain away and circumvent whenever they had to legislate, for the correction of social abuses or in the highest interests of morality and humanity. The tendency of the British Indian Courts to accept the legal binding force of long-standing custom and the wholesale Indianisation of the subordinate judicial machinery tended to crystallise age-long social abuses into a rigid social system upheld by law and every small attempt to remove even a single social disability by Legislation has been checked by the cry of "Religion in Danger" and the apparent anxiety of the state to steer clear of even a suspicion of infringing the sacred promise of Queen Victoria.

The Indian *personnel* of the administration were mostly drawn from the lower middle classes who were the first to take advantage of the educational facilities offered by the Universities established under the Act of 1854. That educational system modelled on the old University of London, a mere examining body, has now been condemned as soulless and as having produced merely sen-

sitized specimens of humanity. The products of that system were types that had cut themselves adrift from all their old moorings of "Dharma and Ahimsa" and had not assimilated the British ideals of Justice and Fairplay. They were with a few honourable exceptions, merely free-lances abroad armed with a smattering of Western knowledge in a vast population of varying degrees of culture from the fifth century to the fifteenth and mostly took to the predatory professions and fished in troubled waters of their own creation. Those of them that got into the subordinate branches of the administrative machine, from the highest Deputy Collector or Commissioner and Subordinate Judge to the lowest Urban Police Constable or Village Headman carried on the merry game of tyranny and oppression of the common people, for both they and people knew full well that behind the meanest policeman stood all the absolutism of the Indian Government backed by the full might of the British Empire. The people were too poor and spiritless to attempt to bring home to the erring official his heinous acts committed under the cloak of authority and the

British agency were too few in number and the individual officer had too great an area under his control to maintain any effective supervision over his entire jurisdiction.

All this fell with the greater intensity on those classes that are classified as the "Depressed" and rivetted their social disabilities on them, for the Indian official was almost entirely drawn from the higher castes with their notions of inherent superiority.

II. THE OPPRESSION

According to the latest Census Report, the total population of the Madras Presidency is 42,794,155. Out of this, the Depressed Classes alone number about 7,503,475 slightly more than a sixth of the total population of the Presidency. The term "Depressed Classes" should not be confused with the term "Backward Classes". Backward Classes, are those communities that are only educationally backward but are really high up in the social, economic and religious scale.

On the other hand, communities that are called "Untouchable Classes" and are educationally, economically and socially back-

ward come under the term "Depressed Classes". These people have been kept down by the Caste Hindus, through the ages, by systematic tyranny and social oppression. The present submerged condition of these people is due to the organized age-long oppression of the so called superior classes. Sometimes it is argued that the existence of such a class is not peculiar to India. But caste in the form and under the circumstances in which it exists in India does not exist anywhere else. It should be remembered that the Submerged Tenth of other countries owe their condition chiefly to economic causes, but in this Presidency the Submerged Sixth or the Adi-Dravidas and Adi Andhras owe their miserable condition to social and religious rules, operating against them through the centuries. The peculiarity in the case of India does not consist in the existence of such a submerged class, but rather in the means employed to keep that class permanently under the blockade set up by the usurpers of power and influence. How these are regarded as Untouchables or rather Unapproachables—to approach whom is pollution—is a matter in which Social Workers

should take a deep and abiding interest. You may touch your horse, you may pat your dog, you may stroke your cat, but you may not touch an Adi Dravida or an Adi Andhra. You may breed cows and dogs in your houses, you may drink the urine of cows and swallow cow-dung to expiate your sins, but you shall not even approach an Adi-Dravida. The following is found in Sonnerat's voyage to the East Indies:—

“When an Indian of any other caste permits a Pariah to speak to him, this unfortunate being is obliged to hold his hand before his mouth, lest the (Caste) Indian may be contaminated with his breath; and if he has met on the highway, he must turn on one side to let the other pass. If any Indian whatever even a Choutrie by accident touches a Pariah, he is obliged to purify himself in a bath.” This account is one hundred and fifty years old.

They are denied access to public wells, tanks and roads. They cannot enter temples. They cannot obtain admission even into certain state-aided Schools and Colleges. They cannot even get into certain Post Offices either to post letters or to get a stamp. They are not allowed into choultries; although these houses of charity are solely intended for giving relief to the

poor, the needy and the suffering, yet, these classes are not allowed their benefit. They are denied even the rights permitted to dogs, cats, pigs, asses and buffaloes. Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn. How long is such a state of things to continue ?

No greater wrong can be done to a community endowed with human feelings and human capacities than to place it in such circumstances as to force it or lead it to believe that its members are eternally and for all time to come doomed to a life of ignorance, servitude and misery and that any sort of ambition in them for betterment or improvement is Sin. These voiceless millions are ground every day into the dust, and treated with contempt, a barbarity that is not accorded even to the vilest of animals. Hungry, naked, dispirited, living in wretched hovels, cringing in their attitude through long oppression, driven often by hunger to eat anything they get, abandoned religiously, morally, mentally and physically, they remain utterly miserable and helpless. Is this not a great national iniquity ?

The social condition of the Outcastes of

India, is tragical. The very manhood has been altogether crushed out of them, as the result of long centuries of oppression. High-handed lawless oppression overtakes the outcastes in a thousand forms as soon as ever he attempts to assert the freedom of his manhood or the elementary rights of a citizen, and he is thrust back into his old place, worse off and not better for the effort he has made. Being illiterate and socially down-trodden, his Caste Hindu neighbours prey upon him without compunction.

Now the Depressed Classes feel their smallness. They feel keenly that they have been deprived of their ancient heritage. They feel that it is the perverted judgment, purblind sectarianism, 'caste pride and caste arrogance in the so-called Caste Hindus, that is the cause of their starvation, ignorance and oppression. They also feel that they are the children of the soil and citizens possessing equal rights and privileges with their Caste-proud Hindu brethren.

When they compare their present condition with that under Indian Rulers, prior to the advent of the British, the dominant feeling is

one of gratitude and thankfulness. With the advent of the British, their emancipation commenced. But the emancipation is by no means complete; it has just commenced. We hear people speak of the foreigner with a certain amount of dislike. But after all, is it not to the foreigner that these people owe what little of education, material prosperity and personal liberty they possess, and not to their selfish countryman, the Caste-proud Hindu, who calling himself their kith and kin, exploited their labour for the fulfilment of his selfish ambition and greed, giving them a pittance. Moreover the Adi Dravida field labourer in many districts, is so tied up by debt to his master, who is a Caste Hindu and who takes care that the debt shall not be redeemed, that he is practically in the position of a serf and the system of man-mortgage by which the labourer binds himself and frequently his heirs to service till the debt is redeemed is well-known.

In most districts if a member of the Depressed Classes aspires to acquire a piece of Government waste land, the jealousy of Caste Landholders is aroused. Then what happens? He

has to reckon from the very start with a strong and deep-seated conspiracy of the hereditary land-holders, and "there is often no meanness, no lying dishonesty, no low creeping craftiness to which that conspiracy will not descend to deceive and destroy its victim."

Being almost invariably illiterate and socially down-trodden, it is a common thing for the Village Munsiff (a public officer) to collect excessive taxes from these people, who are cultivators, to withhold their receipts and charge them twice or thrice, denying the first payment and staying the reaping of their crops, or even putting their lands to auction, if the unjust demand is not met. Sometimes they are made to pay wet rates for dry cultivation.

It will no doubt interest the readers to know how applications for assignment of Government Darkhast lands from the members of Depressed Classes are at present disposed of. Invariably these applications are put down on the irrelevant and frivolous grounds of tank-bed-land, water-storage, village-common etc. These are mere pretexts for reserving these lands for well-to-do Caste Hindus. In the

disposal of these applications, the remarks of the Village Karnam and the Village Munsiff (petty Government Village Officials) go a great way almost to decide their fate. These Government village officials are in almost all cases Caste Hindus, and they have no sympathy whatsoever towards these people. Another objection very commonly urged against the grant of such lands is that they are required for grazing purposes, for the grazing of the cattle of the Mirasdars and other land owners who are all Caste Hindus. These wealthy Caste Hindus have vast areas of lands of their own. Instead of setting apart a portion of their own lands for the grazing of their own cattle they want Government to provide free grazing ground for their cattle, and think that the members of the Depressed Classes are lower in the scale of creation than their cattle. This is the very reason why the application for lands is being treated in this summary and contemptuous fashion. It will be strange to hear that in certain cases these applications have been rejected simply because the applicant did not possess a pair of bullocks and a plough of his own. This

is like putting the cart before the horse. How on earth could one expect a poor Depressed Class man who has not even an inch of land of his own to possess a pair of bullocks and a plough. If by chance a piece of land is assigned to the applicant, he is asked to pay for the trees growing on it. When a poor farmer of the Depressed Classes starts life practically, it is hard to expect him to have money with him to pay for these trees.

Another feature in the assignments made to these people is the introduction of caste distinctions even in classifying waste lands. In this caste-ridden country even lands are divided into High Caste Lands and Low Caste Lands, the high caste lands being better lands reserved for so-called high caste people and the low caste lands being inferior lands reserved for so-called low caste people ; for instance, when a member of the Depressed Classes applies for an elevated place for house site he is offered site on a low marshy ground and when he applies for a piece of cultivable waste land, he is offered a piece of land—barren, rocky-waste or saline in nature.

The following extracts from the Rev. T. B.

Pandian's brochure "The slaves of the soil in Southern India" will show what oppression really means with the Adi Dravida.

"A poor pariah started from his native town in the Madras Presidency to one of the British Colonies in quest of a fortune. He landed safe on colonial soil and was soon able to eke out an existence as a cooly labourer on the wharfs. His daily hire amounted to on the whole about 20 cents—a little over six annas—and this was ample to keep body and soul alive; but economy—stern economy—he soon pulled up in his exchequer. After the lapse of five years he one day said to himself:—"I will now sail home to India, and see what I can do there". Yes, the very idea of home, sweet home, caused his heart to palpitate; for it seems difficult to a man to keep away from those near and dear to him. There was joy, when he arrived at the doorstep of his cosy little rustic mansion. The wife and the little ones welcomed him with shouts, and with words of love, and everything within that rustic home was full of life. The poor man for some days enjoyed the quietness of home life, and in course of time set himself up in a petty trade. This alarmed the caste people of the village and it was an "eyesore" to the "swellish snobs," when they looked on the freaks of Dame Fortune. To find Raman, the swine feeder, a petty tradesman, was too much for the mirasdars (landlords) to behold. In

fact, it gave swine-feeder, an ascendancy, which was detestable, for the very fact that he was a Pariah. So oppression was the order of the day. They soon resolved to wreck Raman's independence, "petty independence", and a criminal case was most dexterously weaved to enmesh the man who had been the architect of his own fortunes. Raman was placed before a tribunal for theft, convicted and lastly thrown into a felon's cell. Now, all was darkness within that rustic dwelling. Smiles turned into tears, and after the lapse of a few months, poverty once more spread her hideous black pall over the poor household. It was all starvation, sheer starvation, and then sickness. One by one, the little ones—sweet flowers, drooped down to die as the rays of poverty were too sharp for them and they fell to mother earth never to rise, never to see the face of their father after his release. What about the wife? Sorrow and starvation were also her portion and she also succumbed as a pauper. The husband after his release traces his steps to the old homestead, but vacant is the old home, and the only portion left to him is the profession of a mendicant; but keen sorrow and privation soon end his days also. Such was Raman's lot."

"I have to tell you again in my own homely style another incident, where a poor labourer was deprived of his cow, the sole means of support of himself and his wife. This labourer was an exceed-

ingly poor man of the lowest caste and one who had a large family. His sons, young men, went in search of labour to distant parts, leaving their parents to live the best way they could. The cow was therefore their only sustenance, but the headman of the village (a caste Hindu) was rather fascinated with the beast and ordered some men under him to fetch the animal. The animal was taken by force; and the husband and wife both pleaded to the effect that the cow was their only support in life, and if it was taken away from them, they would necessarily suffer from poverty. But to appease them the headman drove the couple away, promising to give them the sum of 8 annas a month for their up-keep. Such instances as these occur almost every day in country places, and it is oppression unpardonable, to rob the poor who cannot defend themselves. Is it not cruel to tread on the poor earth-worm and to treat it as we would treat the Cobra? Cruelty, in whatever phase we may view it, should be sternly put down, and to those who devastate poor homes, no punishment administered by the law can be too severe."

"Here is another instance, where the Karnam (Village Accountant) of a village utilizes the poor pariah to his benefit. The Karnam has by some mysterious way become a land holder, but he is still not satisfied. He wishes to add to his possession and in some respects to cope with petty Zemindars, and thus finding a waste piece of

land near to an extensive cultivated plot of his own, he holds a private "Panchayat" Council among half a dozen of his own pariah slaves, and strives his utmost to make some of them believe that waste lands can be monopolised without the consent of Government, and if the tax be regularly paid, no suspicions of any nature would arise. Upon this the pariah soon toils at the sweat of his brow, first he clears the land of all its weeds, and the next thing is he borrows a country plough and ploughs for a few annas, and turns over the hard crusted soil. Piccottahs (water-lifts) are next built on a loan from the Karnam himself, and flocks of sheep may be seen here and there scattered to manure the soil. All this means money, and the poor Pariah borrows it, so that at the end he may recover four-fold in the produce of the land. Well, after the soil is prepared to receive the seed, the poor and deluded Pariah husbandman is induced to apply for Government "Pattah", as this secures to the land owner a right to his possession, and thus keeps him safe and well-protected from the interference of other "land-grabbers". But he finds that no sooner is an application made for a "Pattah" than the Karnam opposes the application, or in other words, turns out to be the most inveterate foe of the man whom he pretended to protect. The Karnam in his evidence informs the authorities concerned that the Pariah occupied the land of his own sweet will and

without his permission. The decision then is, that the land should be made over to the Karnam, since the 'Pattah' was *sub rosa* made in his name. This is what the Karnam wished to obtain; that is, waste land, well cleared of its refuse by the brow-writhing labours of the poor Pariah, who under dupery toiled hard to benefit himself, but in the long run was ousted and was destined not to enjoy the fruit of his labours. Such is the injustice and the law sanctions it".

Here is another similar instance, where rude oppression has its iron sway, but here we find the Pariah husbandman a little fortunate. He has cultivated land without Government permission and interference for over ten years and holds Revenue receipts to show that he has been a regular taxpayer, but he thinks it far safer to make a move and asks the Karnam to put in an application for a "Pattah". But the Karnam is a "wide awake", and informs his slave to toil on for another couple of years. After the lapse of another six years, the Pariah puts in a second application direct to the authorities for a 'Pattah' and this time he is opposed by a mirasdar, in whose name the "Pattah" was originally made without the knowledge of the Pariah. While the Pariah is thus in the vortex of litigation a drove of cattle is wantonly driven into the 'Cumboo' fields of the Pariah, and the whole field is laid bare in a few hours. Whereupon, the Pariah launches another case in court, and receives

a fair compensation for damages done, but the "Pattah" made on the mirasdar's name was produced, and the Pariah after so many weary years of honest toil is cast upon the open world, with no means whatever to defend himself. This is the iron-hand of oppression."

Swami Sahajanandam, an Adi Dravida Saint, a highly cultured Sadhu, applied for a piece of Government waste land for his Nandanar Free School in Chidambaram. His application for the grant of this land was sent to the subordinate Government Revenue Officials. These caste-ridden officials did not recommend the assignment. Whereupon, the application of Swami Sahajanandam was rejected. The Swami did not stop there. He went up to the District Collector who is an Officer of the Indian Civil Service, and requested him to personally inspect the site, before finally rejecting his application. The District Collector was a sympathetic officer, he went up to the spot, inspected the site and assigned it to our Swami and wrote the following proceedings, which will clearly show how the British Collectors are thwarted in their attempts to benefit the Depressed Classes by their Caste Hindu subordinates :—

" D. Dis. No. 2395-20-A-4.

Proceedings of the Collector of South Arcot dated 3-9-1920.

R.F.B.L. Guppy Esq., I.C.S.

Read:—Correspondence ending with report No. 112-S. C. of 1920, dated the 2nd August 1920 of the Revenue Divisional Officer, Chidambaram.

ORDER.

Assignment—land—Chidambaram Taluk—Kallipadi village—Sahajanandam—Manager—Nandanar School—Chidambaram.

* * *

I therefore resolved to inspect the land and did so. All reports in the file are misleading. More correct reports are found in another file not shown to me before inspection. The northern portion is the highest and is no use for storing water. The middle portion is low, and is required for draining off surplus water of Kunamangalam tank.

3. * * *

4. The mirasdar Mr. V. Velayudam Pillai is the chief opponent of the alienation. Knowing that I inspected the land he gave up the contention that the Northern portion is required for water spread and says that it is required for village site. The contentions of persons who offer contradictory arguments of this kind are worth nothing.

(Sd.) R.F.B.L. Guppy,

Ag. Collector."

III. CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY

Sometimes the European Christian Missionary who is their Good Samaritan is blamed for giving them religious instruction, or rather these people are looked down upon for receiving religious instruction at his hands. But what did the so-called patriotic Caste Hindu do for these, his fellow countrymen, by way of moral and religious instruction? The Christian Missionary opens his doors wide to all and especially to the outcaste and down-trodden, following his Masters saying "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" and fulfilling His teaching "He that is least among you the same shall be great." Is it not a fact that some among the Depressed Classes, being unable to endure the treatment at the hands of the so-called higher castes, are becoming Christians? Is it not a fact that the Caste Hindus show greater respect and give better treatment to those that have become Christians than to those that remain within Hindu fold? When Raman or Ramaswamy becomes Mr. Ramsay, he is respected by the Caste Hindus. Thousands and thousands of

Depressed Classes are becoming converts to the Christian faith. This is due to the inhuman treatment of the Caste proud Hindu.

IV. PAST AND PRESENT

Of the former greatness of the Adi Dravidas, it is not for me to speak. But it may be stated that they cherish the memory of their former greatness and delight in asserting that they were the original inhabitants of the soil.

The Adi Dravidas represent the earliest civilization of South India. They were once a very great and powerful community that played a conspicuous part on the historical stage of India, and had developed a complete civilization of their own, with their democratic form of Government, their priests, their astronomers and astrologers, their fine arts and a religion and philosophy of their own. Long before the Aryans came down to South India, the Adi Dravidas had their own political and social institutions: upon them they (the Aryans) sought to impose their civilization. Even now when a Foreign Missionary comes into our midst and begins to expound the Gospel, those that are educated, independent and in good

circumstances do not go near him, but resist his attempts and call him "Milecha". On the other hand those who are in adverse circumstances and who are not well versed in the Hindu religion, approach him, listen to his teaching and become his disciples. So also, when the Aryan missionaries came to South India some Adi-Dravidas followed them and listened to their mantras, tantras and religion, and some others resisted their attempts. The Adi Dravidas of to-day are the descendents of those who strongly and successfully resisted the attempts of the Aryans. As missionaries, the Aryans received into their fold anybody who agreed to accept their spiritual guidance and leadership and acknowledged their superiority. Having succumbed to the teachings of the Aryans and not resisted them in their attempts, the Dravidas of to-day were taken into their fold and were converted into Caste Hindus, and for having resisted and stood aloof from their system, the Adi-Dravidas of to-day, were left out to sink in the social scale, as the Aryans became powerful. By their cunning the Aryans gradually became the lords of the soil and the Adi-Dravidas were

punished with social degradation and were made serfs and slaves. When the Aryan immigrants came into India, there was a paucity of women in their clan, probably there were none. So the immigrants were forced to take wives from the indigenous people and miscegenation discontinued as soon as each mixed tribe had a sufficient number of women to provide itself with wives. Then the Adi-Dravidas were Vellalas (weavers and tillers of the soil) in times of peace and Kshatriyas (armed warriors) in times of war. F. A. Steel in "India Through Ages", says, "A time before this, when the Aryans came to India, they found a people in India civilized enough to have towns and disciplined troops, to have weapons and banners, women whose ornaments were of gold, poisoned arrows whose heads were of some metal that was probably iron." These were the Adi Dravidas, a tawny race as compared with the white-skinned Aryans. They did not perform sacrifices, their rites were different from those of the Aryans. The Aryans called them, "The wealthy barbarians," "the neglectors of sacrifices" who "decorated with gold and jewels," and

“dwellers in iron cities.” The Aryan invaders got from the Adi Dravidas, servile work, debarred them from meddling with matters religious and denied them the privilege of carrying arms. It was the centuries of serfdom that made them depressed, but the spirit is still dormant in them.

The Adi Dravidas were the ancient sons of the soil. They were so highly cultured that their advanced civilization had the vitality to spread as far as Ancient Babylon. They were also a great commercial people, sending their ships all over the known world and carrying on a great commerce. Their refusal to submit to the influence of the Aryan immigrants from the North gave the death-blow to their advanced civilization. There was no caste system among the Ancient Dravidians. But when the Aryans first came, a system of caste existed among them. There were already groups within the Aryans,—Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas. To this they added the fourth section and admitted into it all the Adi Dravidas, the Dravidas of to-day, who tamely submitted to their influence. This fourth section was given the name of “Sudras.” Those Adi Dravidas

who strongly resisted their influence and refused to submit to their teaching were left out and condemned as outcastes. They, the Aryans, adopted towards these people an attitude similar to that usually assumed by the white races towards the coloured races in tropical colonies.

For the crime of having stood aloof from the system of the Aryan foreigners these Adi Dravidas were not only punished with social degradation, but were also stigmatized as untouchables and unapproachables. It is this despicable caste system that imposed various social and economic disabilities upon them. But the Caste Hindus could not get on without their assistance, for it was they that supplied the labour and the Caste Hindus enjoyed the fruits thereof, giving them a mere pittance in return.

A historical survey of the caste system will not be out of place here. The four castes gradually developed a number of sub-castes. During the time of Sandracottes, the Greek Ambassador Magasthenes noticed the existence of only seven Hindu Castes :—1. Philosophers, 2. Husbandmen, 3. Shepherds and Hunters,

4. Labourers or those who trade or vend wares, 5. Fighting men, 6. Inspectors charged with the supervision of all that goes on, 7. Councillors and Assessors of the King. There was no slavery then. Now instead of the original four or the latter seven, we have about 2, 400 Main Castes and Tribes and about fifty Races or nationalities in South India. And caste holds a mighty sway in India. From the cradle to the grave the monstrous "Caste," encourages repulsion between man and man, sways every movement of the Hindu as it exists in India to-day, brings on physical degeneracy and national poverty, crushes individual liberty, stunts the growth of nationality, sows disunion and discord, degrades the race of man to the low level of brutes, hardens the heart of one against the sufferings of another and fills a few with pride and arrogance which makes them imperious in their demeanour towards their fellowmen.

The outcaste people were called Pariahs, Pallas, Valluvas in the Tamil Districts, Malas and Madigas in the Telugu Districts of the East Coast, and Pulayas and Cherumas and Holeyas in the Districts of the West Coast. Pariah was

a common name used to indicate all these untouchable classes. For the first time the word "Pariah" occurs in a poem of Mangudi Kilar, a poet of the second century A.D. This term Pariah is not found either in any earlier Tamil Literature or in any ancient inscriptions. The term "Pariah" is derived from *Para* or *Parai*, a drum. The inference is drawn that they were the drummers and have obtained their name from the instrument, the Parai or drum, that they were supposed to use. The word Parai or Para, is not found in any other Dravidian language in the sense of drum, but Tamil and Malayalam. If the Pariahs were really the drummers, they would be called by the same name wherever they were found in India. But these people were called and are called Holeyas in Kannada and Malavadu in the Telugu country. Now the so-called Pariahs do not beat drums. Those that beat drums and play the band during festivals, marriages, etc., are called Ambattans and they belong to the Barber Caste, a sub section of the Sudras. The Pariahs were in actual possession of the fields which were subsequently taken from them and made over to the Aryans. Thus the

lord of the soil became the serf attached to the soil.

The outcastes in the Telugu country are called Mallas. The Mallas are repeatedly mentioned in the Mahabarata and in various Puranas as a nation. The outcastes in Northern India are called Mars or Mhars. The Mallas are the same as Maras, who are known as Mars or Mhars, transformed into Mahar. Mallabhum and Mallarashtra which refer to the Northern parts of India, occur in Ramayana and Mahabarata. Mallarashtra and Maharashtra are identical in meaning. Although the term Mallarashtra dropped into oblivion, yet these two names indicate the connection of Mallas and Mahars with the land, Mallarashtra the country of the Mallas and Maharashtra the country of the Mahars. From this also it is very clear that these people were once the Lords of the Soil.

The word Pariah may as well be a corruption of the word Paharias, a race of mountaineers. When the Aryans came to the country, these people were probably then living in mountains and hills, and attacked the Aryans with all the ardour of the mountaineers in

defence of their independence and liberty. Again the word Pariah split into *Par* plus *Iyan* in Tamil, *Par* meaning land and *Iyan* meaning lord, may mean the owners of the land and the lord of the soil (India). So the Pariahs were then probably the Rulers of the land, cultivators and weavers in times of peace and warriors in times of war. Thus you come across the two divisions Uzavu (ploughing) and Nesavu (weaving).

Going further still into their subdivision we see such a section as Valluvas (priests and state heralds who proclaimed the news by beat of drum from on the back of caprisoned elephants). The words Kottai (fort), Kottaram (granary where in ancient days the land tax levied in kind was stored), Sambu (God Siva), Virabhahu (a General of Siva), Panikan (teacher), Kolyan and Solyan (weavers), and Ambu (arrow) in their language point to the fact that these people were once a great nation, occupying a high position, having priests, heralds, tax gatherers, religious devotees, and solicitors and owning forts. The Adi Dravidas were then a flourishing nation with a language, religion and art, occupations and a political status of their own.

They had their kings even as late as the 2nd or 3rd Century A.D. These kings were reigning at Vellore, Ambur and other places, with all the pomp of Eastern Rulers. In Vincent A. Smith's Early History of India, it is stated that "the Chandels, like several other dynasties, first come into notice early in the ninth century, when Nannuka Chandel, about A.D. 831, overthrew a Parihar (Adi-Dravida) chieftain (King), and became lord of the southern parts of Jejakabhukti." He further describes Jejakabhukti as the province between the Jumna and Narmada, now known as Bundelkand.

The Caste Hindus have called them for a long time Pariahs. Whatever be the derivation of the name, this word uttered by a Caste Hindu tongue, conveys everything that is mean and despicable today and means the opposite of all that is holy and respectable. Awakened to a sense of self-respect they protested against this opprobrious name and agitated for a better one. Some of the Caste Hindus suggested the name of Panchama meaning one belonging to the fifth class. In their eagerness to get rid of the name of Pariah, they accepted the name Panchama. But as their sense of self-respect

grew, they came to realize the sinister implications of the name Panchama. When there are only four Hindu Castes to call them Panchamas or men of the fifth class or caste, is really to call them 'outcastes'.

So they sought for a name which would indicate that they were the first inhabitants of Southern India and had nothing to do with that most inhuman of human institutions, Caste. They wanted a name which would point to their racial and territorial origin. Disliking the name Eurasian, the Eurasian community took to themselves the name 'Anglo-Indian'. The Non-Brahmin caste Hindus, disliking the name Sudra took to themselves the name Dravidian.

When the question of a name for the community was considered some thirty-two years ago, it was decided that they should be called Adi Dravidas to distinguish them from "Sudras", who had now taken the name Dravidians or Dravidas.

Adi means original, pure and unalloyed as in "Adi Saivas, Adi Sankarachariar, Adi Lakshmi, Adi Bagavan, Adi Sivan, Adi-Narayan, Adi-Kesavan, Adimulam" etc.

There are at the present day some relics of their ancient rights and privileges which show beyond doubt the former greatness of these people, which are still to be found in the village organizations. Their decision in disputes concerning ownership of land is regarded as final. In an inscription of the eleventh century A. D., we find recorded the decision of one Vesali Parian and his Councillors to be a final one in a civil case concerning the ownership of a piece of land belonging to a temple in the village of Mudepakavar. Even in the North it is so, for the evidence of the Mhar is required in every dispute. "Should two cultivators quarrel respecting the boundaries of their fields" says, Mr. R.N. Goddine, "the Mhars' evidence ought to decide it, and should a similar quarrel happen between two villages, the Mhars are always the chief actors in it and to their decision alone it is sometimes referred". Mr. W.F. Sinclair calls the Mahar as the guardian of boundaries and of public peace and health.

The lower offices in villages are held by the Adi Dravidas and wherever there is any dispute about the boundaries of land, the Adi Dravida walks over the true boundaries

with a pot of water on his head. They are wonderful experts in this matter and unerringly point out where boundaries should run, even when the demarcation stones have been removed. This also shows that the Adi Dravidas' connection with the land is of longer standing than that of any other caste. Moreover the admitted proprietary right which they have in the site, known as *Cheri-natham*, on which their huts stand is a confirmation of this. It is not so well known that the Brahman who considers himself polluted by the touch, the presence or shadow of an Adi Dravida, will not be allowed to enter the *Cheri-natham*. Should a Brahman venture into a *cheri*, water with which cowdung has been mixed, is thrown on his head and he is driven out. Some Brahmins consider a forsaken *cheri*, an auspicious site for an *Agraharam*. It is also stated by Captain J.S.F. Mackenzie in the *Ind. Ant. II*, 1873, that "Brahmins in Mysore consider that great luck will await them if they can manage to pass through the Holeyá quarters of a village unmolested and that should a Brahman attempt to enter their quarters, they turn out in a body and slipper him."

The special privileges that the Adi Dravidas enjoy even to this day, point to their former greatness. At the annual festival of the tutelary Goddess of George Town in the premier city of Madras, the *thali* or marriage badge is tied round the neck of the Goddess by an Adi Dravida in the name of the entire community. The Adi Dravida in question is clothed gorgeously and fed in the temple as the accepted bridegroom of the Goddess as long as the festival lasts. Drums are beaten in his honour when the idol of the Goddess Egathammal is carried round the city and a copper coin is placed in his hand and another copper coin on the hand of the Goddess by the officiating priest when the *Kappu* ceremony is performed. The Adi Dravida officiates as priest at the Bull Games at Dindigul. During the great Hindu annual festivals at Conjeeveram, one of the sacred cities of India, and at Srivilliputtur, Kumbakonam, Tiruvottiyur and other holy places, Adi Dravidas are permitted to pull the ropes of the huge cars containing the idols. Rev. A. Andrews rightly remarks "A special license is given to the Pariahs on such great religious festivals and

this shows how accommodative Hindus can be when it suits their purpose." Yes, they can be very accommodative when it suits them. During the festival of Siva at Tiruvalore in the Tanjore District, the Adi Dravida headman is specially honoured by being placed on the temple elephant along with the God and made to carry the *chowry* in his hand to fan the idol.

Adi Dravidas according to the *Indian Antiquary*, Volume III, page 191, are accorded special privileges even in the famous Krishna Temple in Melukote in the Mysore State. Melukote is the chief seat of the Sri Vaishnavite Brahmins and the residence of the Sri Vaishnavite high priest. It is the place where Ramanuja the famous Vaishnavite Reformer lived for fourteen years in the 12th century and is therefore regarded as a very holy place by Ramanuja's followers. It is recorded that a certain Adi Dravida pointed out to him a certain image of which he had been dreaming and for this act he conferred on the Adi Dravida community the privilege of entering the temple for three days in the year for all time to come. This Andrews points out, is a very extraordinary privilege when we

consider how rigid and strict the Vaishnavite Brahmins are with regard to ceremonial purity in things pertaining to worship and social intercourse. They also enjoy a similar privilege at Sriperumbudur in the Chingleput District, for having sheltered an image of Vishnu during the Mussalman raid.

There is no doubt that the Adi Dravida community was once a very important community and that it had a glorious past. It had its own Government and its own courts. Each village elected five men and these formed the Panchayat, the Council of the Elders. A Panchayat is a court presided over by five men ; it was something like the *Witanagemot*. Out of these five men one was elected as the headman and he was called the Natamaikaran. Even to-day we see the remnant of this institution in the villages. All disputes of the village so far as they are arbitrable were tried by the Panchayat, an admirable instrument of decision. The Valluvans, a section of the Adi Dravidas, were priests to the Pallava Kings, before the introduction of the Brahmins, and even for sometime after it. The late Sir Harold Stewart in the Census Report for 1891

quotes an unpublished *Vatteluttu* of the 9th century in which the following sentence occurs :—

இத்தனி உவச்சன் ஸ்ரீ வல்லுவம் பூவணவன்
 சியமம் ஆளுளிட்டு உவச்சப்பணி செய்பவன்.

Which means, Sri Valluvam Puvanavam the Uvachan (or temple minister) will employ six men daily and do the temple service. The inference is that the Valluvan a member of the Adi Dravida community was a man of recognised priestly rank and of great influence. Not only this, the Valluvans were the astrologers and astronomers and physicians and surgeons. Even to-day there are Valluvans, who are expert astrologers and capable physicians practising the Ayurvedic and Siddah system of medicine.

There is however, evidence to show that these people were intimately connected with the important temples. Mr. Gustav Oppert in his work "*On the original inhabitants of Bharatavarsha or India*," says "Valli is a well-known female name common among the Pariahs and Pallars." Subramanya, the son of Siva, is credited with having chosen a South Indian girl called Valli as his wife. She was an Adi

Dravida. Parvati, the wife of Siva is even worshipped as an Adi Dravida woman in her disguise as Matangi. Among the twelve *Alvars* of Vaishnavaism, the famous Tirupan Alwar was an Adi Dravida. Among the sixty three *Nainars* of Saivitism, the well-known Nanda was an Adi Dravida. In the sacred work *Manushya Panchakam* of Jagat Guru Sree Sankaracharya, the founder of the four *Sankara Pedams*, the seats of learning, it is stated that this Great Jagathguru publicly accepts one Visvanadhan as his guru and received initiation from him. This Visvanathan is an Adi Dravida and is held in high esteem by his followers who are Smartha Brahmins. In *Bakthavijayam*—Lives of Vaishnavite Bakthas or Devotees of North India—Chokka melar, the great baktha who was accepted as a guru by the learned Brahmins of Pandaripur, was an Adi Dravida. So also Nambaduwana and Maraneri Nambi whose lives are recorded in that sacred standard work *Guruparamparai*—Lives of Vaishnavite Saints and Devotees of South India. Among the *Sanga Pulavars*, the most ancient Tamil Academy of Poets, the world-famed author of the immortal *Thirukkural*, Thiruvalluvar one of

the greatest didactic poets in the world, was an Adi Dravida. Avvai, the popular poetess was an Adi Dravida. Arundathi, the wife of Maharishi Vasishta belonged to the Depressed Classes. The origin of the famous Jagannath Temple at Puri, is also closely connected with the outcastes.

In this connection a few words about the Adi Dravida luminaries referred to above will not be out of place. In the galaxy of the eminent poets and scholars of the period the holy Thiruvalluvar stood first and foremost. His famous work *Thirukkural* is a code of morals expressed in poetical aphorisms. Even after a lapse of more than 1800 years it has lost none of its original admiration and popularity among the tamil people and it is still considered as a standard authoritative work in tamil literature. This masterpiece is prescribed as a text book for the B.A. and M.A. Degree examinations of the University of Madras.

Thiruppan Alwar is one of the most prominent among the twelve Alwars. The famous work of Thiruppan Alwar, *Amaran Adhiparan* in tamil verse, is chanted in all Vaishnavite

temples side by side with the Sanskrit hymns or *Upanishads*. It is accepted by all, Brahmins included, that this Adi Dravida saint has become one with God Sree Ranganadha, at Sreerangam in the Trichinopoly District. Even to-day the image of Thiruppan Alwar is seen in all the Vaishnavite temples of South India and is universally worshipped.

Nanda was a Saivite saint. He was a ryot under a Smartha landholder. This Nanda was eager to go to Chidambaram to worship the God Nataraja. But the Brahman was an obstacle to this and would not allow him to do this. Nanda persisted. His master with a view to stop him from going to Chidambaram to worship Sree Nataraja imposed on him several impossible tasks and wanted him first to finish them and then go. Being a baktha, God Siva himself did all the work for him without his knowledge in a single night. His master struck with the devotion of Nanda, immediately prostrated himself before him, adored him and permitted him to go to Chidambaram. Nanda went there and became one with Siva. His image is found in all the Siva temples and is worshipped by the devotees.

The famous tamil poetess is Avvai. Her poems are read by every beginner in tamil. Her two books of aphorisms, *Athichudi* and *Konraiventhan*, were considered by the learned Reverend Beschi as 'worthy of Seneca himself.'

Arunthathi is the wife of Vasishta, the Brahma Rishi, one of the *Saptha Rishies* and a *Vathaparangadha*. She is famous for her chastity and that is why she is worshipped by the bridegroom and the bride of all Hindu communities on marriage occasions. When Arjuna's son Abhimanyu was hit by an arrow and was at the point of death, his mother Subhadra invoked the blessing of Arundhathi and her son recovered. This shows the high veneration with which she was held by women of all classes. She is now said to exist in the form of a star.

Again according to *Nanavethi* the Adi Dravidas have eighteen titles and possess also the same insignia.

Among these insignia are mentioned the following: White, earth-circle umbrellas; lion, swan, green and white, monkey (Hanuman), cuckoo, plough-handle, wheel and lion faced

flags; a trumpet; closely carried torches (aruku) and day torches; victorious bells, two white chowries, white elephant; white horse; ivory palanquins; cuscus fan, flute; white long robe, two poles with cloth stretched across the street (makaratorna), golden pot, etc.

Samban is also a title borne by some Adi Dravidas in the tamil country. The word *Samban* is a corruption of the word *Jambavan*, who though described in *Ramayana* as a bear and having a following of his own species, is said to be the first born of the God *Brahma*, the creator. It is also found in *Ramayana* that *Jambavan*, the Adi Dravida, was the custodian of all ancient learning and was a mighty warrior though called a bear in *Ramayana* by the Aryan poet in his conceit. *Jambavathi*, a daughter of *Jambavan*, was married to King *Krishna*. God *Sree Krishna*, the black ('கரியன்', 'கரியமேனி', 'கார்மேனி' as said by *Nam Alwar*, *Peri Alwar* and *Sree Andal*) is an Adi Dravida and not an Aryan,

Then again, *Jambavan* was a faithful devotee and the commander of the army of *Sreeman Narayana*. And it was *Jambavan* that proclaimed to the world, by means of tom tom,

the victory of Tiruvickarama, God Narayana, who redeemed the worlds from the cruel tyrant, Mahabali. Jambavan was also holding the office of a Chief Judge. As it is the custom even now for the crier, to announce the arrival of a Judge in the public court, the crier during the days of Jambavan used to announce the arrival of Judge Jambavan by crying out *Mthadigai*, which means, the Great is coming. This term *Mahadigai* is now converted into Madiga and signifies a section of the Depressed Classes.

Here, it will be interesting to know something about how the Adi Dravidas, during those days prior to the advent of the Aryans, managed their country. The head of the administration was a monarch, a hereditary monarch. His power was restricted by five councils known as the Five Great Assemblies and consisting of representatives of the people, priests, physicians, astrologers and astronomers and ministers. The Assembly of the People protected the rights and privileges of the people. The Assembly of the Priests safeguarded the religious ceremonies. The Assembly of the Physicians looked after all

matters affecting the health of the king and his subjects and attended to the sanitation of the country. The Assembly of the Astrologers and Astronomers fixed auspicious times for public functions and ceremonies and predicted important events. The Assembly of the Ministers looked after the finance and the administration of justice and also with a keen foresight prevented all that was evil and promoted all that was good for their king and for the people at large. This system of Government was in vogue even in the kingdoms of Pandya, Chola and Chera although they were quite independent of one another.

The chief officers of the State were the High priest, the Chief astrologer, the Ministers and the Commanders of the army. There were Judges and Magistrates also who carefully weighed the evidence and interpreted the law without fear or favour. All appeals were finally disposed of by the King. Justice was administered free of charge to the suitors and the punishments were very severe, hence crimes were very rare.

The sources of revenue were chiefly customs, tolls and land-tax.

The King was not only the head of the administration but also the head of the society. He freely mixed with the people and took the lead in every festivity in his capital, above all, he shared the joys and sorrows of the people. When the King came out in public or on state occasions, he was carried in a golden palanquin decorated with tassels of pearls and was clothed in fine white muslin embroidered with purple and gold.

They had their own recreations and amusements. Cock fighting, bull fighting, Rekla racing, driving of horses and of elephants, hunting, swimming, dancing, musical entertainments and religious festivities have been some of the chief amusements of the people during those days. There were gymnasia also, wherein the youths of the country were taught boxing and wrestling and the art of self-defence by means of sticks and swords. Gladiatorial contests between men were also exhibited.

Women had their own amusements, teaching parrots, singing the *Vallai* or *Ammanai*, rocking swings and playing the games of *dhayam*, *kalanku* or *elangal*, *pallanguli* and *pandhu*. The game of *dhayam* was something

like the game of dice, the game of kalanku or elangal was played with seven tiny balls or stones, the game of pallanguli was played with a wooden board on which fourteen holes, in two rows, seven on each row, were scooped out and filled in with a certain number of tamarind seeds.

The science and practice of fine arts were highly developed among the Adi Dravidas. The bark of trees and cotton cloth served as writing materials, but *cadjan* leaves (Palmyrah leaves) were commonly used. The study of music formed an essential part of a liberal education. The practice of reciting tamil poems with *ragam* dates from that period. They knew the art of boat and ship building and weaving and dyeing and working in gold and other metals. They had attained the highest proficiency in the art of agriculture and irrigation and in pearl fishing. Dancing also was cultivated as a fine art. The Adi Dravidas acquired proficiency in the art of painting and sculpture.

As regards their religion, they were nature worshippers. They worshipped the Sun, the Moon, and the five elements. They had even

hero-worship but they had no images or idols during those days. These were introduced only after the Aryan conquest.

They were a god-fearing people. Every small village in the rural parts had a temple, the remnant of which can be seen even to-day. In the *Threthayuga*, an Adi Dravida by name Samvara and his wife Pulini one day came across a *Sivalingam* in the forest. They worshipped it daily by smearing it with ashes from the burial ground. One day there were no ashes. The woman offered to have her body burnt in order to get ashes to be used. The husband did so and performed the puja. After the puja was over, he as usual, forgetting that she was dead turned round to offer the *prasadam* to her. To his great surprise he saw her standing behind him receive the offering (*prasadam*). God Siva then appeared before them in person and gave them absolution. From this it is evident, that these people were great devotees.

The Adi Dravidas were a martial race and had a glorious past. They had a regular army with cavalry and elephant corps. They knew the different ways of fighting the enemy

by siege and in the open field. They had well constructed fortresses. They were very brave soldiers and they were very humane to the aged and infirm and to women and children. *Purananuru* and *Agananuru* are full of incidents of their sublime heroism. The men delighted in the number of wounds they received in the front part of the body. Heroism was displayed even by women. Virikal (victory stone) was put in honour of the departed heroes. Even the holy Thiruvalluvar has written two chapters in his *Thirukkural* on the excellence of the army and on military spirit. When the Europeans came to India for the first time, it was these people that gave them timely and fraternal assistance and helped them to lay the foundations of the British Empire in India. In the famous siege of Arcot, they were content with gruel and offered the rice to Lord Clive and his assistants. In the Vellore and the Great Indian Mutiny they stood by the British and fought against people who sought to stir up hostilities by spreading false rumours.

I hope it will not be out of place to refer here to the ancestry of the author. Mr. A. R. Cox, I.C.S. Collector of Madras, said, while

presenting the Sanad and Badge of Rao Bahadur to Mr. M.C. Rajah M.L.C., the author, on the 15th December 1922 at the Durbar held in the Pachaiappas Hall, said as follows :—

“You are such a well known public man that it is almost unnecessary for me to say much about you. No doubt you have received this title because of the work you have done for and the esteem in which you are rightly held by the members of your own important community of the Adi Dravidas. During the labour troubles you did yeoman service in restraining them from violence and in protecting them effectively from law-breakers.

“You have represented your community in deputations to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State and to His Excellency the Viceroy. You are the first Adi Dravida to enter the Legislative Council and you have the interests of the depressed and poor always at heart.

“I understand that your grand father was an Indian Mutiny Veteran. The courage and endurance which he displayed in times of war are evinced by you in times of peace.

“The Government are well aware of the public services you have thus rendered and have therefore conferred on you this title”.

In the Great War they offered their services in great numbers, as combatants. Her Gracious Majesty the late Queen Victoria having been

pleased with the meritorious services rendered by the Sappers and Miners, who were almost all Adi Dravidas, gave her name to that only regiment and it is now called the Queen's Own Sappers and Miners. As these people were hereditary warriors we find them even to-day in large numbers in the British army doing excellent work. It is a great pity that this ancient martial race is now subjected to all sorts of insults and injuries and is employed in carrying on the most menial work.

Such an ancient independent and important community has been subjected to the most cruel wrongs, wrongs from which thanks to an ever merciful Providence, it is Britain's mission in India to rescue. The Adi Dravidas are still denied the use of public wells and tanks and at the same time stigmatised as unclean. They are still kept out of schools and colleges maintained from public funds and at the same time despised as ignorant and illiterate. They are still shut out from temples and yet branded as ungodly and unfit to associate with. For access to public roads and even for space to bury the dead, they have to depend very much on the capricious benevolence of their Caste-

Hindu neighbours. Such is the enormity of the sins of the Caste Hindus against them. But they are conscious of the fact, that their present condition is certainly better than what it was before the advent of the British. The British Government in India is the best Government we have ever had. It is the strongest, the most righteous and the best suited to India's diverse population and diverse interests that this country could ever have. The Indian Penal Code makes no difference between the Adi Dravida and the so-called high caste man.

THE WAY OUT

Have the Caste Hindus given decent burial to Manu's law? Though it is for all practical purposes a dead letter, will it not be reimposed the moment Full Responsible Government is granted to India? During a thousand years of the autocratic rule of the Mohamedans and a hundred and eighty years of the benevolent despotism of the British, we have not been able to destroy caste. Caste is still reigning supreme, though it is said that caste is relaxing its hold on the people. Freedom of person will be totally denied to the Depressed Classes

by the Caste Hindus, for their law allows it and the courts will support it. Freedom of person is a pre-requisite for the development of nationality. Freedom should not be given to the people of India before our social wrongs have been set right. Social equality, social liberty and social fraternity should be enforced among the people who clamour for political equality, political liberty and political fraternity.

The duty of so-called higher classes to their submerged fellowmen at the present day is at once manifest and insistent. The Caste Hindus ask them. "Why are you not satisfied? What do you want?" The very insolence of these questions is staggering. They reply, "What do we want? Are we not men like you? What would you want, if like us you were held in subjection by long standing custom by the domineering class against your will? What would you want, if you were exploited, if you were intellectually starved, if you were denied the benefits of schools, roads, choultries, wells, temples, etc., if you were lectured, bullied and rebuked day by day? We are not bricks or stones. We have feelings and ambitions and a national pride. We have suffered all sorts of

tyranny, exploitation, insult and injury. You have trampled on our national honour and dignity and also heaped outrageous insults on us, added to grave injuries, economic and political. This domineering must go and we must be free. This is what we want. We want our manhood, our rights as men. We do not want any patronage. We want social emancipation, economic emancipation and political emancipation."

It is a glorious thing to do service to the poor, and the needy. Do not despise the poor, for the poor inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Lord Jesus was not born in a palace nor was Sri Krishna nor Vamana. Christ was with the oppressed peasants in Gallilee and not in the luxurious cities of Capernaum and Bethsida. He preferred the company of publicans and sinners to that of wealthy scribes and pharisees with their long cloak of self-righteousness. Through tattered clothes small vices appear, robes and furred gowns hide all. The crimes of the wealthy are glossed over with all kinds of soothing explanations. Though the little vices of the outcastes are apparent on the surface yet in their hearts

there is ever a fertile soil to receive the good and bear fruit. The safety of India lies in the emancipation of the submerged.

As long as there is such a section as the Depressed Classes in existence, it would be committing the most egregious of blunders either to think of giving Full Responsible Government or of even granting another instalment of Reforms. The very fact of the existence of the Depressed Classes is an unquestionable indication, of the depth of barbarism to which the Indian has sunk, and the enormous resistance that any attempt at their amelioration meets with, is a further sign of how utterly incompetent they are for even an approach towards Self-Government. I am not against Reforms, but I maintain that no greater harm could be done to the country than by the introduction of these Reforms before the country is ripe to receive them.

So long as this great community consisting of more than seven millions of the population remains in bondage, there will be no salvation for South India. The Caste Hindus have sinned long enough against these people. He who did the mischief must undo it. Hasten to

make it good even at this the eleventh hour. It is never too late to repent.

Some persons who not very long ago espoused the cause of the Depressed Classes in public meetings, associations, Local Boards and Legislative Councils, both provincial and imperial, are not so willing now to help the work among the Depressed Classes, because these people are beginning to assert themselves and show that they have an individuality of their own. This shows that there is something rotten at the core. I have heard of some elder brothers in charge of their family estates, being unwilling to educate their younger brothers, because they fear that if education is given to these young fellows, they will grow impertinent and disobedient. These elder brothers think that they could reign supreme if their brothers are kept in perpetual darkness. Such families do not endure for many generations. They soon break up and become extinct. If the family heads think that by repressing the healthy growth of self-respect and independence in the junior members of the family they would remain powerful for ever, they are mistaken. Rome, whose greatness was built

upon a social substratum of slaves, came to grief and Gibbon could write his famous book on the Decline of the Roman Empire. On the other hand the free nations of the west are able to adjust themselves to changing conditions because they believed in freedom and education permeating every stratum of society. How can any nation be free when a large proportion of its people is kept by the operation of social customs and social prejudices in debt, dirt, drink and darkness, the four evils of social degradation which will consume the body and the soul of even so-called respectable citizens? How can a carriage proceed, if one of its wheels sticks in the mire.

Are not the Adi Dravidas also children of the soil like the so-called Hindus? Does the fact that they live in miserable huts entitle them to contempt and neglect at the hands of the so-called Caste Hindus? If they are ignorant or dirty, is it not due to the so-called Caste Hindus failing to do their duty by them. If they are too poor, is it not due to the so-called Caste Hindus taking their labour and giving them very little to eat? If they drink, is it not because the so-called Caste Hindus do

not set them a good example? If they have no decent houses to live in, is it not because the so-called Caste Hindus live in large houses or houses surrounded by large compounds? One of the most insulting remarks which the Depressed Classes have to endure at the hands of other people, Europeans included, is that they are unclean. In this matter of cleanliness I may point out many a Depressed Class man who is more scrupulously clean than any so-called High Caste man in this country. But if the Depressed Classes are prevented from sharing in the supply of God-given pure water, whose fault is it? The Caste Hindu will not give them water to drink, water to wash themselves with and yet the Caste Hindus have the audacity to say that these people are unclean. As a matter of fact, they rely on insanitary and inadequate drinking water sources the contamination of which is the frequent cause of sickness and epidemics. Great indeed are the sins of omission and commission for which the so-called Caste Hindus are responsible.

When are those disabilities to be removed? There was a time when it was said that once the people of India get power into their hands

suitable staff under him should be appointed as Protector of the Depressed Classes. Such an officer if properly chosen will impart continuity to all the remedial measures which Government have already sanctioned or may sanction in the future and prevent the good intentions of Government from being rendered ineffective by local indifference or opposition. It is only from a long sustained, persistent and well-directed effort that any appreciable result can be expected in elevating these vast masses of the population in view of their apathy, ignorance and helplessness. Further, in view of the rapid steps which are being taken to give India Self-government, it is a matter of urgent necessity and mere political justice that, along with the political reforms, social reforms should be pushed more vigorously than before, so that the Depressed Classes may be enabled to make their voice heard in politics and that they may not be left a helpless prey to the higher classes who at present monopolize education, and, with it, property and power."

It will thus be seen that the Government started this most necessary and useful Department after a most careful consideration. This was the first concerted action of the British Government to improve the lot of the Depressed Classes in the Presidency. In the interests of civilization and humanity, a full time officer

as Protector of the Depressed Classes and the enlargement and expansion of his functions so as to embrace consideration of the measures to be adopted in each District of the Presidency for the amelioration and elevation of the Depressed Classes are necessary.

The Caste Hindus as soon as they came into power as the result of the Reforms Act set themselves to destroy this very Department. Scarcely a year passes but this Department is threatened with extinction. Soon after the Caste Hindus came into power, in September 1921 Sir P. Tyagaraya Chetty, the redoubtable Knight of Thondiarpet and the head of the Non-Brahman Caste Hindu Party in the Council wrote a most unwise letter to the Government of Madras on the side of Caste Hindu Labourers during the Madras Mill Troubles, protesting against the protection given by the Madras Government to the Adi Dravidas who were rendered homeless by the incendiaries when they refused to join Non-co-operation strikers, and making the most unwarranted statements suggested to Government to deport the Adi Dravida Labourers out of Madras.

The following extract from my speech on the

Budget for the year in the Madras Legislative Council in March 1923 will make it clear that the Madras Labour Strike, referred to above, was not a genuine Labour Movement.

“This party has a majority in this Council at present; but unless they use this majority with regard for real justice and not merely from an intoxicated sense of power which they wish to retain as long as possible and unless they feel that it is their duty to enlighten and educate and elevate the masses including the depressed classes, that majority will become a thing of the past. In this connection I would remind the Caste Hindu that we, the Adi Dravidas, were the first to denounce non-co-operation in this Presidency. If the example set by us was followed by the non-Brahmin Party in general, the non-Brahmin Hindus would have had timely warning. But what is the use of going to correct wrong notions when the poison has once been injected into the popular mind?

Besides I remember now, soon after Mr. Wadia left Madras, I asked Sir P. Tyagaraya Chettiyar and other non-Brahmin leaders to take the leadership of the Labour Union and prevent them from falling into the hands of the non-co-operators.

What did the party in power do then? Was it not because they allowed the non-co-operators to capture labour in Madras that we the Adi Dravidas felt it a duty we owed not only to ourselves but to

the Government and the public at large that we should refuse to join the non-co-operation strikers? And instead of thanking us for refusing to join the non-co-operation strikers the leaders of the non-Brahmin party fell into the trap set by the non-co-operation leaders who, instead of distinguishing between non-co-operation strikers and loyal non-strikers, divided the labourers into Caste-Hindu strikers and Adi Dravida blacklegs and asked the Caste-Hindu non-co-operation strikers to go to the Caste-Hindu leaders of the non-Brahmin party and worry them to take their side against the loyal non-strikers. And these leaders, partly out of fright and partly out of flattered vanity and partly in the hope of capturing labour, which had already been captured by the non-co-operators—they might as well capture a peacock by putting butter on its head—played into the hands of non-co-operators by attacking our community and extenuating non-co-operation strikers' acts of incendiarism, etc., against us. If only I had not at that time kept my people from joining the non-co-operation strikers, I leave you, Sir, to imagine what would have been the state of Madras with the non-co-operation Labour Union men in their full strength, when, for instance, the Prince of Wales came to Madras. Even as it was, how did the non-co-operators behave on that day? It was a fine compliment they paid to Sir P. Tyagaraya Chettiyar when they paid a State visit to his house on the 13th January last and

made it necessary for the valiant Knight to take shelter in a house in Kappal Bolu Chetty Street so that he could not attend this Council during the Prince's memorable visit to it."

Let me quote an extract from my Presidential Address at the Second South Indian Adi Dravida Congress held on the 21st and the 22nd July 1923 at Koilpatti, Tinnevely District, which gives the facts and figures regarding the treatment meted out to the Depressed Classes by the Caste Hindus in Power in the Madras Legislative Council:—

"Now under the Reform Council consisting as it does of a large majority of the so-called Justice Party what has been done? The council cut down our allotment of money in the very first year of its existence by one lakh of rupees and thus deprived the Department of opportunities of relieving distress among the poor, and in its second year removed all the important and functioning officials of Government. I need hardly remind you how this outrageous procedure crippled all the resources of the Department, and thank God it is not to be in existence much longer than its third year. Their natural animosity towards us was patent even before the labour troubles in Madras the cause and effect of which will be fresh in your minds. I need hardly recount the sad circumstances which then

necessitated hundreds of our community being driven helpless and homeless. Driven out of our huts and hearths by incendiaries who were so bold and defiant as to try to prevent the police from putting out the consuming fire, we stood helpless before God and man, not knowing where to go. At such a time the Government in the interests of peace and order had to defend and protect us against those who wanted to punish us for no other sin than that we wanted to earn our bread by honest labour against the advice of those who wanted to use us as tools in their camp against constituted authority. It is the fashion for those who want to save their faces and the face of the party which they are supposed to lead from the ministerial office to call us black legs in that strike. In the first place the so called strike of the men in the mills was not a genuine labour movement. Secondly we were not permitted to participate in any organisation whose legitimate function is to decide on a strike. To call us therefore 'Blacklegs' is a perversion and an atrocious perversion of truth. Our legs were in no wise specially black but the faces of our tormentors were. I shall not enlarge on this subject especially as anything we might say is likely to be misunderstood by real labour, with the rank and file of which we really have no quarrel now. They were not our real persecutors: they were tools in the hands of political agitators. We harbour no resentment against the Caste Hindu section of

labour. They along with us labour under difficulties and disabilities which require urgent and drastic remedy. It is the high handed poisonous action of members of a party who after inflicting all known and unknown injury on our community shed crocodile tears and pose as friends of the Depressed Classes, that we have no room for in our politics. When I am told that the Party in power did several things for the Depressed Classes including making grants for expenditure on our behalf I am filled with amazement at the ingenuity or shall I say the disingenuousness of the political individual responsible for such a statement. Recently one in acting through his mouth piece (a member of our own community, I am ashamed to confess) collected all the figures from the Government Budget Statement and wanted the public to swallow the statement that they represented grants made by the Party in power. Gentlemen, believe me when I say that this is a fair sample of the half-truths and intrigue and unscrupulousness which have brought the Justice (!) Party to power. It is a half-truth to call the figures budgeted for by the Reserved half of Government the figures of sums spent by the Party in power on our amelioration. Rather should we take into account the figures asked for by the Reserved Department and the figures cut down by the Party in power. It is intrigue to set up a member of our community to sing the praises of the Party in power and it is

unscrupulous on the part of that party to twist, distort and misuse facts. As you are aware the procedure in the matter of Budgets is that the Department concerned prepares a programme of work being itself in touch with the needs of the community and asks for the amount of money necessary to redeem its obligations as well as meet the demand of the community. This "Budget estimate" as it is called is placed before the Finance Committee—a Committee in which there is a preponderance of the members of the Party in power. The department concerned, manned as it is, by responsible officials prepares a statement only of its minimum demand—the minimum consistently with its deep concern for the deficit in the whole budget of the Presidency. Unless it represented the minimum requirements there is no chance of the figures being accepted by the Hon'ble Member of Government. As I said this very carefully prepared statement of figures has to be approved by the Party in power, first in the Finance Committee and then again in the Legislative Council. In 1921-22 the Department asked for a grant of 6.47 lakhs for Labour and allied departments. This came before the Legislative Council and the grant asked for was reduced by one lakh. In 1922-'23 the Department budgeted for 12.25 lakhs. After the first sift in the Finance Committee, the amount was cut down to 7.87 lakhs for Labour and allied Departments. This amount

includes 3.25 lakhs for loans to Co-operative Societies which are to be repaid to Government by easy instalments. When this amount of 7.87 lakhs came before the Legislative Council it was further reduced by Rs. 21380. The Finance Committee even this year cut down the allotment asked for by the Department by 1.23 lakhs. If you will refer to the proceedings of that committee dated 8-1-23 you will find that no pretence of a reason is even made for this drastic cut."

Our representation in Local Bodies and Municipal Councils is at present in the hands of these so-called popular leaders. And you know what they have done. The scheme for giving us representation in these institutions was not started by this ministry and since their party came into power we have not been assured of even a single seat uniformly in every Local Board and Municipal Council. Perfunctory nominations have been made and when their attention was drawn to deserving candidates or unfilled vacancies the Minister in charge of the Department referred me to the Presidents of the Boards and would do nothing to justify his presence in the administration. Our nominations were in the hands of Presidents even before the subject of Local Self-Government was treated as a Transferred Subject. The accession of power has enabled the Minister only to revert to the former position and leave us where we were before. Even the few places given for our members, when they became

vacant on account of the death of the holder (as in the case of Thiruvannamalai Municipal Council) or through other causes (as in the cases of Chingelput and Cuddalore Taluk Boards) are subsequently filled by members of other Communities especially of the Caste Hindu. Towards the close of last year I suggested in the Legislative Council that a meal at midday might be provided for the poor Adi Dravida boys in the Government Elementary Schools. You all know in what pitiable state our little boys are and how on account of poverty they have at present to go without a mid-day meal at their School. My suggestion was, I understood placed before the Finance Committee in which as I already said there is a majority of members of the Party in power. The proceedings of the Finance Committee were as follow :—

Read.—Scheme relating to the provision of mid-day meal for pupils of the Adi-Dravidas and other Depressed Classes (total expenditure estimated by the Director of Public Instruction is about 67 lakhs per annum.) The committee did not recommend the scheme for adoption ”

When I read this I could not understand the anticipated cost and suspected that the so-called scheme ought to have been made all-embracing so as to include probably the Communities to which the Hon'ble the Ministers themselves belonged. Thereupon I put in a question in the Council on the 27th of February of this year asking for a copy of the

scheme drawn up. The answer given by the Education Minister was "No definite scheme relating to the provision of midday meals for pupils of the Adi-Dravida and other Depressed Classes has yet been drawn up." That my proposal was bound to fail when a gentleman of the type of the Rajah of Panagal or Mr. Patro is the Minister in charge I knew, but it was the greatest of surprises to me that a proposal could be allowed to go before the Finance Committee without examination, that the cost of the proposal could have been estimated at 67 lakhs without such examination and that a 'scheme' before the Finance Committee could cease to be a scheme before the Legislative Council. The Minister for Local Self-Government when asked about the non-appointment of an Adi-Dravida representative on the Chidambaram Taluk Board said "that the owner of the rented house in which the Taluk Board office is located has objected to the Adi-Dravida representative entering the premises." On this reply I asked the Minister in a series of questions how a public office which according to the Standing Orders of Government should be located in a place to which all castes and communities ought to have access, came to be located under such adverse conditions and the Hon'ble Minister was sympathetic enough to give me the reply (for all my six questions bracketted together) "The Government have no information." These facts constitute the most tragic commentary on the

attitude of these Ministers towards our party and on the wasted opportunities that the history of any party, communal or political can afford. It is clear to all those who have eyes to see that beneath the verbiage of some members and beneath the cant of communal representation there is nothing in truth original than the hideous features of the class despotism and caste tyranny."

This year too the usual motions were tabled during the Budget Session in the Madras Legislative Council by the Caste Hindu members for the abolition of this Special Department which is still temporary and continued from year to year. An allotment pertaining to this Department along with others forms one part of the Budget. The demands for the various other Departments were taken up and passed and the time allotted for discussion of demands had run out before the Council reached the provision for the Labour Department. By this very lucky accident, it narrowly escaped the fate, that was awaiting it.

Persistent efforts have been made recently to get the activities of the Department transferred to the control of the Caste Ministry as far as they overlap the Transferred Subjects. This must be resisted stoutly and defeated.

The Special Department must be reinforced and kept entirely in the hands of Englishmen and the Indian Ministers ought not to be allowed to exercise even a semblance of power or influence in this Department. This Special Department should be made a separate Department with a separate Budget working directly under His Excellency the Governor and His Excellency should have an Advisory Board consisting of the Commissioner of Labour and the leading men of the community so that the Governor may consult them whenever necessity arises and His Excellency should not on any account be guided solely by the Indian Members of the Cabinet until it is leavened by the presence of a Depressed Class element.

It has been clearly pointed out that so early in the history of the Reforms in Southern India, the Non-Brahman Caste Hindu Party in the Local Council, who posed as the guardians of the Depressed Classes has been not only practically arresting the progress of a Community which forms the back-bone of the labouring population, but also has been crushing its hopes and aspirations. This is why, it is very

rightly said that the leaders of the people of India could not be safely trusted to look after the welfare and progress of the weak and the Depressed Classes. It is the fashion, to say, of a man, who is not an enthusiastic believer in our immediate fitness for Self-Government, that he is a die-hard; such a thing is easily said and passed on from lip to lip, while it by no means carries them one step nearer so far as fitness for Self-Government is concerned. It is now said, we are all now competent to rule ourselves and the presence of Englishmen is not necessary, and it only impedes our march onward. And it is proposed to make up for this piece of gross injustice, Indianisation of the different services must be commenced forthwith and completed as soon as possible. I say, woe to India when such a wish is achieved.

The cry for Indianising the Services sounds very patriotic indeed. The agitation for wholesale Indianisation of the Services is made only by a handful of educated Indians. It is simply for the purpose of satisfying the ambitions of a few Indians at the top of the services. The Britisher is a foreigner here and he may live for another ten centuries and he

will never get to know the Indian as we in the country do. Used as he is to such a thing as public opinion in his own country and in the continent of which his place but forms a part, which comes right down from the bottom and permeates and vivifies the whole mass, he often makes the mistake of supposing that the loud cries of a few politicians in India must also mean much the same thing as it does in Europe, he yields to it and gradually hands over responsible functions of Government to these cocks that crow from their own dung hill. Of these politicians, public men as they are called in the same sense in which we talk of certain women as public women, nobody need have any concern. A sop to the dog will effectually silence it. Can't we recall scores of instances of these politicians in whom an inordinate love of country has suddenly developed and manifested itself in agitations for Home Rule, Self-Government, Non-co-operation, boycotting of the Prince of Wales, boycotting of foreign goods while we have no means of replacing them and in projects comparing almost with those of the great Laputans for the conquest of the world by means of charka, the moment the till

then forbidden and hated and despicable fruit of a fine job in Government Service is offered to them, their intense patriotism takes itself to wings and flies away to find a refuge in more congenial regions, and our erst-while patriot hastens to conform himself to his new surroundings and cuts a somer-sault to divest himself of his masque and presents himself in his true colour a base, selfish and self interested place-hunter. Little does he think that while begging for votes, he gave an assurance to the voters that he would never commit the flagrant crime of seeking service under the hated foreign bureaucracy.

Indianisation means only inefficiency in the present stage of the country. Indianisation should not on any account mean the Indianising the character of the administration and the diluting of its British character. The British character of the administration must be maintained, and that respect for British ideals of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Progress should be a living force in the Government of the country. The Indian is clannish and when Indians occupy high posts of responsibility they are more amenable to influence that leads

to inefficiency, than an European Officer who is able to take an impartial and unbiassed view of things in the affairs of the administration. The following extract from my memorandum to the Reforms Enquiry Committee, Delhi, will show the nature of training an European youth generally gets in England.

“Let us take, to begin with, the case of the I.C.S. The man who comes out from England has generally been through one of the two famous Universities of England, Oxford and Cambridge. Let us look at the training that such a person receives. He generally goes through one of those remarkable Public Schools of England and by the time he leaves it, he is about 16. And what is the kind of product that these Public Schools turn out? Most of my English friends would not require an answer to this question; but several of my countrymen would be glad to know something about it. Well, to put the matter in a nutshell, they come out with their character fully formed and thoroughly equipped with the necessary material to enable them to fight life's battles with courage tempered by sympathy, justice by mercy, energy by patience; all this is inspired by a very high sense of duty; a high sense of their calling, and a high sense of responsibility. Into the youngster's mind they are very careful to instil courage, courage not of the barbarian variety, but courage always guided by

intelligent and cool unruffled thinking ; secondly an absolute dependence on self in the last resource, with a readiness to take counsel from anybody if proper and necessary : a mind that will work energetically and actively during emergencies : a sense of organisation, i.e. the habit of quickly organising themselves into an orderly party, cheerfully submitting themselves to irksome discipline and obeying the selected chief to the death irrespective of his social rank ; a sense of law, a sense of honour, a sense of justice. Now, this is the equipment with which a Public School boy leaves his school. He enters the University, there he specialises in some branch of study. During the time that he is there, he is no more a youngster : he is a man who has already begun to do the work he is expected to do in the world to some extent, while at the same time he is equipping himself with knowledge of an advanced nature in some special branch. There the students behave to each other as though they were already men : discuss the great problems of the world with the same serious interest that is seen in them when they begin the work of life proper after they leave the University. To their Union meetings come the great men of parliament and join with the students in the discussion of the problems of the day. To them come the great men of letters, leaders of thought, scientists and men who excel in every branch of literature, to pour their treasures at the

feet of the *alma mater*. It is in the midst of such surroundings that these students are nurtured, it is in such an atmosphere that these students breathe, move and have their being. Fed upon such thoughts, nurtured in such traditions, equipped with such knowledge they come out here, to serve us in the Civil Service, Education and other services."

The British character can be imparted to Indian administration through personal touch, personal relationship, personal influence and personal example. The process of Indianising the services and of the elimination of the Britishers from the Government should be proceeded with slowly and carefully, with an eye to the progress of the Depressed Classes. As long as there is caste in this country, so long will there be the necessity for the British character of the administration through the agency of the British people. Here let me quote an extract from the Farewell Address presented to H. E. Lord Willingdon on 5th April 1924 by the members of the Depressed Classes of the Madras Presidency.

"May we humbly request Your Excellency to tell the Britishers in England that we of the Depressed Classes regard the British Government as the trustees of the people in India ; that one reason

why the British Government should exist in India is to secure just treatment for the Depressed Classes and to stimulate and guide progress among the weaker communities; that so long as caste remains a ruling factor in the lives of the people, and so long as the labouring population is kept in a depressed condition, so long will there be the need for the supervening, controlling and adjusting hand of the benevolent Britisher in India; that the British Government should on no account sacrifice the interests of the Depressed and Minority Communities, out of deference to the wishes and sentiments of a majority community; that the British character of administration through the agency of the British people must be maintained at any cost; that as for Indianizing the services, it must be a matter of ages and must be proceeded with to keep pace with the actual growth and expansion of mind of the Caste Hindus, who form about 85% of the population; that the howl that is being raised for immediately Indianizing the services, if by misadventure should be heeded to, woe to our land we will cease to exist as a class, for we feel confident that the Caste Hindus, though we do count among them some most ardent and sincere friends individually, would take good care to see that such a thing happens, for then their one present eye-sore will for ever be removed from before them".

What the Depressed Classes need most is education—a liberal education which will

make them raise their heads and be men. Education is the panacea for all the woes of the community. It is too late in the day to discuss the importance to individuals, communities and to the nation of Compulsory Education not only for boys but also for girls. It is education that will make the homes of the Depressed Classes brighter, purer and happier, and their labour sweeter. The Depressed Classes are anxious to share in the benefits of education, but their extreme poverty stands in their way. Elementary Education ought to be made compulsory and provision should be made in schools for providing the children of these classes with a square meal in the middle of the day, and allotting the parents, who lose the services of their wage-earning children, a compensatory allowance.

The children of the Depressed Classes must have the benefit of Education at any cost. It is not enough to teach the 3 R's to them and let them drift in life without compass or rudder. It is necessary that they should be taught to earn their daily bread by some useful occupation in which both mind and body will be brought into play. A scheme

of Vocational training has to be considered as part of the curricula of these schools. The facilities offered by Government at present to these children are inadequate and even as they are, they are the outcome of the sympathy of the British Officials during the Pre-Reform days. In the year 1923 I moved a resolution in the Local Legislative Council asking for an increase in the number of scholarships for the children of the Depressed Classes. The Caste Hindu Minister for Education vehemently opposed the resolution on the ground that poverty was not the monopoly of the Depressed Classes. I spoke out my mind in my Budget Speech in March 1923 in the Legislative Council regarding the attitude of the Minister for Education thus:—

“Regarding scholarships for the Depressed Classes, I must take this opportunity of recording my emphatic protest against the speech of the Education Minister the other day when I asked for an enhancement of their amount in view of the extreme poverty of the boys of my Community. He told us then that poverty was not the monopoly of the Depressed Classes and that Brahman boys too were poor. I

wonder when and where he discovered these facts, whether before or after he assumed office. If Brahman boys are poor, why did he not press their claims as a Non-Brahman leader, and if the Depressed Classes were not the only classes suffering from the pangs of hunger, why did he and his party make a speciality of the advocacy of their claims? Does he see no difference between the poverty of the Depressed Classes and the poverty of other classes? Does he not know, the poverty of the Depressed Classes is due to age-long oppression by other classes? And is it not bare justice that we ask and when we ask for special encouragement being given to them? If he has forgotten the first lessons of his political school, shall I read to him what the recent Report and G-O No. 239 referred to above, says :

“The Committee considered the needs of special classes and communities and agreed, so far as the Depressed Classes are concerned, that adequate boarding and fee facilities should be granted to them. It was felt that the position at present occupied by the members of these classes was due in large measure more to

the peculiar customs and usages of the country than to any inherent defects of the classes themselves. Viewed from this point, the education of the Depressed Classes became a matter of national duty, and public funds should in justice be available to all reasonable extent in serving their interests.

“Let me say in conclusion that his speech the other day was the most graceful speech I have ever heard from the lips of a responsible Minister in this House.”

The Hon'ble the Minister called my attention to the poverty of the so-called backward classes. I find that whenever I press the claims of the Depressed Classes, certain so-called backward classes are brought forward to minimize the claims of my community. I wonder who these backward classes are as distinct from depressed or untouchable classes. I suppose they are all Caste Hindus. Under these classes come communities to which belong at least two of the Ministers.

The Depressed Classes anticipated this kind of attitude on the part of the caste Ministers long before the Reforms came into being. When the Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, the

Premier Political Association of the Depressed Classes of this Presidency was asked by the Government to send in their opinion on the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms in the year 1918, the said Sabha expressed themselves as follows :—

“ We may indicate, however, in a general way, our attitude towards the Reform Scheme. We are averse in the present condition of public opinion, and in the present stage of social and moral progress, and with the ideas which now rule the social relations of communities, to the establishment of a dual Government in this country. We are therefore opposed to any department of the administration being transferred to popular control. We would particularly protest against education being vested in “ Ministers.” These Ministers would look after the interests of their particular communities and either neglect us or train us in such a way that we may look upon them for ever as our masters.”

An adequate number of scholarships and liberal fee-remissions should be instituted for these children attending recognised Schools and Colleges. There should also be a net work

of free Hostels established throughout the Presidency for the children of these men.

It is feared in certain quarters that if these children are sent to school, it will become difficult to obtain labour and that the children of the Depressed Classes will become gentlemen. Why should they not? Are they not the sons of the soil and citizens possessing equal rights and privileges with the Caste Hindus?

Why should they remain hewers of wood and drawers of water for ever and the Caste Hindus remain lords over them for ever? The wheel of progress is moving and the wheel must revolve full cycle. Adequate representation should be given to these Classes in the Public Services as an incentive to their education. In a country like this, where caste has not relaxed its hold on the people and where social culture has been mistaken for and identified with religious tenets the predominance of any particular class in the Public Services is a danger to the country. It is all very well to talk of Hindu-Moslem Unity and it is very easy to blame the Mohammadan for not joining the Hindus. Physician! heal thyself. When there is no unity among the Hindus themselves,

how on earth can one expect to have Hindu-Moslem unity?

So if the scale of justice is to be held evenly in the public administration, it is very necessary that all classes should be represented in the Public Services and especially those classes whose backward condition renders them absolutely inarticulate. The mere fact that a particular class is wealthy and can make itself heard or can win the good graces of those in authority is no reason why it should wield influence which will tilt the balance against the others. Official posts carry with them not only salaries, but also official and administrative and even political influence. If men belonging to the Depressed Classes are appointed, the grievances of the Community will be attended to more readily and people who wish to ride rough shod over their rights will think twice before they make up their minds to do so.

The holding of Government posts acts like magic upon the public mind in divesting it of stupid notions of touch and distance pollution. It is not Mr. Gandhi's untouchability propaganda that will drive the demon of untouchability and unapproachability. A strong De-

pressed Classes element alone in the Public Services will raise those classes in the estimation of others as being invested with all the prestige and authority of the Governmental machine.

Sixty-three percent of the Government appointments, both in the higher and lower grades, have been reserved for Non-Brahmins. At least 30 percent should be reserved for the Depressed Classes and that the minimum qualifications required under the Public Service Notification should be considered sufficient.

As a matter of fact considering the gross injustice that has been meted out to them, it would be but bare justice to allow the Public Services to be entirely recruited from them for at least a quarter of a century to come and perhaps then the bitterness that has been rankling in the minds of these men on account of oppression by the other castes through the ages will be softened and the time may come when the Depressed Classes will gladly march hand in hand with the other communities towards the goal of Self-Government. India will then become one happy family with joy radiating from every home and England will

then be only too glad to invest her with full Responsible Self-Government.

I must now turn to consider how best to stir the public conscience, combat the apathy and active hostility of caste opinion, arm the Depressed Classes with the necessary amount of self-respect and political leverage and hasten the process of their amelioration. A great deal is now being said on this question all over India. The Depressed are told that they have equality before the Law and are advised to stand on their own legs and assert themselves as members of the Hindu Community. This is merely begging the question. It is impossible in the present circumstances for the Depressed communities to assert either their elementary rights or work for their higher aspirations of having their due share in the Councils of the Government. Owing to their economic and social depression they form a negligible factor in the General Hindu Electorate and they have absolutely no chance of influencing, by the exercise of their franchise, the conduct of any representative of a General Constituency. The number of the Depressed Class Voters in the whole Presidency is very

small. The problem then, I submit, is to arouse their self-respect and capture the imagination of the other sections of the South Indian population by a bold act of statesmanship on the part of the Government, and to arm the members of the Depressed communities with the most elementary of political weapon, the franchise. They must also be assured of an effective voice in the public bodies and the legislatures of the country.

Lord Morley of Blackburn, when he found that Indian discontent had a central core of racial bitterness, appointed Lord Sinha of Raipur, then Mr. S. P. Sinha, to the Viceroy's Executive Council to show to all the world that His Britannic Majesty's Government knew no distinctions of race, colour or creed. The Adi-Dravidian problem in South India is similar in origin and results, although intenser in the agony of bitterness that it is producing in the hearts of seven millions of people in this Presidency and fifty millions of human beings all over India. The Mohammadan Community numbering less than three millions in the Presidency has rightly asked for and obtained separate Communal Representation in the legislatures

and their interests are always safeguarded by the appointment of their co-religionists to high offices in the State. There used to be a Muhammadan judge on the High Court Bench at Madras and there is now a Mohammadan Member of the Governor's Executive Council in the Province. Although I do not suggest that those appointments go merely on racial or communal considerations it cannot be denied that considerations of equipoise of communal interests have something to do with the origin of the system. The Depressed Classes of the Presidency numbering more than seven millions, out of a total of nearly forty-three millions should have their interests safe-guarded by the inclusion of a member of their community in the Cabinet of the Province.

The question of Adi Dravida representation on the Legislatures is a more knotty problem. They are economically backward and socially depressed. In the absence of special measures they can never hope to influence in any way the deliberations in the Councils of the country. They should be given the Franchise in sufficiently large numbers. This could be done only on a differential basis of qualification in

the General Electorate and this arrangement will be open to very serious objection on grounds of principle. The alternative would be a purely Communal Electorate and any prescribed set of qualifications in such an electorate cannot be construed as preferential treatment or infringement of the rights of others.

As it is, the Caste Hindus who form the bulk of the population and of the General Electorate know full well that any member of the Depressed Classes has absolutely no chance of being returned to the Council for any General Constituency and it is this conviction that is at the bottom of their attitude towards these communities in the councils and the country. The only remedy for this state of things would lie in ensuring the presence of a sufficient number of these classes on the Public Bodies and the Legislative Council that they cannot be ignored by any party that would be in power. This can be done either by nomination or election of such members.

The following points respectfully urged by me on behalf of the Madras Adi Dravida Maha Jana Sabha on 24-9-24 for sympathetic con-

sideration of His Excellency the Governor of Madras, will explain this matter :—

Representation in the Local Legislature :—

We wish at the outset to make it clear that we require and demand Communal Representation of our community in the Local Legislature on an elective basis. We are, entirely opposed to the principle of nomination in the matter for the following reasons :—

(a) Representation by nomination is no real representation. It is at best only a makeshift and not the real thing.

(b) The Cabinet in which the Indian members including the ministers are in a majority, have at present the predominant voice in the selection of men for nomination and are therefore in a position to exercise undue influence in the course of their conduct in the Council. The political views of the Indian section of the Cabinet and particularly of the member who holds the portfolio of nominations have been or still diametrically opposed to the views of our Political Association and the real interests of our Community. The members selected by them are therefore likely to be of the pliable type who would subserve their interests in opposition to the real interests of our Community.

(c) We would therefore respectfully urge that, so long as the principle of nomination holds the field with regard to our representation on the Local Legislature, His Excellency the Governor may, in

accordance with the letter and spirit of the Instrument of Instructions issued by His Gracious Majesty the King Emperor be pleased to reserve the portfolio of nominations in his own hands and nominate representatives of our Community on the Legislature in consultation with the recognised Political Association of the Community, the Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabah, which has ever since the Montague Chelmsford visit, helped in securing Representation for the Depressed Classes and has been consulted on such questions as the Constitutional Reforms including Franchise and Functions, Rowlett Bills etc. etc.

(d) We number 7,503,475 out of a total population of 42,794,115 inhabitants of this Presidency. We are mainly engaged in agriculture and suffer from various disabilities, political, social, economic and educational arising from and aggravated by the stigma of untouchability and unapproachability rivetted on us by the united force of caste opinion. We are now represented on the Local Legislature by five nominated members. The Mohamadans who number only 2,865,285 in this Presidency are allotted 13 elective seats. The Indian Christians who number only 1,380,672 out of the total population have 5 elective seats and three nomination seats (total 8) secured for them. The Anglo-Indians who number only 23,492 in the Presidency have one elective seat and one nominated seat (total 2) given to them. We who number more

than one-sixth of the population engaged on the land, the basic industry of the Province and have our undoubted, age-long grievances to redress, are certainly entitled in Equity, Justice and good Conscience to a much greater representation than we have at present. We would therefore respectfully urge for your Excellency's sympathetic consideration that a minimum of twenty seats for our Community on the Legislature is an urgent necessity.

II. We wish to respectfully press our undoubted right as a distinct community to elective representation on the Legislature, in consideration of our separate interests, our numerical strength, our political importance and our undoubted disabilities as "Depressed Classes" with all that the term connotes. The various Conferences and Congresses held by the Depressed Classes in different parts of the Presidency and the demands put forward by them during the past decade are sufficient indication of the political consciousness of our Community. The members of the Depressed Classes are not one whit less articulate or less conscious of their interests or less responsible than the classes that have been enfranchised under the Reforms. The factors of social, economic, and educational depression in our Community which have been produced and aggravated by the stigma of untouchability rivetted on us by age-long oppression in Pre-British days have resulted in their present economic position which disqualifies them for the franchise under the

qualifications laid down by the rules framed under the Reform Act of 1919. The only solution of the problem would seem to us to lie in granting to our Community a system of Communal Representation, either by a reservation of an adequate number of seats in the General Electorate and enfranchising a sufficient number of the Community on a differential set of qualifications or by direct election through Communal Electorates enfranchised in sufficient numbers. Under either arrangement, we respectfully submit to Your Excellency that our Community is entitled to not less than twenty elective seats on the Legislature in consideration of our numbers, political importance and undoubted disabilities of all possible kinds.

It is only then we submit to Your Excellency that the voice of our representatives will be effectively heard in the Council Chamber and will make it worth the while of any party which would be in power to court our support by conciliation or fear our opposition to continuous caste domination. The history of the amelioration of the condition of the Depressed Classes during the tenure of the First Reformed Councils with a Non-Brahmin majority and a Non-Brahmin Ministry in power tells a sad tale of every conceivable obstruction by the Caste-block in the Council and throws an interesting side-light on this question. We would suggest, as an additional safe-guard that there should be a statutory provision that no legislation affecting our

communities should go into the Statute Book unless a clear two-thirds majority of our communal representatives are in support of the measure and that His Britannic Majesty's Government should in any event reserve to themselves the right to veto any legislation that in their opinion is contrary to the interests of our Community. These provisions, we respectfully submit to Your Excellency, should form an integral part of the Parliamentary Statute when it comes up for revision."

Indian Assembly and Council of State:—The same arguments apply *mutatis mutandis* to the question of our representation on the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. We have more pressing and peculiar problems to solve. Social and Labour Legislation affect our Community more intimately.

The Cabinet:—We would urge for favourable consideration the feasibility of appointing a qualified member of our Community on His Excellency's Executive Council, on the same basis of qualification as laid down for the members of any other minority community like the Mohamadans.

Separate Department:—Finally we request your Excellency to make the interests of the Depressed Classes a special concern of the Governor to be looked after adequately by a Separate Department under His Excellency the Governor.

CONCLUSION

Our demands, our wants and our needs are multifarious and numerous. It is needless to repeat over again here what has been said time and again in hundreds of Conferences and Conventions. Briefly, I would say we need at the hands of our fellow countrymen a recognition of the fact that we are men equally with themselves. We are not to be segregated; we are not to be treated like lepers. From being Kings, Emperors and Ministers, for having taken up arms against a foreign invader, the Aryans, and then when defeated for refusing to embrace their civilization, the punishment, the like of which is unknown in the history of any other part of the world was imposed on us and that was to be perpetual: not only those that revolted then but their descendants and their descendants' descendants were to suffer for ever and ever. The inquisition, the atrocities committed by barbarians in their inroads to Rome, the sufferings of the heretics in the Netherlands, the enormities of Nero, the cruelties perpetrated by Tamerlain and Chinghiz-khan, these pale before the horrors of caste.

This equality that we claim, they will not accord. Now will the Government do that? How is this to be done? Communal Representation has been acknowledged as a principle and given effect to in practice. We are as much a community as either the Non-Brahmins or the Mohammadans for the matter of that. Seats are reserved for the Non-Brahmins to protect them from the Brahmins: how much more necessary it is then to reserve adequate number of seats for us, who labour under so many disadvantages. Secondly, why are we not represented in the Executive Council? Why should there not be an Adi Dravida there to represent his community along with others? Is it a *sanctum sanctorum*, not to be polluted by the presence of an untouchable?

The Earl of Winterton, while speaking about Reforms, distinctly said, that so long as there existed a class known by the name of the Depressed Classes, India was utterly unfit for another instalment of Reforms: and he said the mission of England in India was to remove that stigma from her fair name. We earnestly hope he will do what he said, if he should get the opportunity. And let us also hope and

pray, fervently, that the Unionists now in power will take a special interest in our community and help to advance our cause during their tenure of office, so that when the time comes for them to make room for the next Government they will carry with them along with others the blessings of a whole population that they redeemed from slavery lasting over a period of two thousand years, which noble and glorious work it was reserved for them to accomplish.

“Never for me the lowered banner, never the lost endeavour.”