
REPORT OF THE WORK DONE

BY

The Anti-Untouchability Sub-Committee

(Indian National Congress)

April—December 1929.

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This Sub-Committee was appointed by the Working Committee at its sitting at Delhi on 29th March 1929, consisting of Pandit Malaviyaji and Sjt. Jannalal Bajaj, the latter to work as Secretary.

The Committee commenced work from April with its office at 395, Kalbadevi, Bombay, and with a programme for (1) getting temples, wells and schools, freely opened to untouchables, (2) instructing them in sanitary living.

The Immediate Programme.

It was also resolved that efforts should be concentrated for the time being on the first item in the programme *viz.*, getting the temples thrown open, as constituting the most effective means of eliminating untouchability. With this end in view special meetings were held in Bombay in April where Pandit Malaviyaji spoke on the temple-entry question exhorting the caste Hindus to freely admit the so-called untouchables in all Hindu Temples. He spoke on the same theme emphasising the necessity of broader interpretation of Hinduism at almost every meeting during his extensive tour in Southern India which followed his visit to Bombay.

Bandra, Bombay and Poona Conferences.

A resolution in terms identical with the programme of the Committee was moved and passed at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference held at Bandra on 4th and 5th May 1929 and an informal Conference of workers was held under the auspices of the Committee at Bombay on 23rd May when the working programme for the districts was chalked out. Another conference of workers in the field of untouchability was convened by the Asprishyata Nivarak Mandal of Poona in June at which the Committee sent its representatives. The Secretary also attended. Both the organisations undertook to work out in close co-operation an intensive programme of persuading temple-owners and trustees to throw

open the temples under them to untouchables. Every worker attending personally pledged himself to get at least one temple opened in the near future by his efforts. Three Pracharaks were appointed to carry on propaganda work in the districts one of them from the untouchable class itself. The Conference was attended by some of the foremost Shāstries versed in Hindu Dharma-Shastras. Some of these who wield considerable influence among the orthodox caste Hindus are actively working in our field of reform.

Secretary's Work During Tours.

The Secretary during his tours in Madras Presidency, C. P., Rajputana, Sind, Kashmir, Punjab and Frontier Provinces collected information regarding the conditions under which untouchable classes lived, and discussed the problem with local workers everywhere. He met Municipal members, trustees and owners of temples, wells, etc., and exhorted sympathisers to make concerted efforts for throwing open temples, wells and schools. He found the atmosphere favourable everywhere and an eagerness on the part of the caste Hindu workers and leaders in charge of public organizations or local bodies to do their duty for alleviating the lot of the untouchable classes. Municipalities and local boards in most places have officially no ban against untouchables, in schools, wells, Dharmashalas, etc. under them, but efforts are needed still to enable the untouchables to enjoy the benefits of the same in actual practice.

Bombay Central Office.

The Central Office of the Committee in Bombay put itself in communication with the District Congress Committees, issued circulars and collected information regarding conditions prevailing in their respective areas. Lists of principal temples in every district with particulars as regards forms of worship, history, endowments, etc., were invited and made and the trustees or owners concerned were addressed.

Publicity Work.

Bulletins were issued to the Press from time to time detailing accounts of work in the districts and other relevant information regarding the progress of propaganda. A general appeal addressed to the Trustees of Hindu Temples was issued by the Secretary and circulated through press and in pamphlet form in English, Marathi and Hindi all over the country. Prominent workers and eminent leaders in other provinces were approached to issue similar appeals. These appeals, it appears, had good effect upon the mind of most

people whose attitude in matters of internal reform of Hindu society had been markedly favourable during recent years. For a variety of reasons every thinking Hindu, belonging to whatever school of thought appears to realise to-day the supreme need of a complete overhauling of social life in order to effect a re-adjustment that would answer all the pressing needs of the day and bring about social solidarity.

Response.

The first temple opened through the Committee's efforts was the big Datta Durbar temple at Ellichpur in Berars. Influential Hindu organisations besides the Congress had been vigorously working towards the same end and a very good response was beginning to be made without any opposition worth the name almost everywhere. About half-a-dozen temples in the mofussil towns and villages were announced to have been declared open and the trustees of some of the biggest temples in Bombay were being successfully moved. Sjt. Bhopatkar, President, Poona Asprishyata Nivarak Mandal issued a closely reasoned appeal addressed to the trustees of the historical Parvati Temple of Poona exhorting them to open the doors of the famous temple to all Hindus including untouchables.

Second Stage

Our appeals were vigorously supported by a number of leading caste Hindus and it seemed for a while to promise rich fruition when suddenly the movement of direct action under the title of "Temple Entry Satyagraha" was launched by certain leaders of the untouchable communities in Poona to force an entry into the Parvati Temple.

An Anxious Situation

With the broadcasting of modern ideas of freedom and self-assertion in the matter of birth-rights and as a result of years of earnest efforts of the reforming sections among Hindus, a sudden self-consciousness has swept over the depressed classes during recent years. To their leaders the existing disabilities are too galling to be tolerated for a moment longer and they are naturally impatient with the pace of reform which even their accredited sympathisers among caste Hindus would deem acceptable for the moment. They attacked the caste Hindu leaders and workers, questioned their *bonafides* and attributed all their efforts for the uplift of the untouchables to sheer jealousy of Mussalmans or Christians. In Bombay they openly talked of equality of status not

only in all out-door dealings but in the matter of inter-dining and inter-marriage. They endorsed the action of those who gave up Hindu Religion and embraced Islam as the most effective method of teaching a lesson to the Hindus. The "Satyagraha" which the Bombay untouchable leaders proposed to resort to was naturally different from the well-known methods of Mahatma Gandhi inasmuch as they did not make too much of a fetish of non-violence. All these upset the Hindu population in Bombay and Poona almost entirely and an atmosphere of increasing good-will that had prevailed was completely marred for the time being. Acute tension prevailed both in Bombay and Poona for weeks and the news and the controversies raging in the city proved equally disastrous to the atmosphere in the districts. The alarmist and die-hard elements among the class Hindus got a unique opportunity to raise the cry of "religion in danger" and setting up a bitter opposition among the cast Hindus and representing the temple entry agitation as only the thin end of the wedge. The signboards at the entrance of most temples "for Hindus only" were substituted in hot haste for new ones bearing the words "admission restricted to High Caste Hindus only" and legal authorities were ransacked to unearth Judicial decisions in support of maintaining intact the customary bans. Most trustees now realised for the first time that there were legal difficulties in the way of removal of customary bans in Temples. Difficulties which could hardly have arisen in an atmosphere of universal good-will now loomed large and insurmountable and barred the way of further progress.

Remedies Suggested.

The tension however is now slowly subsiding and the trustees in many places have begun to reconsider their position. Steps are under consideration to approach the courts for a fresh judicial pronouncement that may take full cognisance of the religious and the social out-look for the modern Hindu. Eminent counsel like Mr. Jayakar who is regarded as one of the foremost authorities on Hindu Law. Customs and Tradition have opined that a favourable judicial pronouncement is within the range of possibility despite previous decisions. Legislation on the lines of the removal of the Caste disabilities Act has also been suggested and Mr. M. R. Jayakar has published a draft bill which he intends to introduce during the next session of the Legislative Assembly.

Suspension and Resumption of Parvati Satyagraha

Poona Satyagraha was suspended for a fortnight on the leaders of the local Asprishyata Nivarak Mandal and Messrs. Kelkar, Jaykar and Jamnalal Bajaj offering to mediate with the trustees. They all tried to move the trustees but unfortunately failed to persuade

the latter under the atmosphere of bitterness and distrust that prevailed. The "Satyagraha" was thereupon resumed and is still continuing, batches of untouchables, aided by some caste Hindu sympathisers who have cast in their lot with the Satyagrahis from the start, daily visit the Parvati temple and sit waiting at the foot of the stairs leading to the main gate of the temple which is kept closed and bolted since the commencement of the Satyagraha. The Poona Satyagrahis have till now observed exemplary non-violence inspite of provocation and actual violence on one or two occasions on the part of caste Hindu opponents or by the guards specially appointed by the trustees.

The Committee had to work hard during these months of acute tension. The Brahmin Non-Brahmin bitterness already existing in Poona and the Deccan contributed to aggravate the tension.

The Committee and the Satyagraha

The Committee's attitude on the question of Satyagraha had to be determined even before the Poona and Bombay situations developed. The president of the Hindu Mission, Calcutta, under date 12-9-29 wrote to Sjt. Jamnalal Bajaj intimating him of Satyagraha having been started in respect of the Kali Temple at Munshiganj "to assert the inherent right of very Hindu to enter and offer Puja irrespective of caste and creed in that place of public worship" and soliciting his opinion and help in that connection. Sjt. Jamnalal Bajaj wrote in reply that the existing conditions did not warrant starting Satyagraha at once, and that the question of entering into temples was a delicate matter needing special handling. There was danger of creating internal jealousy among the various Hindu communities and jeopardising unity. He stated it as his opinion that if Satyagraha should be resorted to the caste Hindus should take the initiative.

The conditions indicated in the reply represented the situation in Bombay and in Deccan perhaps to a much greater degree than in Bengal. Half-a-dozen temples were already thrown open, people who spontaneously lifted the ban but had not announced their act in the press were coming forward and informing the organisations concentrating on this question of their having already admitted untouchables to their temples, schools or wells. Appeals were issued by prominent orthodox Hindus wielding considerable influence in the Society to lift the ban and take these little brethren closer. Sit. Jamnalal Bajaj in the extensive tours he made during the year had everywhere evinced an atmosphere of goodwill and of earnestness which would have surprised the most sanguine reformer a few years ago. During Ganpati, Navaratri and

Dussarah festivals the caste Hindus fraternised with untouchables on an absolutely unprecedented scale, organised processions, meetings, Bhajan parties and special occasions to admit them or mix with them and went out of their way to take them closer in a variety of ways. Under these hopeful conditions, the launching of Satyagraha by untouchable leaders coupled with the declarations they made regarding the reasons that prompted them to take the initiative was regrettable, however unobjectionable or justifiable it might be in theory. Our Committee had therefore to disapprove of the Satyagraha in Poona as in the case of Munshiganj, though it congratulated the Satyagrahists for the non-violence they maintained in spite of the injuries they sustained during the first approach to the temple. It also offered to help them in moving the trustees to come to settlement. The negotiations unfortunately proved of no avail as did also the Committee's efforts to induce the Satyagrahis to postpone a resumption of Satyagraha.

The Bombay Manifesto

The Secretary's statements regarding the Poona situation, the negotiations with the trustees and with Satyagrahis were published in the press from time to time and in order to further allay the situation a manifesto calling upon the Hindu community as a whole to realise the urgency of doing away with untouchability was issued by the Committee. It warned the Hindus of the dangers involved in delaying to solve the problem and allowing spasmodic attempts to be made by various people to solve it in their own way and appealed to all caste Hindus and their organisations to take speedy action for the extinction of untouchability in all public places and outdoor dealings. The appeal was signed by almost all the prominent Hindus of Bombay a large number of them well-known for their orthodox style of living. The manifesto was published in the press and circulated all over the country and similar appeals were issued in Ahmedabad, Karachi and many other cities, signed by foremost local Hindu citizens and Hindu leaders, lesser people signing in thousands.

The Future

The Committee is confident that if sustained and vigorous efforts are made by Hindu Congressmen on proper lines, the problem of untouchability is capable of being solved for all practical purposes without recourse to direct action which may involve the Hindu society in an internecine struggle at a most critical juncture in the history of the nation. If, however this is not accomplished soon, we may be unable to avoid a vast and embarrassing domestic struggle for which the Hindus may have to thank none but themselves. For "it is impossible" to quote the words of Mahatma

Gandhi, "to avoid an exhibition of impatience and worse, if after having awakened them (*i.e.* the so-called untouchable classes) to a sense of their awful position, we do not succeed in easing it for them before it becomes too late."

Temples and Wells Opened.

The following is the list of temples declared opened under the auspices of the Committee or through the efforts of its members, workers and sympathisers :

1. Datta Darbar Temple		Ellichpur (Berar)
2. Maruti	„	Akola.
3. Koteswar	„	Wai (Dt. Satara)
4. Rama's	„	Gulal Wadi, Bombay.
5. Fakirchand's	„	Jubbulpore.
6. Byahorji's Radhakrishna Temple		„
7. Naramadaji's Temple		„
8. Purnani Khair Mai Temple		„
9. Bilaiya's Kadhakrishna Temple		„
10. Bade Mahabir's	„	„
11. Rama's	„	„
12. Dikshitpura Shiv	„	„
13. Shankar and Mahabir	„	Tumsar (C. P.)
14. Ekveera Devi	„	Kinai (Oundh State)
15. Maruti	„	Satara.

(Seth Jamnalal Bajaj had opened his own temple of **Laxmi Narayan** before this Committee was formed.)

Temples declared opened through the efforts of other organisations or individuals working on similar lines are—

1. Ekbote's	Temple	Umerkhed (Berars)
2. Ganpati	„	Pimpalner (Khandesh)
3. Yamai Devi	„	Oundh (Dt. Satara)
4. Kirloskar's	„	Kirloskar Wadi, Satara.
5. Maruti	„	Poona (Camp)

Untouchables are freely admitted and allowed to worship at Kailadevi's ancient temple owned by the State of Karauli in Rajputana. They are allowed to take the Darshan and sit to listen to religious discourse on occasions at Rama's temple, Sholapur.

Through the efforts of the Secretary all the 27 Municipal wells were thrown open to the untouchables at Wardha. A number of wells were also thrown open during the Secretary's visit at Tumsar and Gondia in C. P. Municipalities and local boards are being moved to lift the ban over schools, water wells, Dharmashalas, etc., whenever it still exists and to see that the benefits conferred are enjoyed by the untouchables wherever it has been lifted. These bodies are also being moved to withhold exemptions from tax in respect to all temples, etc., which persist in maintaining the ban against untouchables.

It must be noted that in all parts of the country temples are being opened to untouchables by caste Hindus on their own initiative many of whom often do not announce the fact or the local events are not reported to wider public. Many district Congress Committees do not function though they exist in name and no information is collected or furnished by them in response to repeated requests made by this Committee.

No sort of ban exists against untouchables on the Kirloskar Industrial Settlement at Kirloskar Wadi (Dt. Satara) and untouchables numbering 80 live and work and deal with fellow residents on the colony without any distinction whatever, including in the temple. It is also understood that no untouchability exists in most part of the district of Burulia (Bihar) and in Gwalior State villages. A resolution had been passed throwing open 3 more temples in Bombay and its vicinity but the trustees have not yet formally declared the temples open in the press owing to the necessary arrangements not having been yet completed.

More Conferences.

Through the efforts of the Committee, a Conference of some of the Bombay Temple Trustees and the leaders of untouchables was brought about at Mr. Jayakar's house in Bombay with a view to discuss the legal aspect of the temples-entry question and to find if possible a *Modus Operandi* to cut the gordian knot of the legal barrier. A procedure was found under which Temple Trustees could approach the Court for direction and the Trustees agreed to proceed upon that line of procedure as soon as cause for action had arisen the untouchables co-operating.

The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee held this month a Conference of leading Hindus and sympathisers of the

Anti-untouchability movement which was attended by Sjt. Jamnalal Bajaj and representatives of various organisations including those of the depressed classes, as also by a fair number of Temple Trustees. Suggestions were invited and made for effectively carrying on the Anti-untouchability propaganda in various spheres and a sub-committee was formed to execute the programme of work laid down.

Acknowledgments.

The Committee's special thanks are due to Mr. M. R. Jayakar, M.L.A., Bar-at-Law and Sjt. B. G. Kher, Solicitor, Bombay, for the most valuable assistance they have rendered to the Committee at a great sacrifice of their time and personal convenience, in the most delicate and trying task of negotiating with the trustees of various Bombay Temples in the midst of a most difficult situation. With Sjt. Kher the cause of the untouchables is a passion. There is hardly an organisation for the uplift of untouchables in Bombay with which he is not closely connected. His zeal and sweetness of temper coupled with his undoubted abilities in the legal profession makes him irresistible and his influence is discernible everywhere. It is difficult to thank him adequately for all that he has done for the Committee and for the cause generally.

Swami Anand took charge of the Committee's Central Office in Bombay from the commencement and did all the work for the Secretary whose absence at the Bombay Central Office of the Committee was almost continued save a few days' flying visits occasionally. Sjt. Pundalikji Katagade's services were lent by Sjt. Gangadharrao Deshpande for propaganda work in the districts for which Sjt. Pundlikjee is eminently fitted. He continually toured in Berars, Bombay and Maharashtra districts and most of the temples opened in these provinces are the fruit of his efforts. Both Swami Anand's and Sjt. Pundlikji's services have been honorary.

The statement of Committee's account up to 30th November 1929 has been attached herewith duly audited.

(Sd.) JAMNALAL BAJAJ,

Secretary.

Statement showing receipts and disbursements from 19th April 1929 to 30th November 1929.

Particulars.	Receipts.			Payments.		
	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
A. I. C. C.	1,600	0	0	...		
Bachraj & Co. Ltd.			149	10	6
Travelling & Conveyance			455	1	9
Printing & Stationery			243	14	0
Postage & Telegrams			87	14	0
Miscellaneous			87	13	9
Salary			520	0	6
Dead-Stock & Library			18	7	0
Suspense			10	0	0
Cash in hand			27	2	6
	1,600	0	0	1,600	0	0

Bombay, 7th December 1929.

Anti-Untouchability Sub-Committee,
(Indian National Congress).

(Sd.) Jamnalal Bajaj,

Secretary.

Examined & Found Correct

(Sd) DALAL & SHAH,

INCORPORATED ACCOUNTANTS (LONDON)

Auditors.

14-12-29.

Karnatak Printing Press,
318A, Thakurdwar, Bombay.