

Life & Mission Dr B R Ambedkar

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For those of us born after 1950 Dr Ambedkar is mostly remembered to as the Father of the Indian Constitution. He is also referred to as the Savior of the Depressed Classes called Dalits today. I had always wanted to read about him but the man aroused me after I read his book 'Thoughts on Pakistan'. His style is well researched, simple, straight possibly blunt. He came across as a very well read person whose arguments were based on sound logic. After completing the book I was in awe of the man's intellect. Where did this Man come from? Why do the depressed classes worship him today? What were the problems that he had to undergo? Why did he become a Buddhist? What were his views on Ahimsa? Not knowing whether any book would satisfy my quest for knowledge I went to my favorite bookshop at the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan & was fortunate to find a book by D Keer. Having read Life Story of Veer Savarkar by the same author I instinctively knew that this was the book. Dr Ambedkar is referred to as BRA & Depressed Classes as DC henceforth.

How have I compiled this piece? Done a précis of the book taking the most important events in BRA's life. Focused on the problems faced by him, his achievements, dual with Gandhi, role in India's Independence movement & framing India's Constitution, reasons for embracing Buddhism. The book also has extensive quotations from historic interviews & inspiring speeches. Have ignored aspects of Partition that are covered in essays on Patel & Savarkar. My comments start by saying Friends.

Excerpts from Preface by the Author 16/5/1954 "BRA has played the part of destiny in the liberation of suppressed humanity in India. So India must learn to understand his life, character and mission & know him as he is & not as he is distorted by his enemies or deified by his devotees. In order to help readers see the development of his mind and understand the bitterness and violence with which he attacked the old views & values that had defaced a part of humanity in this land, I have traced the events & facts in their proper context and perspective & dealt with the views of his great contemporaries with whom he came into clash. In doing so I have not the remotest idea of his belittling his greatness. Every great man has his minor foibles and flaws and when he moves & struggles in a particular field, he comes into conflict with the great ones in that field". Friends hope that my précis is up to the mark, if not apologies in advance.

This piece is dedicated to Valmiki, Veda Vyasa, Sant Tukaram, Mahatma Phule, Veer Savarkar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati and lastly to the author Dhananjay Keer. He attained eminence as a biographer, in recognition of which The Govt of India conferred on him the honor of Padma Bhushan. This piece is divided into 27 chapters as they appear in the book.

Ch No	Title	Content
1.	2500 years.	Origin of untouchability, British attitude, socio-political situation in Maharashtra.
2.	Childhood & Youth	BRA's family, early education & childhood.
3.	Self-Development.	Education in U.S.A., early activism, back to London.
4.	Man of the Hour	Law practice, BRA/Gandhi/Savarkar, Organizes DC.
5.	Up Against Slavery	Mahad fight – taking water from well, Role in Bombay Legislative Council.
6.	Declaration of Independence	BRA on violence, historic Mahad conference, BRA/Gandhi/Savarkar compared.
7.	The Morning Star	Comments on Bhakti Movement, Simon Commission, Rising Star.
8.	Land, Labor, Education	Fight for education or political rights, textile strike.
9.	Before the Bar	Temple entry into Nasik, Ist R.T. Conference.
10.	War with Gandhi	Meeting with Gandhi, 2 nd R.T.C., Gandhi/BRA tussel.
11.	Truce	On Gandhi, separate electorates, Gandhi BRA pact.
12.	The Real Path	Muslim approach, temple entry controversy & Constitution committee.
13.	A Thunderbolt.	Health, ready to embrace another religion, why BRA would not adopt Islam.
14.	Verdict on Hinduism.	BRA on varna & embracing Sikhism.
15.	A New Party.	Starts a new party, elections of 1937.
16.	Labor Leader	Role, why BRA did not want to adopt Christianity, noble words, comments on Gandhi.
17.	On Federation & Pakistan	Challenges Congress, compares times of Ranade & Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo's words on Gandhi/Congress, World War 2, Thoughts on Pakistan.
18.	From Dust to Doyen	Mahar battalion, Cripps Mission, BRA grows in stature.
19.	Labor Member	Super speeches, work for labor cause, BRA routed in elections.
20.	Spell on Constituent Assembly	Dispute with Congress, depressed + great speeches.
21.	Modern Manu	Results of partition, constitution work, BRA praised.
22.	Shadow of Buddhism.	Increasing popularity, back to Buddhism.
23.	Back to the Opposition.	Hindu code bill, resigns, defeated in elections, conferred doctorate.
24.	Govt on the Anvil	No linguistic states, on foreign policy.
25.	Old Age	What did BRA achieve, contribution to Hinduism, knowing BRA the man.
26.	Revival of Buddhism	Promoting Buddhism, thoughts on Buddhism and BRA converts. (a Must Read).
27.	The Last Journey	End / Tributes / Thoughts.

This chapter gives you the political, social situation on eve of BRA's birth.

1. BRA hailed from a poor family belonging to one of the untouchable communities (lowest strata of Hindu society) in India. Before the Indian Constitution abolished untouchability in 1950 they were divided into three categories – Untouchables, Unapproachables & Unseeables and were nearly 20 % of the Hindu population in India. They had different names in different parts of the country – Outcastes, Antyajias and Namashudras. Their social disabilities were specific & numerous. Their touch, shadow and even voice were deemed by the caste Hindus to be polluting. They were obliged to wear a particular type of dress & footwear, eat a particular type of food, and were forced to occupy the dirty, dingy, and unhygienic outskirts of villages & towns for habitation where they lived in dark, insanitary and miserable smoky shanties or cottages. Men wore a turban, carried a staff in the hand - rough blanket on the shoulder and a piece of loincloth. The women wore bodices & rough sarees barely reaching the knees.

Their children were not admitted to schools attended by caste Hindus. Though they worshipped Hindu gods, observed the same festivals, the Hindu temples were closed to them. Barbers & washermen refuse to render them service. These untouchable Hindus were treated by the caste Hindus as subhumans, less than men, worse than beasts. This picture is still true of villages and small towns (written in 1954). Cities have now mostly overcome this prejudice. As they were uneducated all public services including police & military forces were closed to them. Some of them plied trades of a lower & degrading order such as those of street-sweepers, scavengers & shoemakers. Others who were more fortunate tilled the land as tenants, worked as laborers in fields, a great number of them subsisted on food or grain given to them as village servants. They were born Untouchables, lived and died as Untouchables.

2. The **origin of Untouchability** is an enigma to modern history. But it is generally held to be a perverted outcome of the caste system. The Vedic Aryans knew no caste system. As time passed by, they divided themselves for different occupations. Those who took to learning became Brahmins, undertook governance became Kshatriyas, took to trade were Vaishyas and those who served these three classes became Shudras. But in actual practice this original principle of division of labor did not sustain for long. The result was that the original four divisions became watertight compartments & degenerated later into the present day caste system. Another view holds that these Untouchables were Broken Men and then followers of Buddhism. In their fallen days they did not assimilate themselves with Vedic Hindus or give up beef eating, and so they were degraded & segregated as Untouchables. The question is – Did this disruptive system go unchallenged?

Several worthy sons of India from generation to generation made attempts to free Hindu society from this system. There was Buddha who around 500 B.C. rocked the system to its foundations for a considerable period and even initiated the Untouchables into his religion. 'Friends Buddha's was a reformist movement, not a Religion, because in India

existed Never Religion but Dharma did'. In the 11th century Ramanuja, who had an untouchable discipline, threw open the monasteries & temple to them which he had founded & built. There was Basavana in Karnatka followed by saints like Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanya, Eknath, Tukaram, Rohidas & Chokhamela who succeeded to a great extent in establishing equality in matters of their Bhakti Cult.

Then followed the waves of socio-religious revival led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. But the most vital role was played by Mahatma Phooley who started in 1848 India's first School for Untouchables. Among the Indian Princes it was Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda who started schools for the Untouchables in 1883. Gopal Baba Walangkar, a follower of Phule strove hard to convince the caste Hindus of their inhuman behavior. The virile & valiant Dayananda made great efforts too.

3. The attitude of the **British** rulers, who had just abolished slavery in their own land, towards the Untouchables was quite indifferent. Their neutral role was in effect a negative support to the caste Hindu oppressors. After the fall of the Maratha Empire they about stabilizing their newly acquired empire a manner so as to drain them slowly, fleece them safely and exploit them softly. Thus they first took up the cause of the Brahmans who had suffered tremendously by the change of Govt. For enlivening their hearts they began to educate them to enable them to be in service of the new Govt.

In those days literature was the privileged treasure & education was the monopoly of the Brahmans. They were forbidden to other caste Hindus too. When the Govt opened a Sanskrit school in 1821 for education of other castes the Brahmans protested and a majority of them resigned. However, as time passed by, it may be said to the credit of the British govt that non-Brahmins & backward class Hindus advanced gradually in education & govt service as never before.

If this was the situation of the caste Hindus what must have been the condition of the Untouchables. The Christian missionaries fully exploited the situation. By their tact, kindness & readiness to help they ingratiated themselves with the lower classes & Untouchables with the result that a strong feeling grew that foreigners were preferable to the Brahmans. Due to the problems faced by Untouchable students in 1858 the Govt announced that it reserved the right refuse support to any partially aided school in which the benefits of education are withheld from any class of persons on account of caste & race. But this directive was not enough to result in a changed mindset of the caste Hindus.

4. Maharashtra – by the 1890s a strong socio-political revival had set in. The main problem that confronted the leaders along with political backwardness were the caste system, untouchability, child marriage, widow remarriage and emancipation of women. A bitter controversy arose over whether social reforms should take precedence over political reforms. The British naturally so wanted the Indians to focus on social reforms & bypass political agitation. But the Indians believed that both need to happen simultaneously. The foremost among them was the glowing & mighty Ranade who conceived a vast broadening of the social foundations. Agarkar, a man of intellect & character, envisaged a profound reshaping of national, social & individual values. Dr Bhandarkar, a man of great learning actively propagated social reform.

On the side of political reformers was the commanding, aggressive personality of Tilak. He led the orthodox section of people who shouted that political reforms constituted the nation's first necessity, with a subtle motive of bypassing social reforms. Telang an eminent judge wanted social reform running along the path of least resistance and political reform. Most of the political reformists opposed social reforms because they feared that social & religious disabilities if removed, would jeopardize their own prestige, privileges & position in Hindu society. So they bitterly opposed every move sponsored to give Hindu society a real & sound foundation.

The Indian National Congress had been founded 7 years ago, its sessions ended in appeals to the British for atleast Indianizing the Governmental administrative posts & Councils.

1. BRAs Family- Ambedkars come from Konkan. BRA's ancestral village is Ambavade, five kms from Mandangad, a small town in the Ratnagiri district. The family had some prestige in the village. BRA's grandfather Maloji Sakpal came of a good Mahar family. Of all the untouchables the Mahars are the most robust, adaptable, fighting, brave and leading community. It is believed that the Mahars were the original inhabitants of Maharashtra which they say was Mahar –Rashtra! Yet the origin of the word Mahar is said to be Maha-Ari, the great enemy! They were the first to come into contact with the Europeans. They formed a part of the Bombay Army of the East India Co just as the Dusads of Bihar.

Maloji was a retired military man. BRA's father was Ramji & mother Bhimabhai. The family belonged to the devotional Kabir school of thought. Thus Bhakti school found consolation in the human attributes like love, compassion and resignation to God. These devotees sought & found moral/spiritual food in Lord Krishna/Ram. But the most important effect upon the mind of the followers of this school was that they had abolished the rigidity of the caste system as Kabir had condemned it.

An uncle of BRA'S conferred a boon on Ramji that soon would a boy be born who would leave his mark on history. Entranced with the belief, Ramji and wife intensified their religious observances. The boon took effect at Mhow, on April 14, 1891 & so was born Bhim. BRA's mother Bhimabai came of the Murbadkars, an untouchable Hindu family. They were a rich family from the village of Murbad in Thane district. Fair by complexion, she had a broad forehead, curly hair, round glowing eyes & short nose.

BRA's father secured a job in Bombay in the military quarters at Satara. His mother passed away when BRA was six. Being the youngest of five children now his married sisters looked after him turn by turn. Besides his father's sister Mirabai was there to take care of the family. Soon BRA became her favorite. BRA's father Ramji Sakpal lived a very industrious & intensely religious life. He offered prayers morning & evening. He read & recited to his children the Ramayana & Mahabharata, the two unfailing sources of divine inspiration. He also sang spiritual songs from the Marathi saint-poets like Moropant, Mukteshwar and Tukaram. Constant recitals of these songs provided his children with a certain toning & command over language at an early age. For 14 years Ramji served as headmaster in military schools & had attained rank of Subedar-Major. He was a teetotaler and never touched meat. A friend & admirer of Phule he was aware of the social problems faced by his community. When the British banned the recruitment of the Mahars in the Indian Army, Ramji took a lead in protesting, approached the ever helping Ranade to draft a petition appealing to the British to rescind the orders. No wonder BRA had derived from his father his painstaking spirit, forceful mental energy and intense interest in the welfare of his society.

2. Early Education - At Satara BRA completed his primary education. During his school days BRA realized painfully what the stigma of untouchability meant. Once he & his brother took a train for Goregaon. Since their father had not come to the station they took a bullock cart for Goregaon. When the god-fearing caste Hindu cartman came to know that the two brothers were untouchables he asked the brothers to get off the cart, took them back only after they had paid him double the fare. After that the caste Hindu walked behind the cart with BRA's brother driving it. This was the first rude & shattering shock to the budding mind of Bhim. A few days the earlier impression got confirmed when he was drinking water stealthily at a public watercourse, got caught, and was beaten black & blue. The barber refused to cut his hair so his sisters cut his hair.

What an indelible impression these cruel disabilities must have made on Bhim's young mind that was so strong, so sensitive & yet too resolute. Such insults must have engendered in him a burning hatred for Hinduism. Bhim was pugnacious, resourceful & fearless. He could defy anybody and anything that dictated rules of conduct & discipline.

A Brahmin teacher by the name Ambedkar loved Bhim very much. He dropped part of his meal into the hands of Bhim every recess. This teacher has left his impress on the life of his pupil. The original name of Bhim father was Sakpal. **Bhim drew his surname Ambavadekar from his native village Ambavade**, as Maharashtrian surnames are often derived from the names of the ancestral villages. 'Friends it happens in other parts of India like Punjab's ex-CM Parkash Singh Badal came from the village Badal. Sachin Tendulkar's village is Tendu'. The teacher took so much fancy to the Bhim that he changed his surname from Ambavadekar to Ambedkar in the school records. Despite those oases of warmth, Bhim & his brother were not treated well at school.

He was a playful child who was not keen on studies but liked to indulge in all sorts of hobbies, fancies and gardening. When Ranade died in 1901 he was happy to enjoy the holiday not knowing who Ranade was. Sometime before this, Bhim's father married again. Bhim did not like this and so decided that he must earn his own livelihood. He had heard from his sisters that boys from Satara had found jobs in mills in Bombay, thus, he decided to be a winding boy in a Bombay mill. Unable to arrange the money for fare to Bombay he decided to give up his truant habits, study hard, get through his exams as fast as possible so that he could be independent of his father. This marked a turning point in his life because he became so diligent that his teachers urged his father to give him the best possible education.

3. Then Ramji & family moved to Mumbai, stayed at Dabak chawl in Lower Parel. He got his sons admitted into the Maratha school. Under his father Bhim did the translation of Howard's English Reader & the three famous translation books by Tarkhadkar. This improved Bhim's English tremendously. Bhim like Tilak & Savarkar developed in his youth a passion for reading. His desire to possess books was insatiable. A wide reading, deep knowledge & historical perspective bestow upon their growing lives a certain prestige & toning, Bhim was no exception. Ramji borrowed money to ensure that his son was supplied with new books. It was his ardent desire that his son should become a man of letters & light.

After a few months, Bhim was sent to the Elphinstone High School a leading school. Bhim studied hard, read at night – early morning under a kerosene oil-lamp. In spite of being a govt school there were the same prejudices. By virtue of living in a labor class locality i.e. Parel he had the opportunity of observing the conditions of the labor class. In this environment three years glided by. By dint of hard work he got through his exams.

Yet the school life of Bhim was to receive its unkindest cut that was so deep which all his life he remembered with strongest aversion. Both Bhim & his brother were not allowed to take up the study of Sanskrit – a key to the study of the Vedas, but were forced to take Persian instead against their will. Afterwards BRA studied Sanskrit partly by himself & sometimes with the help of some pandits & himself became a pandit. “In his opinion, Persian stands no comparison with Sanskrit as the latter, observes he, is the golden treasure of epics, the cradle of grammar, politics & philosophy and the home of logic, dramas & criticism”. Quote from Hudilkar, Prof Satyabodh. **BRA praises Sanskrit.**

Notwithstanding the ills & intolerable insults inflicted upon him and stimulated by his father to rise to a high position on life, encouraged by broad-minded men, Bhim passed the Matriculation exams in 1907 from Elphinstone High School. Bhim obtained 282 out of 750. This scoring of average marks is not uncommon in case of ambitious boys whose minds are absorbed in subjects other than texts and who become great in the future. But these marks were uncommon for an Untouchable. The community under the presidentship of S.K. Bole, a well-known social reformer, decided to honor Bhim. At this meeting well-known author & social reformer Krishnaji Arjun Keluskar took a fancy to Bhim & presented him with a copy of his new book, Life of Gautama Buddha.

4. A short time after the exams Bhim in abeyance to his father’s wishes got married in an open shed of the Byculla market in Bombay. Bhim was hardly 17 and his wife 9, name Rami she was renamed as Ramabai.

By now the problem of Untouchables had made headway. From among them emerged Shivaram Janba Kamble who convened the first Conference of Untouchables in India. He sent a memorandum to the British govt in 1910 appealing to them to enlighten & elevate the Untouchables ‘by allowing them to remain followers of their own ancestral faith’. Another stalwart from the Maratha community V.R. Shinde, educated at Oxford, started in 1906 the Depressed Classes Mission of India. It opened branches in other cities too. Encouraged by his father Bhim studied further, completed his Inter Arts after which his father ran out of funds, approached Keluskar for help who called the Maharaja of Baroda reminding him of the announcement he had made a few days earlier at a Townhall meeting in Bombay, promising to help any Untouchable in the pursuance of higher studies. Mahaja Sayajirao Gaekwad asked Bhimrao some questions, satisfied, he granted him a scholarship of 25 rupees per mensem.

AIM. BRA studied now with a view to passing the exam. But reading was the greatest joy in life. It was directed to some purpose in life. It was his aim to arm himself with every possible missile, make himself master of a repository of knowledge & develop the

power of his mind to prepare himself for higher attainments & a new life that was to open the portals & possibilities of a great career.

BRA passed his B.A. exams in 1912. It was during this period that the rights of Indians were totally suppressed by the British govt. This gave rise to a whirlwind of discontent. Tilak's deportation to Mandalay & Savarkar's brother's revengeful transportation to the Andamans, imprisonment of several others shook Maharashtra violently. This state of repression must have agitated the strong currents of BRA's mind.

The repercussions of these events were seen on his mind when he wrote his famous thesis, *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*. The patriot in BRA describes in it how the Brits resorted to repressive measures and indicts the British administration in India with these words, 'Not satisfied with the aid of power with which the Executive was endowed by the provisions of the Criminal & Penal Codes to anticipate offenses by preventing acts, it besmeared the Indian Statue Book with a set of repressive laws hardly paralleled in any other part of the world'. He tells us that the Indian Press Act of 1910, puts a muzzle on the Press. Few front rank authors of those times described this period of Indian history as pithily as BRA has done.

BRA's reactions to Morley-Minto are noteworthy. Tracing the growth of constitutionalism at different stages, 1853-1861-1892-1909, he says in his theses that it was always the intent of the British to make the legislature independent and at the same time muzzle it. He said that it was a Parliamentary system without a Parliamentary executive and in which the Legislature could neither make or unmake the Executive.

After his graduation, BRA took service in Baroda, the state of his benefactor. He was appointed to the post of a lieutenant in the Baroda State Forces. This move was probably a shrewd step fully aware that most offices being manned by orthodox Hindu upper classes it could create an unbearable situation for him. Barely 15 days later BRA had to rush to Bombay to see his ailing father who passed away on 2/2/1913. This was the saddest day of BRA's life. So passes away Ramji Maloji, in debt but with exemplary character and unconscious of his great legacy to his clan, country & humanity. Having infused his son a strength of will to resist worldly temptations & a depth of spirituality unfound in his son's contemporaries, he left him behind the fight the battle of life & to break the world to his way.

1. Education in U.S. - BRA's thirst for knowledge & spur for ambition made him restless. He was now in no mood to return to his job, his short stay had been unhappy. In June 1913 the Maharaja of Baroda thought of sending some students to Columbia University for higher studies & advertised. BRA replied to advt, met Maharaja who decided to send BRA & three other students there for higher education. BRA signed an agreement with the Baroda state agreeing to devote his time studying the prescribed subjects & to serve the state for 10 years after completing his studies.

Life in America was a different ball game. He could move freely, read – write -talk-bathe with a status of equality. Life there was a revelation, it enlarged his horizon, and his life gleamed with a new meaning. A letter to one of his fathers friends give us a peep into his mind, 'We must now, entirely give up the idea that parents give birth to the child and not destiny – Karma'. They can mould the destiny of the children and if we follow this principle, be sure that we will see better days ahead – progress will be hastened if male & female education are pursued simultaneously. 'Let your mission' concludes the man of 20, 'thus be to educate & preach the idea of education to those atleast who are near to & close contact with you'.

Imbued with these thoughts & vision BRA knew well that he had to develop his native worth without the backing of name or influence for which tremendous hard work was necessary. Out of his stipend he had to remit some money home every month so expense had to be kept down. His college colleagues related afterwards with pride how BRA seized every possible hour for his study for which he had been given a life's opportunity. He wanted to be a master so took up political science, moral philosophy, anthropology, sociology and economics as the subjects of his study.

Thus started '**Dnyana Yadnya**', for 18 hours a day went on the endless digging for knowledge. After two years of hard work, BRA obtained his M.A. degree in 1915 for his thesis 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. He also read a paper on 'Castes in India, Their Mechanism, Genesis & Development' before the Anthropology Seminar of Dr Goldenweiser in May 1916. The second ladder of success was reached not long afterwards. Another thesis of his 'National Dividend of India – A Historic & Analytical Study' was accepted by the Columbia University in June 1916.

8 years later Messrs P.S. King & Son, Ltd, London published an extension of this thesis under the title, Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India. BRA then submitted the required number of copies of the thesis to the University. Columbia awarded him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for this dissertation. In this thesis BRA traces the growth of the financial arrangements from the Act of 1833 under the imperial system. From chapters 10 to 12 the book becomes eloquent, interesting & powerful in its appeal. The style of the professor becomes one with the soul of the patriot and **BRA bitterly exposes the British bureaucracy**, denounces the designs & objects of the imperial system and

lashes out at the reactionary forces in the country. While admitting that there was some progress he adds that everybody knows that the whole policy of India was dictated by the interests of the English industries & manufacturers. This book became a companion of the Members of the Indian Legislative Council & Central Assembly at the time of the budget discussions during the British regime, ready reference for students of economics.

Young Americans whose forefathers had struggled for the abolition of slavery of the Negroes were celebrating the success of a young man who had the will & mission of Lincoln & the labor of Booker T Washington. While in America he must have been impressed with two things, one was the Constitution of the U.S. and the 14th amendment, which declared the freedom of Negroes. Two was the life of Booker T Washington who died in 1915. He was a great reformer & the educator of the Negro race in America.

From the U.S. he reached London in June 1916. At New York Lala Lajpat Rai tried to convince BRA to join the Indian Revolutionary Party but failed. BRA told Lalaji that he was a student, must complete his studies first without betraying the trust of the Maharaja who had given him an opportunity of his life. Immediately BRA got himself admitted to Grays Inn for Law for the study of Economics to the London School of Economics. While he was studying he was informed that period of scholarship was over and thus had to return to India – Baroda. Wanting to study further but bound by agreement he secured permission from London University to resume his studies within a period not exceeding four years from October 1917.

2. BRA reached Bombay on 21/8/1917. The British govt faced a deep crisis, depressed by war reverses, pressed by the Indian Home Rule movement and oppressed by the Indian revolutionary forces. In order to pacify Indians the then Secretary of State declared the policy of gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to progressive realization of responsible Government in India as part of the British empire. When Montagu visited India all sorts of people met him, for the first time in the political history of India the representatives of the Untouchables met him too.

BRA was felicitated by Sambaji Waghmare & others for his achievements in the academic world but he did not attend the meeting – embarrassed he was. BRA left for Baroda bound as he was to the State for 10 years but no hostel wanted a Mahar to stay so he took shelter in a Parsee inn. The Maharaja wanted to appoint BRA as his Finance Minister eventually but wanted him to gain experience first, made him Military Secretary to the Maharaja first. However he was treated by staff & peons as a leper. One day a group of Parsis armed with lathis asked him to vacate the Parsee hostel that he was living in. No Hindu or Muslim would give him shelter in the city. Neither the Maharaja or the Diwan were able to help. Disgusted he returned to Bombay in the end of 1917.

The Indian National Congress (referred to as INC) was now growing conscious of the existence of the Depressed Classes. But its sudden love emanated from an ulterior motive of winning their support for the Congress-league scheme in which premium was put on the separate identity of the Muslims, but notice was not taken of the Untouchables.

To consider the Congress-League demands the Depressed Classes (referred to as DC) held two conferences in Mumbai. At the first one, a resolution appealed to the Govt to protect the interest of the Untouchables by granting the DC the right to elect their own representatives to legislatures in proportion to their population & by another it asked the Congress to pass a resolution impressing upon the caste Hindus the need for removing all the disabilities imposed upon the DC in the name of custom & religion. Accordingly the Congress passed a resolution at its annual session held in December 1917. The second conference opposed the transfer of power to the caste Hindus and appealed to the govt to grant them the right to choose their own representatives.

Three months after the Congress resolution the DC held it's First All India Depressed Classes Conference on 23-24/3/1918 in Bombay. It was attended by amongst other Maharaja of Baroda, Rabindranath Tagore, M.R. Jaykar, Shankaracharya of Dwarka, Tilak. Everyone asked for abolition of untouchability. At the end of the conference there came out with an All India Anti-Untouchability Manifesto signed by all prominent leaders that they would not observe untouchability in their everyday affairs. Tilak, however did not sign, on account of pressure from his followers.

3. Early Activism - Reserved & skeptical of the movement of the caste Hindus for the uplift of the Untouchables BRA did not associate himself with this conference. He was waiting for the right time to draw upon his energy & brainpower. First he must have a footing & position for which he had to earn his living. Law was on his mind. Through the help of a Parsi man he became a tutor to two students – started offering advice to dealers in stocks & shares. But soon it became known that its owner was an Untouchable and he had to close it down.

Yet the mind was busy with the ideas of intellectual conquest. BRA reprinted his paper on Castes in India in a book form & contributed a thought provoking paper on 'Small Holdings in India & their Remedies'. In a depressed state of mind he heard of a vacancy in Bombay's Sydenham College of Commerce, applied for the post of professorship. He accepted the post of Professor of Political Economy in November 1918 as his object was to collect money & return to England to complete his education. At first the students were apprehensive on the competence of an Untouchable but as time passed by they respected him, in fact students from other colleges came to attend his lectures.

Some Gujarati professors objected to his drinking water from the pot reserved for the professional staff. Wanton insults & humiliations were goading him to go to the root of the trouble. So gradually he began feeling the pulse of the Untouchables & was silently contacting all the centers of sympathizers with their cause. It was with this intent that he encouraged the felicitation of P Balu on his great achievements in cricket. Another prince Shri Shahu Maharaj, the ruler of Kolhapur did his utmost to promote education among the lower classes, eradicate prejudices and barriers created by the caste system.

Around this time Karamveer Shinde & BRA were called upon to give evidence before the Southborough Committee dealing with the franchise in the light of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. BRA demanded separate electorates and reserved seats for the

Depressed Classes in proportion to their population. With the help of the Maharaja of Kolhapur he started a fortnightly paper titled Mook Nayak, Leader of the Dumb in January 1920. In articles therein he wrote it was not enough for India to be an independent country, she must rise as a good state guaranteeing equal status in matters religious, social, economic and political to all classes, offering every man an opportunity to rise in the scales of life & creating conditions favorable to his advancement. He wanted to awaken the DC to their disabilities, take to education & progress. BRA was not prepared for all out attack on Hindu society yet and besides his armory was not yet full with weapons.

At the All India Conference convened by the Untouchables in May 1920 at Nagpur was the first time that during a debate BRA's skills & presence of mind as a debator and his ability as a prospective leader were seen to a remarkable degree. He defeated a proposal by Karamveer Shinde that the representatives of the Untouchables must be elected by the Members of the Legislative Council. **It was here that BRA won his first victory in public life.** BRA believed that howsoever-hard caste Hindus worked for their upliftment they did not know their mind. That is why he was opposed to any organizations started by caste Hindus for the upliftment of the DC. This Nagpur conference gave him an opportunity of turning the eyes of the Untouchables from the DC Mission. At the end of the conference he called the leaders together with a view to unite them for eg within the Mahar community there were 18 sub-castes.

4. Back to London - Although BRA drew a good salary as professor he lived a very simple life. He gave a fixed amount to his wife Ramabai for running the household. Dutiful, self-respecting, pious and given to self-denial she spent her early life in struggles yet lived in peace & harmony. Having lost her first two sons in infancy the health of her third son Yashwnt caused her anxiety. Yet she kept herself away from her husband's study, gave him no news of any illness in the family. Like Tilak, Savarkar BRA too had a great wife.

At last he had saved some money plus help from Maharaja of Kolhapur & Naval Bathena he left for London to complete his studies in Law & Economics. Besides his studies he turned his attention to the London Museum where the relics of saintly & scientific thoughts are preserved. Whenever possible he was there from 8 am to 5 pm. He also read several volumes & old reports in the India Office Library, took down notes for his thesis. After a walk and light dinner he would start reading again at night till early morning. BRA lived so sparingly that he survived on a small sum of 8 pounds a month.

Yet he did not forget his main aim in life, he had seen Montagu the then Secretary of State and Vithalbhai Patel and had talks with them on the grievances of the Untouchables in India. He took great interest in his paper Mook Nayak too. The political scene in India was changing with dramatic suddenness. A short while after BRA came to London passed away India's great son, Tilak. In the wake of this misfortune, surged and spread the politics of Gandhi. BRA described these times later as 'the dark age of India'.

Gandhi who while collecting the Tilak Swaraj Fund had made the removal of untouchability one of the planks of the Congress propaganda, now refused to spend on it beyond a meager amount out of the one crore rupees collected. The Congress Working Committee now resolved that the problem of the upliftment of the Untouchables should be left to the Hindu Mahasabha as it was thought that they were alone concerned with the problem. The Act of 1919 recognized for the first time the existence of the DC.

BRA research work was now coming to an end. Thesis 'Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in British India' was completed for which he was awarded the Master of Science in June 1921. In October 1922 he completed his famous thesis 'The Problem of the Rupee and submitted it to the University of London. His studies were now coming to an end. He went to Germany for a while when he was called back to London as his thesis had offended the British who asked him to rewrite the thesis without changing his conclusions. A few days earlier he had read a paper on 'Responsibilities of a Responsible Government in India' before the students union. It created a furor like his earlier writings and he was suspected to be a revolutionary.

Running out of money he returned to India in April 1923. A few days later he resubmitted his thesis 'The Problem of the Rupee' from Bombay. Accepted, he was at last awarded the degree of Doctor of Science. In this work **BRA reveals how in the final settlement of the currency problem the relationship of the rupee to the pound was manipulated to the greater profit of the British**, and how it inflicted hardships on the Indian people as a whole. BRA was now a Barrister reinforced by a London Doctorate in science, an American Doctorate in Philosophy and studies at Bonn University.

1. BRA now decided to practice law that would provide him with opportunities, means & leisure to devote himself to the aim of his life, the uplift of the Untouchables. With the help of Naval Bathena he started his life as a Barrister in June 1923. The thorns of untouchability, the color of his skin, the inexperienced legal mind & unhelpful surroundings in courts turned his path into an uphill task. But BRA knew that excellence in pursuit is achieved by laborious application.

BRA joined the Appellate side of the Bombay Bar as success in practice on the Original side depended more upon one's influence with the solicitors than upon one's ability. The Solicitors would not have anything to do with him on account of his untouchability and thus he had to be happy with whatever work came his way. What's new, all famous legal luminaries had to start their early career cooling their heels.

By now outer influences and inner forces had brought about a visible change in the mental & moral outlook of the DC. The spread of education, development of communications, mode of traveling & spirit of nationalism had gradually begun to act as an effective correctness to the prejudicial ideas of untouchability. The rise of the textile industry during World War I helped the DC too since they had to work with other classes & stimulated them to better their own condition. On the top of it was the impetus to democratic ideals generated by the inevitable forces of World War I that gave an impetus to social reformation the world over.

About this time D Gholap, the first nominated member of the DC in the Bombay Legislative Council, moved a resolution in order to make primary education compulsory in order to bring it within the reach of the DC. But the most important resolution was one moved by S K Bole which the Bombay Legislative Council adopted on 4/8/1923. Moving the resolution he said that untouchability was a stigma on the good name of India: 'It is in the interests of the country that the DC should be given better treatment. The Council recommends that that the Untouchable Classes be allowed to use all public watering places, wells & dharamshalas which are built & maintained out of public funds'. Bole's work was widely appreciated by the DC of Bombay.

Another notable proclamation was made concerning the DC at the end of 1923. Stimulated by Gandhi's support to the Indian Muslims on the issue of Khilafat, presiding at a meeting called to present an address to Gandhi at Madras, Yakub Hussein once openly enjoined upon the Muslims the duty of converting all the Untouchables of India to Islam.

2. **1924, Savarkar, Gandhi, BRA** – this was one of most eventful years in Indian history. After undergoing a hellish life for 12 years in Andaman Savarkar was released & interned in Ratnagiri. Gandhi too was released on health grounds after suffering for nearly two years consequent to the debacle of his Khilafat-Swaraj Movement. Savarkar

worked for the consolidation of Hindu society & for the upliftment of the DC. Gandhi too did the same. BRA prepared himself for the same. He convened a meeting in March 1924 to consider establishing a central institution for removing difficulties of the untouchables & placing their grievances before the Government. So in July was formed 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, activities confined to Bombay. Its aim was to promote the spread of education – culture among DC, advance & improve their economic condition, to represent their grievances.

Why was BRA chartering a different path? BRA was looking at social reforms in the sense of the reorganization & reconstruction of Hindu society on the basis of equality and not at issues like widow remarriage, education of women etc. Despite the good work by the Prarthana / Brahma Samaj / princes none could stir in the heart of these suppressed people an emotion of confidence, hope & aspiration for their own salvation. Self-help is the best help. The conservative feeling in the country at this juncture was unmoved as a rock. Only the conscience of the more political minded Hindus was tweaked when they were reminded by the rival Muslim politicians that more than one-third of the Hindu population was not accepted by the Hindus as part & parcel of the community. That is why the Hindu Mahasabha & the Arya Samajists could not succeed much in their work of consolidation of Hindu society.

To be fair to the Hindu Mahasabha it must be said that they undertook a mission, which the conservative minds looked upon disfavor. Now when they were fighting foreign rule by raising the issue of social reform they ran the risk of alienating the conservative Hindu whose support they needed. But more than that the reason for their failure was that some of their first rate leaders were orthodox at heart, resolutions / intent were good but execution bad. Their apathy & indifference was so much that even Swami Shradhdhananda had to resign from their camp. No wonder the Mahasabha was described by the World Press as reactionary instead of having great leaders like Shradhdhananda & Savarkar. Congress leaders were concerned only with Muslim sentiments, did not care about the disabilities of the DC or note their conversion to Islam & Christianity. They did follow Gandhi's movement for uplift of the Untouchables.

3. Gandhi believed in the caste system & the four varnas. He wanted to raise the DC to the status of the fifth class, improve their lot but cared not to hurt the sentiments of his orthodox capitalist admirers who were the prop of his movement. His was more propaganda than effective change while Savarkar / BRA were social revolutionaries. Savarkar stand was nationalistic, realistic & revolutionary in outlook & action in as much at molding different castes into a casteless society in which all Hindus would be socially, economically & political equal. But as he was interned in Ratnagiri district the impact could not be seen outside that district.

BRA was one amongst the DC. He knew what it meant to be born & live the life of an untouchable. He gave vent to their passions, mind & stifled self. A man of great knowledge & boundless energy he was a man who regarded the woes & miseries of those classes as a personal humiliation, and thus had taken a vow to make self-respecting citizens out of those virtual slaves. He urged the Untouchables to fight for self-elevation.

He cried out excerpts 'You have been groaning from time immemorial & yet you are not ashamed to hug your helplessness as an inevitability'. The spate of his burning speeches began to have a telling effect upon their minds & to rouse them against their slavery.

BRA did not join the movement for the political independence of India. Those who were deprived of their political rights by foreign rulers were busy fighting them since they would rule India once the foreigners left. BRA's aim was liberation of the DC for which he knew he would have to fight with caste Hindus & to deal with the British govt in respect of political rights. He however realized that hatred of British rule would be inviting double enmity of his people. **So he thought it prudent to cooperate with the British so far as that cooperation would be able to secure rights for the DC.**

4. With the birth of the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha dawned a new age of self-respect. It started in 1925 a hostel at Sholpaur, a monthly magazine named Saraswati Vilas. The DC were now being attracted to BRA's personality. He provided over the first conference of Untouchables at Malwan in Ratnagiri district in April 1925. But the most o/s event of the year was the satyagraha sponsored by Ramaswami Naicker, a non-Brahmin leader at Vaikam in the Travancore State for vindicating the rights of Untouchables to use a certain road to which they were forbidden entry. Another important incident took place when an untouchable by name Murgesan entered a Hindu temple in Madras despite a ban on Untouchables.

BRA was watching these events closely, his message of self-elevation was gathering force in its appeals. He was also gaining foothold as a lawyer. The spasms of social resolution were stirring the society. In spite of the Bole resolution a number of Local Boards & Municipalities had not granted DC their civic rights. Bole moved another resolution on 5/8/1926 recommending to the govt not to give grant to those Municipalities etc which refused to give effect to the resolution passed by the Council three years ago.

5. BRA continued to live in these B.I.T Chawls; three storied buildings each containing about 80 one-room tenements, common baths. Men of authority came to see him at home. At times he was without his full dress when people came to see him without appointments. Although he was best qualified to fill the position of the Principal of Sydenham College he was not appointed in spite of the best efforts of Dr R P Paranjpye, then the Member for Education. He accepted a part time post of a lecturer in the Batliboy's Accounting Training institute where he taught Mercantile Law.

It was during this time that his wife gave birth to a son Rajratna. Before that his wife gave birth to a daughter who passed away in infancy. However BRA lost Rajratna in July 1926. He was very grieved & depressed because of the death. He had acquired strength of mind, knowledge of all most all the scriptures. Like a yogin he was now spending his days in penance & austerities, immersed in silent contemplation. Men of DC came to him for help, legal advice, he fought their cases free, treated them with care & love. BRA was an expert at cooking.

The most important attribute of a great leader, next to spotless sincerity, is the possession of an ever flowing heard towards his men who are ready to do or die at his command.

1. 1927 opened with a meeting at the Koregaon War Memorial held by the DC. BRA addressed them and said that although hundreds of fighters from their community had fought on the side of the British they ungratefully later dubbed them a non-military community. About this time the Governor of Bombay nominated BRA to the Bombay Legislative Council. The DC Teachers felicitated him on his nomination.

The DC had begun to look up to BRA now. And now we come to a momentous event in the life of BRA, the march to Mahad. Based on resolutions moved by Bole in the Bombay Legislative Council, years 1923 – 1926, the Mahad municipality had thrown open the Chowdar Tank to the Untouchables. However, the resolution was a mere gesture in that the Untouchables had not exercised their right due to the hostility of the caste Hindus. The Kolaba DC decided to hold a conference at Mahad on 19-20/3/1927.

BRA delivered his presidential address. He said that demilitarization was one of the causes of their downfall. Excerpts ‘The military offered us unique opportunities of raising our standard of life & proving our merit & intellect. It is nothing less than a **treachery on the part of the British to have closed the doors of the army to the Untouchables** who had helped them establish the Indian empire while their home govt was at grips with the French during the Napoleon War’.

‘No lasting progress can be achieved unless we put ourselves through a three fold process of purification. We must improve the general tone of our demeanor, re-tone our pronunciations and revitalize our thoughts. It is high time we rooted out from our mind the ideas of highness & lowness among ourselves. We will attain self-elevation only if we learn self-help, regain our self-respect and gain self-knowledge’. He impressed upon them the importance of entering government services & of education.

2. On the first day, a few caste Hindu spokesmen, local + outsiders, made speeches justifying the rights of DC & promised them help. The Subjects Committee, decided after taking the sense of the upper classes who attended the Conference, that the Conference should go in a body to the Chowdar Tank & help the DC to establish their right to take the water.

In pursuance of the resolution of the Mahad Municipality in 1924 throwing open the tank to the DC; BRA & thousands of other delegates began marching towards the tank. BRA took water from the Tank & now drank it, so did his followers. Having done so they returned peacefully to the pandal. Two hours after the event, some evil-minded caste Hindus raised a false rumor that the Untouchables were also planning to enter the temple of Veereshwar. All of orthodox Mahad was up in arms & the whole town at once became a surging mass of rowdies. These men did not field lowered in the scale of life, when Muslims who condemned them as kafirs, broke their idols took water. Their bravadoes died off in their throats when the Christians, who believed the religious truth outside the

Biblical revelation was a work of the devil, took water from the same tank but when Untouchables who worshipped the same God as they did took water there was a furor.

Enraged at this misconstrued outrage on their religion & at the thought of defilement of the temple of Veereshwar, the caste Hindus dashed into the pandal of the DC. Majority of the delegates had dispersed by then, there was confusion in the pandal. Not knowing what to do delegates – women/children included ran into Muslim houses for shelter. Now the DC were enraged, all set to take revenge but BRA appealed for peace & discipline. Later five caste Hindus were sentenced to four months rigorous imprisonment by the District Magistrate.

3. Thus ended the first big, open Conference of the DC in Maharashtra & their first public attempt to assert their civic rights. It was as significant an event in Indian history as the partition of Bengal, the first bonfire of foreign cloth made by Savarkar & Bose's war of liberation of 1943. It is very interesting to note that both the Indian political & socio-religious revolution had their origin in Maharashtra.

Now DC applied their mind to self-improvement & self-culture as never before. They realized the importance of organization & active struggle. The struggle of Mahad pushed ahead the destiny of the DC ahead by fifty years. However, offended orthodox Hindus now sharpened the claws of social boycott of the DC. They refused to sell them corn, picked quarrels under any pretext and had a number of them jailed. For months the wave of protest against the unjust, inhuman conduct of the Mahad caste Hindus swept India.

One leader who fearlessly & whole-heartedly supported BRA's struggle was Savarkar. He said that untouchability must be condemned & abolished. He upheld the satyagraha of the untouchables at Mahad and declared that the pious & bounden duty of the Hindu world at large to restore full human rights to their co-religionists.

The caste Hindus of Mahad conducted a purification ceremony of the Chowdar Tank. Few caste leaders like Bapurao Joshi stood the wrath of the orthodox for years supported the DC while others helplessly simmered at the perverse attitude of the orthodox.

4. BRA had now to face a flood of criticism. So he felt the need for a mouthpiece as never before. He started his fortnightly Marathi paper, Bahishkrit Bharat in 1927. Justifying the need for a mouthpiece for the DC, BRA said that in the ensuing political reforms, which he expected to be affected by 1930, if the Untouchables failed to secure representation in proportion to their population, they would be doomed. To guard against this the DC need to be kept fully informed about the happenings in the land & their grievances, views / reactions must be placed before Govt & people. Through the paper he said that temples & watercourses should be open to the **Untouchables because they were Hindus.**

Some people criticized BRA by saying that people were not prepared for the radical change of society as advocated by him. BRA threw back the argument at them by asking why they clamored for independence when the people as a whole neither deserved nor were prepared for it. One in a hundred, he said, understood the significance of national

independence & even then Tilak rose for their deliverance. They criticized BRA because he drove the Untouchables to adopt a militant policy. If Tilak were born an untouchable he would not have said 'Swaraj is my birthright' but he would have said 'Annihilation of Untouchability is my birth right'. BRA's reading of Tilak is unchallengeable. A man of Tilak's cast, volcanic force, iron will would have surely applied his brains to shell the strongholds of orthodoxy had he been born an Untouchable. 'Lost rights are never regained', said BRA, 'by begging and by appeals to the conscious of the usurpers, but by relentless struggle'. 'Goats are used for sacrificial offerings and not lions,' he concluded.

5. The proceedings of the new Legislative Council commenced in February 1927. In his maiden speech BRA pointed out that out of its total revenue of 15.5 crores, about 9.9 crores was being levied by the Executive without the consent of the Council. BRA also explained how the difference in the method of levying land revenue & income-tax worsened the lot of the poor farmer who was required to pay the tax at the same rate whether he was a owner of one acre of land or a Jagirdar, whether there was a failure or abundance of crops. Said he 'holders of income below a certain minimum are exempt from levy. But under the land revenue the tax is collected from everyone rich or poor'. He raised a number of other issues relating to prohibition, education etc. In spite of being BRA's first speech it was impressive, illuminating and stimulating.

On prohibition he said, 'I feel Sir, the success of prohibition entirely depends upon the financial solution of the question, upon how we will manage to make good the loss we are bound to incur as a result of our new excise policy'. True & practical observations! On Education he appealed to the Govt to give favored treatment to the backward classes.

6. Just then Maharashtra was celebrating the tercentenary birthday of Shivaji in 1927. BRA was invited to preside over a meeting at Badlapur near Bombay. Cordially received by a Brahmin host, BRA ably & vigorously dwelt upon Shivaji's different facets of life such as his achievements, character & policy. Then he asked his 5,000 strong audiences to think over the causes that led to the downfall of the empire founded to the invidious inequality in the social field & to the hatred for the Peshwa rule.

In the third week of July 1927, BRA addressed an important meeting in Poona. A part of the meeting was the refutation by BRA of charges leveled against him of partiality. He sought to dispel such claims by detailing upon his work in the hostels at Nasik & Jalgaon, which were open to all Untouchable students. He asked the Chamars why they did not send able representatives to the Legislative Council to defend their interests. He said that he was willing to give his place to the worthiest leader from their community of one came forward to serve the cause. He warned them not to be stooges in the hands of interested groups. Nothing could be achieved said he if they did not adopt an aggressive attitude and prove by their thought, words & deeds that they would not now tolerate insult & disabilities any further. He urged the DC to wrest the right of drinking water in public places & force their entry into public temples.

In the Council, with regard to the Composition of the Senate, he supported the view that the Backward & Depressed Classes should have representation on the Senate of Bombay

University. Besides showing interest in the major legislation affecting the whole Province, BRA was very watchful about the welfare of the DC. Even at the news of the faintest injustice done to them he took up cudgels on their behalf.

1. The news of the so called purification of the Chowdar Tank lacerated the hearts of the DC & causes BRA's great pain that he decided to launch a satyagraha struggle for the vindication of people's rights. For him deep-rooted diseases needed drastic remedies. Non-Brahmin leaders of Maharashtra agrees to support the agitation on the condition that the struggle should be non-violent, should be staged on a massive scale after convening a conference at Mahad. BRA replied that he hated all men who possessed the spirit of Brahmanism & not Brahmins per say. Accordingly it was announced on 26/6/1927 that those members of the DC who wanted to take the stigma of pollution attached to them by virtue of the purification & who wanted to denounce the acts of assaults at Mahad should enlist themselves at the office of the Bhaishkrit Hitakarini Sabha in Bombay.

'The questions whether we belong to Hindu religion or not' declared he 'is to be decided once for all'. Meanwhile the Mahad municipality revoked its resolution of 1924 under which it had declared the Tank open to the DC. BRA accepted the challenge and it was decided that 25/26 December would be the days for offering the satyagraha.

BRA on Violence - He observed that a satyagrahi must possess boundless selfconfidence, which was generated in its turn from the conviction that the end sought was good & just. Any action that united the people was good. Where there was unity there was a good cause. He ascribed the origin of this philosophy to the Geeta, the main theme of which was satyagraha. He cited the Geeta since it was acceptable to the Touchables & Untouchables. According to BRA, fight, whether violent or non-violent, was just if the end sought was good. In his view Arjun was justified in resorting to arms in defence of a just cause. 'If woundings one's feelings is violence' he said 'Gandhi's satyagraha is also based on violence'. 'Truly speaking,' he concluded, 'the law should be non-violence wherever possible, violence when necessary'.

He warned the govt that if it prevented the DC from exercising their legitimate rights, the matter would be referred to the League of Nations. If the caste Hindus hampered their struggle, it would clear to the whole world that Hinduism was a stonewall and the Untouchables would have to look to another religion to shelter. He told protesting caste Hindus 'If you say your religion is our religion, then your rights & ours must be equal. But this is not the case? If not, on what grounds must we remain in the Hindu fold inspite of your kicks & rebuffs? Friends note that in 1927 BRA spoke about the DC possibility of converting to another religion if the caste Hindus refused to treat the DC as equals.

Untouchability has ruined the Untouchables, the Hindus & ultimately the nation as well. If the DC gained their self-respect/freedom the tremendous energy that they are at present required to fritter away in combating the stigma of Untouchability would be saved & applied by them for promotion of education / development of economic resources of India. They would not have been required to embrace another religion for getting themselves called human beings. That the DC cause was good for themselves, nation and a great contribution to Hinduism too'.

2. BRA now spent his energies to galvanize the younger generation into activity. 2/10/1927 where he presided over a Conference of the DC students in Poona where he emphasized the important point that much depended upon how the DC students performed their duties & discharged their responsibilities. 4/11/1927 BRA entertained at a party Mardy Jones, a Labor M.O. from U.K. who said he was pained to see the tragic dehumanizing condition of a people whose population exceeded the population of Scotland, Ireland & England.

As preparation for the Mahad struggle was coming to a head the issue of temple entry at Amraoti was coming to a head. After the trustees refused the DC entry into the temple a meeting was held at Amraoti, presided over by BRA & attended amongst others by K.B. Deshmukh, Deorao Naik and R.D. Kowly. In his address BRA said that the image of God in temple should be accessible to all who wanted to worship it, without any discrimination, binding & condition. He said that temples were meant for use by all Hindus, since they called themselves untouchable Hindus, they were entitled to entry into the temples to worship the deity. Said he **‘Hindutva belongs at much to the untouchables Hindus as to the touchable Hindus’**. To the growth & glory of this Hindutva contribution has been made by untouchables like Valmiki, Brahmins like Vashishta, Kshatriyas like Krishna, Vaishyas like Harsha and Shudras like Tukaram. So all caste contributed to Hinduism, which is why temples should be opened to all.

3. Historic Mahad conference - The day of the proposed Conference at Mahad was drawing near. The District magistrate visited Mahad on 7/12 when leaders of both of the sides discussed the matter with him. He asked the caste Hindus to take recourse to law & refused to pass an order prohibiting the Untouchables from taking water from the Chowdar Chowk. The leaders of the orthodox section then filed a suit against BRA & other leaders of the DC in the Civil Court and asked for a temporary injunction. The Court issued a temporary injunction on 14/12 against BRA & others going to the Tank or taking water from it until further orders.

Meanwhile elaborate preparations for holding the Conference were made. Since no Hindu landlord allowed the use of his land for the pandal, a site for the conference was secured with great difficulty from a Muslim. BRA reached Mahad on 24/12/. BRA refused to call off the conference inspite of a request by the District Magistrate. It was agreed that BRA should be given a chance to address the conference. He said at the conference ‘At the outset let me tell those who oppose us that we did not perish because we could not drink water from this Tank. We now want to go the Tank only to prove that, like others, we are also human beings. This Conference has been called to inaugurate an era of equality in this land. Removal of untouchability & inter-caste dinners alone will not put an end to our ills. All departments of services such as courts, military, police & commerce should be thrown open to us. Concluding he said – Hindu society should be reorganized on two main principles – equality & absence of casteism’.

The first resolution passed was the declaration of human rights. It repudiated the authority of all ancient & modern Hindu scriptures that teemed with the doctrines of social inequality. Then came the major & bitter attack on the Hindu reactionaries. The

Conference resolved that the Manusmriti, which decried the Shudras, stunted their growth & perpetuated their social, economic, religious & political slavery be publicly burnt. Although compiled over 1500 years ago, in different times, it is considered by the orthodox to be good, all pervading to this day. Yes those who ruthlessly applied the doctrines of the Manusmriti to the non-Brahmans contravened its laws themselves & still boasted of their superiority. The Brahmins are forbidden to trade in chemicals, perfumery, colored cloth etc yet they run cloth-shops, dairies, hotels etc. At 9 p.m. the Manusmriti was placed on a pyre, in front of the pandal & was burnt at the hands of the untouchable hermits. This explosive deed rocked all the pandits, Acharyas & Shankaracharyas. On 25/12/1927 BRA burnt the old one & demanded a new one in re-order to reshape the Hindu code governing the life of so vast a people.

The third resolution demanded that Hindu society be reduced to one class only and the fourth demanded that the present priestly profession be turned into a democratic institution, allowing everyone who desired to have an opportunity to become a priest. Next BRA urged his followers to observe discipline and stated that every satyagrahi would have to go to court imprisonment in which case he must not tender an apology or beg for a release.

4. End of Mahad struggle - Meanwhile 20 workers were asked to register the names of delegates who were willing to join the satyagraha. Within an hour over 4,000 delegates registered their names for the struggle. Since twelve persons had filed a suit in the court that the Tank is a private property the District magistrate advised BRA to wait for the court decision or else they would be arrested like those who assaulted the DC's earlier. A Maratha delegate Javalkar rose & read the declaration of the Marathas supporting the satyagraha. On the morning of 27/12 BRA rose to withdraw the first resolution & move another resolution instead, amidst breathless silence, asking the Conference to postpone the struggle. Said he 'I feel we should not antagonize the government and put it on the side of our opposition.'

A wave of bitter disappointment swept over the Conference, and some of them in innermost recesses of their hearts even fluttered at the retreat of their leader. Yet there was no alternative then to obey their leader's call. The delegates formed themselves into a procession, with boards & placards reached the Tank and took its round. The streets were deserted. Caste Hindus were in their homes. And so the procession returned peacefully without any mishap.

After the Conference attended BRA addressed a meeting of about 3,000 women of the DC, the first meeting of its kind in modern India. BRA spoke to them in a stirring manner. He said 'never regard yourself as an untouchable. Live a clean life. Dress yourself like the touchable ladies. Attend more to the cultivation of the mind & the spirit of self-help. But do not feed your spouses/sons if they are drunkards. Send your children to schools'. To the surprise of all the women left early in the morning with a wonderful change in the fashion of their sarees as ordained by BRA.

5. Effect of Mahad conference – it had a far-reaching effect upon the Untouchables, gave a rude shock to the caste Hindus & exercised a tremendous influence upon the Government. DC's realized that it was now possible for them to organize a conference, to challenge the injustice they were smarting under, they were not alone but had brothers in other districts who were ready to help in times of danger. The Govt now realized that these people were of some consequence & so it began to pay attention to their grievances. BRA's name spread far & wide. His leadership of the DC was now an almost accepted fact. Mahad proved BRA to be a statesman as well as a savant, a man of study & action.

The bonfire of Manusmriti calls for some comment. BRA himself revealed afterwards that it was not made for the sake of mere hatred. Said BRA in 1938, 'The bonfire of Manusmriti was quite intentional. It was a very cautious & drastic step, but was taken with a view to forcing the attention of caste Hindus. It is not that all parts of the Manusmriti are condemnable, that it does not contain good principles and that Manu himself was not a sociologist and was a mere fool. We made a bonfire of it because we view it as a symbol of injustice under which we have been crushed for centuries'.

Savarkar & BRA compared. This is a parallel with the first bonfire in India, which Savarkar made of the foreign clothes in 1906 as a symbol of foreign rule and exploitation of people in whom discontent was growing. The object & effect of BRA's deed too was, to show discontent in & hatred of slavery. It is interesting to note the attitude of these two giants towards Hindu scriptures. Both were rationalists, social revolutionaries but had a slight difference in their approach towards ancient scriptures.

The bonfire of Manusmriti put the hair up of almost all the Hindu reformers on its end. The social reformers recoiled with horror of Savarkar's caustic attack upon their beliefs, holy works and scriptures, and his caustic essay on the cow wherein he enjoined upon the Hindus to eat even beef in a state of national emergency! But Savarkar differed from BRA in his attack on Hindu scriptures. In his rational approach Savarkar appealed to the Hindus to test all their ancient works on the touchstone of Science & to follow fearlessly what contributed to the good the nation. Naturally he was not prepared to apply the code of Manu to the DC & Hindu women.

BRA was the symbol of a suppressed people who suffered through the ages while Savarkar's whose forefathers never felt a pinch of the caste system, swept outworn scriptures into a corner as historical & cultural monuments. What BRA did to these scriptures, Savarkar would have done with equal violence and what Savarkar wrote BRA would have asserted with equal force had they been born in the opposite communities.

After the conclusion of the Conference BRA & his party went to see close by the excavations supposed to have dated from Buddha's times. Moved at the sight of those figures, he described how the disciples of Buddha in those times remained bachelors, embraced poverty & served society selflessly. The party then set out to Raigarh Fort, Shivaji's capital & place of coronation. Anticipating an attack by the caste Hindus BRA's supporters gathered at the foot of the fort. BRA was moved at the sight of the

place, which was once a stirring & living center of Hindustan. 'Friends pictures of Raigarh are on the site, section Maharashtra. It is a great place, worth a visit'.

1. Comments on Bhakti Movement & Bombay Hereditary Offices Act, 1874 - The DC were now searching with a new light for the scattered resources of their spiritual & historic inspiration. Early 1928, a meeting of the DC was convened to consider a proposal for building a temple in the name of their great saint, Chokhamela. BRA was specially invited to preside over the meeting. After a full discussion it was decided that their energies be used to remove untouchability rather than construct a temple. BRA was one, against the idea of a separate temple, two the building expenses would be a financial burden & three he was a utilitarian than an idol worshipper.

It was BRA's view that the saints of Maharashtra belonging to the Bhagavat Dharma did not preach directly against the caste system. Their efforts were directed towards establishing equality, not between a Brahman & Shudra as individuals, but between them in the eyes of God. 'Yet from the view of annihilation of caste' BRA stated, 'the struggle did not have any effects on society. The saints did not establish that the value of man is axiomatic, self-evident; it does not come to him as a result of the gliding of Bhakti. On the contrary the movement had a negative effect on the DC. It provided the Brahmans with an excuse to silence them by telling that they too would be respected if they attained the status of Chokhamela. As the followers of different cults were themselves filled with caste prejudices, BRA proceeded; they not only turned a blind eye to their message of equality, justice but also described their miracles with utmost exaggeration. As regards the cult of Ramdas, he said that his followers were notorious for their caste prejudices since its inception.

Under the presidentship of Bhole the DC of Baramati showered praises on BRA and felicitated M K Jadhav on his being the first untouchable Hindu to be appointed to the post of a deputy collector. This was possible because of the untiring efforts of BRA.

1928 - The most important Bill introduced by him was an amendment to the **Bombay Hereditary Offices Act, 1874**. According to the Act, the Mahars, the holders of post, were required to slave day & night: in the absence of a Mahar servant, his father or other family member was pressed into service. And for all this work, a piece of land called, Watan, some corn & a paltry pittance of app annas two to a rupee was given per mensum. The result was that Mahars had become lethargic, lost self-respect & they were perpetually tied to menial jobs. In order to break these shackles BRA introduced the bill. 'Friends I wish someone can tell me why did the Brits introduce the 1874 bill, what was the conditions of the Mahar prior to this Bill, better or worse'?

After taking members of his community into confidence a big meeting of over 8,000 Watandar Mahars was held at Bombay & Jalgaon where he explained to them the provisions of the said Bill. Moving the Bill he described their utter penury. The land assigned to them was divided & subdivided to such an extent that that the income these people got from the Watan lands was not worthy of being taken into consideration. Have

referred to excerpts of the problems faced. He appealed to the house for ending this atrocious system. He proposed that Watan lands should be given to the holders of those posts at the full rate of assessment and they should be relieved from the obligation to serve. His two-hour speech was so forcible, straightforward and eloquent that all Members heard in complete silence. BRA then moved that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of 23 members of the house. This Committee changes its body beyond recognition.

The friction came over the question of baluta (collection of grains made by the Watandar Mahars from the villages) which BRA proposed to convert into a money cess and over the Committee's opinion that the Watan lands should not be given to the Watandars on payment of the full assessment of their lands but should be given on half the proceeds of the lands. Almost all the representatives of the privileged & orthodox sections showed cold shoulder to the Bill. The Muslim members opposed the bill as they were displeased with BRA for having violently attacked & exposed their anti national designs in the special report he had submitted to the Simon Commission as explained later. BRA was now left with no choice but to withdraw the bill.

2. Simon Commission – In order to ease the troubled situation, the British decided to reexamine the Act of 1919 for which it appointed the Simon Commission. Its non-Indian character was an offense to almost all Indian political parties. It was accorded a black welcome in 1928 & 1929. Meanwhile the All Parties Conference in May 1928 appointed a committee under Motilal Nehru to draft a Swaraj Constitution of India. The first attempt at Constitution making, it was aimed at closing the Muslim breach. They did make any special provisions for the DC's in the Constitution by way of separate electorates or nominations as these methods were considered harmful / unsound. The Congress Working Committee towards the problems of the Untouchables can be gauged by the fact that it issued invitations to Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, and Christians but not to the DC led by BRA. At this juncture BRA accepted an appointment as acting Professor of the Govt Law College, Bombay more out of economic necessity than anything else.

To cooperate with the Commission, the Central govt appointed a committee for all British India, and every legislative council elected its provincial committee to work with the Commission. BRA was co-operating with the Commission, was thus stubbed a British stooge. 18 DC Associations gave evidence before the Commission of which 16 pleaded separate electorates for the DC's. On 23/10/1928 members of the Commission, Central & Provincial Committees examined BRA in Pune, excerpts from the conversation –

Q. Can you give me a strict definition of the DC?

A. Castes, which causes pollution.

Q. Do inter-marriages take place between Mahar & Mang castes?

A. No, caste Hindus has spread the poison to the rest.

Q. Would you class the DC as real Hindus?

A. I do not care for nomenclature. It does not matter whether I call myself a Hindu or not as long as I am outside the pale of Hinduism.

Q. If you were outside the pale of Hinduism you would not be subject to Hindu Law. Then by what law could you be governed?

A. We are governed by Hindu Law.

Q. What is it that you want to represent us as the proper way in which the Constitution of India & more particularly that of Bombay Presidency should deal with these people?

A. One is that we claim that we must be treated as a distinct minority, separate from the Hindus. Two the DC's need far greater political protection because they are educationally backward, socially enslaved, poor. We want reserved seats in case of adult franchise.

Q. And if there is no adult franchise?

A. Then we would ask for separate electorates.

BRA was always watchful about the civic rights of the DC. It was due to his efforts that the DC 's in 1928 secured rights to worship Lord Ganesh in the pandal of Bombay.

Another event was the first **textile worker's strike** in Bombay effecting 1,50,000 workers. Mill owners introduced a new system whereby one worker had to work on three looms so they resorted to retrenchment. One of the main unions, the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal fanned the resentment & the strike began. BRA did not favor the strike for many reasons. One the poor DC's were the worst sufferers. Two DC's were not allowed to work in profitable departments like weaving. Three in his view, Communism & strike were inseparable twins. He decided to get his men back to work & succeeded to a large extent.

3. Rising Star- The Bombay Provincial Committee submitted its report not agreeing to the separation of Sind & Karnatka from the province, suggested 10 reserved seats for DC with joint electorates & 33% of elected seats out of 140 seats to Muslims with separate electorates. BRA did agree with the Committee and refused to sign the report but submitted a separate report. On **separation of Karnataka** BRA's comments are noteworthy, 'the principle of one language one province is too large to be given effect to in practice. The most vital need of the day is to create among the masses of people the sense of common nationality, the feeling of being Indians first and Hindus, Muslims, Sindhis, Kanarese afterwards'. On the **separation of Sind** he said it was a sectional design to make the communal majority of the Muslims a political majority in five provinces. The motive involved the maintenance of peace by retaliation and stemmed from the premise that the best way of keeping peace was to be prepared for war. To support his views he quoted Gandhian leader Maulana Azad from a Muslim League session 'Whatever treatment Hindus accorded to Muslims in Hindu majority provinces the same treatment would be accorded to the Hindus in the five Muslim majority provinces'.

On Muslim demand for separate electorates he described how different people lived in Europe lived under a common Government in proximity of each other without objecting to a common electorate. 'India is not the only country where Muslims are in a minority. In Albania, Yugoslavia & Russia they form a large majority while in Bulgaria, Greece & Rumania they are in a minority. Have the Muslims there insisted on separate electorates? Thus the Muslim case in India overshoots the mark & fails to carry conviction? I am against separate electorates; the golden mean is joint electorates with reserved seats'.

The Report, viewed in context of principles, theories & personalities, then prevailing, was as rationalistic as it was patriotic. It had both a balance & ballast. When published BRA was overnight found to be a great politician – patriot, a diamond in the abysmal coalmine of Untouchables, statesmen of rare gift. He emerged as one of the great political minds of his generation.

1. Education or Political rights - Although circumstances demanded that BRA spend most of this for securing the constitutional & legislative rights for his people he was aware of the backwardness of his people in education. So he started two hostels in 1928, established the DC Education Society to organize the school education of his community on a sound basis. After an appeal by BRA the Governor declared that he would sanction a scheme for five hotels for the special benefit of secondary school students belonging to the DC. Short of funds BRA approached public, broad mind people, local bodies, etc for help, the caste Hindus were however indifferent to the problem. So he approached the Muslims & Parsis. In spite of various problems there was something in BRA that motivated him to astonish & electrify his great contemporaries and to show that he was equal of those who ranked the highest on earth. To such an ambitious nature politics is more congenial field than a social one.

BRA realized that jobs in lower categories of service & military as demanded by were not adequate to raise the scale of life which is why he emphasizes on education. But since he thought that investing people with political equality & power the problem of their education would be automatically resolved he devoted his time & talent to securing political rights than to educational uplift. In spite of a govt directive children of the DC were refused admission to schools. Karamveer Shinde & Veer Savarkar were successful to a great extent in securing right of DC children of Maharashtra to study with caste Hindu ones.

2. Textile Strike - BRA taught his classes constitutional law in a thought provoking manner; his term expired in March 1929. For the next four years BRA was drawn into the vortex of politics & was occupied with the discussions on constitutional reforms – Round Table Conference & the Joint Committee.

During the 2nd & 3rd quarter of 1929 he was invited to speak at various conferences. At a Chiplun conference he said excerpts ‘You must abolish your slavery yourselves. Self-respect is most vital factor in life’. He then referred to the land revenue system of Konkan called Khoti, which sucked their blood & promised to work towards its abolition. He said excerpts ‘Every one is to die one day or another. But one must resolve to lay down one’s life in enriching the noble ideals of self-respect & in bettering human life’. At the conclusion of the Conference, sacred threads were distributed among the delegates.

On his return to Bombay he set made his opposition known to the textile strike sponsored by the Girni Kamgar Union. In spite of the first strike failing the left wing of the communists compelled the mill workers of Bombay to start a strike again. BRA believed in the worker’s right to strike, but believed that it must be used sparingly & not to promote the political objectives of the communist leaders. BRA’s opposition to the strike was for two reasons, one the communists had never taken up the cause of the DC, two the

previous strike had worsened the economic condition of the DC. Thus BRA along with two other labor leaders carried extensive propaganda to counter the Girni Kamgar Union.

At a Jalgaon conference convened by the DC of Central Provinces/Bidar on 29/5/1929, presided over by BRA, was a resolution passed **stressing the need for embracing another religion in the event of** continued disregard of the caste Hindus of their condition. BRA said they must convert to another religion if their disabilities were not removed by a prescribed date. The feeler was not taken seriously by the Jalgaon Hindus. But the time limit expired, and about 12 Mahars embraced Islam in the first week of June 1929. Stunned caste Hindus opened two wells to the DC's. BRA said it was not good enough, thanks to the pressure of Muslim & Christian groups, the DC were deriving some benefits. These conferences gave a fillip to BRA's movement.

Next he won a battle against the Dadar Sarvajanic Ganesh Festival who initially would not allow the DC's near the room where the image was installed. About 1,000 untouchables had gathered. Discussions by BRA failed but when the orthodox leaders saw that the crowd was getting restive they gave in.

3. BRA was now busy with the proceedings of the **Starte Committee** appointed by the Bombay govt to inquire into the education, economic & social condition of the DC. The Committee submitted its report in 1930 where it said that although the DC's observed Hindu rights, laws & festivals, they were obliged to live in a state of isolation. The Committee recommended an increase in scholarships & hostels for the DC's, scholarship for Industrial Training & studying abroad in Engineering works etc. They must be recruited in the Police & Military services; deforested lands must be made over to the DC's.

In spite of an accident BRA wrote an excellent article on the abolition of priesthood. About this time the Poona DC leaders Shivaraj Kamble, Rajbhoj, V V Sathe & N V Gadgil amongst others launched a movement for the DC's right to worship the deity in the famous temple of Parvati in Poona. The Poona Satyagraha, was however not the first of its kind. Savarkar had launched a similar movement in Ratnagiri amongst others.

1. Temple Entry Nasik - 1930 was a year of action & reaction. It was in this year that Gandhi inaugurated his great movement for the liberation of the country on 12/3/1930 & transformed the whole country into a theatre of passive resistance. Ten days before the Dandi March of Gandhi, BRA launched his temple entry movement at Nasik ie at the Kalaram Temple. A clarion call was issued to the DC to come to Nasik & assert their right of worshipping Shree Rama in the said temple. In response 15,000 volunteers came. On 2/3/1930 a conference was held there under the presidentship of BRA to consider the situation & adopt ways/means for launching the satyagraha. At 3 in the afternoon, the congregation divided itself into batches of four extending itself over a mile long procession, the biggest in the history of Nasik. As soon as the procession came to the eastern gate of the temple, the D Magistrate/other officials greeted them. Since all the temple gates were closed they proceeded to the Godavari Ghat.

It was decided to launch a non-violent struggle before the gates of the temple. The satyagraha continued for about a month. April 9 dawned, the day the chariot procession of the image of Rama. A compromise was patched up whereby the chariot would be drawn by the touchables & untouchables. On d day before BRA & his choicest gymnasts stood near the gate. But before they could touch the chariot, they were engaged in broils by the riotous elements of the caste Hindus, who ran away with the chariot. A daring Bhandari youth broke through the police cordon and in moment's crowds of untouchables pursued the chariot amidst showers of stones. BRA though protected received minor injuries, there was fierce fighting between groups of Untouchables & caste Hindus all over the city.

This satyagraha provoked considerable ill feeling towards the DC, their children were thrown out of schools, maltreated etc. But so great was the resolve of the DC that the caste Hindus had to keep the famous temple closed for a whole year and agitation continued right up to the end of October 1935.

2. Attitude Brit govt - DC Nagpur Conference - At long last the Simon Commission came out with its report in May 1930. It deliberately ignored the Indian view, recommended a continuation of separate electorates for want of agreement between Indian political parties. It allocated 150 seats to the Hindus including the DC out of a total of 250, proposed DC joint electorates with reservation of seats but no DC candidate was allowed to stand for election unless his fitness was certified by the Governor of the Province opposed subsequently by BRA.

The first session of the DC Congress held at Nagpur on 8/8/1930 under the presidentship of BRA. He declared that it was possible for the people of India to become one united self-governing community. If Yugoslavia, Russia with all their differences in race, creed could function as self-governing communities why not India. But he affirmed that the diversity of conditions & peoples prevalent in India must be taken into account while

framing the constitution for a self-governing India. BRA demanded adequate safeguards for the downtrodden untouchables in the Constitution & pleaded for direct representation in the Councils commensurate with the strength of the DC. He said 'the ideal of Dominion Status seems to be superior, for it has in it the substance of independence without the attendant risks involved in complete independence'. He was opposed to Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement because it was extremely inopportune.

Attitude towards British govt. Like Ranade, he regarded the advent of the British as providential, and responsible for the intellectual awakening & the concept of liberty, equality & fraternity. Yet he described the British govt as the costliest govt in the world and he asked his people whether there was parallel to the poverty of the Indian people in any part of the world. 'In the first quarter of the 19th century when the British ruled India, there were **five famines** with an estimated loss of 10 lakh lives. During the second quarter there were six famines with a recorded loss of 50 lakh lives. And during the last quarter what do you find? 18 famines with an estimated mortality which reached an awful total between 150 to 260 lakhs'. The Brits were the cause of this chronic poverty.

He told his people 'It is only in a Swaraj Constitution that you stand any chance of getting political power in your hands without which you cannot bring any salvation to our people'. BRA said that the Congress did not prescribe the removal of untouchability as a franchise for its membership nor did Gandhi set out on a crusade against untouchability. The safety of the DC lay in being independent of the Govt & the Congress. Although BRA insisted upon the necessity of securing political power he said their salvation lies in their social education.

This declaration of Political Independence was a definite departure from the old policy, a landmark in the history of the movement carried on by the Untouchables. Another memorable statement by BRA at this Congress was that he told his audience that **he would not abjure Hindu religion whatever might be the hardships** afflicted upon him by the caste Hindus. Seeing his criticism of the Govt some of the papers appreciated his change in attitude like the Kesari.

3. Departure for 1st Round Table Conference (RTC) – As declared the British convened the first RTC consisting of reps of India, British govt & political parties to frame the constitution for India. It consisted of 89 members, 53 representing various interests except the non-cooperating Congress and 20 of the Indian states. BRA's invitation was epoch-making in the history of the Untouchables for it was at this conference that they were being vested along with other Indians with the right to be consulted in framing the constitution of India. Felicitated by his people he said on eve of departure, 'I will demand what is right for my people, and I will certainly uphold the demand for Swaraj'. He also promised that he would meet the leaders of Germany, Russia, America and acquaint them with the problems of the suppressed Indians. Congress hated, abused & cursed those leaders who cooperated with the British.

Indeed the times were unfavorable to any leader who was opposed to the ways of the INC. The left wing of the Congress was impatient of the Liberal leaders who believed in

maturity/patience. Patriotism was for some to be the exclusive domain of the Congress organization. BRA was criticized by Bose. It was typical of Congress leaders that they acted upon the principle of non-violence where the British & Muslims were concerned and behaved with hatred & violence where other parties were concerned.

On reaching BRA found the political climate sympathetic to the cause of DC, began to contact Britain's important political bosses in connection with the problems of the DC. Yet he was keen to know about the Court judgment on the Chowdar Tank case, Mahad.

4. The RTC evinced interest because never before had British & Indian statesmen, rulers of Indian states met to discuss the future system of the govt of India. Said Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, 'India wants & is determined to achieve a status of equality – equality with all members of the British Commonwealth – an equality that will give it a govt that is responsible to popular voice'. The Maharaja of Bikaner declared that the Princes were prepared to federate of their own free will with self-governing Federal British India. This was a surprise to all but endorsed by the Nawab of Bhopal & Maharaja of Patiala. Muslim members welcomed an All India Federation but with great vigor pressed for a status of N.W.F.P. equal to other provincial units & creation of a separate Sind province.

At the outset BRA declared that he was placing the viewpoint of 20% of the total population of British India. He then asked for a govt elected of – for – by the people. He said that inspite of 150 years of British rule the condition of the DC had not improved as compared to pre-British days for e.g. 'Before the British we could not draw water from the well, has the British secured us the right to the well. Before the British we were denied entry into the Police Force, does the govt admit us into the force now? Of what good is such a govt to anybody? It was a govt, which did realize that the capitalists were denying the workers a living wage & landlords were squeezing the masses dry, and yet it did not remove social evils that blighted the lives of the downtrodden classes for years'.

BRA upheld the demand for Dominion Status but expressed doubts whether the DC would be heir to it unless the political machinery for the new constitution was of a special make. The fearless tone & bold criticism in the speech had a wonderful effect upon the Conference. One man was esp. proud, Maharaja of Baroda, who had sponsored his education earlier, invited him to a special dinner in London. BRA won praise from all.

Muslim issue – liberal leaders like Sapru, Setalvad tried to reach an agreement with the Muslim delegates on the communal question. But talks broke down over the Muslim demand for the separation of Sind and their refusal to grant the same proportion of reserved seats to the Hindus & Sikhs in the Muslim majority provinces as they asked for themselves in other provinces.

After the general discussion the Conference appointed nine sub-committees, BRA found himself on most of these committees. BRA pleaded before the Defence committee that recruitment to the Army should be open to all Indians consistently. The most important work BRA did to achieve his goal was the preparation of the Declaration of Fundamental Rights safeguarding the cultural, religious and economic rights of the DC. He prepared it

with great labor & submitted it to the Minorities Sub-Committee for being included in the future constitution of India. BRA dispatched copies of this declaration to his followers in India and asked them to hold meetings in support of the demand presented to the Minorities Sub-Committee.

One point not sufficiently known about the deliberations of the RTC was the compromise arrived at between Dr Moonje & BRA in regard to the rights of the DC. It was announced by them jointly that there was no cause for the DC's to quarrel with caste Hindus. Muslims were not favoring the untouchables for they feared that caste Hindus & the untouchables would any day become a united force & oppose their demands jointly.

5. Results RTC - Such was the devotion of BRA to the cause of the DC problem that he availed every opportunity to meet/communicate with Members of the British parliament/foreign journals. The result was that the world came to know for the first time that the fate of the Untouchables in India was worse than that of the Negroes in America. BRA's profound study, great industry & conquering intellect created a tremendous impression upon the delegates & British statesmen. He inspired awe & hatred.

During his visit he snatched some time to enter some second hand stalls to purchase rare books. Three boxes of books were sent to India thru V M Pawar. It was in London that BRA received the news of the victory of his people over the orthodox in the Mahad Tank case at the Mahad's sub-judge's Court and that of his nomination to the Bombay Legislative Council. Another thing that pleased him then was that as directed by him, his trusted lieutenants, Deorao Naik & Kadrekar started a new fortnightly paper called Janata.

After recording the reports of the various Sub-Committees, the RTC adjourned on 9/1/1931. It was followed by a debate on India in the House of Commons where one Issac Foot spoke about establishing safeguards for the DC's. This was a tribute to BRA's ceaseless work in London.

The most notable contribution of this session of the RTC to Indian political thought was the evolution of the conception of a united India. Another solid outcome was the definite emergence of the DC in the political picture of India and more important was the brilliant & moving exposition of their insufferable conditions by BRA before the bar of world opinion. Owing to disagreement amongst different communities on the question of seats and on the system of election whether joint / separate electorates with reserved seats should be employed, the Conference was adjourned. Without the Congress too no major decision concerning India could be taken.

6. BRA on his return said that grant of political power depended upon the solution of the minority problem and concluded by expressing his satisfaction that in the future constitution of India the place of the DC was secure & their disabilities would be non-existent. Meanwhile the political situation in India was changing. Within a week of the termination of the RTC, Gandhi after protracted negotiations with the Viceroy Irwin

made a pact abandoning the Civil Disobedience Movement and promising to attend the second RTC.

It was decided by leaders of the DC to revive the agitation for temple entry at Nasik, which was suspended in 1930 on the assurance of Dr Moonje. BRA went to Nasik, made a great speech, aroused his people's feelings, laid stress on discipline & non-violence. The procession of untouchables passed off except for some stones thrown by orthodox groups. A notable point, at its Karachi session, the Congress made a declaration that it would be strictly neutral in matters religious. A little before this session, Gandhi declared in Mumbai that we would fight for temple entry after freedom was won.

In April 1931 BRA convened a Leader's Conference where prominent DC leaders from Bengal, C.P., Maharashtra & Madras came. BRA submitted a report on what he had done at the RTC. The Conference appealed to the Govt to nominate the reps of DC on the Federal Structure Committee, to grant adequate representation at the next RTC and demanded that reps of DC be provided with cabinet responsibilities in future cabinets of the Provinces. It expressed gratitude to people who fought for the DC cause at the RTC liked Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Issac Foot amongst others.

1. Meeting One - Just then the Govt of Bombay announced that the Police dept was thrown open for recruitment to the DC. A small opening, it meant much significantly. BRA was now a force to reckon with. The agitation he had sponsored, the work he did in India and the prestige he attained at the RTC were bringing sufficient pressure upon the Govt to change its attitude towards the DC. There was now a visible change in the attitude of the Congressmen to the political problem of the country. Nehru said that Congressmen had never branded the delegates to the RTC as traitors, what they said was they were not people's representatives. Another important change was that Gandhi showed resilience enough to negotiate the terms of participation in the next RTC. Yet the Congressmen of Amdavad greeted BRA with black flags when he visited their city.

BRAS, Gandhi, Sapru amongst other were invited to attend the second RTC. Congratulations were showered from all quarters of India & even England on BRA. Newspapers from the opposite camp also began to appreciate his patriotism, love for democracy and anxiety for the welfare of the common man. It was not certain if Gandhi would attend the RTC, he wanted to sound BRA as to his demands. They met on 14/8/.

In the characteristic way, which Gandhi observed in dealing with non-Muslim leaders & non-European leaders & representatives, he did not look at first for a while at BRA & kept chatting with Miss Slade & others. BRA's men feared that a little more indifference & a collision would follow. Just then Gandhi turned to BRA, excerpts from conversation.

Gandhi – I understand that you have some grievances against the Congress & me. I may tell you that I have been thinking over the problems of Untouchables ever since my school days. I had to make enormous efforts to make it a part of the Congress platform. The Congress has spent not less than 20 lakhs on the uplift of the Untouchables.

BRA – It is true Mahatmaji, that the Congress has recognition to the untouchable problem. But let me tell you the Congress did not do anything beyond this. The 20 lakhs is all waste. With such a backing I could have affected an astounding change in the outlook & economic conditions of my people. Had it been sincere it would have made the removal of untouchability a condition, like the wearing of khaddar for becoming a member of the Congress. I say that the Hindus have not shown a change of heart in regard to our problem, and so long as they remain adamant we would believe neither the Hindus nor the Congress. We believe in self-help & self-respect.

The atmosphere was grim, faces changed color; just then BRA asked a pertinent question. BRA – everybody knows that Muslims & Sikhs are socially, economically & politically more advanced than the Untouchables. The first RTC has given political recognition to Muslim demands & recommended political safeguards for them. It also gave recognition to the political rights of the DC & recommended political safeguards & adequate representation. According to us that is beneficial to the DC. What is your opinion?

Gandhi – I am against the political separation of the Untouchables from the Hindus. That would be politically suicidal.

BRA thanked Gandhi for his frank opinion & took leave with a fiery resolve to fight out the issue, win human rights for his people. Clearly Gandhi & BRA had crossed swords. To answer Gandhi was to incur permanent displeasure. And that too a Hindu leader doing it was a thing beyond Gandhi's imagination. The interview sounded the beginning of a war between Gandhi & BRA.

2. The same night BRA made a stirring speech to the DC women & men, excerpts, 'At present Gandhi cannot do much to protect your interests. We must stand on our own feet & fight as best as we can for our rights. So carry on your agitation, organize your forces, power & prestige will come through struggle'.

The next day 15/8/1931 most leaders including BRA sailed for London. In an interview BRA gave on the steamer he referred to Gandhi's refusal to go to the RTC, said it was the height of folly to place the interests of Bardoli above those of India. On steam leaders like Jayakar, Maharaja of Rewa expressed satisfaction at the imposing sight of the Samata Seva Dal of the DC. Dr Moonje was pleased that there was one organization of the untouchable Hindus to stand face to face with the Muslim volunteers. BRA reached London but fell sick. Meanwhile Gandhi, Nehru, Patel met the Viceroy at Simla where the differences were patched up & Gandhi caught the earliest steamer for London.

3. **2ND RTC, 1931** – The main work of the RTC was to be done in the Federal Structure & Minority Committees. Gandhi made his first speech in the RTC, in the Federal Structure Committee. He claimed that the Congress represented all interests & classes. It represented the Muslims because it has Muslims as Presidents & Working Committee members, DC because removal of untouchability was a plank of the political platform of the Congress. Gandhi said that Congress stood for the states as 'even now the Congress has endeavored to serve the Princes of India by refraining from interfering from their domestic & internal affairs'. It represented women because its past Presidents like Annie Besant were women. And because he was the sole representative of the Congress it followed that he was the sole representative of the Indian nation!

BRA made his speech the same day. He told the Princes that before a State was allowed to join the Federation, it must prove that it has the necessary resources & the capacity to give its citizens a life and the main condition laid down by BRA was that the State's representatives to the Federal Assembly should be chosen by election not nomination. These strong views gave a shock to the Princely Order & their benefactors.

Gandhi paid lip service to BRA's comments while supporting the Princes. Referring to the main problem he said, 'The Congress has reconciled itself to special treatment of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh tangle. There are some historical reasons for it but the Congress will not under any conditions extend that doctrine in any shape or form. I have not quite understood what BRA has to say but of course the Congress will share with BRA the

onus of representing the interests of the untouchables'. This was nothing but a declaration of war. During subsequent discussions in the Federal Structure Committee BRA's speeches on constitutional history, ideas about free India were full of information, interest & valuable suggestions. All were impressed by BRA.

Now the Minority Committee was to begin work. BRA met Gandhi and placed his cards on the table, Gandhi did not open his mind. Meanwhile Gandhi was having meetings with the Muslims. That time BRA said, 'Those who are negotiating ought to understand that they do not represent all, they may be of the character of Gandhi or the Congress people, they are not in a position to bind us – certainly not'. BRA made his position clear.

4. BRA Gandhi tussle - On October 1, Gandhi asked the Committee for a week's adjournment since he was closeted with various Muslim leaders in talks. In response to BRA's question Gandhi said that the DC would be presented on the Minority Committee. BRA then told the delegates, 'On the first day that Gandhi spoke in the Federal Structure Committee as a representative of the Indian National Congress that he was not prepared to give political recognition to any community other than the Muslims/Sikhs'. BRA thundered that if the DC were not going to be recognized in the future Constitution of India, as was done by the Minorities Sub-Committee in the first RTC, he would neither join the Committee nor whole-heartedly support the proposition for adjournment.

Meanwhile Gandhi's discussions with Muslims had reached an encouraging stage. According to media reports it was stated that Gandhi had conceded to the Muslims their 14 points, accepted that residuary powers be vested in federating provinces, allowed the Muslims majority in Punjab & Bengal, and had in fact offered the Muslims a blank cheque. The talks, however, failed on the Muslim-Sikh question.

On October 8 Gandhi declared that talks had failed, its cause were inherent in the composition of the Indian Delegation, and that they were almost all not the elected representatives of the parties or groups whom they presumed to represent nor were those whose presence was absolutely necessary for an agreed solution. He therefore, moved for an adjournment of the meeting sine die. In response BRA thundered, 'instead of confining himself to his proposition, Gandhi started casting aspersions upon the representatives of the different communities who are sitting round this Table. While admitting that the delegates were nominees of the Govt, speaking for himself, if the DC were given a chance to elect their representative to this Conference, they would elect him as their representative.

BRA's vigorous propaganda carried on. In a letter to the TOI dated October 12 he wrote, 'We are reliably informed that in carrying on his negotiations with our Muslim friends, Gandhi demanded that as one of the conditions for his accepting their fourteen points, they should oppose the claims of the DC & smaller minorities'. In his letter he foretold that the 2nd RTC would end in a fiasco for which Gandhi was responsible. BRA observed that Gandhi's diabolical way of playing one community against the other was quite clear. His undemocratic mental set up gave a rude shock to people like Vithalbhai Patel.

Gandhi's hostility to the demands put forth by BRA had wide reactions in the quarters of the DC's all over India. The All India DC Conference under the presidentship of Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah, declared at its Gurgaon session that Gandhi was misrepresenting the case of the Untouchables and strongly denounced the claim by Gandhi that the Congress had taken care of the Untouchables from the beginning & championed their cause. The Conference supported BRA's demands & declared that no Constitution would be acceptable to the DC which did not include in it the system of separate electorates for the DC. Many telegrams went to BRA asking him not to put faith in Gandhi, they indicated who the real leader of the DC's was. Gandhi, too, received a few cables. Such was the effect of BRA's fighting propaganda that Gandhi was nonplussed, and his assumed guardianship of the Untouchables was exposed.

In spite of his heavy schedule BRA was very busy giving private interviews, explanations, statements, counter-statements and making speeches in London. In one of his letters to a DC leader BRA wondered why Gandhi was opposed to special electorates & to special representations for the DC or else the problem would have been solved long before. BRA admitted that Gandhi had done work for the uplift of the Untouchables but they differed on this question. At a reception hosted by the King Emperor for the delegates BRA narrated him harrowing tales on the conditions of the untouchables that the King shuddered. 'Friends without going into too much of detail BRA had put Gandhi into a spot. Here he was unassisted by the Indian press, party caucuses. BRA had the power of knowledge, will-power, energy, courage, love for his people, passion for their cause that motivated him to take on the world included India's tallest leader then, Gandhi'.

5. A Must Read - A campaign of unbridled ferocity was let loose immediately by the so-called Indian national press against BRA. His statement that he was not anxious about the transfer of power was condemned as one voiced without a blush. BRA was now the most hated man in India. He was stigmatized as rude, uncivil, a public nuisance, stooge of the British, destroyer of Hinduism. BRA hit back at his hostile critics by hammering their idol Gandhi in a ruthless manner.

Some years later he described Gandhi's role in the R.T.C, 'Unfortunately the Congress chose Gandhi as its representative. Gandhi presents himself as a man full of humility. But his behavior at the RTC showed that in the flush of victory Gandhi could be very petty-minded. As a result of his successful compromise with the Govt just before he came, Gandhi treated the whole non-Congress delegation with contempt. By telling them that they were nobodies & he alone represented the country. Instead of unifying the delegation he widened the breach. From the point of view of knowledge he proved ill equipped. On the many constitutional & communal questions with which the Conference were confronted, Gandhi had many platitudes to utter but no views or suggestions of a constructive character to offer'. **Gokhale**, the Guru of Gandhi had predicted this. He said that when the history of political negotiations & parleys was written **Gandhi would go down as a great failure.**

BRA's interpretation that Muslims dropped Gandhi's proposal because they refused to betray the other minorities, was not correct. It was the unwritten policy of the Muslim

leaders to drag the Hindu leaders to a certain line of agreement and then to turn to the British for more concessions, for they knew, it was the British govt that had the power to give. Secondly, having got separate electorates themselves they were shrewd enough not to refuse the same benefit to smaller minorities. A divided Hindu society was to their advantage, politically & socially, they paid lip service to BRA no more.

And was it fair on the part of the Congress to declare a man of BRA's integrity, independence as a traitor just because he was against Gandhi. Congress led the people to believe that it was their party alone that wanted independence. But the fact their claim was late, **it was Veer Savarkar & his revolutionary party that first declared absolute political independence as their goal.** BRA also wanted independence, said at several conferences & at the first RTC that the fate of the DC's would improve only in free India. But he feared the reins of the govt would fall into the hands of the majority who was hostile & inimical to the interests of the DC. So sometimes his enthusiasm for that demand dwindled.

But the conflict, which raged in BRA's mind, can best be understood with this incident. When BRA saw that his speeches were used by the English statesmen against Hindus to support Muslim demands, he secretly submitted, it is learnt from a circle close to him, a Memorandum to Ramsay MacDonald defending the interests of the Hindus against the Muslims.

6. BRA & Gandhi - The caste Hindus suffered political bondage by being ruled by the British, but BRA's peoples suffered social & political slavery in the land. If political slavery of 150 years could justify extreme methods against the British, the Untouchables were a thousand times justified in lashing with scathing hatred the spokesman of their oppressors & the system of oppression. What good could they expect from the touchables if they were to be invested with political power. There had been no leader like BRA who would have cared to bring the Untouchables in the political picture of India. The Congress fighting for independence were equipped with wealth, strength to fight their case but BRA was fighting for the rights of those people whose minds, views, hearts & emotions were trampled upon in this land for ages past. It was their good luck that a leader of the caliber of BRA was born amongst them. His grip over political problems & ability to judge constitutional problems was in itself a great asset. Thus BRA's efforts were directed to the lasting good of Hindu society as a whole esp. of the DC.

BRA's dilemma – had he opposed the British & sided with Gandhi he would not have gained anything for his people from the Britishers and Gandhi would not have given his people anything more than blessings & hollow platitudes. Naturally the way out for BRA was to side with the Britishers and secure recognition to his cause & sanction for his demands. The second option was to side with Gandhi & to get special representation with joint electorates. But Gandhi was dead against it. **Had Gandhi shown this much insight, he could averted a disaster.**

To return. The last meeting of the Minorities Committee took place when leading reps of Muslims, DC, Europeans, and Anglo-Indians submitted a Memorandum stating their

general & special claims. Further the memorandum also demanded recruitment of the DC to public services, military & police services etc. Also BRA & Srinivasan put a supplementary memorandum, asking for special representation for the DC in all provincial legislatures & in the Central Assembly in proportion to their population in India. They demanded separate electorates, but added that if the system of joint electorates was to exist with reserved seats, it would take place only after a referendum but that also not until after 20 years. Their last demand was they must be called 'neo-caste-Hindus, Protestant Hindus or non-conformists Hindus.

Gandhi - When Gandhi saw this Minorities pact he was livid and expressed strong disagreement in the Committee meeting. He expressed regard for BRA's ability but added that his bitter experiences in life had warped his judgment. Said Gandhi, 'it is not a proper claim that is being registered by BRA when seeks to speak for the whole of the Untouchables in India. It will create a division in Hinduism. **I do not mind Untouchables being converted to Islam or Christianity.** I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are these two divisions in every village. Those who speak of Untouchables do not know how Indian society is conducted. Thus I will resist this with my life'.

Gandhi could have clinched the issue with BRA by accepting joint electorates with reserved seats with DC. But he was not prepared to conciliate with BRA while he surrendered totally to the Muslims, allowing them separate electorates & provinces into the tent of the constitution. Had he used his persuasiveness to argue BRA into a compromise, BRA's brains & guns would have been a positive step in demolishing the fortress of Muslim communalists.

When the British Premier saw that there was no unanimous solution to the minorities problem, he asked all members of the committee to sign a requisition authorizing him to settle the problem and they would accept his decision. Gandhi signed, BRA did not.

A few days before Gandhi's arrival it was announced that DC from all over the country were coming to Bombay to show their faith in Gandhi to which Shivtarkar, Secretary of the DC Institute threatened a counter blast to Gandhi. On the early night of December 27, Congress volunteers gathered, a procession of 8,000 marched to the Mole Station. The DC staged a black flag demonstration against Gandhi, and there then ensued a free fight, exchanging stones, lathis etc and decrying the arrival of the apostle of non-violence to India. Congress leaders/journals were the fathers of intolerance against their political opponents. They had preached hatred against BRA, called him a British stooge and a traitor. Congressmen showed black flags to BRA at Amdavad. This was a return gift.

1. Gandhi + Electorates - BRA & his fellow passenger, Maulana Shaukat Ali landed at the Mole station in Mumbai. Both the leaders were received amidst a burst of cheering. Addressing a huge crowd of Muslims & DC Ali said that every man must have an undeviating faith in his cause, and he appreciated the courage shown by BRA in fighting his cause. To the DC BRA had now become a symbol of hope, strength & ambition. It was now proved that he could not be suppressed. The same evening at a mass meeting at Parel, BRA was presented with an address on behalf of 114 institutions. He stood motionless & embarrassed before such a vast gathering.

‘I am described as a traitor by Congressmen’, he observed, ‘because I oppose Gandhi’. I am not disturbed but it was a great shock to the world that Gandhi himself should have sponsored violent opposition to the breaking of your shackles. I am confident that the future generations of Hindus would appreciate my services when they study the history of the RTC’. He also disclosed how Gandhi went to secretly see Aga Khan with a copy of the Holy Koran in his hand and asked the Muslim leader to withdraw his support to the DC and how Aga Khan had refused to do so. He appealed to his people not to deify him as he hated deification.

BRA left for Delhi to take part in the franchise committee headed by Lord Lothian. DC greeted BRA with enthusiasm at every place. At Patna DC supported the scheme of separate electorates as they feared that in the system of joint electorates with reserved seats DC candidates would be at the mercy of the majority of electorates. Now another trouble brewed for BRA. Dr Moonje made a pact with M C Rajah on the basis of reserved seats & joint electorates. This put BRA in an awkward position. First Rajah a member of the Constituent Assembly supported separate electorates but now wanted joint electorates with reserved seats being his original demand. But BRA too had changed sides. In his report to the Simon Commission he had supported joint electorates with reserved seats & vehemently criticized the Muslim demand for separate electorates. But Gandhi’s determined demand to the DC demand for reserved seats worsened the situation and BRA now asked for separate electorates.

Rajah’s pact with Dr Moonje was denounced by most DC associations. BRA was congratulated by the Ratnagiri Hindu Sabha on his brilliant advocacy of the claims of the Untouchables – implying an appreciation of BRA by Savarkar. BRA realized that it was important to meet the British Premier in London before he gave his award on the communal issue. He asked his lieutenants to raise money for the trip. He also wrote to Aga Khan seeking his advice in the matter. He criticized the Hindu members of the Franchise Committee for being selfish, very aggressive inside their own camp, cowards outside.

The Lothian Franchise Committee finished its work on May 1, defined DC as those who were untouchables. This was a great victory for BRA as he had insisted in his note to the Committee that the test of untouchability must be applied.

2. BRA now attended the All India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur. He was greeted & cheered all the way. On day 1 about 200 messages supporting the demands for separate electorates as adumbrated in the Minorities Pact, repudiating the Rajah-Moonje Pact were read out. BRA's control over the Congress was total. Next he went to Pune where too he was given a warm welcome.

On May 26 BRA left for England to see the British PM and other Cabinet ministers before the decision on the communal issue was announced. It was true that the sudden change in Rajah's attitude worried BRA very much and the Lothian Committee's findings were not favorable to him. When in London he presented his case to all Cabinet Ministers with heart & soul. There was a rumor that Dr Moonje was to go to London with Rajah. He asked his men in Bombay to give Rajah a black send-off. Meanwhile he extended his trip to spend a month in a German Sanatorium.

3. Communal Award, Gandhi fast - BRA returned to Bombay on Aug 17. Three days before his arrival the British Premier had given his Award on the communal issues in India. Accordingly, the DC were granted separate electorates in the provincial Assemblies & the right of double vote under which they were to elect their own representatives and also vote in general constituencies.

BRA said that the DC's were upset. The Communal Award politically balkanized India. It gave separate electorates for Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans & Christians. Its main objective in the words of the Bombay Chronicle was to turn the national majority of the Hindus into a minority. It was thus condemned by all persons & the Press. Gandhi declared his resolve to fast unto death if separate electorates for the DC were not abolished. Yet he said not a word against separate electorates being conceded to others. By being a signatory to the requisition to the British Premier at the time of the last RTC, empowering the Premier to declare the Communal Award Gandhi was bound to accept his word. But politically frustrated, he declared the fast to rivet the attention of the world on India in general & BRA's attempt to secure separate electorates in particular.

Gandhi's fast shook the nation. People who refused to recognize BRA as the leader of the DC were now compelled to recognize his leadership of & spokesman ship of the DC. He now became the cynosure of the whole country. BRA said, 'So far as I am concerned, I am willing to consider everything, thought I am not willing to allow the rights of the DC to be curtailed in any way. It is no use holding a conference in a vacuum or discussing things without any specific data'. Visitors, friends & leaders began to call on BRA. A furious campaign was launched against BRA but he was calm & collected.

He issued another statement excerpts, 'It would have been ok if Gandhi had resorted to this extreme step for obtaining independence for the country. It is also a painful surprise that Gandhi should have singled out special representation of the DC as an excuse for

self-immolation. Separate electorates were granted to the DC besides Indian Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Anglo-Indians & Europeans. The Mahatma is neither an immortal person, nor the Congress assuming that is not a malevolent force and is not to have an abiding existence. Mahatmas have come & gone but the Untouchables have remained as Untouchables'

The Mahatma knew what would happen to his fast unto death, had he entered upon one aimed at wresting independence from the hands of the Britishers, or had he started one to force the Muslims to drop separate electorates. Nor did he enter upon a fast unto death for the abolition of untouchability. BRA knew this bent of Gandhi & hit him hard. Gandhi's declaration made the people learn more about the condition of the Untouchables & opened their eyes for a while to the passions that were seething in the bosom of the DC. BRA was talked about everywhere. What did fast do was to put DC problems & BRA center stage.

4. Gandhi BRA Pact - As declared a Conference of Hindu leaders was held in Bombay on 19/9/1932. Pandit M M Malaviya, BRA, Rajah, Dr Moonje, Walchand Hirachand attended amongst others. In a calm & firm voice BRA told the conference that it was proper that every man should try to save the life of Gandhi but in the absence of an alternative proposal from Gandhi there seemed no way out. 'But one thing is decided. To save Gandhi's life I will not be a party to any proposals that would be against the interests of my people'.

Amidst a lot of discussions between Hindu leaders & BRA, they went to see Gandhi in Pune's Yerwada jail. The proposal made to BRA earlier evolved a scheme of primary & secondary elections for reserved seats. According to it the DC themselves were to select for every seat a panel of not less than three candidates and then out of these three one was to be selected by the joint electorates of the caste Hindus and DC. BRA agreed but demanded a much larger number of seats than the British PM had given. Later after meeting Gandhi Dr R Prasad etc suggested that the panel system be extended to all seats, again the atmosphere became heated.

Amidst the fierce whirlwind raging outside the jail & the entangling silence prevailing inside, BRA was calm & collected. A lesser man would have been buried alive in such a cyclone of happenings. But BRA's love for his people, his age-long suffering – humiliations under which his people had groaned were keeping his heart & eyes under the pressure of his head. Besides BRA, as is typical of all great Maharashtrian leaders, kept his mind unaffected by the crisis.

BRA & Gandhi met, Gandhi said, 'I agree to your panel system but you should make it apply to all seats'. BRA agreed and the leaders started to settle out the details regarding number of men in the panel, total nos of seats in the provincial assemblies, duration of the reserved seats and distribution of posts.

Marathon discussions followed but negotiations seemed to break down on the duration of primary election & referendum to decide duration of reserved seats. BRA wanted the

referendum to be at the end of 25 years amidst a furor among the caste Hindu leaders. It was now 4pm. News came in that Gandhi's health had taken a serious turn. Matter went to Gandhi who agreeing to the idea of referendum, said it should be held after five years.

The question of the total number of seats was decided by granting 148 seats to the DC's in the Provincial Assemblies and it was also decided that 10 % of the seats of the Hindus from British India in the Central Assembly should be given to DC. The point came back to the timing of the referendum, Gandhi said 5 years, BRA refused to budge, wanted 10 years. After an hour or so they decide to make an agreement without the condition of referendum attached to it.

5. After Pact Notes - Immediately the contents of the agreement were cabled to the British Cabinet. All the leaders met at the Indian Merchants Chambers in Bombay. Presiding over the meeting Pandit M M Malaviya declared that no one should be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth & appealed to Hindus to make the idea of untouchability disappear from the land. When BRA rose to speak a thunderous applause greeted him. BRA said that what happened the previous day was beyond his dream. In spite of all the problems, at last, with the cooperation of Gandhi, Sapru & Rajagopalchari they could arrive at a solution.

'My only regret is', he added, 'why did not Mahatmaji take this attitude at the RTC. If he had done so, it would not have been necessary for him to go through this ordeal'. The Poona pact thus vibrated the whole country & had repercussions world over. It proved BRA to be the true leader of the DC.

In the new arrangement both sides had to lose something. Caste Hindus had to grant 148 seats instead of 71. DC lost their chances of bending the caste Hindu leaders to their will as the DC were under the Award entitled to elect their own representatives to the Assemblies separately, and besides they were to vote in the general constituencies with the caste Hindus in electing the caste Hindu representatives. Now the caste Hindus got the power to elect the representatives of the DC. But one wonders why BRA opposed the Moonje-Rajah Pact, which was less troublesome & straightforward.

The third thing that was proved that whenever the Mahatma in Gandhi got the upper hand of the politician in Gandhi, he formed the marvel of making simple things complex & complicated. At the RTC the Mahatma in him dominated the politician & he was defeated. This time round it was the opposite. BRA was made a powerless man. But then as BRA rightly said the ordeal was of Gandhi's own making.

The Pune Pact was closed. But did the war end on 14/8/1931. Or was it a second battle and the war was to continue even after the truce? 'Friends this entire battle between Gandhi, BRA, Rajah was as to who would be the leader of the DC's. Everyone was trying to protect his turf. Gandhi had charisma while BRA had brainpower.

1. In the early twenties Gandhi was not in favor of temple entry of the Untouchables as also inter dining. As a result of the Pact, caste Hindu leaders seemed to have taken heavily to the temple entry movement. During the days of Gandhi's fast some temples were thrown open but these were old-dilapidated ones. The struggle for temple entry was launched by BRA at Nasik in March 1930 & at Guruvayyur by Kelappan in Nov 1931.

BRA now shifted changed the rudder of the ship from temple entry movement to Gaining political power. He said so in many speeches that he gave in Bombay after the Pact. 'Friends BRA was a real smartie. Having made his point with the Congress on who was the true leader of the DC & temple entry he like a true general shifted gears at a pace which am sure his opponents hated but admired him for'. BRA left for England on 7/11/1932. At the time of his departure he said that the establishment of Provincial Autonomy without responsibility at the Centre would be unwise and that he disliked the Central responsibility for British India being made dependant upon an All India Federation. After crossing swords with India's tallest leader BRA was in high spirits.

In his letters home he said that his frame of mind was quite suited to democracy but he was smothered by these crowdy, noisy and undemocratic displays of hero worship. He said that his heart craved for loneliness and a calm/quiet atmosphere but that was not destined to be.

2. Thinking about Hindu & Muslim - BRA used his time on the ship to read & write. Referring to Gandhi's statements on the Harijan movement from Yerwada Jail he said there were signs that Gandhi was coming round to their views but he added that Gandhi's mental frame had not reached a stage that welcomed or encouraged inter-marriage/dining. He wrote a letter to Thakkar, Gen Secretary of the Untouchability League quote 'The touchables & Untouchables can be held together only by love. The salvation of the DC only when the caste Hindu is made to think and is forced to feel that he must alter his ways. I want a revolution in the mentality of the caste Hindus'. He thus asked the Anti-Untouchability League to launch a campaign all over India to secure to DC the enjoyment of their civic rights such as taking water from village wells, admission into village schools/chowki.

He advocated a crisis by direct action against the customary code of conduct of the caste Hindus. This will compel the caste Hindu to think, only then would he be more ready to change. The great defect in the policy of least resistance & silent infiltration of rational ideas lies in this that they do not produce a crisis. The direct action at Chowdar Tank at Mahad or the Kalaram Temple at Nasik have done in a few days what million days of preaching by reformers would never have done.

Muslim approach - On reaching London BRA found that the joint meeting of the 3rd RTC had begun on 17/11. This time the delegation was smaller and Congressmen were

conspicuously absent. He was sorry to observe the Muslim delegates, even after securing almost all of their demands contained in the 14-point memorandum, were still not cooperating with the other Indian groups in the demand for responsible Govt at the Centre. He was more than convinced that the Muslims were acting as a separate bloc and that the Hindu delegates were divided among themselves, therefore powerless.

Another mark of the character of the Muslim mind he was surprised to note was that the Muslim leaders were not only self-centered but also narrow-minded & regressive in their social attitude. BRA drew the conclusion that it was unsafe to count on their support w.r.t. the demands of the DC. He hoped that the Indian Muslims took out of a leaf of the Turkey leader Kemal's book, a leader whom he greatly respected but the Muslims did not.

3. Untouchability - The proceedings of the 3rd RTC was to supplement the work done by the earlier two by filling in some details, decide the composition of the Central Govt in the light of the reports of various committees. In the second week of December BRA wrote a letter home that nobody was interested in the proceedings of the RTC. The British were anxious about the settlement of their debts with U.S.A., were unmindful of the Conference. BRA said that details of the structure of Federation were placed before the Conference but no date of its inauguration was ever mentioned. BRA lamented that the Muslim & states indifference to the immediate grant of Indian demand for Responsible Govt at the Center and naturally divided men, he observed, would not be able to bring anything to India. The RTC ended its work on 24/12/1931 among intransigence of the Muslim delegates & their growing indifference to the goal of India.

Meanwhile the Zamorin, a Hindu king refused to throw open the Guruvayyur Temple to the Untouchables. Gandhi then suggested that if a referendum in the Ponnani Taluka decided by majority against the entry of Untouchables he would refrain from the proposed fast. The majority decides in favor of temple entry. Still the King did not yield. About the same time Ranga Iyer presented a bill in the Central Assembly called the Untouchability Abolition Bill. Similar bills were presented & a resolution moved by Bole in the Bombay Legislative Council in the same manner. After extending the time limit for the fast, Gandhi said that would commence the fast on 1/1/1933 but would wait the decision of the Governor General. But if Gandhi's word was law, why there be so much fuss? So said the Ambedkarites.

BRA received a hero's welcome. He felt that Gandhi should not stake his life on the question of temple entry. The day after his arrival he received a wire from Dr Ba Maw of Rangoon who wanted him to meet him at Delhi next week. They were eager to discuss Burma constitutional situation with you & other leaders. BRA could not attend, as he had to see Gandhi in Poona's Yerwada Jail on 4/2/1933. Gandhi requested BRA to support Subbanarayan / Ranga Iyer's bill but BRA refused since the Bill was based on the principle of majority & did not regard untouchability as a sin. It only said that if a referendum favored temple entry it should be thrown open to the untouchables but said nothing of their right to worship the deity in temples.

Gandhi said that according to him the caste system was not bad. 'Let the touchable Hindus have an opportunity to expiate their sins & purify Hinduism'. BRA/Gandhi disagreed again. BRA was convinced that if the Untouchables made progress in the economic, educational & political fields, temple entry would follow automatically.

4. Temple Entry Bill - BRA continued with his arguments against the Iyer bill. He said that just as the Hindus do not beg admission into clubs & social resorts run by Europeans so also the Untouchables did not beg for admission into temples. He told the caste Hindu, 'To open or not to open the temple is a question for you to consider, not for me to agitate. If you think it is bad manners not to respect the sacredness of the human personality, open your temples & be a gentleman. If you rather be a Hindu than a gentleman, then shut the doors & damn yourself. For I do not care to come. If Hindu religion is to be the religion of the Untouchables, it must become a religion of social equality. Temple entry is not enough. What is required is to purge it of the doctrine of Chaturvarnya. Unless this is done, the DC will **reject not only temple entry but also the Hindu faith**. Asking Gandhi, If I accept the principle of temple entry now and agitate for the abolition of Chaturvarnya & caste system on what side would Gandhi be. If he will be in the opposite camp, I cannot be in his camp now'. BRA received support from almost DC leaders.

Gandhi replied, 'I am a Hindu, not merely because I am born in the Hindu fold, but I am one by conviction & choice. There is no superiority or inferiority in the Hinduism of my conception. But when BRA wants to fight Varnashram itself, I cannot be in his camp, because I believe Varnashram to be an integral part of Hinduism'.

At the same time Savarkar invited BRA to open a temple built by Seth Bhagoji Keer in Ratnagiri. Appreciating Savarkar's work BRA expressed regret for being unable to accept the invitation. Many were surprised that BRA should have drifted to the extreme left when rightist leaders made a definite move towards him. It was true that instead of asking his men to co-operate with the caste Hindu reformers he now turned his eyes to political gains & power. But he did it with reason. Although his name appeared on the Central Board of the Anti-Untouchability League, renamed Harijan Sevak Sangh by Gandhi, he had not attended any of its meetings. He had severed his connection from the League when it made a complete departure from its original aims. Exclusion of DC leaders & workers from its executive gradually aroused the suspicion of its bona fides in the minds of the DC leaders. Many thought that the object of the League was to liquidate BRA's leadership & not to facilitate his movement. Many of them were of the opinion that to Gandhi untouchability was a platform not a program! Hence this widening split.

Infuriated at the bitter statement of facts by BRA, the whole hierarchy of the national press relapsed into a campaign of hatred against BRA. Not to speak of the hardened sanatanists, even semi or sanatan social reformers opposed the temple entry bill of Ranga Iyer. Pandit M M Malaviya urged Gandhi that Iyer's bill should be withdrawn, as he was opposed on principle even to an indirect interference by legislature in the management of temples. The British rulers on their part suspected foul play in the Gandhi-Rajaji move. They thought it was a move to arouse the DC against the British. Iyer introduced the bill on 24/3/1933 but with the connivance of the Congress members & lack of sympathy on

the part of the Govt, the orthodox leaders smothered it by resorting to dilatory methods. The result was a few months later the Temple Entry Bill dropped dead.

5. Speeches - After issuing his statement on the Temple Entry Bill, BRA carried on propaganda against the spiritualistic fads & superstitions of his people. He impressed upon them that bread was better than the worship of God. At a meeting at Kasara he said excerpts 'The Chaturvarnya must be rooted out. Do not allow disunion to grip you. Do not forget that your fight at Nasik & Mahad won you what political status you are going to get'. At Mazgaon, Bombay he said excerpts, 'The Untouchables are now convinced that the demand for Swaraj & the cause of the Hindus will suffer for want of support of the DC. What the Hindus do for you is not by way of charity or mercy. They do it for their own welfare as well. Our cause has gained recognition because of our ceaseless struggle. Give up eating carrion. Some of you nurse the wrong notion that you will not rise in the world. But remember the age of helplessness is ended. A new epoch has set in. All things are now possible because of your being able to participate in the politics of this country'.

BRA made many similar speeches. 'Friends clearly BRA liked to be in a perpetual attack mode. He increased the scope of his attack starting with condition of the untouchables, temple entry, Gandhi not being the sole representative of the DC, getting rid of Hindu society of chaturvarnya, superstitions. To my mind he felt strongly for the DC but at the same time the politician in him realized that he had created a space for himself and there was no way he was going to give it to Gandhi or anyone else.'

6. Constitution committee - Towards the middle of March 1933, came the announcement of the British Govt in the form of a White Paper containing proposals for Indian Constitutional Reforms. It's contents were denounced by Jinnah, Bose, Dr Moonje. The names of delegates to the Joint Committee were announced, representatives were 17 from British India, 7 from Indian states and 32 from both the houses of Parliament. BRA was there too. Although he grew in fame, name, all India status, ranked among men of higher academic attainments the semi-reformers of India would not do him honor as they did not shed their caste prejudice.

In the meantime BRA decided to sound Gandhi again on the question of the panel & primary elections of the DC candidates in the light of the coming constitution of India. BRA met Gandhi & told him that candidates from the DC who would contest the general election should have secured atleast 25 % of the votes of the DC in the primary election. Gandhi said he would give consideration to it, diverted the conversation to the question of untouchability and said the sanatists were decrying him as a devil. Gandhi said that even BRA was not pleased with his work. Gandhi wishes BRA bonvoyage & meeting ended.

On reaching London he heard about Gandhi's fast & asked for details. During these days the leader & organizer in BRA always remained in close touch with his lieutenants, sharing their joys/sorrows & acting as their guide/advisor in times of need. He tried to help his benefactor Keluskar an old man now. He encouraged Kadrkear who edited his

weekly Janata. About this time there was a rumor that BRA was to go to Islam. **BRA wrote to Savadkar from London that he was determined to leave the fold of Hinduism & embrace another religion but he would never embrace Islam** and that at this juncture he was inclined to Buddhism. He said this in 1933 23 years before he became a follower of Buddha.

The Indian delegates to the Joint Committee met to appoint a committee to expose the shortcoming in the White Paper. At this meeting BRA asked for separate electorates saying he was fed up with the attitude of the caste Hindus. By this time the agitation against the Poona Pact reached white heat. Almost all Hindu leaders who had ratified it now turned out to be its opponents.

When the Joint Committee reopened its session on 3/10/1933 Churchill was cross-examined. BRA crossed swords with him when he quoted a speech, which the latter had made in Parliament, and asking him questions thereon, he floored Churchill. The Joint Committee completed its work in November 1933. While most members returned to India BRA was busy collecting data for a book on the Indian Army, which has not seen the light of the day. The Chamars a small minority in Maharashtra accused BRA for partiality towards the Mahars. BRA wrote back that he was sick of these small minds & said that this controversy would go on as long as caste remained.

1. Health - The strenuous hard work done by BRA during the last four years told upon his health. His body needed rest, nerves clamored for relaxation & he suffered from brainfag. He went to Bordi, Mahableshwar for rest and then returned to Bombay after a few days. It was a matter of great satisfaction to him that the DC were invested with a right to vote. The Bill sponsoring the draft constitution was about to be placed before the British Parliament. Not having anything to do he reverted to the legal profession & acted as part time professor in the Govt Law College, Bombay from June 1934.

BRA built a bungalow at Dadar to house his books and named it Rajagriha. The country was drifting to constitutional & constructive work. There was no enthusiasm for Gandhian non-violent revolution. And not long before did Gandhi support the revival of the Swaraj Party & declared that he had suspended his struggle. The All India Congress Committee accepted this new policy & change in May 1934. In the following month the Govt lifted the ban on the Congress Party & the Congress leaders started reviving their provincial organizations.

The first thing the Congress leaders did was that denounced the White Paper & expressed dissatisfaction at the Communal Award. In order to favor the Muslim League, which was in favor of the award & to discourage the demands put forth by Malaviya for its annulment, the party neither accepted nor rejected the reward.

Just then the Govt proposed to hold elections to the Central Assembly. Gavai, a DC leader from Nagpur requested Gandhi to ask the Congress Party to adopt 5 DC candidates without imposing any conditions to contest elections. But Gandhi reiterated his belief in the sanctity of the Poona Pact and rejected the offer of Gavai, saying it would needlessly bring the DC into conflict with the Govt. BRA was glad to endorse Gandhi's views and requested him to pass a resolution on the Communal Award at the ensuing Congress session without affecting the Poona Pact. Little did BRA dream that one day he would its worst enemy?

2. Wife passes away - Meanwhile the report of the Joint Committee was out, the Indian Bill was introduced in British Parliament on 19/12/1934. BRA said that DC were not only opposed to the establishment of the Second Chambers, but also to their composition, for according to them the purpose of the Poona Pact would be defeated and what was more DC candidates stood no chance of success against influential caste Hindu rivals in the elections. As regards creations of Second Chambers in the Provinces, BRA had opposed the idea at the time of the Simon Commission & at the RTC as well.

Because the Congress neither accepted nor rejected the Communal Award, they allowed Jinnah to compel the Central Assembly to endorse the Communal Award. As a professor at the Govt Law College, BRA kept a watch on the developments. His wife was very unwell, he decided to give her his attention to someone who was so supportive of his

efforts. Profoundly religious Ramabai had a great longing to make a pilgrimage to Pandharpur where everywhere lakhs of Hindus bow their heads in devotion. But being an Untouchable she would be required to offer her prayers from a distance an idea BRA would never accept. He consoled her by saying that virtue of our own selfless life, virtuous services in the cause of the downtrodden we would create another Pandharpur. Sadly she passed away. For a week he wept bitterly like a child.

The respite for consolation was short lived. The Bombay Govt appointed him as Principal of the Govt Law College from 1/6/1935.

3. Ready to embrace another religion - Then all of a sudden news appeared in the press that BRA was thinking of making a declaration of a change of religion at the Yeola Conference to be held in October 1935. The news was shocking, friend/well wishers tried to persuade him against doing so. For the past ten years BRA had tried in vain to create an opening for his people into Hindu society, Mahad & Nasik struggles had pained him. In 1929 he had asked Untouchables to embrace any other religion if things did not improve, he embraced Islam. The Conference was convened by leaders of the DC to review the political & social situation in light of the ten-year-old struggle & the coming reforms.

Rankhambe, Chairman of the Reception Committee said that 'degenerated Hinduism was rightly called Brahmanism because it benefited only the Brahman hierarchy as a class'. BRA spoke at length on the plight of the DC, efforts made without much success. Thus he said that the time for making a final decision had arrived. The disabilities they were facing as a result of being members of the Hindu community. He inquired if it would not be better for them to abjure that fold & embrace some other faith that would give them equal status, a secure position & rightful treatment. He exhorted his followers to sever their connections with Hinduism but warned them to be very careful in choosing the new faith and to see that equal treatment; status was guaranteed to them unreservedly. He said, 'I solemnly assure you that I will not die as a Hindu'. In the end he asked people to stop the Kalaram Temple satyagraha as the past five years had demonstrated the futility of such an agitation against caste Hindus. He exhorted them to conduct themselves in a manner as would leave no doubt to the outside world of their decision to be a separate community outside the Hindu fold, carving for themselves a future worthy of free citizens.

The Conference represented a definite, grave departure from the original aims & objects of the movement. BRA's address rocked all circles, political parties & social institutions to the bottom. Proselytizing religions like Islam & Christianity looked at BRA's followers as potential targets for conversion. Everybody wanted to add to their strength the Buddhists/ Sikhs included.

Gandhi view – Gandhi styled his decision as unfortunate when untouchability was on its last legs. He said, 'Religion is not like a house or a cloak, which can be changed at will. It is a more integral part of one's own self than of one's body. I am convinced that a change of faith by him and those who have passed the resolution will not serve the cause which

they have at their heart and that millions of Harijans will not listen to him esp. when it is remembered that their lives for good or evil are interrelated with those of caste Hindus'. **Savarkar** warned against such a step saying that conversions would not solve the problem referring to the prevailing riots between touchable & untouchable Christians in Travancore. 'Truly speaking any Ism in the sense of religion contains something which is not amenable to reason & which is based on belief. BRA should thus embrace a religion which is based on principles that are not averse to logic & reason'. What they should do he concluded was to fight valiantly for equality by the side of progressive Hindus & rise in the scale of life. Deorukkhar a DC leader was Bombay said that embracing another religion would reduce the untouchable nos in Hinduism but increase it elsewhere.

4. Conversion - No other announcement of BRA got so wide a global publicity as this. No doubt the decision was the last dreadful scream of a suppressed people. BRA hailed a powerful weapon at Hindu society. BRA said he did not agree with Gandhi that a man must stick to his ancestral religion when it did not good for him. He had made up his mind, he concluded, to change his religion, would not care if masses followed him or not. Caste Hindus were unmoved by the decision of the DC. The Nasik orthodox Hindus who had kept the Kalaram temple closed for five years were happy to see the DC go out of the Hindu fold. They applied to the Nasik collector for the removal of the ban on the Nasik chariot procession in the light of the DC declaration.

A famous Hindu missionary, Masurkar Maharaj, who had reclaimed about ten thousand Christians in Goa to Hinduism, had a three-hour talk with BRA. He told BRA that the exodus of the DC would be the death of the Hindus in the long run. Thereafter BRA said that it mattered little, the history of Hindustan would continue. In that case Maharaj said, it would not be the history of Hindustan but be the history of another 'stan' namely Pakistan. BRA sadly nodded and admitted that would be so, not a happy thought & added that it was upto the caste Hindus to avert the tragedy. When asked what would make BRA changed his mind, he said that caste Hindus must take a pledge to remove untouchability within a prescribed period, say five to ten years but added sarcastically that in the meantime Maharashtrian Brahmins must install K K Sakat, a DC leader as the Shankaracharya for one year & a hundred Chitpavan Brahmin families should fall at the feet of the new Shankaracharya.

At a caste Hindu deputation meeting held at Nasik to remove untouchability BRA said that as to Conversion, it would be done in five years, if caste Hindus assured him a positive result, he would reconsider the position. He added that he wanted to absorb his community into some powerful community, & he was thinking of embracing Sikhism. **On adopting Islam** he said, 'If there any people with whom religious sentiments & practices make it extremely risky to interfere, they are the Muslims.' According to him India needed a benevolent dictator like Kemal Pasha or Musslini in social & religious matters. He was hoping that Gandhi became one but! Democracy is not suitable for India. Meanwhile the Press received letters for & against his stand.

BRA took an interest in the activities & development of the Law College. They paid him a tribute in the January 1936 issue, college magazine, 'A lawyer of repute, he is a close

student of economics, an authority on constitutional law and a personality known throughout India & elsewhere. Expecting much more from our Principal we shall not embarrass him now but prefer to wait & see’.

5. Conversion - On Conversion, 12/1/1936 at a conference in Poona under the presidentship of Prof N Shivraj said excerpts, ‘The only way to get rid of untouchability is that the DC should leave Hindu religion not by conversion but may be by starting a new religion or reviving an ancient one practiced by the Adi-dravidas, long before the Aryans came to India’. BRA reiterated his declaration on the need for abjuring Hinduism. **Three things were significant** at this Maharashtra Untouchable Conference. One Dr Solankhi who had opposed BRA on conversion supported him now. Two that the Chamar community began to drift away from BRA on the issue of conversion. Three was that like Gandhi who had extended the time limit for his fast on the entry on the untouchables in the Guruvayur temple but never undertook it, BRA extended the time limit for action to an indefinite time and said that he/his community would welcome the religion which would give them fullest equality of status.

BRA warned his people that conversion would lead them to the paradise of equality. In a new religion too they would need to fight for liberty & equality. Referring to the Harijan Fund started by Gandhi he said that its object was to enslave the Untouchables to the camp of the Hindus. While the conference ended with victory for BRA in his own circle, it positively alienated the sympathy of several supporters of BRA’s movement outside and alarmed the newspapers / political minded Hindus.

Except the Mahar community leaders of other untouchable communities disapproved of BRA’s conversion move as they held that conversion would not materially change their fate & would be disastrously disadvantageous. The caste Hindu workers who were working hard for the upliftment of the DC were irritated at the announcement. They characterized BRA’s attitude as runaway mentality. They pointed towards how the conversions of the DC into Islam & Christianity had failed to change their living conditions. Those who were incapable of assessing the issue described BRA’s announcements about conversion as a mere threat, a bluff & stunt.

It was a fight between BRA the man brought up in an intense religious atmosphere & the iconoclast and expurgator of society. **In the early part of his struggle he said that Hindutva was not the property of caste Hindus alone.** When some news of Chamar women’s conversion to Islam reached him he was greatly perturbed in those days. He even declared that the **Untouchables by their struggle would purify Hinduism & wash its stains with their blood.** In those days he had signed a telegraphic memorandum to the Goa govt protesting against the arrest of Hindu missionaries who had carried out reconversions in Goa. At the R.T.C. he insisted that DC be called Protest Hindus or Non-Conformist Hindus. Above all, he had signed the Poona Pact, and these were gestures enough to show that he wanted to remain in the Hindu fold.

'Friends any one who reads BRA's book written in 1941 called 'Thoughts on Pakistan' cannot but call him a nationalist, patriotic Hindu. The way he exposed Muslim anti-national activities and the Muslim mind, in 2003 we would call him Communal.

1. Amritsar Conference - Since January 1936 BRA had been preparing an address to deliver at Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal at anti caste outfit at Lahore. On 15/3/1936 BRA was honored at the Bombay Theatre by the Chitta Ranjan Theatrical Co. Written by Appasaheb Tipnis it dealt with the problem of Untouchability during the reign of the Peshwas and their ill treatment then. There was a stir in the Punjab press over the Mandal's decision to elect as its President BRA who was a declared hater of Hindu religion. Thus staunch leaders like Bhai Parmanand & Dr Narang had to disassociate themselves from the mandal. One Har Bhagwan met BRA in Bombay & took away portion of the presidential address that was ready. The next day BRA left for Amritsar to attend the Sikh Mission's Conference. The conference attracted a huge number of Sikhs & DC from Punjab, Kerala & C.P. Speakers stressed the need for improving the plight of the DC by intensive missionary work. BRA expressed his approval of the principles of equality among the Sikhs and added that though he had decided to renounce Hinduism he had not decide which religion to adopt. Five DC leaders from Kerala, Thiyya community became Sikhs then. Since BRA refused to expunge from his printed address remarks related to the Vedas & Hindu scriptures the Jat Mandal refused to accept them as their President for the Conference.

Walchand Hirachand & Jamnalal Bajaj tried to convince BRA to join hands with Gandhi but BRA said it was not possible because they differed on many points. These rich men expressed surprise at the large crowds that greeted BRA and remarked that although they spent large monies on the Harijan cause they did not respond properly. BRA answered that it was the difference between a mother & a nurse. BRA published his undelivered address in the form of a booklet entitled Annihilation of Caste. It was logic on fire, piercing & fiery, provocative & explosive. It was to the minds of the caste Hindus leaders what silver nitrate is to gangrene.

2. Varna – according to this thesis, Hindu society was originally divided into four Varnas – classes. The varna was based on worth. But as time went on, the varnas came to be based on birth. In BRA's view the caste system is a social division of the people belonging to the same race, is a division of labor & also a division of laborers compelling a man to engage himself in a calling which may not appeal to him. Reorganization of Hindu society based on Chaturvarnya is impossible & harmful because the Varna system has a tendency to degenerate into the caste system. It prohibits the Shudras from pursuing knowledge, engaging in economic enterprise and from bearing arms with the result that they could never revolt and became reconciled to their fate.

Caste has had, he continues, a bad effect on the ethics of the Hindus. It has restricted man's loyalty to his caste, made virtue & morality caste ridden. What is more caste has made Shuddhi – reconversion impracticable because is incompatible with conversion, there being no place for a convert. Because there is caste, there is no Shuddhi, & so long as there is no Sanghatan, the Hindu will remain weak & meek. Although he admits that

nowhere in human society one single whole & that group exists in all societies, he observes that groups in other societies are fundamentally different from caste groups in Hindu society in point of interplay, intercourse & inclusiveness. Each caste lives for itself, though Hindus have similar customs, beliefs they are not a society or a nation in the true sense of the term. Caste has demoralized & devitalized Hindu society.

The real remedy is intermarriage. Fusion of blood alone can create a feeling of being keith & kin. Hindus observe caste not because they are inhuman & wrong headed. They observe caste because they are deeply religious. They are not wrong in observing castes. What is wrong is their religion, which inculcates this notion of caste. The real enemy is the Shastras which them this religion of castes. Destroy the sacredness of the Shastras & Vedas. Make every man free from Shastras.

As a matter of course the Brahmans who form the intellectual class will not lead the movement to destroy their own prestige. So he suggests the destruction of the idea of hereditary priesthood. You thus kill this Brahminism and save Hinduism. He also insisted that Hindus should have one common religious book. BRA concludes that Hindus are the sick men of India and sounds a warning that 'only when Hindu society becomes a casteless society that it can hope to have enough strength to defend itself'. The demand for this thesis on caste was so great that the English edition ran out within 2 months, it was translated into regional languages too.

BRA was not the only leader who preached annihilation of caste for the reorganization of Hindu society. Leaders like Swami Shraddhananda, Lajpat Rai, R C Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Veer Savarkar amongst other condemned the caste system. In short caste is the bane of Hindus is the verdict given by India's great & true historians. It seems that the remark of some critics that the Europeans pride themselves on racial feelings, the Muslim on religious feelings and Hindus on caste feelings is not far from the truth.

3. Reaffirming Support - BRA was not satisfied with the Untouchable Youth Conference at Poona. In order to truly assess the strength of his people for the conversion movement, he decided to hold a conference of the Mahar community on 30/31 May 1936 in Bombay. Present were a European missionary, a number of Sikh/Muslim leaders. Describing the numerous social & specific disabilities that the DC had to undergo because of being the Hindu fold, they had to go out to secure true freedom. He said that although it looked like a social problem it was essentially a class struggle. He told the gathering that they lacked three essential qualities for carrying out their struggle namely manpower, money & intellectual power & so long as they remained in the Hindu fold they would not be able to acquire those powers. On the spiritual aspect, he observed that the function of a true religion was the uplift of the individual. For that purpose it should teach virtues of fellow feeling, equality & liberty which Hinduism does not teach thus they must leave its fold.

BRA said that he did not believe in the honesty of Hindu social reformers who lived, married & died in their own caste. He declared that Gandhi had not the courage to take up the cudgels against the caste Hindus on behalf of the DC. Just as Swaraj is necessary for

India so also change of religion is necessary for the Untouchables. Politically they would not suffer in any way by changing their religion, they would get the support of the community in which they merged into. **Concluding his speech** with a quote from the lips of the dying Buddha, he asked his people to seek refuge in reason. This made some believe that he was leaning towards Buddhism. He shrewdly avoided mentioning the name of the religion, which he had chosen.

All those scholars like Max Muller, Bernard Shaw who sang the praises of Hinduism must have turned in their graves. Here was a volcanic attack by BRA on Hinduism. It was coarse & cutting, yet smashing & dissecting. The Conference declared by a resolution that they were prepared to change their religion en masse, as a preliminary step urged the Mahar community to put a stop to the observance of Hindu festivals & stop visiting Hindu places of worship. This declaration made the heads of other religions woo BRA namely the Muslims, Buddhists & Sikh.

4. Embrace Sikhism! MUST READ - Meantime BRA decided to embrace Sikhism. His friends felt that BRA must seek the support of Hindu Sabha leaders for this since they believed that Sikhism was not an alien religion. It was an offspring of Hinduism & thus Sikhs/Hindus intermarried and the Sikhs were allowed to be members of the Hindu Mahasabha. Accordingly BRA met Dr Moonje the spokesman of the Hindu Mahasabha. The purport of BRA's views was reduced to a statement and given to Dr Moonje who approved it personally. Then he left Bombay to obtain the approval of Hindu leaders to the conversion of Untouchable Hindus to Sikhism. He sent the statement to various Hindu leaders like M R Jayakar, Rajah the Harijan leader with whom he made a pact in 1932. Rajah thought it was an excellent opportunity to dislodge BRA wrote to Gandhi, Malaviya etc and sought their advice in the matter.

Gandhi & co wrote to Rajah expressing their opposition to the move. While Moonje had written to Rajah in good faith Gandhi urged him to disclose the move publicly. Unable to get Moonje's approval due to his traveling for the publication of correspondence between him & Rajah Gandhi asked Rajah to make all the correspondence public. Gandhi was not fair, he used the dissatisfied of Rajah as a tool to arouse Muslims, Christians & the Govt against BRA & to dislodge him.

In his proposal Dr Moonje said that the Hindu Mahasabha would not object to the conversion of the DC to Sikhism, not object to the inclusion of Neo-Sikhs in the list of Scheduled Castes for the enjoyment of benefits under the Poona Pact if BRA preferred Sikhism to Islam/Christianity, agreed to cooperate with the Hindus & Sikhs to counteract the Muslim movement for conversion of DC, to live within Hindu culture.

Why did BRA choose Sikhism- He favored it in the interests of the Hindus and said that is was the duty of the Hindus to help the Sikhs in removing the economic & political difficulties that would lie in the way of the neo-Sikhs? 'The second question, is looking at these alternatives purely from the standpoint of the Hindus, which is best Islam, Christianity or Sikhism? Obviously Sikhism. If the DC embraces Islam or Christianity they not only go out of Hindu religion, but also go out of Hindu culture. On the other

hand, if they become Sikhs they remain within Hindu culture. This is by no means a small advantage to the Hindus. Conversion to Islam or Christianity will denationalize the DC. If they go to Islam the number of Muslims would be doubled, and the danger of Muslim domination also becomes real. If they go over to Christianity it help strengthen the hold of Britain on the country'. Are these not the words of a noble, wise & true son of Bharat?

BRA said that it was not right for Rajah to publish the correspondence. As regards the views expressed by Gandhi & Malaviya, he said that had no right to complain as they had utterly failed to carry out the promises they had made at the time of the Poona Pact for the uplift of the DC. Concluding BRA said with a certain emotion, 'The move for conversion to Sikhism has been approved by a number of prominent Hindus, including Shankaracharya Dr Kurtakoti. If I have gone to the length of considering it an alternative, it is because I felt a certain amount of responsibility for the fate of the Hindus'.

5. Why Sikhism - BRA the historian gave a rude shock to Hindu society, because he knew that conversions of Hindus had convulsed India. Six years after the agitation, Jinnah told Lord Fisher that 75% of the Indian Muslims were former Hindus. 'Friends Jinnah was a Gujarati Muslim, Bhatia Rajput, think a 3rd or 4th generation convert'. What religious conversions, neglected by the Congress leaders, who prospered on Hindu support, has done to Travancore, Assam & Punjab can be seen from the following. Savarkar, Shivaji, Shradhdhananda strove to reclaim the converted Hindus & stop increasing the anti-nationalists in India. In 1901 the proportion of Hindus per ten thousand was 5,578 that of Muslims was 2,689 and Christians 23. In 1941 Hindus were reduced to 4,129, Muslims rose to 3,373 and Christians to 35. 'Friends thanks for Bangladeshi infiltration & missionary activity the Hindu number must be much lower now'.

The aim of Muslim leaders for conversions of Hindus had been handed over to them for generations, which is why they objected to Untouchables being recorded as Hindus in the Census. BRA's Annihilation of Caste was still being discussed, attacked all over the country. Savarkar held the same views as BRA on the subject. But he objected to BRA's remark that Hindu life had been a life of continuous defeats & pointed to some glorious chapters in its history. Gandhi & BRA disagreed on the merits & demerits of caste.

Inspite of the opposition sponsored by Gandhi & others BRA took one more step toward conversion to Sikhism. He deputed on 18/9/1936, a group of his followers to the Sikh Mission at Amritsar to study the Sikh religion. They were a group of 13 none of whom was a scholar or a first rate Ambedkarite. BRA wished them success but had not asked them to convert to Sikhism. In an excess of zeal those students went over to Sikhism & did what their leader did not mean. They were coldly received in Bombay and then sank into oblivion.

1. Starts New Party - The year 1937 was to witness the inauguration of the Provincial Autonomy under the Govt of India Act. The coming elections aroused keen interest. Like every party BRA too began to lay down his plans. After discussions with colleagues he founded a new political party called the Independent Labor Party or ILP in August 1936 and drew up a program, which answered all the immediate needs & grievances of the landless, poor tenants, agriculturists & workers.

Its agenda emphasized rehabilitation of old industries, starting of new ones, extensive program of technical education, state management & state ownership of industries where necessary. For the benefit of industrial workers, the Party would endeavor to introduce legislation to control the employment, promotion & dismissal in factories, fix minimum hours of work, provide for adequate wages etc. The Party promised to help social reformers, penalizing all forms of orthodoxy & reactionerism. It proposed village planning & to modernize village outlook. Then he left for Geneva but it is said that his inner motive was to sound the British statesman whether the safeguards for the DC would be available if they went over to Sikhism.

2. No Sikhism - BRA's conversion threat aroused the caste Hindus as never before to the injustice inflicted on the DC. For the first time the Dasara celebrations of the Mysore State would have Harijans take part. Then Travancore State threw open about 1,600 State controlled temples to the DC. Even Nehru a man who was never concerned with the fate of the Hindus was moved by the extent of these changes.

BRA spent a week in London, reached Bombay on 14/1/1937. He said that he had no interviews of a political nature with anyone in London. He affirmed his decision to leave Hinduism but had not declared which religion he would adopt. His immediate concern was the ensuing elections to the Bombay Legislative Assembly. The British were too involved with the crisis brought about by the proposed marriage of King Edward VIII to worry about the DC's. Prior to his meeting the British, BRA had consulted some German & other Europeans jurists of repute as to the possibility of the DC retaining the reserved seats in the Provincial Assemblies if DC became Sikhs for the Sikhs were granted reserved seats only in Punjab. **Later the Sikh authorities & BRA could not hit it off and so they parted.**

3. Elections – BRA launched his election campaign. His new party faced opposition from the Congress, which was equipped with men, money & surrounded by the halo of patriotic sacrifices. It is rather surprising that BRA who had presided over the All India DC & was the voice of the dumb millions, could not create an All India Party to fight the elections. His new Party was mostly confined to Bombay province.

BRA had to explain to people why a new party? His reply was that in the Provincial Legislative Assembly there were 175 seats out of which only 15 were reserved seats. It

was obvious that the strength of 15 members was insufficient for an active opposition. So in consultation with his loyal caste Hindu colleagues he decided to set up some more candidates for the general seats. One it preserved the goodwill of his colleagues, two the party became broad based & wider field of influence. BRA toured all districts in Bombay Presidency. Another feature of the election was BRA extended support to L B Bhopatkar, leader of the Democratic Swaraj Party. Though BRA knew that this party was mostly supported by orthodox reactionaries, he knew Bhopatkar's sterling qualities & sincerity of purpose. He also believed in working the new constitution & for propagating this idea his colleague N C Kelkar had borne the brunt of the attack from Congressmen & press. BRA supported Bhopatkar while Kelkar praised BRA. Untouchables pledging support for a Poona Brahmin!

The Congress Party put up candidates in all provinces. The seat contested by BRA & Bhopatkar was contested by the Congress with all its might. Election took place on 17/2/1937 where BRA won but Bhopatkar lost against heavy odds. Of the 17 candidates put up by the ILP 15 came out successful.

DC celebrated BRA's victory. Another victory awaited BRA. The protracted case over the use of the water of the Chowdar Tank was decided in favor of the DC by the Bombay High Court on 17/3/1937. The Congress won at the polls but was opposed to the acceptance of office. BRA expressed his firm determination to work for the new constitution for what is was worth in the best interest of the DC. At last the Congress leaders decided to take office on 19/7/1937. Congressmen took the oath of allegiance to the British king, BRA refused to swear by the Geeta, but he took the oath in a dignified manner. Two leaders BRA & Jamnadas Mehta from the opposition parties in the Bombay Assembly were the best lot of the lot in the country & formidable for any Assembly in the world. Most of the Congress ministers were inexperienced.

1. The Congress leaders formed their Ministry in Bombay. Being routed in the Muslim constituencies, the Congress leaders were in search of Muslim leaders for adoption. There was no need for a coalition. BRA was not in favor of coalitions. On his way to Dhulia BRA was accorded a great ovation by the DC at Chalisgaon station. He pointed out to the crowds that Brahmanism was asserting itself in India through the Congress ministries. All the Congress ministries were led by Brahmans while there were no DC ministers.

At the first general meeting of the ILP BRA was elected President & Treasurer. In August 1937, a Bill proposing salaries for the Ministers at Rs 500 per mensem plus house & carriage allowances came up for consideration before the Assembly. BRA opposed the bills on many grounds. Of the three arms of the state, he stated, the Executive was the Brain Trust & a salary of Rs 500 would make competent men turn to other walks of life. To this Premier Kher said that the principle underlying the Bill was the service of the motherland. Patriotism, BRA remarked, was the last refuge of the scoundrel according to Dr Johnson, but he would add, of a politician as well.

BRA's propaganda continued unabated. In Sept 1937 he presided over a DC Conference at Masur where he told them that it was his confirmed opinion that Gandhi was not the man to look into the interest of the working classes & the poor. He said that he was a confirmed enemy of the communists who exploited the laborers for their political ends. BRA was doing his best to promote the interest of the agricultural masses that labored under unbearable advantages. On 17/9/1937 he introduced a bill to abolish the Khoti system of land tenure in Konkan. BRA was the first to introduce a bill for the abolition of the serfdom of agricultural tenants. But as the Govt postponed the issue BRA could not move the bill.

2. Peasants Leader - December 1937 BRA left for Pandarpur to preside over the Sholapur District Conference of the DC. BRA told the conference that there were three problems before them. One whether they would ever be given equal status in Hindu society, two whether they would get a proper share of national wealth and three what would be date of the self-respect, self-help movement. On one he said it is not possible till the caste system existed, on two he expressed strong resentment at the treatment they got from the Congress, which was ruled by the capitalists.

From Pandarpur BRA went to Sholapur to address the Matang Conference. 'In the political situation that has grown up in this country, there has grown the habit among the people of paying homage to only one political party, the Congress. I am no believer in Democracy as an ideal to be pursued in all circumstances, and having regard to the present day condition in India, Democracy is the most unsuitable form of govt.'

Why BRA did not want to adopt Christianity - Next day he addressed Christians of Sholapur. He said in a very sarcastic tone that since the day he had declared his intention

to abjure Hindu religion, he had become a commodity for bargain or a source of comedy. From his study of religion two personalities could captivate him. They were Buddha & Christ. He told the Christians that their co-religionists in Southern India observed caste system in churches. Besides they lagged behind politically. Thus there was no economic gain in their being Christians. Moreover, the Indian Christians, he remarked, as a community never fought for the removal of social injustice. The love for Sikhism evaporated with his return from London.

Immediately after his return from Sholapur BRA buried himself with a march of the peasants from districts outlying Bombay. The first demand presented by the deputationists was the enforcement of the minimum standard of wages for agricultural laborers. The second was that all arrears of rent should be remitted since the revenue arrears had also been remitted. They asked for legislation that provided for the abolition of the Khoti system and land-lordism, which was economically wasteful & socially tyrannous. The last demand was for reduction of 50% of irrigation rates payable by small holders. BRA made a very powerful speech. He exhorted workers to think over the causes of their poverty & told them that they lay in the richness of the exploiters. The way out for them was to organize a labor front without any regard to caste & creed and to elect legislatures those who were their real representatives. The force, sharpness, logic of his speech would put any communist leaders into the shade. His opponents were afraid that BRA would develop into a dangerous leader of peasants, workers & landless.

3. Protest against name Harijan, Noble Words - at this time BRA had a major clash with the Ruling Party. They wanted to define the Scheduled Caste as Harijans or sons of God. Moving an amendment to this Congress plan Bhaurao G said that if the untouchables were the people of God, were the touchables assumed to belong to the monsters. Something practical should be done rather than giving them a sweet name. The Congress forced this amendment down the throats of the DC although the Congress had won only 2 out of the 15 seats reserved for the Untouchables. BRA & his supporters walked out of the house since Premier Kher's arguments did not carry conviction.

BRA was now fully engrossed in the promotion of the welfare of the downtrodden. He was bent on organizing the peasants & rail workers. A big conference of Untouchable Railway workers was convened at Manmad. Addressing a conference of 20,000 workers he said that according to him there were two enemies of the working classes in the country, and they were Brahmanism & Capitalism. 'By the former he stated, I do not mean the power, privileges, & interests of the Brahmins as a community. **By Brahmanism I mean the negation of the spirit of liberty, equality & fraternity.** In that sense it is rampant in all classes & is not confined to Brahmins alone though they have been its originators. He asked the untouchable worker to compare the opportunities of their class with those of a touchable and said that the former had less opportunities of obtaining work, securing service or advancement in his respective occupation.

Noble Words - BRA had also to address an important conference of DC youths. He delivered a very instructive, inspiring & thrilling speech. The rule in life, he said, they should keep in mind, was that they must cherish a noble ideal. Whatever might be one's

ideal, one should patiently exert oneself to reach it. He observed that all great things in the world were achieved by patient industry & by undergoing toil & tribulations. He said that one should concentrate one's mind & might on one's goal. 'Character is more important than education' he added. It pains to see youths growing indifferent to religion. What good things I have in whatever or me have been the benefits of my education to society, I owe them to the religious feelings in me. I want religion but not hypocrisy in the name of religion',

4. Bombay Legislative Council matters - BRA urged his people to join the I.L.P. Since his health was not good he was advised by his doctors to observe complete fast for two days a week Saturday & Sunday. Encouraged by the success in the Assembly Elections BRA now turned his attention to the Local Board elections. Visiting Islampur he asked Marathas to form a separate political party independent of the Congress since the latter was dominated by capitalists & Brahmins.

Besides an interesting dual with Home Minister Munshi on the Primary Education Amendment Act where each one of them argued against their competence to judge the scheme another important issue was discussed in the Bombay Assembly in April 1938. It was the demand of Karnatak for its separation from Bombay province. BRA expressed his fears saying that it would be a province of Lingayats against anybody. Said he, 'The feeling that we are Indians is still in embryo, and is only beginning to ripen, and to allow other loyalties to grow simultaneously is the greatest crime that we can commit and I for myself, will not be a party to it. I strongly oppose the resolution'.

Although the Congress ruled over the province, BRA continued as the Principal of the Govt Law College, Bombay. He resigned in May 1938, and in the words of the College Magazine, the college 'undoubtedly lost in him a Principal who was greatly respected by the students for his learning and ability'. The magazine mentioned gratefully his enrichment of the Library during his tenure & radical views on legal education.

5. Next he went for a Konkan tour. Addressing a meeting of DC at Kankavli in Konkan district he said that DC should watch the work of their representatives in the Assembly, they should give up the nasty habit of begging & living on the leavings. He declared that he was determined to work for the abolishing of the Khoti system and if the Bill that he introduced failed, they should be prepared to launch passive resistance. At Chiplun he told the audience that Gandhi's so called mesmerism could capture Nehru/Bose not him. He said that the Congress Party was postponing for the past ten months the Khoti Abolition Bill introduced by him.

On his return to Bombay he expressed surprise at the attitude of the Socialists who he said, had been all those years shouting for the confiscation of all Zamindari lands and the abolition of the capitalist system, but were now inactive when a concrete bill was brought forward to end the Khoti system.

Gandhi - During those days, if somebody praised Gandhi as a holy man, BRA replied that Gandhi was owly & described his conduct at the R.T.C. as an act of treachery! In an

interview with a Marathi weekly he said that if a man with God's name on his tongue and a sword under his armpit deserved the appellation of a Mahatma, then M K Gandhi was a Mahatma! No other leader in Indian politics had a rougher tongue! No revolutionary speaks a soft language and marches without raising dust & smoke. Addressing a meeting at Premabhai hall in Amdavad he admitted that he was opposed to Gandhi. It was because he had no faith in Gandhi; he did not believe that Gandhi would do any good to the DC. He said if Gandhi was sincere why should he not ask the Premiers of Bombay & C.P. to include representatives of the DC in their ministries? He maintained that the Congress Govt of Bombay was not reducing the land revenue nor was it prepared to tax the rich.

6. Labor Leader - The Industrial Disputes Bill was taken up in Sept 1938 by the Bombay Legislative Council. It was opposed by BRA & Jamnadas Mehta tooth & nail. Not going into too much detail BRA said that the bill restricted the right of the laborer to strike & made strike illegal & impossible. The Congress was determined to pass the Bill and did so. There was wide spread opposition to the Bill. A one day strike was called by the I.L.P. & B.P.T.U.C. Meetings were held, one at Kamgar Maidan was attended by not less than 80,000 laborers. Subsequently almost all the textile mills & Municipal workshops closed down. In response there was a partial strike in other districts too.

As a finale to the one-day strike, a huge rally was held at Kamgar Maidan, Bombay where stalwarts like J Mehta, Ranadive, Pradhan, the cream of Communist leaders, BRA amongst others. BRA congratulated the workers, stressed the need for capturing political power by electing their own representatives. Concluding he said that he would join the Congress it really started a genuine fight against British imperialism.

Two things emerged from this strike. It was proved that BRA could dominate the labor field too. His reputation as a labor leader was established & it prepared a background for his future relationship with All India Labor problems. So great was this event that Swami Sahajanand, the Peasant Leader from U.P. met BRA & talked with him about the labor problem in Bombay and agrarian reforms in general. He urged BRA to join the Congress to form a united front against imperialism. BRA replied that he would join the Congress if it decided to fight imperialism but it was using constitutional machinery to advance the cause of the capitalists.

In December 1938, BRA presided over the Aurangabad DC Conference at Aurangabad where the Chairman of the Reception Committee gave a graphic description of how the people were persecuted & converted to Islam by force & how the Brahmins with the help of the Muslims flouted their attempts to take water from public tanks & enter temples. BRA stressed upon the DC the importance of the Self-respect Movement.

1. Challenges Congress/Aurobindo's words - On 6/1/1939 addressing a meeting at Mahad he said that Premier Kher was simply a figurehead and described other Ministers of the Provincial Govt as dogs of Sardar Patel. Referring to the boastful statement of Patel, which he made at a reception to Kher in Gujarat, to the effect that they welcomed Kher as a devotee of Gandhi otherwise they would have sent him back unceremoniously. BRA said that he would wreak vengeance on Patel for this dire insult to a fellow Maharashtrian. If Patel dare insult BRA in this manner, he added he would thrash him.

Bo now the question of the inauguration of the proposed Federation had assumed first class political importance in India. The British statesmen now favored participation of the Indian states in the Federation without democratising their State govts. The Congress President, Bose was against the acceptance of Federation. Muslims opposed it tooth & nail. The Hindu Mahasabha wanted to bring it into effect with a view to frustrating the fissiparous tendencies of the Muslims & unifying India. BRA opposed it.

At a meeting in Poona, he explained how federation far from leading the country towards Independence would block its way permanently. The reason, he said, was that British Indian representatives would be free while State representatives would be bondmen in the hands of British bureaucrats, who would dictate to the Princes the selection of their representatives. He added, that federation did not forge a common citizenship as people in the States remained State subjects & the Federal govt could not deal with directly. He was in favor of a Unitary Govt as nationalism was compatible with it. Further Federation would not help India unite as it was not open to all States to join it, not would it give responsible Govt as it did not have powers over Defence & Foreign Affairs.

In the course of his speech **BRA compared the times of Ranade & Gandhi**. The age of Ranade was honest & more enlightened. The leaders took care to be well clad, people engaged themselves in studying & examining the facts of life and molded their lives/characters with the light they found as a result of their research. In the age of Gandhi leaders took pride in being half clad and making India a living specimen of antiquity. Learning was not deemed to be a necessary qualification for a politician and people ceased to read & examine facts of life. So his verdict was that Gandhi age was the dark age of India.

Friends remembered Sri Aurobindo's words as I typed his this. Excerpts from the book India's Rebirth that is on the site – "(A disciple:) **What is your idea of an ideal government for India?** My idea is like what Tagore once wrote. There may be one Rashtrapati at the top with considerable powers so as to secure a continuity of policy, and an assembly representative of the nation. The provinces will combine into a federation united at the top, leaving ample scope to local bodies to make laws according to their local problems ..

The Congress at the present stage - what is it but a fascist organization? Gandhi is the dictator like Stalin, I won't say like Hitler: what Gandhi says they accept and even the Working Committee follows him; then it goes to the All-India Congress Committee which adopts it, and then the Congress". (I must mention that in 1920-21 Gandhi started the Khilafat agitation without consulting the Congress Working Committee, a decision that most of us will realize was a blunder and sowed the seeds for Pakistan. His dictatorial attitude was again proved in 1947 when he nominated Nehru although the Committee wanted Sardar Patel to be India's first PM.)

"There is no opportunity for any difference of opinion, except for Socialists who are allowed to differ provided they don't seriously differ. Whatever resolutions they pass are obligatory on all the provinces whether the resolutions suit the provinces or not; there is no room for any other independent opinion Everything is fixed up before and the people are only allowed to talk over it-like Stalin's Parliament. When we started the [Nationalist] movement we began with idea of throwing out the Congress oligarchy and open the whole organization to the general mass. Srinivas Iyengar retired from Congress because of his differences with Gandhi..."

In February BRA attacked the Budget in the Bombay Assembly on many points. From the point of expenditure it was reckless as it included an increase in stamp duty against the declared opposition of the Congress to it, increased duty on consumption of electricity that encouraged people to consume kerosene which was bad for public health. He urged the Govt to abandon their prohibition policy in the larger interests of the province & evolve a proper order of priorities.

2. The echoes of the 7/11/ strike were still echoing in the Assembly. The Committee of inquiry justified the police firing & blamed the Communists /BRA for the disorder. There was a heated argument between BRA & Home Minister Munshi. If BRA was overpowering & unyielding in his arguments, the Ministers attacked him by reminding him of his late coming & fleeting visits to the Assembly. And Yet Premier Kher some years later paid tributes to BRA who as leader of the opposition who had made helpful, constructive criticism & suggestions, and pointed out defects.

In July 1930 BRA had a meeting with the leaders of the Chamar community. They had broken with him at the time of the elections on the problem of his conversion. BRA had refused to set up candidates from their community on the ground that they did not support his conversion policy. BRA told them that he had started his work for the uplift of the whole of the DC and favored abolition of sub-castes among the DC / honestly worked towards that end. He told them that the Congress was trying to drive a wedge amongst the DC.

3. **World War 2** – just then WW2 broke out in Europe over the safety of Poland. India was committed to the war with Germany by a proclamation of the British Viceroy. The Indian Liberal leaders favored unconditional help to Govt, but the chief Muslim organization led by Jinnah said that the British should create a sense of security and salvation in the minds of the Indian Muslims. At first Nehru Patel favored

unconditional help. Gandhi broke down before the British Viceroy at the very thought of the destruction of the British House of Parliament.

At that time the Viceroy announced that although federation was their ultimate objective, under the existing conditions they had put the idea on hold. Jinnah was overjoyed. BRA declared that it was unfair to India that she should have no voice in her foreign policy on declaring war / making of peace. Appealing to the Govt to take steps in preparing Indians for the defence of their country, he reminded the British Govt how they had agreed at the R.T.C. that the defence of India was to be treated as the responsibility of India. He stated it was the duty of the British to reassure India of the status she would occupy in the British Empire after the war was over and that India could not willingly fight for principles if she not assured that the benefit of those principles would be extended to her when the war was won.

On Sept 11, the Congress leaders changed their attitude. They declared that a free democratic India would gladly associate herself with free nations for mutual defense & asked the British govt to declare their war aims w.r.t democracy particularly to India. A few days later a joint statement by seven leaders that included Savarkar, BRA, Jamnadas, Kelkar declaring that Gandhi's claim that the Congress was an all representative was a fascist one and would prove to be a deathblow to Indian democracy.

After discussions with Indian leaders, the Viceroy issued a statement, which said that at the end of the war, the Govt of India Act would be revised in consultation with all the leading parties in India and that no substantial political advance would be made without the consent of the minorities.

Congress were dissatisfied with the statement, asked all their Provincial Ministries to tender their resignations, thus in fact, enabling the British govt to pursue more conveniently a policy which the Congress leaders themselves hated. BRA said that the minorities' problem would never be resolved unless Gandhi and the Congress gave up their egoistic attitude towards persons & parties outside the Congress. Referring to the Muslim problem, he said that he did not believe in the allegations made by Muslims that they were being tyrannized in the provinces ruled by the Congress. What they wanted along with other minorities, he affirmed, was a share in the Govt. He warned that if the demand of the League for the division of India was allowed to hold the Muslim masses, there would be no hope for a united India and that the responsibility for driving the DC to another fold would lie with the Congress.

The Congress Ministries introduced a war resolution in all the Provincial Assemblies on the eve of their resignations. The Bombay Ministry resolution declared that the British Govt had made India a participant to the war between Britain & Germany without the consent of the people of India and "have further in complete disregard of Indian opinion passed laws & adopted measures curtailing powers & activities of the Provincial Govt". BRA reiterated his statement on war policy & declared that the Untouchables would never accept a political status that would make them political Shudras. Speaking in the Bombay Legislature he said, 'I know my position has not been understood properly in the

country. Sir, whenever there has been a conflict of personal & country interests, I have always placed the claims of the country above my personal claims. But I will', he thundered, 'leave no doubts in the minds of the people of this country that I have another loyalty to which I am bound and which I can never forsake. The loyalty is to the Untouchables, their interests will take precedence over the interests of the country'.

4. Congress Flip – Flop- The Congress Ministries eventually resigned in obedience to the mandate of their High Command in November 1939. So relieved was Jinnah that he appealed to his community to observe a 'Day of Deliverance'. BRA told Jinnah that if he could prove 5 out of 100 cases alleged oppression he would prove 100 out of 100 cases before any impartial tribunal. The most significant feature of this day was that two eminent opponents of Gandhi & Congress shook hands a meeting at Bhendi Bazaar, Bombay and belched fire on the Congress leadership.

On March 19 DC observed their independence day for it was on that day in 1927 at Mahad that their struggle for emancipation began. BRA addressed a rally of 10,000 there and observed that it was wrong for Indians to focus on political independence & forget the foremost economic & social problems. Meanwhile the Congress at its annual session in April 1940 at Ramgarh, repudiated any attempt to divide the country. Simultaneously the Muslim League at its annual session at Lahore demanded the creation of Independent States in the North-Western & Eastern parts of India where Muslims were in a majority.

Just then Hitler overran the Low Countries and war took a serious turn for Britain & her allies. Congress leaders abandoned Gandhi's leadership and offered co-operation in war efforts provided a fully representative National Govt was formed at the center. Jinnah opposed the offer saying it would mean a permanent Hindu majority at the center.

At this point Bose who was dethroned from the Congress Presidentship was growing restless. He came to Bombay to meet Savarkar, Jinnah & BRA. Since Bose had no convincing answer to BRA's question on what the positive attitude of his party would be to the problem of the Untouchables & refused to put up elections against the Congress their meeting ended. **It seemed Savarkar's inspiring talk changed Bose's mind and he began to ponder over the possibility of fighting a war of Independence against the British power from outside.**

The Congress now switched over again to Gandhi's dictatorship for a struggle. Gandhi inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement in Oct 1940, preaching non-participation in the war on the grounds of non-violence. As a result, nearly all Congress leaders were thrown in prison. BRA criticized the move and ended by saying, '**That the Congress is fighting for the cause of the country is humbug.** The Congress is fighting to obtain the key of power in its hands. Why did Gandhi not start a civil disobedience movement after the Defence of India Act was passed a year ago?

5. BRA's book Thoughts on Pakistan – Friends since a précis of the book is available on the site, will cover the main issues raised as given in the book.

- That the Muslims, the book argues are a nation must be accepted without cavil.
- As the resources of Hindustan are far greater than that of Pakistan, the creation of Pakistan will not leave the former in a weakened condition.
- A safe army rid of Muslim preponderance is better than a safe border.
- It prescribes a sovereign remedy for securing peace & homogeneity by arranging for a total exchange of population, Hindus for Hindustan and Muslims for Pakistan.
- The book castigates the anti-reformist tendency of the Muslims. The predominant interest of Muslims is religion, their politics being essentially clerical.
- The brotherhood of Islam is not universal brotherhood of man. It is the brotherhood of Muslims for Muslims only. For non-Muslims there is only contempt & enmity.
- The Muslim has allegiance to a nation that is ruled by a Muslim, a land not ruled by one is enemy land. Thus, Islam can never allow a true Muslim to adopt India as his motherland and regard a Hindu as his kith & kin.
- The book then asserts that the Muslims are now awakened to a new life. They will be a nation. Till now they were calling themselves a minority but they have now discovered their destiny.
- After giving philosophical justification for Pakistan, the book asks Hindus whether a united India is worth fighting for. To avoid shipwreck mid-ocean, you must lighten the draught by throwing overboard all superfluous cargo. Forced union will hinder progress. India will be an anemic and sickly State, a living corpse, dead though not buried.
- Partition opens a way to the fulfillment of the destiny each may fix for itself, whether dominion or independence concludes the book.

In his report to the Simon Commission he had criticized separate electorates but now he supported & justified a separate nation for the same Muslims! With the cool intelligence of a doctor he viewed & examined the malady of India. The effect of the book was terrible. It shattered the brains of many Hindu politicians. It was applauded as an epitome of the political & social history of India, and it rocked Indian politics for over a decade. The Muslims rejoiced at this support to their ideal. The Congress brought up with a neither accept – reject philosophy winked at each other. Savarkar stoutly refuted the theory of India's division. He said that it was not bravery to run away from danger, to abandon the fight, to yield to the aggressor. He warned the Hindus that partition would strengthen the hands of the avowed enemies of India and the hordes would invade India. Partition, said Savarkar, would be a standing menace to the peace, security, liberty & prosperity of India. Unfortunately no front rank Hindu leader issued a counter treatise refuting BRA's arguments with equal force, scholarship, courage & brilliance.

Friends by supporting India's partition, **can BRA be called anti-Hindu?** Debatable! But why did he write the book? Quote from the last three pages of the book, 'In spite of all this the Hindus will not give up the illusion that PAK is only the fancy of Mr. Jinnah and that it has no support from the Muslim masses or leaders. These are the reasons why I have addressed so a large part of the argument to the Hindus. A thick and impervious

wall of false sentiments and illusions has prevented the Hindu from receiving fresh light. It is because of this that I felt the grave necessity of applying my batteries. I do not know how far I have succeeded but I am satisfied that I have done my duty. If the Hindus don't do theirs they will be plagued by the very consequences for which they are laughing at Europe and they perish in the same way as Europe is perishing'.

Fully agree with Savarkar's viewpoint. Partition has made the sub-continent Muslim realize that you can bulldoze the Hindu through a combination of violence & continuous attack of their values. Pakistan has been bleeding India since its birth. It continues to support, encourage & direct terrorist's activities against the Indian state. Yet it is India that is forever making unilateral peace initiatives, is a pre-partition hangover that the Hindu leadership of our country has yet to get rid off. Perhaps the post independence generation will think differently. Then what is the Solution? That would need a separate article by itself but let me leave you with Sri Aurobindo's words. A disciple asked him, 'what is the solution to the Hindu Muslim problem? Said he, organize the Hindus and the problem will take care of itself'.

Friends BRA was the only one to suggest exchange of populations i.e. all Muslims to Pakistan and the opposite. Now if only that had happened post independent India would have been a different place to live in. The movie 'Hey Ram' by Kamalhasan made that point very well, there were Hindu Muslim riots in 1920-40's and continue today. Has anything changed? That would not have been the case had the people of India paid attention to BRA's exchange of population thoughts.

1. Mahar battalion - During the first quarter of the 1941, BRA managed to convince the Govt to raise a Mahar battalion. Savarkar, who wished the Hindus to be reborn into a martial race, expressed his hope that under the guidance of BRA the Mahar brethren would be re-animated with the military qualities & their military uplift would contribute to the consolidation of the Hindus. In July 1941, the Viceroy expanded his Executive Council by including eight representative Indians & established a Defence Advisory Committee. BRA was appointed on the Committee but not on the Council to which he protested. It was due to BRA's efforts that the Bombay Govt had to revoke its order for demand of additional levy on farmers.

Two weeks later BRA addressed meetings stressing the need for joining the military forces. He asked Mahar youths to suspend their studies & qualify themselves for military commissions & preserve their martial traditions. Friends BRA & Savarkar were amongst the only Indian leaders to urge the Hindus to join the armed forces. A reading of BRA's book 'Thoughts on Pakistan' will tell you how the British increased the % of Muslims in the Indian Army to nearly 40 % with intent to use it against the Hindus who were agitating for independence. BRA & Savarkar knew this, which is why they asked Hindus to join the army in large numbers. Their efforts succeeded because when Pakistan attacked Jammu & Kashmir in 1947-48 it was an Indian army that defeated them.

The political deadlock continued. Congress leaders were in jail with Gandhi outside. Some thought that Gandhi would start a fast unto death for Hindu Muslim unity, for the Muslims had started Pakistani riots and Jinnah said that only a change of heart would ease the tension. Gandhi, however, clearly realized the historical mistake & futility of his slogan which had drummed into the people for twenty years that freedom would not come without Hindu Muslim unity. Without Muslim support he was now on the eve of a 'do or die struggle'.

Friends Gandhi was in some ways a realist. He would go for a fast unto death to pressurize Hindus not to retaliate against Muslim atrocities or to state that DC are Hindus but never did he fast to pressurize the Muslims to stop their violent acts against Hindus. WHY? He did not want to die, because Gandhi knew that his fast unto death would have no impact on the Muslims. It would actually be fast to death!

2. Patriot, Cripps Mission - In the middle of Feb 1942, there was a discussion at the Wagle hall, Bombay on Thoughts of Pakistan. Acharya V Donde presided over the meeting. BRA rose to reply to the debate, he said at the outset that he would not waste his words who thought that Pakistan was a debatable subject at all. Quote BRA 'To bring down the preponderance of the Muslims in the Indian Army and to make the army safe, it is wise to let out the hostile element. Do not be under the false impression that Pakistan would be able to spread its Muslim empire over India. (Subsequent events have proved BRA wrong, surprised because he had an excellent understanding of the Muslim mind).

The Hindus will make it lick the dust. I confess I have my quarrel with the caste Hindus over some points but I take a vow before you that I shall lay down my life in defense of our land'. Applause.

As a solution to the impasse in India BRA suggested to Stafford Cripps that the British govt should promise to raise India to a Dominion Status within 3 years from the date of peace, and if the Indian parties failed to produce an agreed solution within one year from the date of signing of the armistice, the dispute should be submitted to the International Tribunal for a decision, and Britain should declare that she would undertake to give effect to it as a part of the Dominion Constitution for India. He rejected Jinnah's demand for 50 % representation as monstrous. Those who criticized this scheme said they were surprised that the historian & constitutionalist in BRA should have expected the Muslim League to consent to a decision of the International Tribunal.

Meanwhile the Empire was cracking impelled by reverses. The Brits panicked & Stafford Cripps came to India sooner than planned. After discussion with all Cripps suggested that a Constituent Assembly be convened immediately after cessation of hostilities. It was to draft the constitution in co-operation with the Indian States, but the right of joining or staying out of the Indian Union was given to the Provinces & the Constituent Assembly was to enter into a treaty with the British Govt.

Gandhi called it a post-dated cheque; Savarkar rejected it as a scheme to balkanize India. The Muslim League rejected it, as it did not contain a definite announcement in favor of Pakistan. The Congress leaders who were more keen on transfer of power than the balkanization of India, swallowed the pill of the division of India, but were straining at the gnat of the Defense Portfolio. BRA too rejected the proposals as it bound the DC to a Hindu rule and would lead them as they feared to the black days of their ancient past.

3. 50 Bday The new policy of Britain w.r.t. the DC compelled to make from a departure from his role as a labor leader & resume leadership of the DC. It was decided after a gap of ten years, to hold an All India DC Conference at Nagpur, in July 1942 with a view to creating an All India organization with distinct purpose & cooperation between provinces.

BRA turned 50 on 14/4/1942. He was felicitated in Bombay & Pune. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the women's branch of the Rohidas Tarun Sudharak Sangh he urged the youth to emulate the spirit of Kacha, a mythological hero, in not deviating from the purpose of life. It was characteristic of BRA that whenever he spoke before his people he cited inspiring quotes from the Mahabharata such as the love of self-respect of Dronacharya, the story of Yayati & devotion of Kacha.

A huge function was held on 19/4/ at Chowpatty, Bombay. The media, English & Marathi expressed their appreciation of the services & scholarship of BRA. The most important appreciation came from **Savarkar**, 'BRA's personality, erudition & capacity to lead and organize would have by themselves marked him out as an outstanding asset to our Nation. But in addition to that the inestimable services he has rendered to our

Motherland in trying to stamp out untouchability and the results he has achieved in instilling confidence in millions of the DC, constitute an abiding, patriotic as well as humanitarian achievement. I wish BRA a long, healthy & eventful life’.

Addressing a huge gathering at Kamgar Maidan, Bombay he asked the mammoth gathering to discontinue to habit of celebrating his birthday, for according to him, a society which idolized & raised a mere man to the level of God was set well on the path of destruction. Reviewing the progress of the DC, he said there was considerable improvement in their political, social & economic conditions. He said that DC willingly or unwillingly formed a limb of Hindu society and added that at Mahad/Nasik he had tried to make the Hindus accept the DC on terms of equality but the desired effect was not achieved. He sounded a note of warning to the British that any Scheme, which did not recognize their legitimate aspirations & rights, would be resisted by them with every means in their power.

4. BRA Grows in stature & views on Women - Come June 1942 and the Executive Council was expanded to include BRA, C P Ramaswami Iyer, Muhammad Usman amongst others. BRA’s appointment was welcomed by all, never before had an Untouchable Hindu occupied such a post. Moreover BRA was the first mass leader to be appointed to the E Council. BRA was felicitated by many organizations.

The All India DC Conference was scheduled to meet on July 18/19. A crowd of 40,000 people gave a thundering ovation to BRA & N Shivraj. Leaders from Punjab, Bengal & Madras had come to attend. BRA said that he was happy to announce that DC had acquired a great degree of political consciousness, which few communities in India had. There was progress in education & acquiring jobs in the institutions of public service. Above all progress made by the untouchable women was encouraging & astonishing. It was not the result of Hindu charity but was entirely the result of their own labor. The basis of his politics was that the Untouchables were not a sub-section of the Hindus, but a distinct element in the national life of India, as separate & distinct as the Muslims. Thus he wanted separate political rights as against the Hindus. Gandhi, he declared was their greatest political opponent. He offered unconditional support to the war. ‘My final words’ he concluded, ‘of advice to you is to educate, agitate, organize, have faith in yourself’.

BRA addressed two more conferences at Nagpur. One was the DC Women’s conference. BRA said he was a believer in women’s organization. In the eradication of social evils they rendered great services. He measured the progress of a community by the degree of progress, which women had achieved. Friends clearly BRA believed in the power & empowerment of women. BRA also addressed the Samata Sainik Dal Conference where he observed that he had love for the principle of non-violence, but he differentiated non-violence from abject surrender. He said that to destroy evildoers was the principle element in the doctrine of ahimsa. Shakti (strength) and shila (character) should be their ideal.

1. Super Speeches - In an interview to the Times of India on 27/7/1942 BRA described Gandhi's all out rebellion as both irresponsible & insane and a measure to retrieve the Congress prestige that had gone down since the war started. It would be madness; he proceeded, to weaken law & order at a time when the barbarians were at the gates of India for the mastery of India. The Congress criticized BRA's statement. The Muslim League warned its members to keep away from the Congress. **Savarkar** declared that the Sabha stood by the integrity & unity of India. He **foretold that Gandhi, as was his wont, would agree not only to one Pakistan but to many.**

Congress leaders all over the country were arrested & put in detention. The movement plunged the country into turmoil. At a reception given the DC Welfare Association in Delhi he pointed out that in the Executive Council the representation given to the Muslims was three times greater than the DC, who were almost equal in population strength. He declared that the DC resented this. BRA made a thought provoking speech on 'Indian Labor & War on 13/11/1942 from the Bombay station of the All India Radio. Excerpts – So labor must fight for victory over Nazism, which if successful, would end in Nazi order under which liberty would be found to be suppressed, equality denied, and fraternity expunged as a pernicious doctrine. The worth of independence depended on the kind of Govt and society that were built up. So labor ought to place more emphasizes on 'New India' and less on Quit India. Peace obtained by surrender to forces of violence was no peace. 'War cannot be abolished', he concluded, 'by merely refusing to fight when attacked. **To abolish war, you must win war & establish peace**'.

BRA was invited to Poona to address a meeting on 19/1/1943 on the occasion of the Birth Anniversary of Ranade, India's patriot & reformer. **Here he delivered one of the most important speeches of his life.** At the outset he discussed three theories of estimating the greatness of a man. He observed that the Augustine theory that history was only an unfolding of a divine plan in which mankind was to continue through war & suffering until that divine plan was completed on the day of judgment, was now a belief only with the theologians. The theory of Buckle that history was made by Geography & Physics, & the theory of Marx that history was the result of economic forces did not result the whole truth. Impersonal forces were not everything; man was necessary to rub two pieces of flint to make fire.

Summarizing his discussion, BRA opined that a Great Man must be motivated by the dynamics of a social purpose and must act as the scourge & scavenger of society. Applying this test to Ranade, BRA held that Ranade was a Great Man not only by the standards of his time, but was a Great Man according to any standard. Ranade's life was nothing but a relentless struggle against social injustice, social evils & reforms. BRA compared Ranade with Gandhi & Jinnah and opined that it would be difficult to find two persons who would rival Gandhi & Jinnah for their colossal egoism. He then observed that Indian journalism was once a profession, but it had then become a trade. He thus, denounced the writings of the Congress journals as the writings done by drum boys to

glorify their heroes. In the end he said that hero worship in the sense of expressing one's unbound admiration is one thing, to obey the hero blindly was another.

He hated injustice, tyranny, pompousness, humbug etc but hatred was a reflex of the love he bears for the causes he believed in nothing else. The principle of hate BRA had not imbibed from Buddhism, a phase that was yet to come in his life. It was Buddha's eternal rule that hatred was ceased by love. BRA loved the principle of absolute non-violence as an end & believed in relative violence as a means. **He was of the opinion that Gandhi's non-violence was derived from Jainism** & not from the Buddha, who never stretched it to the extreme view of Jainism.

2. BRA works for Labor Cause - The ill prepared and ill-ordered August Revolution came to an end after a few weeks of violent disorder, mass lawlessness & mob violence. Realizing the fiasco, Gandhi started a 21-day fast on 10/2/1943, a tactical move to force his release from the Aga Khan Palace. The fast rocked the nation & the Indian sky was filled with cries of 'Release Gandhi'. Some executive council members like Sarkar, Modi resigned by BRA/Srivastava remained unmoved. A few days after the end of the fast Sir Chimanlal Setalvad paid BRA a glowing tribute on his 51st birthday saying that BRA was an outstanding example of natural intelligence, perseverance & courage.

BRA was now deeply engrossed in the welfare of the laboring classes. Addressing the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce he said the reasons why the European nations adopted an attitude of superiority towards the Oriental nations was, in his judgment, their potential economic & industrial strength. He thus held that India's economic & industrial strength would resolve the problem of imperialism & color. Just at this time discussions were going on in the media on a scheme out forth by BRA to solve the political deadlock. It contemplated the setting up of a Delimitation Committee & the holding of two plebiscites. Plebiscite one, the Muslims were to determine whether they want Pakistan, two was to decide whether non-Muslims in the proposed Pakistan wanted to stay there or not. In the non-Muslims preferred to stay in Pakistan the scheme suggested no change in the existing boundaries. If they declared their opposition to be in Pakistan, a boundary commission was to be appointed to demarcate the predominantly populated Muslim districts, and at the end of two years it was to be decided whether the Muslims wanted separation or not. Friends plebiscite one if held might have thrown interesting results.

BRA had some satisfaction that he could add to the representation of the DC in the Central Assembly as well as in the Council of States. He had secured 8.5. % Appointments in govt posts, reserved seats for technical education of the DC students in London and one more seat in the Central Assembly & got one created in the Council of States. In April 1944, BRA moved an amending Bill proposing holidays with pay for industrial workers employed in perennial factories.

A few days later, Gandhi was released on health grounds from internment in the Aga Khan Palace in Poona. He went to Panchagani where Rajagopalachari declared that he had sent a new offer to Jinnah which had been approved by Gandhi during his fast in internment.

3. Rajaji Pakistan formula - BRA welcomed Gandhi's acceptance of the principle of vivisection, but felt that it would have been better had the offer been made by Gandhi himself & if it had been an unconditional one. Now what were Rajaji's proposals, reproduce from article 'Life Story of Savarkar' based on a book by the same author - Rajaji had by now released to the press his correspondence with Jinnah on the offer that was fathered by Gandhi during his jail stay. Rajaji said, "I stand for Pakistan because I do not want that State where Hindus and Muslims are not honored. Let the Muslims have Pakistan. If we agree our country will be saved. Gandhi approved of my proposals and authorized me to approach you (Jinnah) on that basis". Jinnah said, "Gandhi is offering a shadow, a husk, a maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan and thus trying to pass off as having met the Muslim demand". Rajaji's new offer had these terms. That the League should endorse the Indian demand for independence and co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a provincial Interim govt and conceded that if the Muslim majority provinces of the West and East decided a plebiscite in favor an independent state the decision should be given effect to, a mutual agreement should be entered into for safeguarding defense, commerce and communication. End of quote.

BRA said that he could not understand why Jinnah turned down the offer, there were risks in a plebiscite but any rate people must be the final judges. BRA was sorry that people Gandhi's friends who thought he was opposed to Pakistan were made to look small by this offer. BRA added that the Hindu press would suppress the voice of the Hindu Mahasabha who were opposed to India's partition. But it is strange that in his second edition of Thoughts on Pakistan BRA described this very scheme as a snare which did not offer any solutions.

Seeing a change in Gandhi's attitude towards the League BRA wrote to Gandhi that a settlement of Hindu-Untouchables problem was necessary if the Indian political goal was to be achieved & added that he was willing to formulate points for settlement. Gandhi replied that for him the question of DC was of religious & social reform. He accepted that BRA & himself held different views on this question. Licks to those who are aggressive & kicks to those who are feeble. As a politician, Gandhi was not exception to this.

BRA gave talks at various DC gatherings in Calcutta, Hyderabad, Madras. Briefly he said that it was good on the part of the Viceroy to tell Gandhi that for the transfer of power a tripartite agreement was necessary among Hindus, Muslims & the DC. He was not opposed to a national Govt but history did not warrant the assumption that once a Parliamentary Govt was established on adult suffrage, it would put an end to all human sufferings. Since the departure of Cripps, BRA had worked furiously to impress upon the country & the British Govt that the DC were an important element & demanded a recognized place in the social, economic & political structure of Indian society. That was long & short of his whirlwind propaganda and his arguments won the Viceroy over.

4. Pakistan - Meanwhile BRA took out a second edition of Thoughts on Pakistan under a new title Pakistan or Partition of India, adding one more chapter. Although he admitted to

cultural & geographical unity of India, he said that Pakistan should be conceded for a sure defence of free India & for Muslim sentiments who wanted to be a nation.

Vigorous attempts were made to solve the political deadlock for which there about nine schemes as alternatives to Pakistan. BRA unfolded his plan on 6/5/1945 where he said that majority rule was untenable in theory, he proposed weightages to be given to the minority communities in legislatures & asked the Hindus to be satisfied with a relative majority. Although his plan ensured a united India, he appealed to the Muslims to accept this plan as it promised them better security, a continuance of weightage & relieved them from the fear of Hindu domination. The most important part of the plan was that DC were to hold the balance of power & the aboriginals were not to get any representation as BRA felt they were devoid of political sense. The scheme was rejected outright. The consensus opinion among Hindu journals that BRA aimed at minority rule over India.

In June 1945 another book by BRA titled What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables. It hit the Congress party like a bombshell. Full of statistics & powerful arguments the main thesis of the book was that advertised Harijan uplift work of the Congress, since it adopted in 1917 as one of its planks, was actuated more by a desire to prevent the DC from appearing as a separate element in national life than anything. Criticizing the work of Gandhi, BRA paid a rare tribute to Swami Shradhanand by praising him as the greatest champion of the Untouchables. BRA warned the DC to beware of Gandhi & Gandhism. BRA's book remained unchallenged. BRA's violent opposition to Gandhi on rationalistic basis was not a new phase.

In June 1945 came the Wavell Plan. The Conference broke on the question of the personnel of the interim Ministry, the Congress insisting on Muslim nominees of its own. As a member of the Executive Council BRA could not take part but he was preparing the case for the Schedule Castes.

5. BRA routed in Elections - In July Britain went to the polls & the Labor came to power. Japan also surrendered. In September Wavell announced general elections. All the parties went into election mode including the Scheduled Castes federation. BRA went to Manmad to address a conference of the SC federation where he explained how the Congress campaign for removal of untouchability had proved a utter failure and cited how during his recent visit to Puri he could have only a distant view of the Jagannath Temple. Next he traveled to South India.

In January 1946 he held talks with a British Parliamentary delegation of ten members, Jinnah & Nehru met them too. At a talk in Bombay BRA said that the Scastes were not asking for a territorial division like the Muslims, what they wanted was equal rights & patronage. Just before this speech, Sardar Patel declared that the first concern of the Congress Ministries would be to destroy the very roots of untouchability by force of law. He said that BRA's aspirations were legitimate but his ways wrong. Though the Harijans had benefited by the Poona pact BRA continued abusing the Congress & Gandhi. A number of DC leaders wrote to the Press in reply to Patel stating how the Poona Pact had been a curse to them.

The Provincial Elections were held. BRA's party was routed. Lack of organization & indifference/non-cooperation of the caste Hindu voters made him eat his words, which he had uttered at Sholpaur. This was a stunning blow to his prestige as a leader, which drove to think of drastic methods. Congress defeated both BRA & Hindu Mahasabha but the Muslim voters routed the Congress.

The patriotic upsurge emanated from the I.N.A. Revolt & their trials, Revolt raised by the Royal Indian Air Force & Indian Naval Ratings seemed to break down the imperial structure. It was a clear indication that Indian Army was feeling & experiencing the pangs of freedom. The British realized that it was longer possible to keep India in bondage. So on 15/3/1946, PM C Attlee, acknowledged India's right to attain full independence within or without the British Commonwealth and said that they would not allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of the majority.

A delegation of three cabinet ministers came to India to discuss with Indian Party leaders the question of resolving the political deadlock. Various interviews took place; the outstanding feature was that Maulana Azad represented the Congress party, Jinnah the Muslim League & Nawab of Bhopal, the Princely India. Thus the whole of India was represented by three Muslim leaders. Friends can you ever think of a Hindu representing Muslims in a meeting as important as this, Oh Hindus when will you learn!

BRA & Master Tara Singh were interviewed too. The failure at the elections had made BRA's position shaky. He was almost throttled. Authorised by the Scheduled Castes Federation as its sole spokesman, he expounded their claims. It was reported that BRA pleaded his case forcefully, demanded safeguards for his people in the new constitution. The Mission Plan declared on 16/5/946 contemplated a feeble & formal union with three groups of provinces, the formation of a Constituent Assembly & an interim Govt. As it was almost decided by the British govt to set up a new govt with the representatives of the successful parties, the Viceroy made it clear to his cabinet colleagues that they were to go. BRA left Delhi & came to Bombay in the last week of May 1946.

1. Dispute with Congress - On his arrival in Bombay BRA found the atmosphere to be tense with excitement, there were disturbances in the City between his adherents & caste Hindu Congressmen. BRA's son printing press was burnt down. BRA denounced the 16/5/ plan as mischievous & threatened to resort to direct action if the wrong done to the Scheduled Castes was not rectified. Amidst this uncertainty was fulfilled one of BRA's dreams, i.e. founding an ideal educational institution with modern scientific apparatus & good staff to promote higher education among the lower middle classes & scheduled castes. He founded the People's Education Society, which started the college on 20/6/1946. The name of the college is Siddharth which is one the names of Lord Buddha.

On June 29, a caretaker Govt was announced. The Scheduled Caste (SC for short) leaders made a black flag demonstration in front of the Congress Pandal in Bombay & demanded an explanation from Congress leaders on their rights / representations in a free India. The fight was against the Congress, which had usurped their claim to speak, voice & represent the grievances of the Untouchables. Rajbhoj met Gandhi in Poona & told him that the Congress Harijan leaders were not reps of SC. The SC federation held at a Satyagraha in Poona, Kanpur, Lucknow. Talks between Congress leaders & BRA were inconclusive.

Just then Members were elected by the Provincial Legislatures to go to the Constituent Assembly, which was to meet in accordance with the Mission Plan. Since BRA had no men in the Bombay Assembly to support his candidature his name was put through the Scheduled Castes representatives in the Bengal Assembly where with the backing of the Muslim League he was elected to the Constituent Assembly. (CA in short).

On Aug 24 the names of the Members of the interim Ministry were announced. Among with Nehru, Patel, Azad, Rajagopalachari & Sarat Chandra Bose appeared the name of Jagjivan Ram, who a leader of Untouchables from Bihar. The Muslim League did not cooperate; Muslim posts were filled by other Muslim leaders, one of whom was fatally stabbed by a fanatic. BRA was disappointed with the under representation of the SC. The SC federation started a satyagraha in Nagpur where over 800 people were arrested.

2. Depressed + Great Speech - BRA realized that protests had limited results so he went to London, declared that the Labor Party had let down the Untouchables & betrayed their cause. When asked about his reaction to the situation now that the Muslim League had joined the govt, BRA said it was a Govt of one country by two nations. He told the press that India was in the midst of a civil war. He thus suggested that the British govt enforce the 1935 Act & hand over to the Indian parties a United India after a period of ten years.

BRA was facing a political paralysis. His only point was that the SC should be given due representation in the Executives & Legislatures. He was depressed & in bad health. BRA met PM Attlee & Secretary of State of India, Churchill but there was lip sympathy, BRA was advised to adjust himself to the changed situation & to try his luck in the Constituent

Assembly. He left London in an utterly depressing mood. On his return to Bombay he said that the Untouchables were ready for assimilation or absorption of their classes into Hindu society in the real & substantial sense of the term on the basis of inter marriage & inter dining. He said **that their merger into Hindu society** would become easier only when the Untouchables rose to the social status of caste Hindus.

At this juncture BRA's book Who were the Shudras was published. It presents an impressive method of arranging a catalogue of facts and a brilliant illuminating exposition. It is the thesis of BRA **that Shudras were Kshatriyas**, they were Dasas & Dasyus. They belonged to the solar race, were degraded because of a conflict between the Brahmins & the Kshatriyas who degraded them to the fourth varna.

Although it was boycotted the Muslim League, the Constituent Assembly met on 9/1/21946 as scheduled. Nehru moved a resolution on the Declaration of Objectives in a magnificent speech. He declared India's objective as an Independent Sovereign Republic. It was seconded by P Tandon. India's legal luminary Dr M R Jaykar moved an amendment seeking the postponement of the resolution until the League & Indian States representatives came into the Assembly. He was heckled by the Congress groups and forced to sit down. And then the President of the Constituent Assembly unexpectedly called upon BRA to speak.

Great Speech - In a grave manner, with an unlimited command of language & supreme courage he began his speech. He said that he considered part one of Nehru's resolution & the latter part which set out the objectives of the future constitution to be non controversial although that too was pedantic in that it enunciated only rights without prescribing remedies to the injured parties. Quote 'I know', he said, 'today we are divided politically, socially & economically. We are in warring camps & I am probably one of the leaders of a warring camp. I am convinced that, with time & circumstances we shall in some form be a united people. I have no hesitation in saying that notwithstanding the agitation of the League for the partition of India, some day light will dawn upon the Muslim themselves, and they, too, will begin to think that a United India is better for everybody'.

BRA said he would not ask whether the House had the right to pass a resolution. It might be it had the right. 'The question I am asking is', he asserted with a glow in his eyes, 'is it prudent for you to do it? Is it wise to do it? Power is one thing & wisdom / prudence quite a different thing'. He made a fervent appeal to the Congress leaders to bring about conciliation. In the end he referred to three ways by which the issue could be decided, the permanent surrender of one party to another, a negotiated peace or war. Quoting Burke's famous passage in favor of reconciliation with America, BRA observed: 'If anybody has it in his mind that this problem can be solved by war, or that the Muslims may be subjugated & made to surrender to a constitution that might be prepared without their knowledge & consent, this country would be involved in perpetually conquering them. It is easy to give power, but difficult to give wisdom. Let us carry all sections of the country with us and make them march on the road that is bound to lead to unity'.

So forceful was his plea that it produced an excellent impact on the Assembly. Congress members cheered BRA. It was a red-letter day in the amazing life of BRA. The sacrileger had become now a counsel; the scoffer had become a friend who cast a spell on the Congressmen. The consideration of the resolution was postponed to another session; it was now passed on 20/1/1947.

3. BRA thoughts - Meanwhile the British announced that it would by June 1948 handover the Govt of India to some form of Central Govt for British India or to the existing Provincial Govt in India. It called back Lord Wavell who used his eye to see things from the Muslim angle of vision. BRA realized that the time was ripe for him to put before the Constituent Assembly his constitutional views. He thus prepared a Memorandum in March 1947 in which he proposed that the SC should have separate electorates only in those constituencies in which seats were reserved for them & in others they were to vote jointly. The Memorandum was published under the title States & Minorities. It is a draft of the Constitution that he had prepared for the Indian Union.

The key points in it were – to BRA democracy was essentially a form of society. The slogan of a democratic society must be machinery, more machinery and more civilization inspite of its shortcomings. He opposed Gandhism that hated the machine. BRA hated the orthodox Marxist who quoted Marx & Engels on every occasion. He was a believer in State socialism. He wanted basic industries to be owned by the State. However he did not agree with the Socialists in entirety.

The nebulous British policy, the atrocities committed by the Muslims and the Congress leaders incapacity to rise to the occasion threw the Hindus on the defensive and now they thought it wise to demand a partition of Punjab & Bengal. On 29/4/1947, the Constituent Assembly declared, 'Untouchability in any form is abolished & the imposition of any disability on that account shall be an offense'. Congratulations poured in from across the world. The whole foreign press rang with praise for Gandhi for this great achievement of India. Apparently it was the Congress Party that was declaring the abolition of untouchability, credit went to them. No foreign journal mentioned the names of BRA, Savarkar, Shradhanand, Dayananda, and Phule with any grateful appreciation.

1. Independence - The new Viceroy Mountbatten studied the situation, went to London and returned to declare his Plan on 3/6/1947. There would be two Central govts, two Constituent Assemblies & plebiscites for Sylhet & North West Frontier Province (NWFP in short). Gandhi & Nehru threw their whole weight & forced the All India Congress Committee to accept division of the country. The truth seeker in Gandhi who had considered Pakistan a sin was dominated by the politician in him, the Socialists were neutral & the Hindu Sabhaites rattled in vain. At this juncture Travancore & Hyderabad declared that they would be independent when India became a Dominion on 15/8/1947. BRA advised them against the move.

In Delhi BRA riveted the attention of the Indian govt on the work of the boundary commission & said, 'If my fears come true & the boundary drawn by the commission is not a natural one, it needs no prophet to say that its maintenance will cost the Govt of India very dearly & it will put the safety / security of the people of India in jeopardy. I hope that the defence department will bestir itself & do its duty before it is too late'. This shows the heart of a patriot and yet the author of the Thoughts on Pakistan had preached that geographical conditions were not decisive in modern world technique!

The British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act on 15/7/1947. Because Bengal was partitioned many members lost their seats in the Constituent Assembly, BRA was one of them. He was now chosen by the Bombay Legislative Congress Party to fill the vacancy caused by Dr M R Jaykar. India's first Cabinet was to be formed. BRA was asked by Nehru whether he would join as Minister for Law, promised that a later stage he would be given the portfolio of Planning or Development. The Congress now desired rapprochement with BRA, BRA too forgot the past bickering, BRA agreed.

On August 29 the Constituent Assembly appointed a Drafting Committee with N Madhav Rao, Syed M Saadulah, Sir Alladi K, T T Krishnamachari & two others as members with BRA as its Chairman. It was a great achievement. In spite of being Law Minister BRA kept close contact with the developments of Siddharth College, in a speech there he impressed upon youths the need for cultivating the art of speaking. In the first week of October BRA told a meeting of SC youths that independence had come so suddenly that he did not have a clear line of action before them at the moment. He stressed need for keeping the SC Federation in tact.

2. Results of Partition - Meanwhile the consequences of partition gave terrible shocks to the whole nation. 'The number of wounded & murdered is for a city like Delhi colossal'. BRA had proposed partition with transfer of populations of Hindus & Muslims from their respective zones to avoid civil war. Savarkar was prepared to face a civil war in order to preserve the unity of India but the Congress accepted partition plus massacres & with secular zest ridiculed the idea of transfer of population as they done with the idea of Pakistan till the dawn of Pakistan. Their policy worsened the plight of Hindus who were in the zone of Pakistan. Thus BRA's prophecy & fears were borne out to a letter!

The Untouchables being Hindus had to share the same fate. Jogendranath Mandal, law & labor member of Pakistan, who had asked the SC in Pakistan to look upon Jinnah as their savior was now rudely shaken from his dream. BRA was terribly upset, he complained that SC were not being allowed to come to India and were being forcibly converted to Islam, this was the case in Hyderabad state too. **BRA advised his people**, 'I would like to tell the SC who happen today to be impounded inside Pakistan to come to India by such means as may be available to them. Two is that it would be fatal for the SC to out their faith in Muslims or the Muslim League. It has become a habit with SC to look upon Muslims as their friends simply because they dislike the Hindus. This is a mistaken view'. He warned the SC of Hyderabad not to side with the Nizam and bring disgrace upon the community by siding with one who was the enemy of India. The whole nationalist press rang with praise for BRA.

During the past two months the Congress ministry of Bombay passed the **Temple Entry Bill** as a result of which the famous temple of Vithoba at Pandarpur, Kalaram Temple at Nasik amongst others were thrown open to SC Hindus. It was no mean achievement. BRA was busy with drafting the Constitution. How he worked & why he was called the Chief Architect of the Constitution can be seen from T T Krishnamachari's speech excerpts, 'The burden of drafting the Constitution fell on BRA and I have no doubt that we are grateful to him for having achieved this task in a manner that is commendable'.

The terrific shocks of Partition were coming one after another. **People showed profound disbelief in Gandhism**. The Congress leaders were also chilled in their beliefs. Tandon declared that the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence was responsible for the division of India. 24 hours before the dawn of freedom people had stoned Gandhi's house in Calcutta. And Gandhi's fast started on 3/1/1948 for the reinstatement of the Muslims in their houses in Delhi, restoration of some mosques, five other reasons & as a sequel the Govt of India was forced to pay Pakistan 55 crores rupees had been loudly decried.

Amidst this confusion Godse shot dead Gandhi. While the world was shocked BRA did not react. Hard facts mentioned above & the old bitterness had not cooled down. He did not utter publicly a syllable on his tragedy nor did he issue any statement. In end February 1948 BRA completed the Draft Constitution & submitted it to the President of the Constituent Assembly.

3. Marriage + Constitution - After completing the drafting work BRA came to Bombay for treatment. He felt the need for a companion who would take care of him in his old age. In the hospital he met Dr Savita Kabir. Although he had resolved not to marry he now wanted an educated lady who knew cooking & was a medical practitioner. As it was not possible to find such a lady among the SC he chose a Saraswat Brahmin lady. He married her on 15/4/1948.

In a speech in April 1948 he said that political power was the key to social progress & the SC could achieve their salvation if they captured power by organizing themselves into a third party & held the balance of power between the Congress & Socialists. He said that

he had joined the Congress govt but not the Congress. He asked his followers to keep the SC organization in tact, as the Congress would be ruined in a couple of years.

In a Memorandum submitted to the **Linguistic Commission** on 14/10/1948 he said, 'A linguistic province produces what democracy needs, namely social homogeneity, & makes democracy work better than it would in a mixed province. There is no danger in creating linguistic provinces but danger lies in creating such provinces with the language of each province as its official language'. The latter would lead to creation of provincial nationalities. That would lead to the break up of India, it might end becoming Europe. BRA had presented an irrefutable case for a single official language for the Centre & States in the Constituent Assembly but none listened. He visualized a unitary Maharashtra province, said that Maharashtra & Bombay were interdependent.

BRA's great book, Untouchables was published. He said that Untouchables were broken men since those poor men could not give up beef eating & Buddhism they were treated as untouchables. He traces the origin of untouchability to 400 AD & said that is born out of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism & Brahmanism. This book showed that BRA had the power of language & strength of thought and wielded a powerful pen. His writings had a peculiar fragrance of simplicity & directness.

The Draft Constitution was before the public for six months. As the last day dawned BRA introduced it on 4/11/1948 to the Constituent Assembly. In a grand, lucid & elaborate speech he brought out its salient features, the whole Assembly listening to him as one man. Replying then to the charges that there was nothing new in the Constitution, he said, 'More than a 100 years have rolled since the first constitution was drafted. Fundamentals of constitutions across the world are similar. **That the constitution has produced a good part of the provisions of the Govt of India Act of 1935, I make no apologies.** There is nothing to be ashamed of in borrowing. It involves no plagiarism'.

4. BRA praised - The whole Assembly paid tributes to BRA. On 12/11/1948 Article 11 was adopted declaring the abolition of Untouchability amidst great acclamation. BRA urged his people that progress of the community would depend on how they advanced in education. A battle royal was fought on the question of the national language, and Hindi with the Nagari script was declared to be the national language of India by a majority of one vote only. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee BRA had to explain in the Assembly many knotty points & niceties of law. He described Article 32 which defines the powers of Parliament & Supreme Court in respect of fundamental rights, as the very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it. BRA worked hard inspite of ill health.

Not all members were pleased with the form of the Constitution. A member said that it had reduced the Provinces to the status of municipalities. Another felt that it had discarded the idea of decentralization propogated by Gandhi. Another thought that it had not provided for the ban on cow slaughter.

Amidst loud applause he rose on 25/11/1949 to reply to the debate on the third reading of the Constitution. Looking to the future of the country he observed, '**What perturbs me is**

the fact that India has lost her independence by the infidelity & treachery of her own people. In the invasion of Sind by M Kasim, the military commanders of King Dahir accepted bribes & refused to fight on the side of their king. It was Jaichand who invited M Ghori to invade India & fight Prithiviraj Chauhan & promised him the help of himself / Solanki kings. When Shivaji was fighting the Mughals, the other Maratha noblemen & Rajput kings were fighting battles on the side of the Mughal emperors. When the British were fighting the Sikh rulers, their principal commandment sat silent & did not help save the Sikh kingdom. In 1857 when a large part of India had declared a war of independence against the British, the Sikhs stood & watched as silent spectators. Will history repeat itself?’

He then turned to the ways of maintaining democracy. He said that the first thing to do was to hold fast to the constitutional methods of achieving their social & economic objectives & abandon the methods of civil disobedience, non cooperation & satyagraha, for those methods were nothing but the grammar of anarchy. Another danger he felt arose from hero worship. The third things people must do to safeguard Indian democracy was that they must not be content with pure political democracy & they must make it a social & economic democracy. In the end he appealed to the Indians to be a nation in the social & psychological sense of the word by discarding castes which brought about separation in social life & created jealousy and antipathy between caste & caste. The House listened to his forty-minute speech spellbound, punctuating it with cheers. Newspapers published his speech with great joy & pride.

On 26/11/1949 the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution. In his concluding speech Dr Rajendra Prasad as President of the Assembly said, ‘Sitting in the chair & watching the proceedings from day to day I have realized that nobody else could have with what zeal & devotion the Members of the Drafting Committee & esp its Chairman have worked. He has not only justified his selection but added luster to the work he has done’.

1. Increasing Popularity - After his great triumph in the Constituent Assembly, BRA returned to Bombay but brought with him a new battle cry, the Hindu Code Bill which he had revised & submitted to the C Assembly in October 1948. Work on revising & codifying Hindu Law had been going on for the last ten years. BRA transformed it & parts of the Code Bill relating to joint family & women's property became a nightmare to most Members of the Select Committee.

As soon as BRA touched the Code & became its spokesman intelligentsia all over India was driven into two camps, on one side was Manu & other BRA. BRA started the war on 11/1/1950 when he addressed the 2nd session of the Siddharth College Parliament in Bombay. He said that it would be wrong to describe the bill as either radical or revolutionary. He said the Bill do not oppose orthodox practices while according sanction to new ways of progress. He said the govt must endeavor to prepare a Civil Code for the benefit of the country as a whole and the Hindu Code was a step in that direction. He said it was beneficial from the country's oneness that the same set of laws should govern Hindu social & religious life. He said the modifications were based on Hindu Shastras & Smritis.

On this day he was presented with a golden casket containing a copy of India's constitution by the Bombay SC Federation. He said he has been branded as a pro-Muslim & pro-British leader. He hoped that this work would help Hindus to understand him better & show how the accusations hurled at him were untrue. On January 29 he was honored by the Maharashtrian institutions in Delhi. BRA was now at the zenith of popularity.

2. Back to Buddhism: BRA now reassumed his old role of an iconoclast. Speaking at a meeting on the occasion of the Buddha anniversary in Delhi, he attacked the Godmen in Hinduism. He said that Buddha's religion was based on morality, ethics where Buddha acted as a guide & not as a god where as Krishna said that he was god of gods, Christ said he was God's son & Mohammad Paigamber said that he was the last messenger of god. In place of God in Buddhism there was morality. Buddha propounded the most profound meaning of the word 'Dharma'. To Brahmins it was yajnas & sacrifices to God. In place of Karma Buddha substituted morality as the essence of Dharma. The social gospel of Hinduism was inequality whereas Buddhism was for equality & the Geeta upheld Chaturvarnya. He felt that the propagation of Buddhism needed a bible & opined that the majority of Bhikkhus of the day had neither learning nor service in them.

He was invited by the Buddhist Conference at Colombo, on his arrival he told the press that he come there to observe Buddhist ceremonials & rituals, and to find out what extent the religion of Buddha was a live thing. He showed disapproval of the some of the resolutions passed at the Conference.

BRA addressed delegates of Young Men's Buddhist Association there on '**Rise & fall of Buddhism in India**' - 'Buddhism in its material force had disappeared. But as a spiritual force it still exists'. As regards Hinduism he said it went through three phases, Vedic religion, Brahmanism and Hinduism. It was during the Brahminism period that Buddhism was born. It was not true that after the days of Shankaracharya Buddhism was dead in India. It was going on for years together. In fact Shankaracharya and his teacher were both Buddhists he added. While he was digging material on the subject for the decline/vanish of Buddhism from India the reasons were – adoption of some rituals & practices from Buddhism by the Vaishnava & Shaiva cults, which were vociferous in their propaganda against Buddhism. During the invasion by Allauddin Khilji thousands of priests in Bihar were massacred and consequently some of them fled for their lives to Tibet, China & Nepal. In the meanwhile, the majority of Buddhists went over to Hinduism. The third cause was that Buddhism was difficult to practice while Hinduism was not. Reason four was that the political atmosphere in India had been unfavorable to the advancement of Buddhism he concluded.

But according to Hindu scholars the fall of Buddhism was due to many reasons. Owing to universalistic ambition its spread was everywhere but it had geographical center nowhere. It discarded all national gods & godmen & proclaimed Buddha the greatest of all gods. As long as it reacted as a reformative flank in India, Buddhism gained ground but when it began to act against the Vedic religion, which was the national religion of the majority, Buddhism lost sympathy in India. The Vedic Hindus fought the Muslims bravely and did not flee to any other country. But the Buddhists when attacked, having a center nowhere, fled to different countries and even it is said acclaimed the invasion of India by non-Hindus with the ringing of bells. Besides its godlessness, its over-emphasis on redemption, its sad tone, its unconcern with the world & neglect of family checked rather than fostered enterprise. The Hindu leaders thus warned the SC Hindus that if they converted to Hinduism in the hope that the outer Buddhist world would exert influence to improve their destiny in India they were sadly mistaken.

Addressing a meeting in Colombo he asked the untouchables there to embrace Buddhism. In Bombay BRA addressed a meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society Bombay Branch where he said that he had been interested in Buddhism since his boyhood. At the same meeting Dr V M Kaikini said that modern day Hinduism was nothing but a branch of Mahayana Buddhism with some special beliefs, rituals & caste system added to it. On 12/9/1950 he made a speech at the Buddha Temple in Bombay where he said in order to end their hardships people should embrace Buddhism & added that the present Hinduism was the same about a thousand years ago but after the Muslim invasion & on account of other causes it lost its purity & was mixed up with dross. In the end he said he would devote the rest of his life to the revival of Buddhism in India. BRA worked on the Hindu Code Bill but it was not taken up in Parliament even in December 1950.

1. Hindu Code Bill - The day for the battle on the Hindu Code Bill dawned & all opponents rallied. The Congress too was divided over the issue. He declared that his Govt would resign if the Bill was not passed by Parliament. Sardar Patel / Dr Rajendra Prasad opposed the bill. Savarkar said that Congress leaders must take up the bill if it helped the nation. Amid such atmosphere BRA introduced the bill on 5/2/1951. Sardar Hukum Singh, Sikh spokesman regarded the Bill as a dubious attempt on the part of the Hindus to absorb the Sikh community.

Replying to the objections, BRA said that the bill would be uniform throughout India. As regards the Sikh objection he replied, 'the application of the Hindu code to the Buddhists, Sikhs & Jains was a historical development & it would be too late to object to it. When Buddha differed from the Vedic Brahmans he did so only in matter of creed, but left the Hindu legal framework in tact. The same was the case with Mahavir and the ten Sikh Gurus. The Privy Council had as early as 1830 laid down that the Sikhs were governed by Hindu Law'. Referring to the point of a **secular state** in the Constitution it did not mean that they could abolish religion. It meant that the Govt could not thrust any religion on the people. The debate continued for 3 days, Bill was postponed to next session.

Outside his library BRA was a beehive of opposition & storms. In April 1951 he made a violent attack on the Central govt accusing it of apathy towards the rights of the SC. It rocked India & upset Congressmen / Nehru. Bitterness between BRA & the Congressmen was increasing & it was said that Nehru was to submit this resignation to the President at the end of the current session of Parliament in order to permit himself to reform & reorganize the Cabinet and had asked BRA to resign if he was not prepared to retract his charge. Sources close to BRA said the only reason why he did not resign was his passionate desire to pilot the Hindu Code Bill through Parliament before the general elections. Meanwhile BRA introduced the Representation of the People Bill to Parliament.

2. Resigns - In May BRA delivered another broadside against Hinduism on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in Delhi. He attributed all the vices of Hindus such as violence, immorality and corruption in Govt offices to deterioration in Hinduism & declared that the real salvation for India would come when people embraced Hinduism. This meeting was attended by almost all Ambassadors in the Capital, alienated caste Hindus; newspapers responded that his remarks were not true. On eminent Hindu leaders this speech had no effect, too much thundering by BRA created no more excitement.

In July August BRA started a new college at Aurangabad. In view of his ill health BRA requested Nehru to consider taking up of the Code bill at the earliest. Due to opposition within it was decided that one part of the Bill, the Marriage & Divorce should be taken up on Sept 17 and other clauses relating to property would be taken up later if time permitted. On D Day Dr Mookerjee said that the Bill would shatter the magnificent

structure of Hindu culture & stultify a dynamic / catholic way of life. He suggested that the principle be applied to members of all religions on the basis of human law & taunted that there was an opportunity to implement secularism. While this debate was on Nehru lost patience & suggested a compromise that the Divorce & Marriage part of the Bill should be treated as a separate bill. BRA alienated the members by an uncalled for attack of Rama & Sita resulting in Nehru asking BRA to drop the bill.

BRA's disappointment was sore. The news of his resignation flashed in the papers, he resigned from the cabinet on Sept 27. When the House reassembled on 11/10/1951 BRA was not allowed to speak first on some technical grounds because of which he walked out of the House in protest. Most members were unhappy at this turn of events. The next day the House welcomed BRA back to its fold as 'leader of the opposition'.

Why did BRA resign – he gave the press five reasons. One he explained how Nehru left him out of every Cabinet Committee although he had promised BRA the Planning dept when he offered the law ministry. Two was the charge leveled against the govt that it had apathy towards SC uplift. Three he differed with the Govt's Kashmir policy, he said, 'The right solution for the Kashmir issue is to partition the state. Give Hindu & Buddhist parts to India & the Muslim part to Pakistan as we did in the case of India. Four was the wrong foreign policy of India, which increased enemies rather than friends. Owing to such a policy India had spent 108 crs out of 350 crs revenue on Army. He said if India had friends whom it could depend upon this money could have been saved. Five was Nehru's lukewarm policy towards the Hindu code bill. It was clear that BRA was out as a disappointed man not because of his illness.

3. Elections + Defeat - The reaction of the Press & people to BRA's resignation was favorable. Excerpts from Times of India editorial, 'BRA leaves the govt with a considerable record of achievement behind him. It would be little short of tragedy if BRA were to relinquish the national stage & relapse into communal politics'. The Executive body of the SC Federation met to consider the election manifesto drafted by BRA, they did not want to have any truck with the Congress, Hindu Mahasabha or the Reds.

At a meeting in Jullunder he declared that there was no place for the SC in the heart of the Congress party & added that Nehru suffered from Muslim mania. Addressing students of Lucknow university he said, 'If we cannot save the whole of Kashmir, atleast let us save our kith & kin. It is a plain analysis of the fact which cannot be denied'. He warned the country against indifference to the backward classes & said that if they frustrated their attempts to rise to the status of equality, the SC Federation might prefer the Communist system & the fate of the country would be doomed. At a meeting in Bombay he declared that Subhash Bose who won Independence for India not the Congress. Later he said that it was one of the greatest surprises in his life how he got into the Cabinet particularly when the Congress was deadly against his entry into the Constituent Assembly.

In his whirlwind election tour Nehru criticized the alliance between the Socialists & S.C.F. and said it was strange that BRA did not oppose the Cabinet's foreign policy

though he had been a minister for nearly four years. BRA in his vehemence against the Congress, **made a speech before the Muslims of Bombay, impressing upon their minds the importance of separate electorates.** This speech was lamented by any many of his sympathizers & unbecoming of the Father of the Constitution. Due to bad health & poor organization as compared to the Congress, BRA / Socialist party was swept away at the polls. It was a colossal failure & BRA fell like a rocket. During his election the Congress but did not lay stress on his alternative constructive program. BRA's defeat surprised all, he blamed it due to the machinations of S.A. Dange.

4. Conferred Doctorate - Political events had in the past affected his health curve. BRA filed towards the middle of March 1952 his nomination to one of the 17 seats allotted to the Bombay state in the Council of States & he was declared elected at the end of the month. People who disliked BRA's caustic speeches against the Congress & Hinduism said that the great Doctor was done up. BRA had many things to do in connection with his educational activities.

At the session of the Council of States in May 1952 he said, 'The army is eating into the vitals of the funds that are necessary for the well being of the country'. If India's foreign policy was aimed at friendship & peace who were the enemies against whom it was necessary to maintain a huge army? Around this time came the news that BRA was to receive the Doctorate of Laws at Columbia University convocation of June 5, learning commands universal respect. On his return from America in an interview to the press he said that it was his impression that the American public was favorably inclined towards Pakistan. On inquiries he was told in America that Pakistan took great care in the selection of her foreign representatives while India sent inexperienced people.

5. Travel - BRA now traveled within Maharashtra. Addressing the annual gathering of the students of the Rajaram college he observed, 'Knowledge is the foundation of a man's life & every effort must be made to maintain the intellectual stamina of a man & arouse his intellect'. He asked the students to develop their thinking power & make use of the knowledge they had gained. Addressing the Belgaum branch of the S.C.F. he thundered, 'I shall wait for the next couple of years or even till the next elections, for the alleviation of the misery of my people & if a new deal is not forthcoming through negotiations, I shall be forced to take recourse to stern measures'. Newspapers criticized the speech and although some of them realized the depth & gravity of his restlessness, many said that to them BRA was a by-word of threats.

On 12/1/1953 Osmania University Hyderabad conferred on BRA the **degree of Doctor of Literature** honoris causa, in recognition of his eminent position & attainments. The threats were not going in vain. In April Parliament rang with clamors for steps towards the removal of untouchability & passed a resolution calling for the enactment of a comprehensive law to deal with the problem.

In May BRA delivered in Bombay a grand eulogy on Buddhism, and reiterated his faith in & dedication to the propagation of Buddhism. While in Aurangabad he told the press in an interview that whatever be the effects of Lingusitic states once the Andhra state

came into being, other linguistic states were bound to come into existence. He said he would favor two Marathi speaking states if it facilitated administration. Referring to events in Kashmir, he observed that Indians had every rights to ask the Kashmiris when they had spent crores of rupees for their safety whether they were ready to merge with India or not.

1. No Linguistic States - While speaking on the Andhra State Bill in the Council of States on 2/9/1953 BRA said that linguistic states would lead to the disintegration of India. He blamed the Home Minister for having made no special provisions in the Bill to safeguard the rights of the SC against the tyranny of the majority. On another point he was blamed for having drafted the Constitution without some provisions to which BRA said, 'I am quite prepared to say that I shall be the first person to burn it out. I do not want it. It does not suit anybody. If our people want to carry on, they must remember that the majorities just cannot ignore the minorities by saying: Oh no, to recognize you is to harm democracy'. I should say that the greatest harm would come by injuring minorities. Criticizing BRA's plea for more safeguard for minorities, P Kodanda Rao said: 'it was very sad that our modern day Manu should style himself as an untouchable'. Some likened BRA to a mother who denounced her own child and invited all & sundry to tear it from limb to limb.

BRA criticized the Govt for resorting to Art 356 of the Constitution to continue with President's rule in Pepsu. In the same speech he attacked the govt for making two Chief Ministers i.e. Rajagopalachari who was a member of the Legislature Council & Morarji Desai who had been defeated in the general elections. He decried their promotion as two instances of the most violent attacks on the Constitution by the Govt.

Speaking on the Estate Duty Bill on 18/9/1953 in the Council of States, he warned the govt that revenue from estate duty might not commensurate with the cost of collection & administration. He added that India should not blindly follow Europe, what was good for Europe could not be good for India. The bitter attacks by BRA on the govt had the desired effect. In end 1953 a Bill titled 'The Untouchability (Offenses) Act 1953 was published and later introduced in March 1954. The bill aimed at rooting out untouchability & the practice would be punished with jail etc.

2. BRA on Foreign Policy - BRA's health again deteriorated, although bedridden he performed the inaugural ceremony of Atrre Pictures Marathi offering 'Mahatma Phooley' in January 1954. In April he decided to contest the Bhandara Lok Sabha seat. He said that because the country was going to ruins he was fighting the election so that he might give people another point of view from the Opposition. He made a frontal attack on the Nehru govt and Nehru's leadership. He said that Nehru's foreign policy had made India a friendless country, that Nehru had bungled on the Kashmir issue - sheltered dishonest men & that India was encircled by a kind of United States of Islam on one side & Russia/China on the other for conquest of Asia to bring it under communism. '**If you want to be effective,**' BRA added, '**then you must have guns & not mere soft speech**'. BRA lost the election by 8,381 votes to a Congress Harijan candidate.

BRA criticized Russia in the Rajya Sabha. U.S.A. & Britian were planning SEATO to prevent Russia & China from making further aggression & occupying any further part of

the world. According to BRA SEATO was not an organization for committing aggression on any country, but was purely defensive in nature. Repugnance to SEATO, he added, seemed to flow from some sort of estrangement between Nehru & U S A and fear of what Russia would think if India joined SEATO. He drew attention that India had been completely encircled on one side by Pakistan & other Muslim countries & on the other side by allowing China to take possession of Lhasa.

Nehru BRA proceeded, should not depend upon the Panchsheel accepted by Mao and recorded in the Tibet treaty of non-aggression. If Mao had any faith in Panchsheel, which was the essential part of Buddhism he certainly would treat the Buddhist in his country in a very different way. 'The keynote of our foreign policy', he bitingly remarked, 'is to solve the problems of other countries & not to solve the problems of our own country'.

3. Safeguarding Constitution/Personal Philosophy - September 1954 BRA attacked the govt policy towards the Untouchables & the attitude of the caste Hindus. He was opposed to the amendment of the constitution every Saturday & made a fervent plea for reimposition of the salt tax & creation of Gandhi Trust Fund for uplift of Untouchables.

It seems BRA was making amends for his provoked outburst against the constitution. So whenever the Govt laid its hands on it, he availed himself of every opportunity to retrieve his position & defend its stability / sanctity. At this juncture the govt moved the 3rd Amendment Bill seeking to alter an item in the legislative lists in the 7th Schedule. The Bill sought to give legal powers to the Commerce & Industry Ministry to control production. BRA carpingly criticized the manner in which the Govt was amending the Constitution from time to time without any mandate from the people. It was four years & some months old, but within that period it had been amended twice and this was the third amendment. He wanted the govt to realize, he growled, the essential difference between the constitution & law. They should treat the Constitution in a more respectful manner. This time BRA's stand was upheld by leading newspapers in the country.

On 3/10/1954, the All India Radio broadcast a speech of BRA titled '**My Personal Philosophy**'. 'Every man should have a philosophy of life, for everyone must have a standard by which to measure his conduct. Negatively I reject the Hindu social philosophy propounded in the Geeta & which had made the caste system & system of graded inequality the law of Hindu social life. Positively, my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality & fraternity. My philosophy is not borrowed has roots in religion not political science. I have derived them from the teachings of Buddha. Law is secular which anybody may break while fraternity or religion is sacred which everybody must respect. My philosophy had a mission. I have to do the work of conversion, for I have to make followers of the Triguna theory give it up & accept mine. Indians today are governed by two different ideologies. Their political ideals as set out in the preamble to the Constitution affirm a life of liberty, equality & fraternity. Their social ideal embodied in their religion denies them'. He profoundly believed that what was political ideal for most Indians would become a social ideal for all.

1. What did BRA achieve - BRA was now 63. His weak constitution could not cope with the rebellious surge in his brains to wrest & wring from the constitution the good he expected for his people who were landless, shirtless, shoeless & hungry. He was aware that his hopes for a better future of his people remain unfulfilled. Opinions may differ on his frequent volcanic attacks, but it would be unrealistic to say that BRA was crying wolf too often.

What had BRA achieved for the untouchables? Their story of their past life was dark. It was for the first time in the history of the past 2500 years that the sun of a better future rose on their horizon. BRA their kith & kin focused world attention on their civic, social and political rights & liberties, made untouchability a burning topic, raised it to international importance. He awakened in them a sense of dignity, self-respect and a burning hatred for untouchability that was worse than slavery. He infused courage in them, which enabled them to voice their grievances and to stand up for justice, equality & liberty. His heroic struggle raised them to political equality with other communities in India. The Untouchables were emerging from the dust, getting government jobs, becoming more politically conscious, organized big conferences and their leaders established institutions of importance. Unfortunately those who progressed tried to become second class Brahmins.

Yet it was an indisputable fact that the SC still suffered social & economic hardships & land & legal impediments in rural areas. Research scholars observed that their housing conditions – small huts mad of tin or coconut leaves had a direct bearing on their moral & health. However, the disease was being cured gradually. The one leader in a liberated India who unceasingly cried for the speedy abolition of untouchability was Veer Savarkar.

2. BRA's Contribution to Hinduism - BRA was a great teacher who taught the common man to have belief in his potential power, to rouse it up, to develop it and to stand on his own feet. To him nothing was more sacred than learning. No man was born a dullard. He recalled to students the glorious traditions & untiring industry, high aims & sense of public life of Ranade, Tilak & Gokhale. 'You must have a firm belief in the sacredness of your goal'. Blessed are those who are awakened to their duty to those among whom they are born. Glory to those who devote their time, talents & their all to the annihilation of slavery.

BRA did not like that his hungry men should envelop themselves in the coil of Bhakti, the cult of devotion, opium of helplessness. He asked the common man not to resign himself to his fate & accept his position as a divine dispensation. BRA tried to divert the minds of his people from the thought of life after death to their present life of degradation. He wanted them to enjoy material amenities & to bring themselves upto the cultural level of the majority. At the same time to the more advanced man he warned that

material comfort is by no means the solvent of all human ills. Man does not live by bread alone, he is a cultural being.

That is why people regard the life of BRA, who was one of the greatest Protestant Hindu leaders of Modern India, as a phase in the renaissance of Hinduism & in the reorganization of Hindu social order. **The first renaissance in Hinduism** was inaugurated by the Upanishads with their stream of new thoughts when the gods, priests & sacrifices receded into the background. With the resurgence of orthodox priests & idea of sacrifices, decadence set in again with added vigor. At this time Buddha came forward to rejuvenate & reorganize the social & religious system of the Hindus. He attacked priest craft, the institution of sacrifice & stood for the abolition of the ramifications in society.

With the rise of Shankaracharya, Hinduism slowly absorbed Buddhist principles but tightened its hold on the caste system & karmakand. Then came another revival with the spiritual teachings of Ramanuja, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya and Namdeo. The fourth phase began with the rise of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Phule, Ranade, Dayananda & Vivekananda carried forward by Savarkar on a rationalistic basis. Gandhi's contribution was more of a humanitarian nature than of a social one. **BRA's movement saw the fifth phase of the renaissance of Hinduism & reorganization of the Hindu social order.** He was the first greater leader from the oppressed people during the history of over 2,500 years of their slavery. He started a mental revolution unprecedented in the history of Hinduism, to purify & revolutionize Hinduism, to reorganize & revitalize Hindu society & to save it from decadence / degradation. His contribution, therefore to Hinduism & India would be greater than that of most of the modern Hindu leaders like Dayananda & Vivekananda, for unlike them he has contributed to the constitutional & political thought & development of this country.

BRA demanded liberation of Hindu society from casteism & priest craft. According to his social philosophy, every Hindu must have the liberty to associate in all legitimate ways with his co-religionists. The Hindus must build a common Social Code. BRA was for one national language, the Hindi & one common script, the Nagari. Thus his social philosophy appealed to Hindus to liberate Hinduism & solidify Hindu society, and to revitalize Hindu thought and abolish the caste system & touch me not-ism.

3. BRA the person - By temperament BRA was cyclonic. At the least provocation he flew into anger. The next moment his anger would cool down. It will not be far from the truth if one says that BRA was a not man of the family. He called himself asang, unfit for familiarity. Constant tours, study and public appointments kept him engrossed all the time. There might be none around him who did not suffer rebukes at his hands at some time or the other. Some eminent men described him as a British Bulldog and Sarojini Naidu called Mussolini. His ability, integrity, great learning & untold sacrifice inspired devotion & confidence. Yet his imperious life was an empire which had lost many cities under the debris of forgetfulness & neglect. BRA did not show enthusiastic familiarity with or admiration for anybody. His truthfulness was shattering.

He had the vision of Buddha but humility was not conspicuous among his merits. His proud self-confidence often verged on boastfulness. In his relaxed mood he talked endlessly. His talks gave his visitors both entertainment & arguments. Besides a strong sense of humor he had an irresistible taste for country jokes & idioms. At times one got more jokes from him in one hour than one got from all other politicians in five years. Though grave & fierce in appearance BRA was a foundation of emotions. When his youngest son died, BRA was so overwhelmed with grief that he would part with the dead body for days. When his first wife passed away his grief knew no bounds.

In his old age BRA found time to hear music for which he had a liking. BRA's house was not a detached villa that gave you an appearance of seclusion. His vast library, rich clothes, his enormous pens, his grand card, the numerous varieties of shoes & boots were the living marks of his conquering personality that marched on removing all obstacles till he felt he had secured all that he was capable of winning in the world in which he lived. Big & varied types of fountain pens had an irresistible fascination for BRA. Rich dress & best cut interested him.

The bookworm in BRA had no time for social life. Once in a while he went to see pictures. Though an expert cook BRA never insisted on any particular dish. When he was angry with family members he remained without words & food. His handwriting had an elegant style, which indicated firmness, clarity & display. He loved fine dogs & would bring one from the farthest corner of the country if his eyes fell on a charming breed. To visit BRA was to visit a speaking museum. His conversation was illuminating, entrancing, vigorous & communicative. His talk ranged over many subjects, which were stored in his prodigious museum.

The time factor was a legend that revolved round BRA's name. None could encroach upon his time. Two great Indians of our age utilized every moment of their life as life's greatest treasure. They were Gandhi & BRA. To BRA love of books was the greatest means of education & self-development, and the highest type of recreation & enjoyment. Company of books gave BRA supreme joy of life & serious aloofness. The cause of Indian independence drove Tilak into politics, the cause of the Untouchables drove BRA into politics. Goethe said we know accurately when we know little, for with knowledge our doubts increase. He had no flash of a Savarkar or of a Nehru. But when he proved his point, he quoted one after another all the great thinkers on that particular topic to support his point. BRA's thirst for books was ever growing & flowing like the river Ganges. BRA bitterly wept at the thought of losing his eyesight, for then life would be meaningless. Great was his joy when he wrote a book.

4. BRA the Man - All that is great in men comes through labor, 'You have no idea of my sufferings & labor, you would have been wiped out' said BRA to one journalist. Three personalities influenced the life & actions of BRA. Besides stories from the Mahabharat & Ramayan, which he heard with rapt attention in his childhood, the life of Buddha, the teachings of Kabir and the struggle of Phule contributed tremendously to the building of his personality. These personalities gave him his soul force and Western education gave him his weapons.

But the combination of idealism & practical life, by knowledge & experience, BRA belonged to the race of Ranade, Bhandarkar, Tilak & Telang who unfurled the Indian flag of learning in the world of learning & research. There was Tagore, Bose & Radhakrishnan but that was a different order. BRA was the last link of the batch of scholar politician, the type that was dying out in India and making politics poorer. Yet BRA had one more advantage over the scholar politician save Tilak. BRA led a stormy political life, launched political struggles and passive resistance movements and was in the firing line when it was necessary. He faced cruel attacks & returned merciless blows. In a moment he knew how to begin the fight & thundered / threw thunderbolts into the camps of his opponents. That is why he was rated amongst the best brains, was regarded as one of the dozen most astonishing men & one of the bravest sons of India.

BRA was a powerful speaker both on the platform & in Parliament. Galvanic & embarrassingly brutal to a fault in his speech, he showered a fusillade of pistol shots at these opponents. Like all positive men of character & mission, BRA had his idolaters & detractors. He had a reputation for great personal integrity & fearless intellectual honesty. Yet it was a fact that he paid bills stingily. BRA's hold over his people was unshakeable. One striking feature about BRA was his marvelous combination of obstinacy & resilience & his ability to seize an opportunity by the forelock which quality succeeds in politics. It was resilience & not expediency that made him shed his obstinacy without compromising his stand or conscience. He was shrewd enough to know that dawn does not come twice to awaken a man. He had the gift of catching the ball as it bounced.

BRA did not accept the Geeta at all, to him it was an irresponsible book on ethics, a compromise of all errors. He believed in the necessity of religion. He believed in God in the sense that some unknown power might be influencing human destiny. This faith in God, he, however, unified, since he took an active interest in the revival of Buddhism, with the worship of the image of the Buddha before which he knelt & said prayers morning/evening. As a front rank leader, BRA kept himself away from the controversies over provincialism. But when points came up for discussion, he proudly said that Maharashtrians never acted as traitors to the country, he also said that they would be last people to be scared by the threat of the proposed Pakistan since they had once in their living past routed the Muslim forces in battlefield & battlefield.

BRA was a leader of the masses. Tilak was the first leader of modern India who influenced the middle class and spread his influence over the masses. Gandhi moved the masses while BRA moved the lower strata of society. BRA represented more a cause than an organization. BRA did not try to organize his party on modern lines. There was no regular annual conferences or general meetings. Where & when he sat was the venue of conference & the time for decision. The office bearers had to fall in line with this arrangement. His followers were attracted by his integrity, ability, sacrifice & learning. When he wanted his people to assemble he simply gave them a clarion call and the organization sprang up like the crop in the rainy season.

1. Promoting Buddhism - So in the last phase of his life, BRA made a great resolve to raise the banner of Buddhism & bring back to his motherland the Buddha who had suffered an exile of 1200 years. He unfurled the banner, and his people marched. In December 1954 BRA went to Rangoon to attend the third Buddhist World Conference. He cast a spell on the Conference with his thought provoking views on the mission & propagation of Buddhism. He said that Ceylon & Burma were in the forefront of Buddhist countries. To his mind, Grandeur had no place on Buddhism. Buddhism had far-reaching effects on Hinduism, and cow protection was a victory of the Buddhist principle of non-violence he added. BRA also declared that he would propagate Buddhism in India. He had already achieved several things to that end, the provision for the study of Pali made in the Constitution, the inscription of a Buddhist aphorism on the frontage of the Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi & acceptance of the Asoka Chakra by Bharat as her symbol / declaration of Buddha Jayanti a holiday mainly through his efforts.

Soon after BRA unveiled an image of Buddha at Dehu road near Pune. BRA also told his audience that the image of the god at Pandharpur was in reality the image of the Buddha. The name of the god Pandurang, he observed, was derived from Pundalik meaning lotus and a lotus was called Pandurang in Pali. So Pandurang was none other than Buddha.

1955 opened with the news that BRA was going to embrace Buddhism. Since then he received invitations from several Buddhist institutions to address them. BRA wrote to D. Valinsinha that he had prepared a formula of certain rites called 'Dhamma Diksha Ceremony' which everyone embracing Buddhism would be required to undergo. BRA received an invite from Dr Felix Valyi Japan to take part in a Round Table Conference on the origin of Indian thought with special reference to Buddhism & Jainism. BRA did exchange notes/thoughts with the Japanese Consul-General in Bombay on ways of promoting Buddhism in India.

Since May 1955 BRA's health deteriorated further, he needed to be put on oxygen often, twice a week but except for a few none knew about his worsening health. The Working Committee of the SC Federation under its president of BRA expressed by a resolution dated 27/8/1955 in favor of abolition of reservation of seats for SC in the Central & State legislatures & District Local Boards, as it is believed that the time had come for its abolition, there was no need for such a provision.

2. On Buddhism - In early 1956 the great book on Buddha & Buddhism was almost completed. He also wrote Riddle of Hinduism. Busy he was his writings simultaneously the political hammer was banging in the Council of States as well. BRA made a fighting speech over the linguistic problem on 1/5/1956. He said that Bombay belonged to Maharashtra, its original inhabitants were the Kolis, it belonged to Dowager Lakshmi Bai from whom the Portuguese took it on lease and later took it over. He was against a United Maharashtra but wanted two Maharashtras divided by the lines of the Sahyadris.

In a broadcast in May 1956 on BBC on 'Why I like Buddhism and how it is useful to the world in its present circumstances' he said, I prefer Buddhism because it gives three principles that no other religion gives, one it teaches prajna (understanding as against superstition & supernaturalism), karuna (love), and samata (equality). This is what man wants for a good & happy life. Marxism & Communism have shaken the religious system of all countries. Buddhist countries that have gone into communism do not understand what communism is'.

BRA was soon going to start a new party called the Republican Party. Due to his ill health he was keen on publishing the book 'The Buddha & his Dhamma'. On 24/5/1956 at a talk in Nare Park, Bombay he declared that he would embrace Buddhism in October 1956. In his speech he attacked Savarkar who had written a series of articles on the non-violence preached by Buddhism. **To him Buddhism differed from Hinduism.** Hinduism believed in God & soul the former did not. Hinduism believed in Chaturvarnya and caste system the former did not. During his speech BRA compared himself with Moses who had led his people from Egypt to Palestine, the land of freedom.

3. Approaching Conversion - After June 1956 his health worsened, his eyesight was fast failing. He was lame, crippled & sad at heart as he thought that he could not fulfill his mission, he sadly & bitterly wept. He wanted to make his people a governing class in his lifetime. The thought of being helpless to complete his books he had planned depressed him terribly. So prostrate was BRA that eminent politicians who saw him said that death was hovering over his face. They wondered at his will power.

October 14 the date of his conversion to Buddhism was fast approaching. He would prefer to hold the ceremony at Bombay, Nagpur or Sarnath pref Nagpur where the Buddhist Nagas flourished in ancient times. On September 23 BRA issued a press note announcing that his conversion to Buddhism would take place at Nagpur on Dassara day on 14/10/1956 between 9 & 11 a.m. BRA wrote to D Valisinha expressing desire that Mahabodhi Society of India should participate in the function. He informed him that he had no idea what the rituals were although he had framed an important formula of a series of vows to be administered at the time of Dhamma Diksha Ceremony.

4. BRA Converts, a Must Read - For a week prior to the event thousands of DC esp. the Mahars from the Marathi speaking areas of Central Provinces, Berar & Bombay reached Nagpur. Nagpur sanctified in the olden times by the residence of Nagarjun, the great scholar-leader of Buddhism was now transformed into a holy place of great significance, historical, cultural & religious. An expansive open ground of 14 acres near the Vaccine Institute at Shradhanand Peth was turned into an enclosure, there was a replica of the Sanchi stupa with Buddhist flags consisting of blue, red & green stripes fluttered everywhere.

BRA said that his Buddhism would be a sort of neo-Buddhism or Navayana. He declared that he had once told Gandhi that he though he differed from him on the issue of untouchability, when the time came, 'I will choose only the least harmful way for the

country. And that is the greatest benefit I am conferring on the country by embracing Buddhism, for Buddhism is a part & parcel of Bharatiya culture. **I have taken care that my conversion will not harm the tradition of the culture & history of this land**'. He predicted that in the next 10-15 years India would become a Buddhist country. He extended his wholehearted support to the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti which was fighting for a united Maharashtra.

The conversion ceremony commenced with a Marathi song sung by a lady in praise of BRA. The vast humanity of over 3 lakhs people watched the ceremony eagerly as the 83 year old Mahathaveer Chandramani of Kushinara & his four saffron robed Bhikkus administered in Pali to BRA & his wife, who were both bowing before the image of Buddha, the three Sarans under Buddha, Dhamma & Sangha and Pancheel of the five precepts of abstention from killing, stealing, telling lies, wrongful sex life & drink. They ten bowed down thrice with clasped hands before the Buddha statuette & made offerings of white lotuses before it. With his BRA had become a Buddhist. BRA declared, 'By discarding my ancient religion which stood for inequality & oppression today I am reborn. I have no faith in the philosophy of incarnation, and it is wrong & mischievous to say that Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu. I am no more a devotee of any Hindu god or goddess. I will not perform Shraddha. I wil strictly follow the eightfold path of Buddha. I will lead a life guided by the three principles of knowledge, right path & compassion'.

It may be noted here that a leaflet issued on this occasion by **Mahasthvir Chandramani** & other Bhikkus (the men who performed BRA's conversion ceremony) on this occasion **said that Hinduism & Buddhism were branches of the same tree.**

Now he called those who wanted to embrace Buddhism to stand up, the entire gathering rose up and he administered the three refuges & five precepts & different pledges to the vast gathering. Nearly three lakhs of his followers embraced Buddhism. Among those who embraced Buddhism with BRA were Dr M B Niyogi, former Chief Justice of the Nagpur High Court who said denunciation of Hinduism as done by BRA while embracing Buddhism had no place in the original Buddhist rituals. There were messages from Burma, Colombo but none from any great Indian leader like Nehru, Dr Radhakrishnan (believed that Buddha had attempted to achieve a purer Hinduism) or Veer Savarkar (described the conversion of BRA as a sure jump into the fold of Hinduism & declared that a Buddhist BRA was a Hindu BRA. He embraced a non-Vedic faith but Indian religious system within the orbit of Hindutva, and according to him it was a not change of faith). The next day he initiated another vast crowd of followers into Hinduism.

He then seriously warned people that a great responsibility had fallen on their shoulders in connection with the upholding of Buddhism, if they did not follow rigidly & nobly the principles of Buddhism it would mean the Mahars be reduced to a miserable state. He said that his partymen were more interested in politics than in religion but he was more interested in religion than in politics. He told his followers that they should try to work

with the leaders of other communities since people did not vote for SC candidates just as they voted for SC candidates.

By this act he said the tone for the revival of Buddhism in India.

1. Off to Nepal / Kashi - On 30/11/1956 BRA wrote to D. Valisinha, 'It was a great event and the crowd that came forward was beyond my imagination. We have to consider ways of & means of imparting knowledge of Buddhism to the masses who have accepted His Dhamma and will accept it on my word. I am afraid the Sangha will have to modify its outlook, and instead of becoming recluses, Bhikkus should become like Christian missionaries, social workers & preachers'. BRA now inspite of bad health went to Nepal to attend the fourth conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. The Govt of Nepal declared the day of the conference a holiday and banned the exhibition of an Indian film on the life of Shankaracharya, the mighty Hindu leader who liquidated Buddhism in India. (friends this statement is incorrect as said by BRA in earlier chapter, for a more detailed reply please visit section Why on site, there is an article titled 'Why Did Buddhism vanish from India'). During this visit the priests in Kathmandu withdrew the recently conceded right to Buddhists to enter the temple of Pashipatinath.

Majority of delegates asked BRA to speak on Buddha & Marx. BRA expressed concern over the fate of Buddhist youngsters in Buddhist countries who looked upon Marx as the only prophet of worship. He stated that the goal of Buddha & Marx was the same. Marx said that private property was the root cause of sorrow. Buddha also wanted to abolish sorrow and its expression was used in Buddhist literature in the sense of property. According to Buddha everything was impermanent and so there was no struggle for property. The Bhikkus were not allowed to own private property. Buddha did not lay the foundations of his religion on God or Soul. So Buddha would not stand in the path of abolition of private property, if the principle of the denial of private property was applied to society. But the two differed. Communism adopted violent methods to abolish private property. Buddhism adopted non-violent means. Marx gave quick results, Buddha's way takes time. Buddhist way was based on a democratic system while the Communist system was based on Dictatorship. According to BRA it is impossible for humanity to live peacefully without the Buddha & His Dhamma.

BRA spoke at the Banaras Hindu University & thought he would achieve for Buddhism what Shankaracharya had done for Hinduism. He spoke on Shankaracharya's philosophy as expounded in the aphorism, 'Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya'. BRA said that if the Brahman pervaded all, a Brahmin & an Untouchable were equal. But Shankara did not apply the doctrine to social organization & kept the discussion on a vedantic level. Had he applied it on a social level his proposition would have been profound & worth consideration, apart from his erroneous belief that the world was an illusion.

He returned to Delhi. Asked by an admirer why the statues of Buddha from different countries had different features, he replied **that till 600 years after the Mahaparinirvana of Buddha there was no picture or statue of Buddha**. Someone made a statue from his own imagination & then in all Buddhist countries statues were made in accordance with the standard of beauty prevailing in those lands.

2. End / Tributes / Thoughts - His health was getting worse. Some Jain leaders came to meet him, presented him with a copy of the book Jain & Buddha. On the morning of 6/12/1956 his wife Savita Ambedkar got up as usual, when she had a look at the bed she saw his leg resting on the cushion as usual. When she touched him she felt that BRA was no more. For eight years she had struggled to save his life and now he had left this world. Long before this in 1946, BRA had said that it was his belief that his life would be prolonged so long as it was necessary for the welfare of the DC. This faith carried him through disappointments & disorders of health.

Nehru, Pant, Jagjivan Ram called on his residence to pay respects to the departed leader. His body was brought to Bombay. More than half a million people witnessed the last rites at the Dadar Hindu crematorium performed by Buddhist priests. Over a lakh people embraced Buddhism at the crematorium to fulfill the last wish of their departed leader.

The nation mourned his death. Nehru praised him in Parliament, Savarkar said that Indian had lost in BRA a truly great man. Dr Rajendra Prasad, C Rajagopalachari said good words about BRA. Newspapers paid handsome tributes including the New York Times & Times London. Later the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Y B Chavan declared BRA's birthday a public holiday. The govt gave away 11 acres of land at Nagpur where the historic Diksha ceremony took place on 14/10/1956 and in 1968 a grand stupa was erected on the Chaitya Bhoomi at Dadar Chowpatty, Bombay.

BRA's monumental work, The Buddha & his Dhamma was posthumously published. The book is subjective, direct and a good model. **The Maha Bodhi, a famous Buddhist journal in India opined that BRA's was a dangerous book**, BRA's interpretation of the theory of Karma, Ahimsa & that Buddhism was merely a social system, constituted not the correct interpretation of Buddhism but a new orientation. Indeed the whole book, observed the reviewer, explained the hatred & aggressiveness the neo-Buddhist nourished and displayed. 'BRA's Buddhism' added the reviewer, 'is based on hatred, the Buddha's on compassion. It would seem more important to be careful what we accept in BRA's book as being the word of Buddha'. The Light of the Dhamma, Rangoon, observed that although this was a book by a great man, it was not a great book which the author with all his manifold virtues was not fit to write. Whatever may be the fault BRA's Buddhism would be a reformist plank like the Arya/Brahmo Samaj.

BRA wanted Protestant Buddhism. Hinduism & Buddhism are branches of the same tree, just as the Catholic & Protestant church. So those who worship Buddha in India would do well to remember the world of Dr Rhys Davids who observes: 'We should never forget that **Gautama was born & brought up as a Hindu and lived & died as Hindu**. His teaching, far-reaching & original as it was, and really subversive of the religion of the day, was Indian throughout. He was the greatest & wisest & the best of the Hindus'.

BRA found a peculiar charm & magnetism in the appellation Bharat. He named one of his weeklies Bhaishkrit Bharat, his printing press was Bharat Bhushan Printing Press. His anxiety to live in Hindu culture, his avowal of embracing a religion that would neither denationalize the DC nor harm the ancient culture of this land, all point to the fact that his

religion had something to do with the culture, history & tradition of this land. His religion & politics went hand in hand. That is why Buddhist critics say that the Dhamma preached by BRA is not Buddhism but Ambedkarism. And rightly so. **His Dhamma preaches the necessity to kill if needed and his message to India is that Indians should be determined to defend the independence of this land to the last drop of their blood.**

And so ends the story of one of India's greatest leaders. Friends at 95 word pages this is my longest piece to date. Many a time I felt tired, willing to throw in the towel but the story of his this great son of India inspired me like few others have in the past. He joins the list of my heroes starting Veda Vyassa, Chanakya, Shankaracharya, Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh, Sardar Patel and Veer Savarkar to name a few.

Today we talk of 'Knowledge Economy'. Well BRA realized that nearly 80 years ago. To my mind it is the Power of Knowledge that made him the man he was. There were few within & outside the Congress who could take him on intellectually. I have also read Arun Shourie's book on BRA 'Worshipping False Gods' and tend to agree with a lot that Shourieji has written Yet I would rather overlook them & remember the good things that BRA did.

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