

CHAPTER - IV

TEMPLE ENTRY SATYAGRAHAS - II

As discussed in the preceding chapter, a series of temple entry *Satyagrahas* were launched by many reformers in Maharashtra since 1924. Apart from those there occurred two more *Satyagrahas* which have greater importance in the temple entry movement in 20th century Maharashtra. Those two *Satyagrahas* lasted longer and succeed in creating awareness among the untouchable masses all over Maharashtra about this movement. They also invited attention of government towards this issue. Those two famous temple entry *Satyagrahas* were 1) Kalaram temple entry *Satyagraha*, Nasik and 2) Vitthal temple entry *Satyagraha*, Pandharpur.

Details of these two *Satyagrahas* have been discussed in the following pages of this research work.

A. KALARAM TEMPLE ENTRY SATYAGRAHA - NASIK**1.1 Kalaram Temple, Nasik :**

Nasik is at a distance of about 5 miles from Nasik road Railway station on the central railway. There is a legend that Lord Ramchandra with his consort Sita and brother Laxman stayed during his exile at Panchavati at the place where the temple stands and used to take bath in the Ram Kunda which has assumed special sacredness because of their supposed association with it.¹

1.2 Its Construction :

“The temple of Kalaram stands in a compound about 500’ long and 150’ wide with an enclosure of stone wall of about 171’ in height with open ovaries touching the inner portion of the wall on all sides

having stone arches resting on pillars. The temple compound has four gates in the enclosure wall, in the east, west, south and north. At the top of the west gate from outside, there is an image of *Ganapati* which indicates that the images installed in the temple were brought into the temple compound from this gate. The temple faces the east and the eastern gate is the *Mahadwar* of the temple.

The temple of Kalaram has three tops (Shikhars) one after another, under the hind most top there stands the images of Ram, Laxman and Sita; under the middle one there is a hall for taking the deities darshan and under the foremost is a porch.

The whole temple building is a stone and the construction though it is more than 200-250 years old, surprisingly enough appears to be quite new with no mark on it of lapse of time.²

1.3 Images of Deities :

The images of Shri Rama, Laxman and Sita made of black sandstone are installed in the inner apartment of the temple on a stone pedestal about 3' to 4' in height with *Prabhaval* in silver at the top and at the back. The image of Rama is in the centre with his consort Sita to his left and brother Laxman to his right. The height of the images ranges from 2½ to 3 feet. In front of these are installed and worshipped *Bhoga murtis* of the three deities made of copper, used in palanquin and *Ratha* processions.³

1.4 Board of Trustees :

For the internal management of the temple there is a board of trustees whose responsibility is to ensure the safe custody of the temple ornaments, dress and articles, daily religious rites on all festivals according to fixed schedule.⁴

2. PUBLICLY OWNED TEMPLE OR A PRIVATE ONE

The Kalaram temple was originally built by Sardar Rangarao Odhekar in 1782. Gopikabai, mother of Peshwa Madhavrao, had donated two *Raths* (chariots) to the temple and since she was born in the family of Sardar Raste, maintenance and repairs of the two chariots became the responsibility of the Raste family. After the defeat of Peshwa Bajirao II, the East India Company continued to pay an annual grant of over a thousand rupees to the temple. It was because of this history of the temple that the issue whether it was a publically owned temple or a private one became the subject of an acrimonious debate when the untouchables led by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Dadasaheb Gaikwad insisted on their right to enter into the temple. The hereditary priests of the temple denied entry to the untouchables and the trustees of the temple refused to intervene. The Bombay Government decided, "neither to help the *Mahars* to get in nor to help the others to keep the *Mahars* out." This was their policy of remaining absolutely and strictly impartial holding no brief for either of the parties to the dispute.⁵

3. DR. AMBEDKAR'S OPINION

Leaders of the untouchables of Nasik discussed with Dr.B.R. Ambedkar the issue of Kalaram temple entry of Untouchables launching a *Satyagraha* for it in October 1929 in Mumbai. Then Dr. Ambedkar explained to them the situation which had resulted from the *Satyagraha* of Mahad (1927). Further he expressed his opinion about the proposed *Satyagraha* of Nasik. He stated, "I give more importance to political rights of the untouchables rather than this *Satyagraha*. There is a possibility of discussion on this issue as early as possible in India or London. This *Satyagraha* will be an obstacles for us if the critical

situation would develop there. Because if we waste our whole energy in this *Satyagraha* we will become useless to face that problem.”

Leaders of the untouchables of Nasik appreciated Dr. Ambedkar's point of view and expressed their reaction to his opinion. They stated ‘We don't want to cause you any trouble in this *Satyagraha*. We only want to give you its leadership. Please, accept it and then you will be free to work for the political rights. We are always ready to extend you all help in all conditions.” Dr. Ambedkar quickly realised that they had a lot of enthusiasm about this *Satyagraha*. Hence he finally agreed with them for the Nasik *Satyagraha*.⁶

When Dr. Ambedkar assumed leadership of Kalaram temple entry *Satyagraha*, a *Satyagraha* committee was formed by the people of Nasik with Bhaurao Krishnaji Gaikwad as its Secretary. The *Satyagraha* Committee suddenly swung into action and sent a notice to the trustees of Kalaram temple. It stated “We wish to enter in the temple for the vision (*Darshan*) of Shri Ram. And we are also ready for the *Satyagraha* if you try to prevent us. We are waiting for your answer.” But *Satyagraha* committee didn't get any reply from the trustees for five months. Consequently, *Satyagraha* committee declared a *Satyagraha*.⁷

4. PREPARATION FOR THE SATYAGRAHA

In the history of India the year 1930 was a year of action and reaction. It brought forth a new line of thinking and a new angle of approach; new measures of repression and new methods of rapprochement. Better still, it was the age of *Satyagraha*. It was in this year that Gandhi as the generalissimo of the Congress inaugurated his great movement for the liberation of the country on March 2, 1930. Ten days before the Dandi March of Gandhi, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the father of Indian social unrest, launched his temple entry movement at Nasik.

Preparation for this movement had been going on for over three months. Dr. Ambedkar was guiding, inspiring and organising it from Bombay through his letters and lieutenants. The depressed classes at Nasik had formed a *Satyagraha* Committee and through its Secretary, Bhaurao Gaikwad, informed the Trustees of the famous Kalaram temple that they would launch *Satyagraha*, if the trustees did not throw the temple open to the untouchable Hindus before a particular date. Simultaneously, a clarion call was issued to the depressed classes to come to Nasik to assert their right of worshipping Shree Rama in the said temple. In response to this call of the *Satyagraha* Committee, about 15,000 volunteers and representatives assembled in a specially erected pandal in the depressed classes locality at Nasik.⁸

It was recorded in the government document that *Mahars* of Nasik District established a '*Mahar Sangh*' in a meeting which was held in Devalali on 17th November, 1929 for the preparation of *Satyagraha*. Sambhaji Yesu Rokade (Nandur) was the President and Dadasaheb Gaikwad was the Secretary of the *Sangh*. They decided to collect fund of Rs. 10/- for the *Satyagraha* from the *Mahars* of the every village.⁹

In February 1930 the District Police Officer informed the Government that one thousand volunteers had registered their names for the Kalaram temple entry *Satyagraha*. As a counter move the priests of Kalaram temple also arranged the *Sabha* to oppose the *Satyagrahis*. Sakharam Anantbuva requested the Governor that 'he should grant permission to the caste Hindus to protest against the illegal actions of the *Mahars*.' On 13th February, 1930, caste Hindus convened a meeting. V.B. Aakut, President of District Congress Committee and a lawyer, Nilkanth Pandurang Patankar, lawyer, were presented for it. Shridhar Annashastry and Gopalshastry Puranik stated, '*Mahars* have no right to

enter in the temple.’ But Nilkanthrao Patankar spoke in favour of the *Mahars*, while Mr. Aakut remained neutral. Mr. Raghunath Hari Gadre faced a strong protest of the priests because he had favoured Kalaram temple entry of untouchables.¹⁰

5.1 Initiation of *Satyagraha* (1930-1935) :

The day of action (*Satyagraha*) was Sunday, March, 2, 1930. In the morning at ten a conference was held under the Presidentship of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the pendal to consider the situation and adopt ways and means for launching the *Satyagraha*. Dr. Ambedkar made a thought provoking speech about the entry of Kalaram temple. He said, “today, we are about to enter the temple. But the entry in the temple would not solve the whole problem. Our problem is comprehensive i.e. political, social, religious, economic, educational etc. The issue of Kalaram temple entry is an appeal to the Hindu mind. Whether the same Hindus are willing to grant our humanitarian rights will be the question raised from this temple entry *Satyagraha*. Whether the Hindu mind is willing to accept us as human beings, this is the question to be tested through this *Satyagraha*. We wish to know whether those very Hindus would give us the status of man or not. This *Satyagraha* is one of the efforts for bringing about a change of heart among the high caste Hindus. Hence the success of this effort depends on the Hindu mind-set.

Our real problem is not going to be solved by the entry into the Ram temple. It will not bring about any radical change in our life. But this is a test to judge the high caste Hindu mind. Whether the Hindu mind is willing to accept the elevated aspirations of the new era that “man must be treated as man; he must be given humanitarian rights; human dignity should be established” is going to be tested. In order to achieve this goal, we have launched this *Satyagraha*. The main question

is whether the high caste Hindus are going to consider these aspects and act accordingly.

We know that in this temple resides God made of stone. By having a mere glance at him or by worshipping him, our problem will not be solved completely. Millions of people might have visited this temple and have had a glance at the god uptill now. But who would say that their basic problem was solved by this Act? We know this. But our *Satyagraha* today is an effort to bring about a change of heart among the Hindus. With this principled position we are launching this *Satyagraha*." At noon the conference adjourned and again met at half past one.¹¹

Procession of *Satyagrahis* at Nasik :

Mr.R.G.Gordon, the Collector of Nasik informed to Mr. J. Ghoghat that on March 2, 1930 about 8,000 *Mahars* gathered at the *Maharwada* of Nasik.. They not only came from the villages of Nasik District but also from those of other districts such as Ratnagiri. *Chambhars* and *Matangs* also participated in it though the *Mahars* were in majority.¹²

At 3.00 in the afternoon, the congregation divided itself into batches of four extending itself over a mile-long procession. It was the biggest procession in the history of Nasik. At the head played a band after the military style redolent of the association of many of the depressed class members with military life. Then followed a batch of scouts. Behind them walked about 500 women *Satyagrahis* showing a revolutionary change in their outlook; and they were followed by a multitude of processionists enthused with an exalted spirit, but walking with a full sense of discipline, order and determination. As soon as the procession came upto the eastern gate of the temple, the District

Magistrate, the Police superintendent and the City Magistrate moved towards the gate of the temple. As all the gates of the temple were closed, the processionists proceeded to the *Godawari Ghat*. There the procession transformed itself into a meeting. At 11 O'clock that night the leaders again discussed the issue in all its aspects and decided to launch a non-violent struggle before the gates of the temple.¹³

March 3, 1930 :

This historical struggle thus commenced on the morning of March 3, 1930. The first batch of 125 men and 25 women was posted at the four gates of the temple and over 8,000 enlisted *Satyagrahis* were awaiting their turn.¹⁴ *Satyagrahis* were posted at each gate of the temple as given below :

At the North gate 41 *Satyagrahis* squatted under the leadership of Patipavanas.

At the East gate 36 *Satyagrahis* joined under the leadership of Kachar Mathuji Salave.

At the South gate 37 *Satyagrahis* participated under the leadership of P. N. Rajbhoj.

At the West gate 27 *Satyagrahis* took part under the leadership of Shankardas Narayan.¹⁵

But the gates of the temple were closed and barricaded. While the *Satyagrahis* squatted at the entrance, chanting hymns and singing *Bhajans*, crowds of untouchables numbering over 3,000 gathered in their vicinity; but the police were on the alert and kept them on the move. A strong force of armed police was posted at each gate. Two First Class Magistrates were on duty at the place since early morning to

meet any emergency. Mr. Reynolds, the Police Superintendent, had shifted his office to a tent pitched right in front of the temple.¹⁶

On 3 March, 1930 Mr. Sahastrabuddhe, Devarao Naik, D. V. Pradhan etc. and Balasaheb Kher, Swami Anand etc. Congress leaders also came to Nasik for the help and support of Dr. Ambedkar. Gandhi launched many *Satyagrahas*. But his struggle was against the foreigners. While Dr. Ambedkar launched a *Satyagraha* against his countrymen - (caste Hindus).¹⁷ This was the basic difference between the two kinds of *Satyagraha*.

5.4 Response Of The Orthodox :

The touchables, too, were precluded from entering the temple as the gates remained closed, and their leaders were deliberating behind closed doors to find a way out of the impasse. A difficult situation would have developed had the gates been opened to the caste Hindus. At night, a public meeting of the citizens of Nasik was held under the Presidentship of Dr. Kurtakoti, the Shankaracharya, but it ended in pandemonium due to the predominance of the orthodox people. The *Sanatanis* by now had got panicky and rowdy. They pelted the meeting with stones and shoes.¹⁸ The Shankaracharya Dr. Lingesh Mahabagwat Kurtakoti, had to concede that the orthodox priests would not permit the untouchables to enter the temple even if Rama himself were to tell them to do so.¹⁹

On March 6, 1930, an aged Brahmin was moved by seeing the *Satyagrahis* sitting at the gates that he emptied the contents of his purse in the hands of a *Mahar* volunteer, exclaiming that "such devotion would melt the stonewalls of the temple but not the hearts of the orthodox Hindus."²⁰

5.5 Developments After a Week :

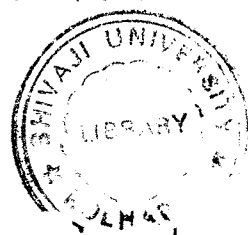
Bhaurao Gaikwad informed Dr. Ambedkar by letter in 2nd week of *Satyagraha* that the Collector and Police were openly supporting the Sanatanis. Then Dr. Ambedkar sent a telegram to the Governor stating that, 'Governor, Bombay, Rumoured Government action against depressed classes *Satyagrahis* at Nasik on ground temple private property. Submit temple not such. Receives grant meant for Hindus and declared public by Government. Rumoured action unwarranted. Should *Satyagraha* continue, Government should be ready for supporting struggle for justice - Dr. Ambedkar M.L.C.' But on March 16, 1930 the Governor informed Dr. Ambedkar that he denied it. Then Gaikwad requested the Governor to grant him an interview, because it would throw light on injustice done by the Police and the Collector to the untouchables. But Governor answered "I must decline to see you in this matter. I quite agree with D.S.P. No fresh *Satyagraha* must be started. Those taking part will be removed.

Sd/ R. C. Gorden

16-3-1930"²¹

6. CHANGED NATURE OF SATYAGRAHA

The *Satyagraha* campaign took a new turn when the private entrance to the house of the *Pujari* of the temple was freely used by the caste Hindus as a public passage for entering the temple. This left the untouchables with no other alternative but to prevent the general public from using the private entrance. The District Collector supported the orthodox priests and refused to meet the delegation of the Untouchables. In his view, any attempt to prevent people from entering the temple through the *Pujari's* house on the invitation of the *Pujari* was really a cognisable offence of wonderful restraint.²² To overcome this situation



Dr. Ambedkar wrote a letter to His Excellency the Governor of Bombay on 24th March, 1930.

“BHIMRAO R. AMBEDKAR
M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc.
Bar-at-Law,
Member, Legislative Council,
Bombay.

Damodar Hall, Parel,
Bombay - 12.
24th March, 1930

May it please your Excellency,

I am extremely obliged to Your Excellency for the letter of the 13th of March, 1930 in reply to my telegram giving an assurance that Government proposed to act impartially in the dispute between the touchables and the untouchables, which is centered in the *Satyagraha* at the Kala Ram Temple at Nasik. I have honour to bring to Your Excellency's notice recent development in the situation which seems to be fought with the greatest danger. On the day on which the *Satyagraha* was started, we purposely omitted to blockade the entrance to the house of the *Pujari* of the temple assuming that it would not be used by the public for the purpose of going into the temple and obtain *Dev Darshan*. But of late this entrance has become a public passage and the public in Nasik is using it to go into the temple. If this is allowed, it will entirely frustrate the principal object of the *Satyagraha*. To prevent this, the District Superintendent of Police and the District Magistrate were approached by the *Satyagraha* Committee to discuss the question and to communicate to them the intention of the *Satyagraha* Committee to blockade that private entrance to the general public and permit only the members of family of the *Pujari*. The District Magistrate, however, refused to see the members of *Satyagraha* Committee and turned them away with a chit stating that he will remove those who will start *Satyagraha* at the door of the *Pujari*. It is not for me to say whether

such a conduct on the part of a District Officer is wise. What I wish to point out to Your Excellency is that if the attitude of the Collector is to prevail, it will immediately provoke a conflict between the Government and the Depressed Classes. Our real contest is with the touchable Hindus and I have been avoiding every circumstance which would leave the touchable Hindus out and make the *Satyagraha* a matter between Government and the depressed classes. Indeed, this could have been done on the first day by our refusal to make *Satyagrahis* stand outside the barricades and insist on forcing through the Police guards for sealing them next to the temple gates. This we did not do simply because we did not wish to make it a fight between ourselves and the Government. But it would be inevitable if the Government to depart from its original intention of remaining impartial by permitting the *Pujari* to permit to use his private entrance as a public passage and thereby be a part to the frustration of our object. Under no circumstances can we permit this new stunt of the *Pujari* and tolerate this rendering our *Satyagraha* futile even if it brought us into conflict with Government. I am writing this to inform your Excellency of the situation as it is developing and to give a chance for the reconsideration of the attitude of the District Magistrate before of the *Satyagraha* Committee addressed to me and also a copy of the chit sent to them by the District Magistrate with which he turned them away when they called upon him.

I have seen the place myself last Saturday and I am quite convinced that the fear expressed and the danger to the *Satyagraha* which is apprehended are real.

I beg to remain,
Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant,
(Sd) B. R. Ambedkar."²³

After that Dr. Ambedkar also advised Bhaurao Gaikwad by sending a letter on March 28, 1930. It stated, "My view is not to face a conflict with the Government if it can be avoided."²⁵

7. THE CHARIOT PROCESSION - 9TH APRIL, 1930

The *Satyagraha* struggle continued for about a month. April 9, it was the day of the chariot procession of the image of Rama. A compromise was patched up between the caste Hindus and the Untouchables. It was decided that strong men from both sides should draw the chariot. Thousands of people assembled at noon near the main gate of the temple to see the sight. Dr. Ambedkar, with his choice gymnasts, stood near the gate. But before they could touch the chariot, they were engaged in broils by the riotous element of the caste Hindus and the caste Hindus ran away with the chariot, as secretly planned, through a street, narrow, thorny and inconvenient on either side and the mouth of which was guarded by armed police. A daring *Bhandari* youth by name Kadrekar broke the cordon of the armed police who were awaiting orders to fire, and in a movement crowds of untouchables pursued the chariot amidst showers of stones and captured it. Dangerously wounded, Kadrekar fell down in a pool of blood. Dr. Ambedkar was protected by his men and as the umbrellas that protected his person were shattered, he too, received minor injuries. There was free fighting between groups of untouchables and caste Hindus all over the city.²⁵

After the experience of chariot procession, Dr. Ambedkar wrote a second letter to his Excellency the Governor of Bombay on 11th April, 1930.



"BHIMRAO RAMAJI AMBEDKAR
M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc.
Bar-at-Law,
Member, Legislative Council,
Bombay.

Damodar Hall, Parel,
Bombay - 12.
11th April, 1930

To,

His Excellency the Rt. Honourable Sir,
Frederick Sykes, P.C., G.C.I.E.,
G.B.E., K.C.B., C.M.G.,
Governor of Bombay,
Bombay.

May it please Your Excellency,

The Government of Bombay must have received a report from the District Magistrate of Nasik on the riot that took place there between the touchables and the untouchables on the 9th instant. I feel it necessary to submit to Your Excellency my reversion of the riot.

Origin of the riot : According to the practice of the Kala Ram temple at Nasik, the *Rath* (Carriage of the God Ram) was to be taken out in the procession through the city. I was asked by Inspector Karnik (one of the Police Officers on duty at the Kala Ram temple) what attitude I proposed to adopt in connection with the *Rath* procession. I told him that if equal treatment was accorded to untouchables I had no objection to the *Rath* being taken out and I also specified the nature of the equality of treatment. I had stipulated for stating that I would insist upon two things :

1) That the untouchables will participate in dragging the *Rath* alongwith the touchables, and 2) the untouchables will offer *Puja* to the idol in the *Rath*. Mr. Karnik then left and turned with the District Magistrate. The District Magistrate told me that my conditions were accepted by the touchable Hindus and that the touchables would bring

the *Rath* to the main door of the temple and after they had dragged it for 10 feet from the gate the untouchables could join and together with the touchables join carrying by holding the rope fastened to the *Rath*, and questioned me whether I had my objection to the *Rath* procession, to which I replied 'I had none', and in order to help the cause of peace I went out of my way to sort out about 50 out of a 5,000 untouchables and told them that they alone want to take part in the dragging of the *Rath*. Accordingly the *Rath* was brought out of the temple gate by the touchables. But the touchables who wanted to deceive both the untouchables and the Police Officers did two things - 1) the touchables held the rope so close to one another that no room was left for the untouchables to join in, and 2) the touchables instead of stopping the *Rath* at the temple gate, as previously agreed to, began to run away with it so as to give no chance to untouchables to catch the rope and participate in carrying the *Rath*. This menace to violate the most important condition in the agreement naturally enraged the feelings of the untouchables. But the immediate cause of the fight was the action of the Police sepoy a great majority of whom were caste Hindus, they at once started to assault those untouchables who were struggling to hold a bit of the rope. The fight was started by the caste Hindu Police who openly took the side of the touchable Hindus.

The batch of 50 untouchables was thus subjected to an assault from two sides. The touchable Hindus who had held the rope were brushing them away and preventing them from taking a position near the rope and when the untouchables were struggling to take a position the caste Hindu Police were charging with their batons and butt-ends of their rifles.

Seeing their men assaulted in this way the rest of the untouchables followed the *Rath* with which the touchables were running away at a terrific speed. Seeing that the crowd of the untouchables pursuing the *Rath* had come very near it, the touchables abandoned *Rath* on the road and went to adjoining field and began to throw a volley of stones on the crowd of untouchables who were standing on the road.

The road was lined on one side by barbed wire and on the other side by cactus, and consequently the untouchables could not escape from the volley of stones as a result of which many of them were injured. The peaceful conduct of the untouchables is evidenced from the fact that there is not a single casualty reported from among the touchable Hindus.

Extent of the Mischief Done : The crowd of the touchable Hindus when they were dispersed from the field wherefrom they were throwing stones went to the camp of the *Satyagraha* Committee, pulled down the tent, smashed bicycles of volunteers, stoned the motor belonging to one of the members of the Committee and stoned the women who were in charge of the kitchen and caused injuries to small children straying about.

From there it went to the bank of the river where they found some untouchable men, women and children who could not leave the bank of the river and join the main body of the untouchables at the temple gate on account of the fact there was no one to take charge of their bullocks and carts, they were brutally assaulted, their belongings were burnt and some were thrown into water.

According to the information given to me this attack resulted in the death of one man. Very little help was given to these unfortunate Untouchables on the bank of river. The main body of the untouchables

could not go to their rescue because they were stopped from moving from their place and the police cordon was placed around them and as most of the Police force was engaged in keeping custody of the main body of the untouchables at the gate, very few were left to give aid to those untouchables who became victims to the attack on the bank.

Attitude of the Police : I must, however, guard myself against creating the impression that I have any complaint to make against the Police officers. On the contrary, I have not the slightest hesitation to say that they have done their duty. I wish particularly to mention the names of Inspectors- Shelke, Nagarkar and Karaka for their splendid work in the most trying circumstances arising out of the *Satyagraha*.

My complaint is against the sepoys who took sides and who exhibited their caste prejudice by assaulting respectable untouchables in a most wanton fashion. Their names and numbers will be submitted to their superiors and I trust Your Excellency will direct disciplinary action against them.

Policy of District Magistrate : I regret to say that I was not satisfied with the policy of the District Magistrate in connection with the *Satyagraha* of the untouchables. In my last letter I had informed Your Excellency how a private door of the house of the *Pujari* was being used by the public as an entrance to the temple and how our *Satyagraha* was being frustrated thereby.

The District Magistrate did not pay any regard to our contention and on the *Ramnavami* by not only allowed the public to use the private entrance of the *Pujari* in complete disregard of our contention but prohibited our *Satyagrahis* to sit as usual at the adjacent public way the barricade from which was removed to provide exit to the touchable

Hindus entering by the private door. As a result 10 untouchables out of 300 who offered *Satyagraha* were arrested on the *Ramnavami Day*.

After the riot of the 9th, the District Magistrate proposed to me that I must stop the *Satyagraha* or else he will withdraw the Police. His proposal was considered by the *Satyagraha* Committee and was rejected and I think rightly. Nothing could be a greater disaster to movement of the untouchables than the stopping of the *Satyagraha* at this juncture. The touchable Hindus would gain the impression that any slight use of the force is sufficient to crush the movement of the Untouchables.

Under the circumstances I or *Satyagraha* Committee can allow such an impression to go round. Only on this, if on no other account, we must continue our *Satyagraha*. Regarding the withdrawal of the Police, I wish the Government of Bombay to realise fully the implications thereof.

To my mind it means that the Government is not willing to use the power it has under its command to help people who are struggling for their rights to win them. such a power is good for nobody and the Depressed Classes may then be justified in joining hands with those who are speaking for a change. I hope that the Government of Bombay will give proper directions to the District Magistrate on this point.

I learn from the 'Times of India' of today's date that the District Magistrate has promulgated an order under Section 144 Criminal Procedure Code and prohibited people coming near the Kalaram Temple. I do not know if this order contemplates the prevention of our *Satyagrahis* from sitting at the temple doors as they have been doing heretofore.

I most respectfully submit to Your Excellency that there is a chance (I use this word advisedly as I do not know the opinion of the *Satyagraha* Committee) of this order being respected only if the District Magistrate gives an assurance that the temple doors will remain closed during the period stated in his order and that the private door of the Priest will not remain open to the public.

As I have made clear in my last letter, the fight is between touchables and the untouchables and I have no desire to bring the latter into the conflict with the Government.

I am anxious to have an interview with your Excellency to discuss the situation personally and if Your Excellency is inclined to grant one I am available till 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Awaiting the favour of Your Excellency's early reply.

I remain,

Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant,

Sd/- B. R. Ambedkar."²⁶

8. IMPACT OF SATYAGRAHA ON THE UNTOUCHABLES

This *Satyagraha* provoked considerable ill-feeling in the minds of the orthodox Hindus throughout the District. As a result of this tension children of the Untouchables were thrown out of schools, roads were closed to them and necessities of life were denied to them in the market because they claimed equal rights with all other Hindus. Untouchables in several villages were maltreated. Despite these sufferings, the struggle at Nasik was carried on. Attempts were being made to persuade both the parties to reach a compromise. Dr. Moonje and Dr. Kurtakoti the Shankaracharya, were trying to reach a settlement.

But so firm was the resolve of the Depressed classes that orthodox Hindus had to keep the famous temple closed for a whole year and the agitation continued.²⁷

9. CLASHES BETWEEN TOUCHABLES AND UNTOUCHABLES

On March 15, 1931; 5,000 untouchables took out a mammoth procession in Nasik and marched to the banks of the river Godavari. There was a serious clash between them and the caste Hindus, who again threw stones causing injuries to some *Satyagrahis* and a few caste Hindus. Caste Hindus continued to attack the untouchables in other places such as Nasik road and Mukhed. A stalemate was soon reached and the gates of the temple continued to remain closed while the District Magistrate followed the policy of extending from time to time the period of the order, issued under Section 144, forbidding the assembly of more than five persons in the vicinity of the temple.²⁸

Meantime, Dr. Ambedkar went abroad (London). And he continued to inspire and guide the *Satyagrahis* through his letters. On November 2, 1931, he gave blessings to Nasik *Satyagraha* by sending a message as given below :

“I regret very much not to have been able to write to you in reply to the letter you sent me some time ago containing the interview you had with the Commissioner. I have been so much taken up with the question of minorities which as you know has become much more difficult owing to the attitude of Mr. Gandhi that I have had no minute to spare :

As anticipated by you I did get a letter from the Commissioner C.D. asking me to advise you people to stop the Nasik *Satyagraha*. I have not replied to him but I am going to do so by this mail. I am going to tell him that we cannot stop. So you may tell our people to go on.

We must not take our orders from the Government just as we must not take them from the orthodox Hindus.

We have trusted the Government long enough to remove "Untouchability". But it has not lifted its finger to do anything in the matter and it has no right to ask us to stop. We must take the burden on our shoulders and do what we can to free ourselves from this course at any cost. If the Government does not help us, it must not at least hamper our just cause. It is no use telling us that we must not create ill-feeling between different classes and communities. This appeal by Government should be addressed to all the communities and not to us alone. It should specially be addressed to those communities who are in the wrong and who are sinning in the matter.

"My people don't need me" - You may publish a translation of this in handbills and broadcast them among our people. I have been reading the telegrams regarding the struggle at Mukhed between our people and the castemen. I am glad to find that our people are prepared at all costs to carry on the fight to a success. I congratulate them on their splendid resolve. I see that you are starting *Satyagraha* on the 5th November. I hope you have made the best preparation. I am sorry. I am not there to help you. But I know that our people are now alive to their problem and that they do not need me every time."²⁹

However, in India, Swami Anand, the Secretary of the Anti-Untouchability sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress, refused to help the Nasik *Satyagraha* further. Expressing his moral support, he declared in November 1931 that the matchless weapon of mass *Satyagraha* should be used only for the attainment of Indian political independence and not for promoting the cause of temple entry for the *Satyagrahis*.³⁰

When the temple-entry *Satyagraha* was going on some persons tried to make ban on temple-entry legal with the help of Government. In this context the temple entry Bills of Dr. Subbaroyan and Mr. Ranga Iyer has much importance.

Ramanavami Day (1932) : On April 15, 1932 the *Satyagraha* was resumed and a number of untouchable women were involved in a scuffle with the volunteers posted by the orthodox priests. Thirty four *Satyagrahis* including B.K.Gaikwad, Amritrao Rankhambe and Savalaram Dani were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.³¹

10. DR. AMBEDKAR ON 'TEMPLE ENTRY BILL' (14 FEBRUARY, 1933)

After the meeting with M. K. Gandhi at Yeravada Prison on February 4, 1933, Dr. Ambedkar issued a statement in which he expressed his views about the Temple Entry Bill on 14th February, 1933. The statement was as given below :

“To the Temple Entry Bill of Mr. Ranga Iyer as now drafted, the Depressed Classes cannot possibly give their support. The principle of the Bill is that if a majority of Municipal and Local Board voters in the vicinity of any particular temple on a referendum decide by a majority that the Depressed classes shall be allowed to enter the temple, the Trustees or the Manager of that temple shall give effect to that decision. The principle is an ordinary principle of majority rule, and there is nothing radical or revolutionary about the Bill, and if the *Santanists* were a wise lot, they would accept it without demur.

The reasons why the Depressed Classes cannot support a Bill based upon this principle are two :

1. One reason is that the Bill cannot hasten the day of temple entry for the Depressed Classes any nearer than would otherwise be the case.

It is true that under the Bill, the minority will not have the right to obtain an injunction against the Trustee, or the Manager who throws open the temple to the Depressed classes in accordance with the decision of the majority. But before one can draw any satisfaction from this clause and congratulate the author of the Bill, one must first of all feel assured that when the question is put to the vote there will be a majority in favour of temple entry. If one is not suffering from illusions of any kind one must accept that the hope of a majority voting in favour of Temple Entry will be very rarely realised, if at all. Without doubt, the majority is definitely opposed to-day- a fact which is conceded by the author of the Bill himself in his correspondence with the Shankaracharya.

What is there in the situation as created after the passing of the Bill, which can lead one to hope that the majority will act differently? I find nothing. I shall, no doubt, be reminded of the results of the referendum with regard to the Guruvayur Temple. But I refuse to accept a referendum so overweighted as it was by the life of Gandhi as the normal result. In any such calculations, the life of the Gandhi must necessarily be deducted.

2) Secondly, the Bill does not regard untouchability in temples as a sinful custom. It regards untouchability merely as a Social Bill not necessarily worse than social evils of other sorts. For, it does not declare Untouchability as such to be illegal. Its binding force is taken away, only if a majority decides to do so. Sin and immorality cannot become tolerable because a majority is addicted to them or because the majority chooses to practise them. If untouchability is a sinful and an immoral custom, then in the view of the Depressed classes it must be destroyed without any hesitation even if it was acceptable to the

majority. This is the way in which all customs are dealt with by Courts of Law, if they find them to be immoral and against public policy.”³²

Further he expressed the view that, the Depressed classes say that they will not spend their resources on such an empty things as Temple Entry. The temples of Hindus carry boards today, which say, “All Hindus and all animals including dogs are admitted, only untouchables not admitted.” Then why should an untouchable beg for admission in a place from which he has been excluded by the arrogance of the Hindus? This is the reason of the Depressed class man who is interested in his material welfare. He is prepared to say to the Hindus, “to open or not to open your temples is a question for you to consider and not for me to agitate. If you think, it is bad manners not to respect the sacredness of human personality, open your temples and be a gentleman. If you rather be a Hindu than be gentleman, then shut the doors and damn yourself for I don’t care to come.” Temple entry as a final goal, the Depressed classes can never support. Indeed, they will not only reject it, but they would then regard themselves as rejected by Hindu society and free to find their own destiny elsewhere.³³

He stated that, if the Hindu religion is to be their religion, then it must become a religion of social equality. The mere amendment of Hindu Religious Code by the mere inclusion in it of a provision to permit temple entry for all, cannot make it a religion of equality of social status. If the Hindu religion is to be a religion of social equality then an amendment of its Code to provide temple entry is not enough. What is required is to purge it of the doctrine of *Chaturvarna*. That is the root cause of all inequality and also the parent of the caste system and untouchability, which are merely forms of inequality. Unless it is done not only will the Depressed classes reject Temple Entry, they will

also reject the Hindu faith. The Depressed classes can say that they are Hindus only when the theory of *Chaturvarna* and caste system is abandoned and expunged from the Hindu *Shashtra*.³⁴

11. SUSPENSION OF NASIK SATYAGRAHA (1934)

Bhaurao Gaikwad had written a letter to Dr. Ambedkar asking for his guidance about the restart of the Nasik *Satyagraha*. The letter was dated 23rd February, 1934. To reply that letter Dr. Ambedkar sent a letter to him on March 3, 1934 advising the suspension of *Satyagraha*. It is as given below :

“BHIMRAO R. AMBEDKAR,
M. A., Ph.D., D.Sc.
Barrister at Law, J.P.M.L.C.

Rajgriha Colony,
Dadar, Bombay -14.
3-3-1934

My dear Bhaurao,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 23rd February. It is very kind of you to have asked me for my views on the propriety of the Depressed classes launching upon and *Satyagraha* at the Kalaram Temple in Nasik on the coming *Ram Navami* Day. I have no position in saying that such a move would be quite uncalled for and should not merely be suspended but should be stopped altogether. This may appear strange and surprising coming as it does from one who was the author of the *Satyagraha*. But I am afraid to declare this change of front. I did not launch the temple entry movement because I wanted the Depressed classes to become worshippers of idols which they were prevented from worshipping or because I believed that temple entry would make them equal members in and an integral part of the Hindu society. So far as this aspect of the case is concerned, I would advise the Depressed classes to insist upon a complete overhauling of Hindu society and Hindu theology before they consent to become an integral part of Hindu

society. I started temple-entry *Satyagraha* only because I felt that was the best way of energising the Depressed classes and making them conscious of their position. As I believe I have achieved that purpose. I have no more use for temple entry. I want the Depressed classes to concentrate their energy and resources on politics and education and I hope that they will realise the importance of both.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- B. R. Ambedkar³⁵

After getting the above message, Nasik *Satyagraha* which was called off. It is essential to study as to why it was finally given up.

On November 19, 1934, before a mammoth gathering of over 15,000 members of the Depressed classes who had assembled at Vinchur on the occasion of the 11th day death ceremonies of the late Mr. Dhondiba Runkhambe of Vinchur. Dr. Ambedkar made an important political pronouncement. He said he had been repeatedly asked why the Kala Ram Temple Entry Movement had been suspended for the last two years. The only reason, he explained was that such a move was no longer needed. Instead he strongly advised the Depressed classes to concentrate their energy and resources on politics. Since in the coming reforms they would be called upon to play an important part in moulding their own political future and thus, their own standard. Concluding, he paid warm tributes to the Nasik Temple Entry *Satyagrahis* who, he said, had not only awakened their brethren and made them realise their true position in Hindu society but had also aroused deep sympathy towards the Depressed classes throughout the civilised world. He also stressed the necessity of educating their children.³⁶

This *Satyagraha* Movement went on for full six years when it was brought to a close in 1935 at a conference held in Yeola in Nasik

District in which the Untouchables as a result of the adamant attitude of the Hindus in refusing to give them equal social rights resolved to go out of the Hindu fold. This *Satyagraha* movement was no doubt independent of the congress. It was organised by the untouchables, led by the untouchables and financed by the untouchables. Yet the untouchables were not without hope of getting the moral support of Mr. Gandhi. Indeed, they had very good ground for getting it. For the weapon of *Satyagraha* - the essence of which is to melt the heart of the opponent by suffering- was the weapon which was forged by Mr. Gandhi, and who had led the Congress to practice it against the British Government for winning *Swaraj*. Naturally the untouchables expected full support from Mr. Gandhi to their *Satyagraha* against the Hindus the object of which was to establish their right to take water from public wells and to enter public Hindu temples. Mr. Gandhi however did not give his support to the *Satyagraha*. Not only did he not give his support, he condemned it in strong terms.”³⁷

Gains of Nasik *Satyagraha* :

Dr. Ambedkar had accepted leadership of Nasik *Satyagraha* only to honour the request and appreciate courage and a lot of enthusiasm on the part of untouchables who wanted to embark on it. He had helped the *Satyagrahis* initially. After some time he inspired and guided them through his letters sent from foreign country. During 1929-1934 they continued the *Satyagraha* with full hopes of getting entry in the temple. But they were not only rejected from entering in the temple but also from bathing in the *Ram Kunda*.

In the meantime some Hindu reformers had tried to legalize temple entry of the untouchables but their attempts proved futile. This *Satyagraha* neither succeed in changing the minds of caste Hindus nor

the Government. However, the untouchables stood confidently against caste Hindus till the beginning of the year 1934. When Dr. Ambedkar realised that there was no hope of changing the caste Hindus attitude, the policy of Government in favour of *Satyagraha*, he sent a message of suspending the *Satyagraha* to Bhaurao Gaikwad on 3 March, 1934. Then it was stopped and never launched by again.

Dr. Ambedkar wanted to awaken the untouchables about their fundamental rights and to learn to fight for rights. Besides he did not want to continue it for a long time. He had made efforts for about 5-6 years to seek entry in the Kala Ram Temple. But his efforts were fruitless. Hence, he declared in the conference of Yeola, held on 13 October, 1935 that 'I will not die in Hindu religion though I am born as a Hindu.' It reflects the feelings of the untouchables about Hindu religion. From the declaration Dr. Ambedkar, made it clear that the Nasik *Satyagraha* was unsuccessful and the untouchables did not get the right to enter in the Kala Ram Temple.

B) VITTHAL TEMPLE ENTRY, PANDHARPUR

Like Kalaram temple entry *Satyagraha* of Nasik, the Vitthal Temple entry *Satyagraha* launched at Pandharpur led by Pandurang Sadashiv Sane (1899-1950) alias Sane Guruji has much importance. Because it was after this *Satyagraha*, that the government legally opened all the Hindu temples in Bombay province to the untouchables. Besides, 'Sane Guruji's fast' was the prominent feature of that *Satyagraha*. Hence the Vitthal temple entry *Satyagraha* at Pandharpur has been discussed in detail in the following pages. It is essential to know about the city of Pandharpur and the Vitthal temple where the *Satyagraha* took place.



1) PANDHARPUR

Pandharpur is the headquarters and a town of the taluka of that name in Solapur district. It is a Municipal town and is situated at a distance of about 40 miles to the west of the Solapur city. The town is on the right bank of river Bhima, tributary of river Krishna. The city is referred to in the old texts and papers by various names, such as, *Pandhari, Pandurangpur, Pandharipur, Phaganipur, Poundarik Kshetra, Pandurange, Pandurang Palli*. It is stated that Pandharpur was founded by the four knights of *Koli* caste named Abhangrao, Aghatrao, Nehetrao and Parchandrao sent by the ruler *Shalivahan* in 83 A.D. after removing the trees of the *jungles* known as *Dindeervan*.³⁸

Let us discuss about the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur.

2) VITTHAL TEMPLE - PANDHARPUR

There are number of temples in the town. The huge structure of Shri Vithoba temple is, however, the main attraction of the place.³⁹ Vitthal temple is built on the top of a small hillock. The temple of Vitthal is not remarkable by any magnificent appearance. It is surrounded by neighbouring houses. The walls of the temple are visible only when one has reached their foot. There is nothing in that temple which is magnificent. The temples of *Hoysalas* or *Vijayanagar* are much more impressive than the temple of Pandharpur. The oldest part of the temple is the image itself of Vitthal.⁴⁰

It is believed that the temple has been in existence for a long time. It is said that the temple might have been constructed during 1117 to 1137 A.D. by the ruler Vishnu Vardhan of *Hoysala* dynasty who discarded his original Jain faith and followed the '*Vaishnava*' sect at the request of a devotee Shri Pundarik. An inscription is found which

records the grant of the village named *Hojiya Garanj* in present Mysore state to the '*Devasthan*'. The inscription is dated 1236 A.D. Many parts of the temple are constructed during the 16th to the 18th centuries.⁴¹

The Vitthal temple is situated about 500 yards from the temple of Pundlika and is just in the centre of the '*Pandhari-Kshetra*' or the holy spot of *Pandhari*. The temple enclosure has eight gates.⁴²

In this ancient and popular temple of Shri Vitthal untouchables had no right to enter till the 20th century. Hence Sane Guruji offered a *Satyagraha* there.

3) TEMPLE ENTRY AGITATION AT PADHARPUR (1946-1947) :

This deity was described by the people as a *Samacharan Vitthal*. But there was no equality of *Darshan* to all the people. Untouchables had no right to enter in the temple and to take a *darshan* of Vitthal. Hence Saint Bhanudas said,

*"Ka Re Lavita Kavade
Savalayachya Raulachi?
Tyachya Charanichi Dhul
Maj Lau Dya Re Bhali
Pandurangachya Bhetisathi!"*⁴³

Yet, Badves (the priests of the Vitthal temple) did not allow entry in the temple to the untouchables. They were in sole charge of the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur. The untouchables were not allowed to enter in the nave legally as well as by custom and tradition. Sane Guruji realised this discrimination and he felt very bad about it. He stated that 'the freedom of India would become useless if there would be no equality in the society'. Besides Acharya Vinobaji asked a question in the meeting, as "In 1932, Gandhi dedicated himself for the work of removal of untouchability. If he asked you 'which efforts were done by you for the betterment of the untouchables? Then what will you do?

Have you any answer to his question?" Such thoughts of Acharya Vinobaji provoked Sane Guruji to think over the question of untouchables. So he consulted Acharya Vinobaji many times on this issue through letters.⁴⁴

4) SANE GURUJI'S DECLARATION OF FAST

Though, after 1933, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar did not agitate for temple-entry, the issue was raised again in November 1946 by Pandurang Sadashiv Sane, a well known Marathi writer and a freedom fighter. He was popularly known as Sane Guruji. After his release from the Nasik jail on January 15, 1945, he decided to concentrate more on the much neglected work of the eradication of Untouchability. He assumed responsibility for managing a boarding house for *Harijan* students. When he consulted Acharya Vinoba Bhave on the issue of using fast as a weapon in the struggle against untouchability, the latter conceded the possibility of a fast becoming justifiable in special circumstances. Sitarambhau Chawdhari, one of Sane Guruji's friend went to Pandharpur and tried to persuade the Badves, the priests of the temple of Vithoba, to throw open the temple to the untouchables. Sitarambhau sought the help of Sane Guruji in his efforts. Sane Guruji, who was at Umbargaon, responded by announcing his plan to undertake a fast unto death on this issue⁴⁵ in November, 1946. Followers of Sane Guruji were shocked to hear the news. And tried to dissuade him from the indefinite fast.

After reading the news of Sane Guruji's plan of undertaking a fast unto death, Senapati Bapat, Achyutrao Patwardhan, S. M. Joshi, Madhu Limaye and Shirubhau Limaye etc. went to Umbargaon to visit him on November 5, 1946. They did not agree with the decision of his fast unto death though they supported him. Because they thought that the

decision was taken by him hurriedly. First of all they wanted to visit all villages in Maharashtra and to create favourable atmosphere for temple entry of the untouchables. But Sane Guruji rejected that proposal. Then Bapat requested to him by saying, 'If these efforts failed then we will be always ready for undertaking the fast unto death with you.' Eventually, he considered their request and accepted their proposal. In such a way Sane Guruji's followers succeed in changing his mind. And he decided to suspend his fast for six months i.e. till *Vaishakh Shudha Ekadashi*. Senapati Bapat, Achyutarao Patwardhan, S. M. Joshi, Madhu Limaye and Shirubhau Limaye issued a statement and spread that news. They stated that traditionally the people behave thoughtlessly. It resulted in creating a heavy cover of illiteracy and stupidity on the real devotion of the people. In the period of six months we would try to tear up that cover by our efforts. Hence there would be a possibility of getting permission to enter in the Vitthal temple with the untouchables.'⁴⁶ After such an action of Sane Guruji and his followers Badve become conscious about their religious power in the Vithoba temple and gave their reply as under.

At the same time a group of orthodox and puritan people used the policy of resistance to Sane Guruji while, another group of intelligentsia and reformers supported him. Kakasaheb Barve - a President of *Harijan Sevak Sangh* and Appasaheb Patwardhan heartily supported the work of Sane Guruji. Appasaheb Patwardhan said to people in his pamphlet, "Please, do not work with the expectation of the credit of solving this problem and also do not accept its success if it would be in your account.' However, not only Congressmen but also Badves did not give any importance to it. Sane Guruji had become a target of their criticism. They criticized him as 'he was an impatient and emotional person' and

‘his work was nothing but a stunt of the socialists.’⁴⁷ they further stated that he wanted to enhance his prestige by the plan of undertaking a fast at Pandharpur.’⁴⁸

Trustees of the Vitthal temple (Badves) announced that, “we shall be ready to open the Vitthal temple for the untouchables only then, if you would be successful in converting a majority of people in favour of temple entry of the untouchables by referendum. We would agree to the method or decision which would be taken by Dr.M.R. Jaykar.” Apparently this judgement of trustees was a symbol of wisdom. But in reality it was a part of their strategy. Sane Guruji had a doubt about it. Hence he opined, ‘When we asked the trustees to open the Vitthal temple for the untouchables, suddenly they realised importance of public opinion. But they do not need it at the time of spending money of that temple, which was collected by the trust. And today whose opinion do they need? Only of the people, who includes the *Varakari* sect or the people of all Hindustan? Vitthal temple had been in existence since before the establishment of *Varakari* sect. It was the oldest one. Aadya Shankaracharya had come there and made a hymn named ‘*Pandurangashtak*’ in that temple. And when *Bhakti* tradition emerged, *Varakari* sect was created, then they realised opinion of the public. Besides National Congress and Hindu *Mahasabha* had been in favour of temple-entry of the untouchables. Therefore, it was not proper to insist on the point of public opinion was it indeed needed?’⁴⁹

5. SANE GURUJI’S TOUR OF MAHARASHTRA

Accompanied by Senapati Bapat, Sane Guruji went on tour of Maharashtra. They addressed largely attended public meetings in various towns of Maharashtra. Nana Patil, the hero of the Quit India Movement in the Satara District and a powerful orator, joined them at

Pune where they addressed a big rally presided over by D. K. Karve. They reminded the audience that freedom did not mean change of masters-black instead of white. Without the abolition of untouchability and the establishment of social and economic equality, freedom was meaningless. V. N. alias Kakasaheb Barve, took the initiative and formed a *Harijan* Temple Entry Association at Pune on January 7, 1947.⁵⁰

Following important events took place during Sane Guruji's Maharashtra Tour.

5.1 Kulaba District :

On 10th January, 1947 Sane Guruji went on a tour of Kulaba District which is now known as Raigad district. He had Senapati Bapat and Kalapathak (a cultural troupe) named '*Maharashtra Shahir*' with him. It included Bapat, Leeladhar Hegde, Bhal Wayal, Bhalachandra Madgulkar, Raja Mangalvedhekar, Raghuanna Limaye, Kutub Vadgaonkar, Kaka Keni etc. Ram Telang was Sane Guruji's Secretary in his tour. Sane Guruji and Bapat gave a speech at various places. Sane Guruji used to define his goal as, "I decided to go on fast unto death for the untouchables at Pandharpur because it has been a heart of Maharashtra and it has been famous in Maharashtras as *Dakshina Kashi*. So I want to give to the untouchables their right to enter in this ancient and sacred temple of Vitthal. Saint Namadeva, Dnyandev etc. were influenced by the principles of equality of Islam. There is equality in the mosque to all people but in Hindu temples we see inequalities. It was realised by the saints of Maharashtra. To spread the real religion and knowledge among the poor and illiterate people they used to preach in Marathi. By these efforts they succeeded in destroying the

discrimination in desert. Hence it is our responsibility and duty to take forward one step and to give entry to the untouchables in this temple.⁵¹

At the end of his speech Sane Guruji used to request the people for their support by singing the following song :

“निराधार आम्ही तुझाचि आधार
अमृताचि धार तुझे नांव ॥
तुझा म्हणुनिया आलो तुझे दारी
मी तव भिकारी भीक घाली ॥
भीक घाली थोडी, थोडी तरी राया
पडतो मी पायां दया करी ॥”⁵²

Then the thousands of men, women, children and old persons gave their signatures and declared that they were always with him. Sane Guruji composed one song specially for that tour to change the minds of caste Hindus :

“च्या रे, च्या रे, च्या रे हरिजन घरांत च्या रे
घरांत च्या रे घरात च्या ॥”⁵³

It was a festival of *Sankranti* Sane Guruji held a meeting in Nagothane. A lot of people from the nearby villages were present there. When the meeting was over, one Harijan person went to Sane Guruji and gave him *tilgul*. Sane Guruji also fed *Tilgul* to that *Harijan* persons.⁵⁴ This incident shows that Sane Guruji broke all the discriminations.

5.2 Thane District :

Mokhada is a town in the Thane District. There was one Muslim woman of 105 years old. She was impressed by the work of Sane Guruji. Though, she was blind she gave 51 rupees as a donation to his work. On the next day Sane Guruji went to her home to visit her. She

was very happy and said to him, "*Beta Tera Kam Ho Jayega*". Then he entered in the temple with untouchables at Mokhada.⁵⁵

5.3 Kolhapur :

Sane Guruji entered in the temple with *Harijans* (untouchables) at the Gadhinglaj which is in the Kolhapur district. At that time one 84 years old *Harijan* person come near Sane Guruji and said, "I am 84 years old man. But it had not been possible for me to take *Darshan* of that deity. Today, it becomes possible for us due to your efforts." That old person got a satisfaction after taking the *Darshan* of that deity.⁵⁶

5.4 Baramati :

Sane Guruji had a very strange experience in Baramati. The temple of Shri Siddheshwara was very popular and famous among the people of Baramati. When Sane Guruji went to the Baramati, he saw that the temple of Siddheshwara was locked by the caste Hindus because they had a fear in their mind that 'Sane Guruji would enter that temple with the *Harijans*. God would be polluted.' In spite of it Sane Guruji had received information that, 'merchants of Baramati wished to give a pinnacle made up of gold to that temple.' After hearing it Sane Guruji became angry and expressed it before the people in the *Sabha* at night saying, "It is not a pinnacle of gold. It is a yellow stone which they would be going to keep on the head of the God.' He said it 'Yellow stone' because it was made up by merchants using black money.⁵⁷

The tour of Maharashtra which was launched by Sane Guruji and Bapat for the propaganda of their work continued for about five-months. In those five months they destroyed the evil thoughts which were traditionally borne in the minds of caste Hindus and they also preached them principles of new religion of equality. They showed the result of

their work to the Badves. They stated : we visited the villages all over Maharashtra and held meetings there. Total 5,04,000 people attended those meetings and they all were favourable for entry of the untouchables in the Vitthal temple.

Besides, Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee and Hindu *Mahasabha* were in favour of it.⁵⁸

Impact of Sane Guruji's Maharashtra Tour :

During the five month long tour of Maharashtra, Sane Guruji and Bapat succeeded in opening some temples to the *Harijans*. In some places, the *Harijans* could draw water from the same wells used by the caste Hindus. In April 1947, a meeting was held in Pune where Shri N. C. Kelkar expressed doubts about the honesty of the priests who declared that public opinion should be ascertained before throwing open the temple to the *Harijans*. Evidently, the priests at Pandharpur were resorting to dilatory tactics. At that time Congress Ministry headed by B. G. Kher was in power in the Bombay Province. A Bill to facilitate the entry of *Harijans* into temples was already moved by the Chief Minister and it was under consideration at a select committee level. The supporters of the Congress Ministry criticized Sane Guruji for his impatience and his threat to go on fast unto death.⁵⁹

6. ACHARYA VINOBAJI BHAVE AND SANE GURUJI

Acharya Vinoba Bhave tried to dissuade Sane Guruji from undertaking a fast unto death.⁶⁰ He sent a letter to Sane Guruji on 25th April, 1947, in which he stated, "Six months ago you decided to undertake a fast unto death. But today, the situation has totally changed. A majority of people are now in favour of temple entry of the untouchables and you have its entire credit. It is a result of your sincere

efforts that the Temple Entry Bill has been made possible. I think, if Government agreed to throw open the temples legally to the untouchables then it would not be needed to undertake fast unto death.” After four days again Acharya Vinoba Bhave sent his second letter on April 29, 1947. In that letter he again requested Sane Guruji to resign his decision of fast unto death. But Sane Guruji did not deviate from it.⁶¹

7. SANE GURUJI'S FAST

Sane Guruji initiated his fast on May 1, 1947 (*Vaishah Shuddha Ekadashi*). In the morning he addressed a huge *Sabha* (meeting) held at Pandharpur and requested the people to do away with untouchability. But some antagonist such as Welankar, Pandit Devnayakacharya, Anantrao Kshire and Vishwasrao Daware etc. were present there for the meeting. They not only tried to create obstacles in the *Sabha* but also force Sane Guruji to retreat from his fast. Bapat handled the situation and Sane Guruji initiated his fast in *Chari Dham Yatra Mandap* of Tanapure Maharaj. S. M. Joshi, Raosaheb Patawardhan, Kakasaheb Barve etc. had reached Pandharpur alongwith Sane Guruji to give him moral support. Narayan Shastri Marathe alias Swami Kevalanand Saraswati had also come to Pandharpur.⁶² Acharya P. K. Atre brought out a *Mandir Pravesh Visheshank* of his *Weekly-Navyug*⁶² in which he published a detailed account of the situation at Pandharpur when Sane Guruji's fast was going on. During his fast Sane Guruji got letters from his well-wishers. They requested him to cancel his fast because they had great affection and respect for Sane Guruji. But he was not pleased with those letters of sympathy. Rather he became angry when he read the letters in which people insisted on giving up his fast. He did not find any person who inspired him in his work.⁶⁴ So he felt very sad.

8. GANDHIJI AND SANE GURUJI

On 2nd May, 1947, the Badves conveyed incomplete information about Sane Guruji's fast to Gandhi. Gandhi after discussing the issue with Shri Kher and Shankarrao Deo sent a telegram to Sane Guruji and expressed his disapproval of the proposed fast. Sane Guruji felt very sad after getting a telegram of Mahatma Gandhi and suddenly on 3rd May, 1947 he sent him a reply. He stated that he would not like to retrace.⁶⁵

9. IMPACT OF THE FAST

As per his previous planning Sane Guruji undertook a fast unto death. But it affected his health. His weight was reduced. A majority of youth of Pandharpur got upset as they were worried about him. Hence they went in depression. Besides, Shri Kshir, an orthodox person, started a counter-fast in opposition to Sane Guruji. Hence, police force was deployed around the Vitthal temple as well as in the Pandharpur city. The situation at Pandharpur became very explosive. People of whole Maharashtra turned their attention towards it. Acharya Atre, Nana Patil, S. M. Joshi, Raosaheb Patawardhan etc. tried to change the attitude of *Sanatanis* through their speeches. People from the various parts of Maharashtra gathered at Pandharpur to extend support to Sane Guruji. Jayprakash Narayan also circulated a handbill from Mumbai in favour of Sane Guruji.⁶⁶

10. ROLE OF DADASAHEB MAVLANKAR

On May 5, 1947 G. V. alias Dadasaheb Mavlankar, the speaker of the Central legislative Assembly, visited Pandharpur and began mediating between Sane Guruji and the priests. In 1938, the first Congress Ministry headed by premier B. G. Kher had passed the Harijan Temple Worship Removal of Disabilities Act. According to its

provisions, if the majority of trustees of any temple passed a resolution and permitted the *Harijans* to enter the temple, such an action was legal. Shri Mavlankar tried to explore this possibility.⁶⁷ When he discussed with Badves, he realised one important thing that, they had a problem about their bread and butter which was dependent upon the temple income. Hence they did not want to hurt the caste Hindus by throwing open the Vitthal temple to the untouchables. Yet, Dadasaheb Mavlankar succeeded in changing the attitude of young Badves but the Badves of old generation did not show any reaction; they stayed firm with their opinion.⁶⁸ Out of 83 priests of the Vithoba temple, about 30-32 were in favour of permitting the *Harijans* to enter the temple. For a clear majority, it was necessary to secure the support of at least 42 priests. Mavalankar sent a telegram to Gandhiji explaining the situation at Pandharpur. In his reply, Mahatmaji informed Mavlankar that he had asked Barve, the President of the *Harijan Sevak Sangh*, to consult Mavlankar on this issue.⁶⁹ The efforts of Mavalankar produced good results as Sane Guruji agreed to give up his fast on certain conditions.

11. END OF SANE GURUJI'S FAST

On 10th May, 1947, Dadasaheb Mavlankar came at Pandharpur from Pune, with Thakkarbappa, Raosaheb Patwardhan and Appasaheb Pant. In Pandharpur, he first discussed with lawyer of the Badves.⁷⁰ Shri Mavlankar told that it was not necessary to persuade all the 83 priests as the temple was managed by a committee of five members elected every year from among them. This Committee was formed in accordance with a directive given by the Bombay High Court. On May 10, 1947, this Committee passed a resolution and agreed to declare that the temple of Vithoba at Pandharpur would be thrown open to the *Harijans*. Sane Guruji broke his ten day fast and in his prayer - meeting

at Delhi, Gandhiji congratulated Sane Guruji for his success in securing entry for the *Harijans* into one of the most important temples of India.⁷¹

The trustees of Vitthal temple who agreed to declare that the temple of Vithoba at Pandharpur would be thrown open to the *Harijans* were as follows⁷⁶ :

1. Shri Baburao Pralhad Badve
2. Shri Shankar Ramchandra Badve
3. Shri Bharat Aabaji Badve
4. Shri Hari Pandurang Mahajan Badve
5. Shri Vitthal Gahininath Badve⁷²

12. REACTION OF ORTHODOX BADVES

Though, on 10th May, 1947 a resolution was passed to throw open, the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur for the untouchables as result of the efforts of Congress leader Babanrao Badve, Chairman of Badve Committee and Shankar Ramachandra Badve, a majority of Orthodox Badves adopted policy to protest that resolution. Suddenly, on 15th May, 1947 Narayan Vitthal Badve with six other Badves rejected that resolution openly by saying, "The resolution passed by the Badve Committee on May 10, 1947, about the entry of the untouchables in the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur has been totally against not only of Hindu religion but also of the traditional customs of that temple. Therefore we have not agreed with it."⁷³

On 29th May, 1947, Baburao Bhagwat Badve with eight other Badves declared disapproval through his statement which was as : "88% i.e. 88 Badves submitted their application against the resolution of Badve Committee in the District Court. The Committee has no authority to give entry to the untouchables in the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur. Therefore, such a declaration of the Committee was illegal. Hence we have requested to the court that it should be rejected. As 88 out of 100



Badves are opposed to it, it would not be right to give entry to the untouchables in that temple, legally.⁷⁴

13. UNTOUCHABLES' ENTRY IN THE VITTHAL TEMPLE

On 10th May, 1947, Sane Guruji broke his fast at Pandharpur, when Badve Committee agreed to open the temple of Vithoba for the untouchables. But those who did not agree to the decision submitted their application against it in the District Court. There were total five applications of Badve, *Pujari*, *Sanatani* and *Saints*. Fortunately, all the five applications were refused by the District Court on October 30, 1947. District Judge Shri Phadakar declared that Badve Committee had the authority to throw open the Vitthal temple for the untouchables. Hence, on 30th October, 1947 the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur had been opened for the untouchables and thousands of untouchables became happy by entering in that temple.⁷⁵ As a result of it President of Utpat Committee Shri Vamanrao Utpat Vakil and Chairman Shri Pandurang Utpat willingly opened the temple of Shri Rukamani Devi for the untouchables.⁷⁶

On 11 November, 1947 (*Kartik Ekadashi*) Shri Ganapatrao Tapase - a Minister of the Untouchables of Mumbai Province (*Harijan Mantri*) entered in the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur with the untouchables.⁷⁷

Like the Vitthal temple at Pandharpur, an ancient temple of Parshuram at Chipalun was opened to the untouchables at the hands of Home Minister of Bombay, Murarjibhai Desai on *Kartik Vadya Ekadashi*. The trustees of that temple played a very important role in it. Similarly on the same day thousands of untouchables entered in the *Kalaram temple* at Nasik and took *Darshan* of both Kalaram and

Goraram in that temple under the leadership of Dadasaheb Gadre, Shri Rankhambe and Govindrao Deshpande.⁷⁸

At the same time Bombay Provincial government passed the Temple Entry Authorization Act and it helped the untouchables to enter legally in all the Hindu temples. Its credit goes to Sane Guruji because it was the decision of Guruji's fast unto death which forced to Government to pass such an Act for the untouchables as early as possible.

Among all the temple entry *Satyagrahas* discussed in the Chapters-III and IV, it was the *Satyagraha* of Pandharpur which succeeded in seeking entry for the untouchables in Vitthal temple.

We found one similarity among the all *Satyagrahas* that *Satyagrahis* were on violent in all the *Satyagrahas*. Initially they have had a lot of enthusiasm but at the end they become inactive. When they realised that their efforts were in vain and caste Hindus as well as Government would not give any response, gradually they neglected it and eventually resigned it. Sane Guruji succeeded in his efforts at Pandharpur because he was determined to accomplish the goal of *Satyagraha* at any cost and give their right to the untouchables. Even Gandhi and Acharya Vinoba Bhave had requested him to deviate from his decision but gently he rejected it and undertook a fast unto death. Truly, it was his great sacrifice for the untouchables. Pandharpur temple entry agitation and Sane Guruji's indefinite fast has much importance in the temple entry *Satyagrahas* in the 20th century Maharashtra because it was after this *Satyagraha* that Government turned its attention seriously towards this problem.

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