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M.C. RAJAH -A PRECURSOR OF B.R.AMBEDKAR, AND RAJAH-MOONJE PACT –A FORERUNNER OF POONA PACT

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Abstract: M.C.Rajah , a prominent Dalit leader of South India emerged even before the rise of B.R.Ambedkar as national leader. Certainly, he was a pioneer to B.R.Ambedkar in the socio-political renaissance movement of the Depressed Classes in the first half of the Twentieth Century. He was the architect of the Rajah-Moonje pact which once he thought that it would solve the woes of the Depressed Classes and they would attain social equality in par with caste Hindus in the passage of time. This fact favoured joint electorates for Depressed Classes. Like this Pact, Poona Pact, signed between Gandhi and Ambedkar also favoured joint electorates for Depressed Classes. Hence the Rajah-Moonje Pact was a precursor for the Poona Pact, the Magna Carta of Depressed Classes. M.C.Rajah who had been fervently criticizing Gandhi and Congress party throughout his political career suddenly became moderate towards them in the wake of Round Table Conferences. When Mahatma Gandhi christened the Depressed Class as 'Harijans', it was M.C.Rajah who directly quarreled against Gandhi, and refused to accept the term 'Harijan'. When Gandhi claimed that he was the only champion to safeguard the rights of Harijans, Both M.C.Rajah and B.R.Ambedkar were the front rank leaders of India who laid firm foundation for the elevation of Depressed Classes in India. They were the 'Messiahs of the lakhs and lakhs of the Depressed Class population'.

Keyword: Separate and Joint Electorates, Depressed Classes, Rajah-Moonje Pact, Poona Pact, Self-Respectors, Untouchability

INTRODUCTION:

M.C.Rajah openly declared that Gandhi was the betrayer of the Depressed Classes. Speaking as President of the Ninth All India Depressed Classes Conference held at Gurgaon in Punjab on 31st October 1931, M.C. Rajah vehemently criticized that Gandhi was misrepresenting the cause of the Depressed Classes, and strongly denounced the claim made by Gandhi that the Congress had been taking care of the Depressed Classes from the beginning and had championed the cause of the Depressed Classes. "I say," said M.C. Rajah, the President of the Conference "that these statements of Gandhi are untrue".¹ He congratulated B.R.Ambedkar for his brilliant arguments in favour of separate electorate.

In this conference the demand for Separate Electorate was unanimously passed and moved. The Conference supported the demand put forth by B.R. Ambedkar and declared that no constitution would be acceptable to the Depressed Classes which did not include in it the system of separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. Almost all the delegates of the Conference and people outside the conference requested Ambedkar not to put faith in Gandhi and in the Congress. All the Depressed Class leaders and Associations from all parts of India expressed the same opinion through public meetings and conferences held at Triunelveli, Robertson Park (Madras), Lyallpar, Kamal, Chidambaram, Calicut, Banaras, Kolhapur, Yeotmal, Nagpur, Chanda, Kanpur, Kamptee, Delgaum, Dharwar, Nasik, Hubli, Ahmedabad, Tuticorin, Colombo and at several other places. Thus, the pretension of Gandhi as the sole champion of Depressed Classes was exposed by M.C.Rajah.

Necessity of Separate Electorate

All along the Temple Entry agitations particularly at Nasik and Guruvayur, Gandhi was totally indifferent towards the agitation.. M.C.Rajah, said that Gandhi was not at all interested in the uplift of Depressed Classes. When such was the case, why M.C.Rajah suddenly deviated from the separate electorate and betrayed his people and Dr.Ambedkar at large. When Franchise Committee visited all over India the Depressed Class leaders met the Committee, and supported the scheme of separate electorate because they feared that in the system of joint electorates with reserved seats the candidate of the Depressed Classes would be at the mercy of the majority of electorates, and in order to win their votes they would have to ponder to their prejudices or there would be every possibility of the seats being occupied by the stooges of the majority community.

Rajah-Moonje Pact

The growing popularity of B.R.Ambedkar in the British political circles, as well as among the depressed classes , influences M.C.Rajah to think of new means for ensuring his political survival.³ He had a firm suspicion that equations in depressed class politics in Madras could change with the emergence of Ambedkar as the sole spokesman of the Depressed Classes. His suspicions were not ill-founded since the Round Table Conferences had brought his political adversaries like R.Srinivasan in close contact with Ambedkar. Subsequently , the support for Ambedkar's demand for separate electorates also started coming from the Self-Respectors under the leadership of E.V.Ramasamy Naicker, a prominent Social Reformer of Tamil Nadu.⁴ Hence Rajah entered into dialogues with B.S.Moonje , the President of the Hindu Mahasabha and reached an agreement on the reservation of seats for the depressed classes on the

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	<p>Indian Streams Research Journal</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ISSN 2230-7850 Volume-3, Issue-6, July-2013</p> <p>basis of joint electorates. The British Premier was subsequently informed that such an agreement had been reached between the All India Depressed Classes Association of which M.C.Rajah was the President and the Hindu Mahasabha. M.C.Rajah also issued statements that this pact would lead to social upliftment of the depressed classes, and integrate them with the main body of the Hindus.⁵</p> <p>When M.C.Rajah made a pact with B.S. Moonje on the basis of reserved seats in joint electorate, Ambedkar was put in a critical position. It may be recalled that it was Rajah who had cabled to Ambedkar and supported his demand for separate electorates, saying that Gandhi evidently did not know their woes and sorrows. Therefore he had tried to force joint electorates down the unwilling throats of the Depressed Classes. Rajah's propaganda in support of this Pact did not meet with much response from the depressed classes in the Madras Presidency. All India Adi-Dravida Mahajana Sabha criticized the opinions expressed by Rajah in favour of joint electorates⁶.</p> <p>Changing sides of M.C.Rajah and B.R.Ambedkar</p> <p>Originally, M.C. Rajah stood for joint electorates with reserved seats, but he changed his mind. Rajah was the only Depressed Class Member in the Central Assembly, and he was not invited to the Round Table Conferences. Perhaps grieved at this omission from the Round table Conferences or greatly perturbed by Gandhi's professed claim to represent the Depressed Classes, he had dropped the idea of joint electorates and insisted on separate electorates. And now he reverted to the original demand. Ambedkar too changed sides. He had in his report to the Simon Commission demanded joint electorates and reserved seats, and vehemently criticized the demand of the Muslims for separate electorates. But Gandhi's determined opposition to the demand of the Depressed Classes for reserved seats worsened the situation, and Ambedkar, switched over to separate electorate, putting forth separated electorates as a united demand of the Depressed Classes⁷.</p> <p>B.R. Ambedkar at Madras</p> <p>On 28th February 1932, Ambedkar was accorded a colourful reception at Madras by a huge gathering of Christians. The non-Brahmins and Self-Respectors also participated in the reception. The chairman of the Depressed Class Army Service presided. Almost all Depressed Class Institutions in the Southern India such as the Depressed Class Army Services Institution, Madras provincial Depressed Classes Federation, the presidents of Adi-Dravida Malayalam Sabha, Adi-Andhra Mahasabha, Arundhatiyar Mahajana Sabha, Kerala Depressed Classes Association, and the Labour Union Unanimously presented Ambedkar with an address. At the meeting B.R. Ambedkar revealed Rajah's somersault from separate electorates to Joint electorates with reserved seats.' He said, that Rajah should not have made any commitment before the Kamptee Session of the All India Depressed Classes Congress was held. He, therefore, exhorted the Depressed Classes to capture political power, to be on their guard against any verbal and rosy promises and urged them to believe only those leaders who had</p> <p>experienced their woes. In the end he asked them to keep before their eyes the fate of the touchable leaders like Gmltama Buddha and Ramanuja who had struggled to better their condition and to remove the stain of Untouchability.</p> <p>The Congress leaders, alarmed by the growing links between the 'depressed classes' and the Self-Respectors, preferred to ally with M.C.Rajah. K.Bashyam met the depressed class leaders belonging to the M.C.Rajah group to express their support for the Rajah –Moonje Pact.⁸ But such efforts proved to be of little political benefit for the Congress in Tamil Nadu. Anti-congress feelings ran high among the depressed classes. R.Srinivasan, another prominent depressed class leader of Tamil Nadu, praised Ambedkar for not relenting to Gandhi's threat on the issue of separate electorates.⁹</p> <p>Opposition for Joint Electorate</p> <p>When the news of the Rajah's leniency for joint electorate was out, the Bengal and Assam Depressed Class leaders denounced Rajah for his change of mind to the system of joint electorates with reserved seats and supported the demands put forth by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. M.B.Malik, M.L.A., President, Bengal Depressed Class Association; the President of Uttarpradesh Adi-Hindu Association; the President, All-Assam Depressed Classes Association, the President, Adi-Dharma Mandal, Punjab; the President of Depressed Class Aid Society, Delhi denounced M.C.Rajah demand for joint electorate and endorsed the demands put forth by B.R.Ambedkar¹⁰.</p> <p>Kamptee Conference</p> <p>In 1932, the All India Depressed Classes Conference was held in Kamptee, near Nagpur, more than 15,000 delegates from all over India attended the Congress. Some of the supporters of the Rajah-Moonje pact also attended the Congress. In this Congress, the demand for Separate electorate and the repudiation of Rajah-Moonje Pact were given top priority for discussion and supporting the Minority-Pact was another significance of the conference.</p> <p>Raj Bhoj who favoured 'Rajah-Moonje Pact' and who became afterwards the General Secretary, All India Scheduled Caste Federation led by Ambedkar was attacked by the delegates when he began to support the 'Rajah-Moonje Pact.' He was rescued by the magistrate and admitted in the Hospital. Such was the objection to the Rajah-Moonje Pact by the Depressed Class Leaders. After the Conference, Ambedkar visited Pune, Kolhapur and other cities. Whenever he used to go to such places, the Depressed Class people clarified his stand about the separate electorate and the Rajah Moonje Pact.</p> <p>Ambedkar hated Rajah for throwing him into a dilemma. Therefore, he asked his men in Bombay to give Rajah, a Black send-off if he left for London from Bombay. Through a letter, he said that he was sure that his followers must have thwarted Rajah's attempt to hold a conference in Bombay. And, in fact, the conference which the Rajah party held with great difficulty in Bombay, at this juncture, was routed when one of Ambedkar's followers died and in all fifty men were injured. In utter contempt for Rajah, Ambedkar</p>	
	2	

	<p>Indian Streams Research Journal</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ISSN 2230-7850 Volume-3, Issue-6, July-2013</p> <p>said that Rajah was not so important a figure as to deserve serious consideration; still he was nervously anxious to frustrate Rajah's attempt on all fronts.</p> <p>The Rajah-Moonje Pact was really a forerunner of Poona Pact. M.C. Rajah's vision even before the Poona Pact was well advanced. By the Poona Pact, the Depressed Classes leaders abandoned the lifeline of separate electorate and accepted reservation in the General Electorate. According to Gandhi, abolishing separate electorates simply saved the Depressed Classes from being eternally branded as Untouchables. In one of his speeches delivered in London, Gandhi said, "Muslims and Sikhs are all well organized. The 'Untouchables' are not. This is very little political consciousness among them and they are so horribly treated that I want to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates their lives would be miserable in villages which are the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. It is the superior class of Hindus who have to do penance for having neglected the 'Untouchables' for ages. That penance can be done by active social reform and by making the lot of the 'Untouchables' more bearable by acts of service, but not by asking for separate electorates for them. By giving them separate electorates you will throw the apple of discord between the Depressed Classes and the orthodox. You must understand I can tolerate the proposal for special representation of the Muslims and the Sikhs only as a necessary evil. It would be a positive danger for the 'Depressed Classes.' I am certain that the question of separate electorates for the 'Depressed Classes.' is modern manufacture of Government. The only thing needed is to put them on the voters' list, and provide for fundamental rights for them in the Constitution. In case they are unjustly treated and their representative is deliberately excluded, they would have the right to special election tribunal which would give them complete protection. It should be open to these tribunals to order the unseating of an elected candidate and the election of the excluded man."</p> <p>"Separate electorates to the 'Depressed Classes.' will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Mussalmans will never cease to be Mussalmans by having separate electorates. Do you want the "Depressed Classes.' to remain "Depressed Classes.' for ever?"</p> <p>Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of Untouchability, and when you have done it, the bar sinister which has been imposed by an insolent 'superior!' class upon an 'inferior' class will be destroyed. When you have destroyed the bar sinister, to whom will you give the separate electorates? Look at the history of Europe. Have you got separate electorates for the working classes or women? With adult franchise, you give the 'Untouchables' complete security. Even the orthodox would have to approach them for votes.¹¹"</p> <p>M.C.Rajah criticized the British decision for trying to transform the depressed classes into 'politically untouchable ones'.¹²</p> <p>M.C.Rajah on Joint Electoral Policy</p> <p>M.C. Rajah never upheld the joint Electoral Policy of Gandhi and the Congress. Even some of the prominent Untouchables backed Gandhi. A curious case was that of</p> <p>Rajah whose grievance was that although he was a member of the Central Assembly nominated to represent the Depressed Classes he was not selected as a delegate for the Round Table Conferences. He was all along fighting for separate electorate. But all of a sudden he changed to the side of Gandhi. On September 13, 1932, M.C.Rajah in the course of a speech in the Central Legislature said relating to Gandhi's fast : .</p> <p>"Never in the annals of the history of India has the issue of the Depressed Classes assumed importance as it has to-day, and for this we of the Depressed Classes must for ever be grateful to Mahatma Gandhi. He has told the world, in words which cannot be mistaken, that our regeneration is the fundamental aim of his life. If world conscience cannot be roused even now to the realization of the position of the Depressed Classes, then we can only conclude that all instincts of humanity are dead in the world today.¹³"</p> <p>Therefore, in the Madras Legislative Council when N.Sivaraj moved a resolution to repudiate the Poona Pact and emphasized for a separate electorate. M.C.Rajah strongly opposed him. Swami Sahajananda, the great common saint of the Depressed Classes from Chidambaram also joined M.C.Rajah.¹⁴</p> <p>Thus, Rajah-Moonje Pact was a continuous process during Poona Pact and even afterwards M.C. Rajah not only backed the Poona Pact but also made the Depressed Classes for ever at the hands of Caste Hindus. He had so much of faith in Gandhi and Hindus. He had declared himself openly as a strong supporter of Poona Pact. He wrote to Gandhi that he and his men would always be faithful to him and further requested Gandhi to bring the Depressed Classes into Hindu fold not only politically, but also socially and religiously. He assured Gandhi that his people in the Legislative Assembly would follow the caste Hindus blindly.</p> <p>The next chain of action was the question of Temple Entry of the Depressed Classes. When the debates were going on the Temple Entry Bill in the Madras Legislative Assembly, all the Depressed Class members joined the Congress and voted solidly against the Bill. The Bill was drafted by C.Rajagopalachari and approved and blessed by Gandhi but all the members under Rajagopalachari opposed the Bill. On another occasion on 12th July 1938, M.C.Rajah introduced a similar Bill and it was also withdrawn by the direction of Rajagopalachari.¹⁵ Thus, at the end M.C.Rajah realized his fault and regretted to Gandhi through his letter; for his letter Gandhi replied on September 14, 1938 that C.Rajagopalachari was the real friend of the Depressed Classes and they would trust him.</p> <p>At the end as per the direction of Gandhi, and after the Poona Pact Rajagopalachari passed the ' Malabar Temple Entry Bill' and earned a good name for Congress.¹⁶ Thus, the Self effort and self respect of M.C.Rajah a member of the Depressed Class Movement was jeopardized and tarnished and the Depressed Classes were put under the yoke of caste Hindu people. All the efforts taken by Ambedkar were held in wilderness. In this regard, G.Thangavelu, a renowned historian of Tamil Nadu views "The life and Mission of Ambedkar so easily elevated, got deteriorated, declined, dead and buried by the life and Mission of M.C.Rajah¹⁷."</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">M. C. RAJAH - A PRECURSOR OF B. R. AMBEDKAR AND RAJAH- MOONJE PACT - A FORERUNNER OF POONA PACT P. Nagarkanti</p>
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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">M.C. RAJAH -A PRECURSOR OF B.R.AMBEDKAR, AND RAJAH- MOONJE PACT –A FORERUNNER OF POONA PACT P.Nagoorkani</p>	<p>Indian Streams Research Journal ISSN 2230-7850 Volume-3, Issue-6, July-2013</p> <p>M.C.Rajah- Forerunner of B.R.Ambedkar Both M.C.Rajah and Dr.Ambedkar aimed at the uplift of the Depressed Classes but their attempts were somewhat differed but their goal was the same. Therefore M.C.Rajah as a legislator, and social leader, social reformer, educationist and champion of the downtrodden was the forerunner of B.R. Ambedkar. His early attempt at saving his people for a right direction helped Ambedkar to guide the depressed classes very easily to a right political goal. M.C.Rajah as a 'Morning Star' shined and shined alone in the Political Heaven of South India and guided his people to the goal of progress in their socio-economic-educational , religious and political careers .M.C.Rajah was the first Depressed Class leader who established Dravidian School at Nungambakkam, in 1936. It was established for the sole benefit of Depressed Classes In every ward of the Depressed Classes, he started Night schools and Gymnastics clubs. Still he is remembered by the Biggest Hostel of the Depressed Classes, Government M.C.Rajah Hostel at Saidapet, in Madras that recalls his services rendered to the educational progress of the Depressed Classes. This is the only relic known to the laymen and common students to remind that there was a great man who lived for the emancipation of the discarded and the depressed downtrodden people. B.R. Ambedkar who was a great educational philanthropist and established ten colleges, four diploma institutions, six high schools ten hostels and some libraries mainly for the Depressed Classes. M.C.Rajah, however, realized the futility of the electorate arrangement under the Poona Pact. He confessed very explicitly that “our entering the joint electorate with Caste Hindus under the leadership of the Congress, far from helping us , has enabled the Congress led by Caste Hindus to destroy our independence and to use us to cut our own throats”.Ultimately he accepted the leadership of B.R.Ambedkar. M.C.Rajah joined hands with Ambedkar later to form the Scheduled Caste Federation⁸. He was one of the participants in the meeting called by B.R.Ambedkar at New Delhi on 30-31 March 1942 for discussing the Cripps Proposals. All the Depressed Class leaders including M.C.Rajah condemned the Cripps Proposals as they were not in the interests of the Depressed Classes⁹. To conclude, Gandhi and the Congress tried to pull on the Depressed Classes to their side backed by traditional Hindu leadership on the one hand, and the Colonial Government and Justice Party tried to imitate as the Protectors us of the Depressed Class on the other. In between these forces the Peacock Neck Policy of British and the caste ridden policy of the Hindu leaders, all Depressed Class leaders whoever they might be, were really confused as to which path they would select and proceed. Their mind was fully enveloped only with the aim of uplifting the thousands of illiterate downtrodden people. Due to the Rajah-Moonje Pact and the politics played by Gandhi, there appeared two wings of the Depressed Classes, one headed by B.R.Ambedkar and another by M.C.Rajah.²⁰</p> <p>END NOTES AND REFERENCES i.Kshirsagar, R.K., Dalit Movement in India and Its Leader, M.D.Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1994, p.303.</p> <p>ii.Dhananjay Keer, Life and Mission of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Bombay, 1981, p.195 iii.Chandrashekar, S., Colonialism, Conflict and Nationalism , South India, 1857-1947, New Delhi, 1995, p.170. iv. Geetha , V., and Rajadurai, S.V., Towards a Non-Brahmin Millenium : From Iyothee Thass to Periyar, Calcutta, 1998, p.243; Indian Annual Register, Vol.I, 1932, pp.331-332. v.Indian Annual Register, Vol.I, 1932, pp.133-134. vi. 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