

SECURE ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS FOR THE UNTOUCHABLES

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar expressed his thoughts regarding the safeguards for Scheduled Castes in the letter addressed to Jogendra Nath Mandal. Letter follows : Editors.

“CONFIDENTIAL

BHIMRAO R. AMBEDKAR

‘RAJGRAHA’

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Bombay-2nd June 1947

My dear Mandal,

Your letter of the 30th May, 1947 was delivered to me by Mr. Meshram yesterday. I am sorry that for the whole of last month owing to severe pain in my left leg I have been confined to bed and disabled from taking any active interest in public affairs. I wish to come to Delhi on the 4th by air to attend the Union Constitution Committee to which I have been appointed. But that depends upon my fitness to move. In case I am still advised by Doctors not to move, I shall let you know my views about the question of partition of Bengal. I have always felt that the British have refused to recognise the Scheduled Castes as a separate and independent entity. The Scheduled Castes were incapable of doing anything precisely with regard to the question of partition. They could neither force partition nor could they prevent partition if it was coming. The only course left to the Scheduled Castes is to fight for safeguards either in a United Bengal or a Divided Bengal. I also hold the view that the Muslims are not greater friends of the Scheduled Castes than the Hindus and that if the Scheduled Castes should by their own circumstances be destined to live in a minority whether a Hindu Bengal or a Muslim Bengal, the only one course is to fight for safeguards for every possible emergency. It is possible for the reasons you have mentioned that the Scheduled Castes in Eastern Bengal

will elect to stay where they are even when partition comes. I have of course told the Hindus that in case there is partition they shall have to agree to reserve some land in Western Bengal for the Scheduled Castes of Eastern Bengal when the Damodar Valley Project matures and more land is made available for cultivation and in case the Scheduled Castes of Eastern Bengal express a desire to migrate to Western Bengal. This is however a somewhat remote possibility. In the meantime I agree that you should work in alliance with the League and secure adequate safeguards for them, I am not quite so hopeless as you are with regard to the attitude of the Hindus in Evelock to give political safeguards to the Scheduled Castes. There isn't a chastened mind. In so far as I am able to judge I think they will agree to almost all the safeguards that we want. The only thing they will insist on is some modified form of Separate Electorates. The Muslim League however, will be ready to give to the Scheduled Castes Separate Electorates more probably because they themselves want Separate Electorates for their own community. So far as the Eastern Bengal Scheduled Castes are concerned that no doubt is an advantage.

You have asked me to let you have what demands you should put up before the Muslim League. I have formulated a set of demands in my Memorandum which has been printed and circulated to the Members of the Minorities Committee. I am sending a copy of it to you for your information. In my view that Memorandum contains all that we need for our protection, not only in Eastern Bengal but in every Province in India. I think you should make this Memorandum the best use in your negotiations with the Muslim League. Of course, you are free to add to it any new safeguard for our people in Eastern Bengal which you think there are some special circumstances which call for such safeguards.

I have been already apprised of the plight of the *Satyagrahis* in Lucknow Jail. I am sending two of my representatives to Lucknow in order to inspect and state the condition of the *Satyagrahis* in Jail. I have also referred to the Prime Minister. U. P. Of course, our own people having thrown a challenge to

the Government of U. P. in the form of a *Satyagraha*, prestige release the *Satyagrahis*. But if some agreement is reached with regard to our safeguards in the Minorities Committee, I should, of course, make their immediate release a part of the bargain.

With Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- B. R. AMBEDKAR

Hon'ble Mr. J. N. Mandal,
Law Member to the Govt. of India,
NEW DELHI.”¹

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¹ : Khairmode, Vol. 8, Pp. 164—166.