

WE SHALL WAGE RELENTLESS WAR TO INTRODUCE ADULT FRANCHISE

“It is amazing that the Bombay Ministry holding office on the ticket of the Indian National Congress which has pompously announced the programme of framing the National Constitution through Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise, should shirk its duty and responsibility on the question of adult franchise in the manner in which it is trying to do in the matter of Bombay Municipal Amendment Bill” said Dr. Ambedkar in the course of an interview with a “Sentinel” representative.

“Some of the members of the Lothian Committee for which the Congress never showed much love was prepared to introduce adult franchise throughout the entire Province “he said,” and the only difficulty which came in their way was the scarcity of men to register votes on the polling day.”

“The Congress Government which has been shouting for years past for adult franchise should have taken the first opportunity to introduce it in district and taluka boards and municipalities. But they have shirked this responsibility right at the start.

“As regards adult franchise for Bombay Municipality there should not have been any room for hesitation, if there is any place in the whole Presidency which is best fitted for “experiment” in adult franchise, it is Bombay. The standard of literacy is higher here than anywhere else. The people are more alive to public question than perhaps elsewhere. There are a host of other reasons why Bombay is the fittest place for introducing adult franchise. Yet the Congress Ministry brings forward a bill which contemplate adult franchise in 1942 and that on the condition that the Corporation would agree to it.

“As Mr. N. M. Joshi has said, it is an absurd condition. The Corporation is not going to commit suicide by voting for an electorate which will, to a large extent, wipe them out of existence.



Greatness can be achieved only by struggle and sacrifice. Neither manhood nor Godhood can be obtained without going through the ordeal of fire.

—Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

WHATEVER THE POLICY OF THE CONGRESS GOVERNMENT, I AND MY PARTY, REPRESENTING THE MOST DOWNTRODDEN STRATA OF SOCIETY, WILL JOIN AND FURTHER ANY MOVEMENT THAT CAN SECURE ADULT FRANCHISE FOR THE CITY

On the floor of the Assembly we shall organise a relentless battle to secure this—the prime condition of democracy—and if possible force the hands of the Ministry to yield.

OUTSIDE THE ASSEMBLY WE SHALL HELP
IN THE ORGANISATION OF MEETINGS AND
DEMONSTRATIONS TO MAKE THE MINISTRY REALISE
THE FORCE OF PUBLIC DEMAND AND THE VALUE OF
IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC PLEDGES AND PRINCIPLES.

I hope, however, that the Ministry will have the wisdom to realise the folly of introducing a bill of the nature they propose to do. I hope, before introducing it in the Assembly, they will remember their promises and pledges and make the necessary changes so as immediately to introduce adult franchise without having to wait till 1942 and for the consent of the Corporation.”¹

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1. : The Bombay Sentinel, dated 31st January 1938.