

## YOU MUST GIVE UP YOUR DISGRACEFUL PROFESSION

“An impassioned appeal to cast off the evil practices and customs among certain sections of the Depressed classes was made by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar at a meeting at Damodar Thakersey Hall, Bombay, on Tuesday the 16th June 1936, at night.

The meeting was largely attended by men and women belonging to the *Devdasi*, *Potraje*, *Bhute*, *Aradhi* and *Jogtini* sects and was held to accord support to the mass conversion move inaugurated at Yeola.

After several speakers, both men and women, had addressed the gathering on the need for a change of faith as a step toward social freedom, Dr. Ambedkar made a fervent appeal, especially to the women, most of whom had come from Kamathipura.

Dr. Ambedkar said,

“Whether you change your religion alongwith us or not, it does not matter much to me. But I insist that if you want to be with the rest of us you must give up your disgraceful life. The Mahar women of Kamathipura are a shame to the community. Unless you are prepared to change your ways, we shall have nothing to do with you, and we shall have no use for you.

There are only two ways open to you : either you remain where you are and continue to be despised and shunned, or you give up your disgraceful profession and come with us.

You will ask me how you are to make your living. I am not going to tell you that. There are hundreds of ways of doing it. But I insist that you must give up this degraded life. You must marry and settle down to normal domestic life as women of other classes do and not continue to live under conditions which inevitably drag you into prostitution.” <sup>1</sup>




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<sup>1</sup>: The Times of India, dated 17th June 1936.

## DO NOT BECOME A VICTIM TO ANY CONSPIRACY

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar called a general meeting of 'Samta Sainik Dal' on Sunday Nov. 8, 1936 at 9 a.m., before leaving for Europe. This meeting was held at Damodhar Hall, Parel, Bombay and was chaired by Dr. Ambedkar.<sup>1</sup>

While addressing the meeting Dr. Ambedkar said,

"I am leaving for Europe tomorrow in connection with some very important work of urgent nature. You will have to shoulder heavy responsibility in my absence. You must be knowing that according to the new Constitution fifteen seats have been reserved in the Legislative Assembly for the Depressed Classes. Election to the Legislative Assembly will be held in February next year. We have been allotted these fifteen seats in different districts of the Province. I have nominated candidates from the Independent Labour Party to contest elections against these seats. Why did my colleagues and I choose to form the Independent Labour Party to contest the coming elections? This is the question I am going to discuss in this meeting. With a well-organised and strong party like the Indian National Congress existing in India, what was the necessity of forming a new Party, is a legitimate question which many would like to ask. It has a very simple answer.

The main object of the Congress is to achieve independence. My colleagues and I also want to attain freedom but to achieve freedom is not so simple or easy task. Even the weapon of '*Satyagraha*' evolved by Mr. Gandhi is not likely to be efficacious. Even with non co-operation and civil disobedience it is not possible to achieve independence. This certainly is beyond our capacity. Everybody seems to be thinking in this manner. If this is so difficult, what is the use of having dreams of such meaningless independence. So long as we do not have the strength and capacity to win true freedom, it is wise and profitable to follow the well-tried methods to achieve our object. I believe this is the correct view.

India has not yet become a nation. This country is divided into as many as 4000 castes. Besides this, there are the evils like

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<sup>1</sup>: Janata, dated 5th December 1936.

casteism, provincialism, religious differences and numerous other conflicts and quarrels which divide the country. With these divisive forces it is difficult to perceive that India will ever be united. Hindus, Muslims and Christians do not have a common goal. Granted, that the British Raj comes to an end in the present situation, will not those who do not believe in one nation and are religious fanatics and caste-conscious people fight against each other to capture political power?

In the absence of real strength to capture real and true freedom, it would be harmful to entertain dreams of freedom.

On the other hand there is a distinct difference between our stand and that of the Congress. Congress does not like the constitutional reforms. It is opposed to the reforms. They may put an end to the reforms after entering the Legislative Assembly. But, notwithstanding the fact that these reforms do not conform with our aspirations and demands, we prefer to work them and to use the opportunity to secure more rights in the legislative assemblies than those which have been given to us. This is not the time that the Legislative Assembly should be used as a playground for gimmicks and pranks.

Today Congress presents the picture of a motley crowd. Starting from the lowly porter, poor—labourer, peasants, petty trader, shopkeepers to landlords, usurers, merchants, middle class people, capitalists and exploiters are found in the Congress. In short people with all sort of conflicting interests are found in the Congress. This can those who thrive on the blood of the poor ever be the friend or the exploited? Congress is sitting in the lap of wealthy people. How can they help the poor peasants, farmers and workers?

Congress is not the party of the peasants and workers. Congress is the protector of the capitalists. It is difficult for the Congress to protect and safeguard the interests of working classes and common people.

As opposed to this our organisation - Independent Labour Party stands for the protection of the weaker section of the society.

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It would be easy for our party to safegaurd the interest of peasants and working classes than it would be for the Congress.

The main purpose of our Party is to fight for the interest of the Untouchables, the working classes, the poor and the deprived people. Without compromising our declared principles and policies we shall form alliances with other parties to win elections.

Many a time a question is asked as to why, leaving aside the cause of the Untouchables, I have chosen to work alongwith other people. In this connection I would like to say that in the proposed Legislative Assembly, according to the new Constitution, there will be 175 members who will be elected. Out of these 175 representatives there will be fifteen from the Untouchables. It is not possible for these fifteen members to work in an effective manner. It is, therefore, very essential to have a larger number of people to help us. They must be friends having similar ideas and principles. Those among the Non-Untouchables who have sincerely helped us, sacrificing their own interests and fought side by side with us for our cause must be adopted by us to contest election as our party (ILP) candidates. And, therefore, we must not waste our time in polemics at this stage. In order to achieve the object of our party, we must leave aside the bickerings, petty quarrels, wasteful activities and discussions. If you follow the spirit and the principles of the party in right earnest and work sincerely to make it a success then whatever I have been able to achieve for our people will be further strengthened.

If I am not successful in election to Legislative Assembly it would not matter very much. But no matter what happens you have to return Mr. Kalokhe as our candidate from the 'G' Ward. It is the matter of prestige for us.

Do not make a distinction at this stage between the Mang and the Mahar. Do not give any importance to narrow caste loyalties. We are all one people and this true feeling of unity we must keep in mind always and earnestly.

Now I proceed to deal with another important matter. I have selected most of the candidates from among the Mahar community

and have not taken many from other castes. Frankly speaking it would not be wise at this stage to go into the reasons for doing so. But those who have founded a so called Nationalist Harijan Party have levelled this charge against me and opened this issue. This allegation has to be refuted and an appropriate reply has to be given to them. I have chosen a name for this organisation of so called nationalist 'Harijans'. I call them 'lay bhagoo' lifters or pick run thieves.

I have not expelled or excluded anybody from the party mainly owing to his being a member of the Chambhar caste. They are free to think whatever they like. This does not bother me very much. In not selecting these 'Harijans' as candidates for the ensuing election to the Legislative Assembly it was mainly this 'pick and run' habit of these people which was responsible for their exclusion. They would go anywhere like beggars after alms. They have no respect for principles, party discipline and ideologies. 'Grab', 'pocket' and 'make off with whatever they can lay their hands on has been their only principle.

We launched Mahad *Satyagraha*. We started the movement for self-respect and self-reliance. We also launched another struggle at Nashik. Not in the distant past, before the Poona Pact was signed, putting our lives in jeopardy we fought against Gandhi for our rights and political safeguards. These so called 'Nationalist Harijans' were comfortably perched in the camp of our enemies. If these scroungers now want a share in our success for which they have neither struggled nor co-operated with us, why should we show any generosity towards such people now? I do not care for the criticism of the people who choose to survive like bats. Not only this, even before the Poona Pact when Gandhiji staked his life, these very people rose in support of his stand and declared that they did not want any reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes to save Gandhi's life. Then, what right these people have to ask for a share now in the seats which had been won through our struggle. The chief leader of the so called Nationalist Harijans Shri Narayan Kajrolkar will one day be found sitting in the ranks of Dr. Savarkar. Shri P. Baloo will be found clinging for a seat in the camp of 'patriots' like Shri Vallabh Bhai Patel.

In such a situation what will be the position of this 'Harijan' organisation. I do not think it is necessary or proper for me to tell you today. Has anybody tried to throw any light on this kind of situation arising in future? The only person who has uptill now co-operated with and helped us in our struggle is Mr. Shivatarkar Master. He is a prominent leader born among the Chamar caste. Unfortunately he has not been granted permission by the Municipal Committee so far to contest election. It is, therefore, not possible to nominate him as a candidate of our party.

Well ! Sincerely speaking I consider that instead of entering the Legislative Assembly it is much better to work outside. The question of religious conversion is also hanging fire.

Inspite of this, respecting the wishes of our people, I have decided to enter the Legislative Assembly as a candidate of Independent Labour party. I fully believe that because of this decision on our part, Congress will try to put all sorts of obstacles in our way. In fact they have already started their efforts from today with the purpose of keeping me out of the Assembly. Therefore, all of us have to remain vigilant, united and continue to work in a disciplined manner. I must get all of your votes this time. Do not think that I am going to forsake my principles for the sake of election to Assembly.

You must clearly understand and keep in mind that there is nobody to help you. I would like to advise you not to become a victim to any conspiracy. At such time you will have to give up selfishness, greed and narrow-mindedness. Some persons, whose inclusion in the list of party candidates has not been found possible, easily take to the path of disintegration and disruption of the party out of resentment and frustration. You must bear in mind that the tree, which gives us shelter, cool and refreshing shade, comfort and protection, has to be nurtured and protected. I trust that you will never try to destroy its branches in any manner.

I have doubt what all such persons who are mainly led by selfish motives and have chosen to do harm to our cause will gain. I think they will not gain any thing at all. They are like the man who strikes at his feet with his own axe.

Leaving aside all other activities for the time being I have chalked out this programme with the help and co-operation of our colleagues and I am placing it before you. I hope all of you, members of the Samta Sainik Dal will endeavour to work for its success in a disciplined and earnest manner.

We have to face very strong and powerful enemies. Therefore, there should be a force of at least two thousand Samta Sainiks in the city of Bombay. Having sufficient manpower with devotion, dedication and unity, it has never been a difficult task for me to find a way out of any situation, no matter how grave it be. Congress and other organisations hostile to our cause are trying to put many obstructions in my election. I fully trust that all members of our community will cast their valuable votes in my favour and that no member residing in my ward will remain without casting his vote. This can be accomplished only if Samta Sainik Dal takes this task in its hands.

I am sure that in my absence each member of the Samta Sainik Dal will earnestly perform this important duty zealously and devotedly. I have appointed a committee for this purpose. I am certain, with the help of this committee, you will be able to successfully accomplish this task.”

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