

DEMOCRACY MUST GIVE RESPECTFUL HEARING TO ALL WHO ARE WORTH LISTENING TO

From Pandharpur Dr. B. R. Ambedkar went to Sholapur to address the Matang Conference. On his arrival he was presented with a civic address of welcome by the Sholapur Municipality in the morning of January 4, 1938* at the Bhagwat Chitra Mandir. The address was read and presented by Rao Bahadur Dr. V. V. Muley, who had helped the cause of the Untouchables at Sholapur in the capacity of the President of the Municipality. In reply Dr. Ambedkar made a very important speech, expressing his views on the working of Parliamentary Democracy.

He said,

“In the political situation that has grown up in this country, there has grown the habit among the people of paying homage to only one political party, the Congress.”

“I am no believer,” continued he, “in Democracy as an ideal to be pursued in all circumstances and in all claims ; and having regard to the present-day conditions in India, Democracy is a most unsuitable system of Government. At any rate, for some time India needs the strong hand of an enlightened autocrat.”¹

“In this country we have,” observed he, “Democracy, but it is a Democracy which has ceased to exercise its intelligence. It has bound itself hand and foot to one organization and only one. It is not prepared to sit in judgment over the doings or thinking of this organization. I consider it the greatest malaise, a disease and a sickness. It has affected all our people. They are intoxicated.” “Unfortunately,” he added, “the Indian people are by tradition men who have more faith and less wit. Anyone who does anything out of the ordinary, does something so eccentric as

* Keer and Bharill had taken extracts of the speech from the Times of India dated 4th January 1938. Keer mentioned the date of the function as 4th January 1938 where as Bharill as 1938. From the perusal of Janata dated 8th, 15th January and 5th February 1938 and also report of the Mang Community Conference, it is obvious that Dr. Ambedkar attended the above function on the 1st January 1938.—Editors.

¹ : Keer, Pp. 298-299. Also referred the Times of India dated 4th January 1938.

to be called in other countries an insane person, acquires in this country the status of a Mahatma or Yogi. And people follow him as the sheep follow the shepherd.....”

I am sure that if this continues we could reap no benefit from the political advancement which this country has secured under the act. Dr. Ambedkar emphatically stated that, “democracy must learn that its safety lies in having more than one opinion regarding the solution of any particular problem, and in order that people may be ready to advice with their opinions, democracy must learn to give a respectful hearing to all who are worth listening.”¹

“I am glad, “he concluded,” that the Sholapur Municipality has set an example in voting an address to me who do not belong to an organization which claims to be the only organization in the country and which all people are in a mood to uphold at present.”²

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¹ : The Times of India dated 4th January 1938.

Reprinted Bharill, Pp 190-191.

² : Keer, P. 299.