

YOUR SALVATION MUST LIE IN YOUR OWN HANDS

Leaving the tome-packed loft in which he had buried himself throughout Sunday, the 26th April 1942 busy collecting yet more material for his next bomb-shell. "What the Hindus have Done To Us", the scholarly Dr. B. R. Ambedkar rushed to the Kamgar Maidan, Bombay in the evening to talk of bombs or co-operation.

Presentation of a purse in celebration of his Golden Jubilee was the occasion for the stupendous crowd, which gathered as for a fair but left with a battle-cry from ten thousand resounding throats.

"I don't want celebration of my birthday any more" he declared.

The soothing calm voice of Dr. Ambedkar developed into a thunder as he roared: Most treacherously have the British Government let us down. The Cripps proposals were meant to placate the Congress and the League in the hour of Britain's difficulties and to sacrifice the Depressed Classes. The demands of the Congress and the League were mutually and violently conflicting and the British in accepting the demands of both ensured the total rejection by both. Thank God for it.

The Depressed Classes have been saved from a disaster. But the menace may raise its head again. Next time that happens you will have to be ready for action, I don't care what action, constitutional or unconstitutional, violent or non-violent, peaceful or disturbing.

Offer To Congress

The votary of constitutional practice then gave an inkling into the possibility of his next jubilee being celebrated as a revolutionary.

He Declared : You may be faced with constituent assembly again. Your place then will not be inside the constituent assembly. You will not find any place there. Your legitimate place then will be in your own headquarters, manufacturing bombs. Yes, bombs make no mistake about it. We can handle hand grenades better than many other people.

To the Congress he has fought these 20 years, he made a sporting offer : You are fighting for *Swaraj*. I am ready to join you. And I may assure you that I can fight better than you. I make only one condition. Tell me what share I am to have in the *Swaraj*. If you don't want to tell me that and want to make up with the British behind my back, hell on both of you.

To the audience present, Dr. Ambedkar spoke like a loving father to his children, telling stories of yore and the happenings during the last 23 years. He was in a reminiscent mood, narrated the episode of the first public meeting he addressed at Kolhapur, the opposition he had to face from his own people who considered loathsome practices as a precious heritage, oppression as a birth-right.

And as Dr. Ambedkar narrated the details of these practices the daintily dressed pretty maids close to the platform turned round and laughed at their wrinkled old mothers. And the mothers felt so embarrassed at the recall of things they had practised so long and abandoned with such reluctance. Said he:

“Today you have been purified of all those evils. Like white snow of an early morning you stand now before the superstition ridden men and women of the higher castes; the Marathas and the Bhandaris, who from the viewpoint of social and cultural outlook are miles behind you.

“When I started on my public career and long thereafter I considered that for good or for evil we were part of the Hindu society.

I thought for long that we could rid the Hindu society of its evils and get the Depressed Classes incorporated into it on terms of equality. That motive inspired the *Mahad Chaudar Tank Satyagraha* and the *Nasik Temple Entry Satyagraha*. With that object we burned the *Manu Smriti* and performed mass thread ceremonies. Experience has taught me better. I stand today absolutely convinced that for the Depressed Classes there can be no equality among the Hindus because on inequality rest the foundations of *Hinduism*.

We no longer want to be part to the Hindu society.

What then are we to do? We shall decide that at a suitable time. For the moment I only want to make it clear that we cannot be part of the Hindu society in any circumstances. We want to be partners in running the government of this country. We want partition of political rights. Our political rights must be recognised distinctly from those of the Hindus separately.

If the Hindus are prepared to recognise those rights I am ever-ready to join them in the common struggle for the freedom of the country.”

Dr. Ambedkar is no hero-worshipper, does not want his followers to do it either, for he is deeply conscious of the evils of hero-worship and the havoc it has caused in this country down the centuries.

Calmly but emphatically said Dr. Ambedkar : “You have been celebrating my birthday for some 15 years past. I have never attended them. I have always been opposed to them. You have celebrated my golden jubilee now; let that be enough. Let there be no more celebrations.

The reason : “Over-regard for leaders saps self-confidence of the masses, leaves them helpless when left leaderless in hour of trial or when led by unscrupulous leaders.”

“One great reason for the downfall of the Hindu society and the perpetuation of its degraded position,” said Dr. Ambedkar,” is the injunction of *Krishna* that whenever in difficulties they should look

out for his *avatar* (incarnation) to redeem them from the slouch of despondency. That has made the Hindu community helpless in face of calamity.

I don't want you to follow such a ruinous teaching. I don't want you to be dependent on any single personality for your salvation. Your salvation must lie in your own hands, through your own efforts.”¹

“In conclusion, Dr. Ambedkar uttered a note of warning to the British Government as well as the Hindus. The British Government, he said, ought to remember that at the time of the transference of power, the Depressed Classes should be given adequate guarantees. If they did not, the Depressed Classes would fight the British with every means in their power. If the Hindus gave adequate guarantees to the Depressed Classes, they would fight their battles shoulder to shoulder with them. Otherwise there would be no compromise with them.

The Jubilee Committee organised for the purpose of celebrating Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's 50th birthday presented him this evening with a purse of Rs. 580 at a Mammoth Meeting of his followers, at Kamagar Maidan. Mr. M. V. Donde, Municipal Corporator presided.”²

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¹: Bombay Sentinel (Bombay), dated 28th April 1942.

²: The Bombay Chronical, dated 27th April 1942.