

I WANT THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT IN YOUR HANDS

“Speaking at a reception given in his honour by the Depressed Classes Welfare Association, Delhi, this afternoon, the 23rd August 1942, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Labour Member of the Government of India, made an important statement about the future of his community *vis-a-vis* the constitutional goal of India.

He said,

“I want to put the Depressed Classes on terms of equality with the other communities in India. I do not want you to remain servile to other communities, but I want to place the reins of Government in your hands. You should share in the political power of the country, on terms of equality with the Mussalmans.”

The right of Depressed Classes to share and partition the power and authority of the Government was recognised by the British Government.

Since 1940 the position of Depressed Classes had suffered a set back. Firstly, the Cripps Proposals *inter-alia* envisaged a settlement with the Congress and the Muslim League, and as long as such a settlement was reached, the Depressed Classes did not matter, “I hold that this was a great betrayal of the Depressed Classes,” declared Dr. Ambedkar.

Proceeding, he said that since that failure of the Cripps Mission, Public persons in India and abroad only talked of a settlement with the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress has been trying to reach a settlement with the Muslim League, but had never bothered to reach a settlement with the Depressed Classes, and Gandhiji shortly before his arrest had declared that he did not recognise a separate identity for the Depressed Classes. He added, “It has therefore become very necessary to secure our position in the political life of the country; a position of perfect equality and sovereignty. Unless we secure such a position, we will be pushed back to our former position of servility and servitude.”

Earlier, Dr. Ambedkar had declared that he had no love for office and would be glad to go back to his work, if he found that his efforts to improve the lot of his community were not successful.— A.P.”¹

However, there were additional dimensions in the speech of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the subject which were reported by ‘The Indian states’. The dimensions were :

Dr. Ambedkar referred to the agitation carried on by him on behalf of his community. He said that at the Round Table Conference he had claimed that the Depressed Classes were not a sub-section of the Hindus but had a separate important identity of their own. His claim was disputed by Mahatma Gandhi, who eventually lost the battle.

The Communal Award was a charter granting separate identity to Depressed Classes. Therefore, Gandhiji raised the question a second time by going on a fast. The Poona Pact was the result in which he again succeeded in retaining the individuality of his community.

The third landmark was the August Offer by the British Government in which it was clearly stated that no constitution for India would be acceptable to the British Government without the consent and concurrence of the Depressed Classes”²

● ●

¹: The Bombay Chronicle, dated 24th August 1942.

²: The Indian States, 12th September 1942.

PRESENT DISORDERS HARMING ONLY INDIANS

“A huge crowd composed mostly of members of the Depressed Classes virtually laid seige to the Bombay Central Station this morning the 3rd November 1942 to receive Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Labour Member of the Government of India, who arrived by the Frontier Mail.

When the garlanding ceremony over, Dr. Ambedkar drove to his residence at Dadar where another crowd awaited his arrival.

It is understood that Dr. Ambedkar will leave for Mahad on November 10th and return three days later.” ¹

“Addressing a public meeting held under the auspices of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation at Kamgar Maidan, Parel, Bombay, on Sunday evening, the 8th November 1942, the Hon’ble Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Labour Member of the Government of India blamed Mr. Gandhi and the Congress for starting the present Civil Disobedience Campaign in India for which, he declared, there was not the slightest justification, especially in view of the offer made by Sir Stafford Cripps. The present disorders, which were committed by hirelings, did not cause any harm or damage to Government or to the British people but only to Indian themselves. Large and important sections in the country were not in favour of the movement, and he had no doubt that it would fail.

So far as the Depressed Classes were concerned, they did not and could not take any part in the movement. The Congress leaders were very anxious to placate the Muslims and they had several times approached the Muslim leader for a settlement; but they had so far ignored the demand of the Depressed Classes for their proper place in the future constitution of the country. The Congress was anxious to placate the Muslims, because the latter were strong and well organised. The Depressed Classes were ignored because they were not sufficiently strong or well organised. Dr. Ambedkar urged them to make themselves politically strong by organisation through the All India Scheduled Castes Federation and also by strengthening their volunteer army. He advised them to keep away from the present political movement.

¹: The Bombay Chronicle , dated 4th November 1942.

Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj, President of the Federation, who presided, referred to some of the work done by Dr. Ambedkar as Member of the Viceroy's Council. He also revealed the fact that he had been selected as a member of the Indian delegation to the Pacific Relations Council in America and that he was shortly going to that country.

Dr. Ambedkar was profusely garlanded after the meeting was over.”¹

● ●

¹: The Times of India, dated 9th November 1942.