

GANDHI AND JINNAH SHOULD RETIRE

“The Hon’ble Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Labour Member, Viceroy’s Executive Council arrived in Bombay today, 2nd May 1943 by the Frontier Mail. Dr. Ambedkar will preside on May 7 and 8 over a Conference of representatives of labour, mill-owners and Government.”¹

“Asserting that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress High Command had displayed “utter political bankruptcy,” the Hon’ble Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Labour Member, Government of India, pleaded at a mass meeting held under the auspices of the Scheduled Classes at Naigaum, Bombay on Sunday evening, the 9th May 1943 that Mr. Gandhi should retire from active politics. He added that Mr. Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League, “who has taken up an impossible position should also retire.” He emphasised that unless both these leaders quitted the stage, it was absolutely hopeless to make any move to lift Indian politics from the present quagmire. It was only then that Indian politics might be expected to move on a line that might help the country towards its progress.

Dr. Ambedkar said that Mr. Gandhi was by far the most fortunate politician that had ever been born. He was fortunate because he had all the necessities for effective politics for the mere asking, while other political leaders had to spend half their lives in collecting them. Mr. Gandhi had both “man-power and money-power” in abundance, while the late Mr. Tilak, Mr. Ranade and Mr. Gokhale, never had “money-power” and as for “man-power,” they had to spend the whole of their lives in collecting it.

With all that, Mr. Gandhi’s political career had been a series of failures during the last 25 years. His politics was no doubt very exciting as compared with the placid politics of Gokhale or Ranade. But there was one thing quite certain, namely, that the politics and methods of Gokhale and Ranade would never have

¹: The Sunday Chronicle : dated 2nd May 1943.

led the country to its present unfortunate position of having to divide the country. Mr. Gandhi's politics had resulted in that tragedy. "Instead of getting *Swaraj* and discussing that solitary question," Dr. Ambedkar declared, "We at the end of the journey have been presented with totally different problems, which probably Gokhale and Ranade would never have permitted to arise."

"The people of India", continued Dr. Ambedkar, "have placed blind faith in Mr. Gandhi and the Congress High Command. They have completely lost critical faculty and they have never the courage to tell Mr. Gandhi where he is wrong."

Referring to the Congress rejection of the Cripps' proposals, Dr. Ambedkar said that whatever might be said about the proposals, in so far as the future was concerned, the Cripps proposals gave the Congress cent per cent what it wanted. The proposals gave it the constituent assembly to decide the form of constitution and also gave it the choice to have Dominion Status or Independence. In regard to the immediate Government, the proposals were as large as they could be in the circumstances dictated by the war. The only thing that was reserved was defence and the rest was transferred.

"Even a tyro in politics," Dr. Ambedkar said, "would have realised that 15 men on one side and the Defence Member on the other would have been a most unequal battle for the Defence Member to fight. Apart from that, any sensible man would have cared more for the proposals that related to the future than the proposals that related to the present. If the future proposals gave complete authority to the nation, then no sensible man could have rejected them because something was lacking in them which related to the immediate present". He emphasised that defence was the only means to attain freedom.

Appealing to the Scheduled Castes people to join the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation, Dr. Ambedkar said that placed as they were, they had to organise themselves to protect their own interests. They should prepare themselves to fight their battle for political rights when the new constitution for India was

drafted. “The stand we take,” he said, “is that the constitution must be tripartite. It must be a constitution which will be controlled and worked by free, independent and important elements in the national life in the country. We do not propose to allow Hindus and Muslims to work up an agreement for political advancement, leaving the Scheduled Castes in the cold. Therefore, we propose to have one single organisation, such as the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation, functioning all over India and acting as a single live piece to this particular political aspiration of the Depressed Classes”.

Emphasising the importance of technical training, Dr. Ambedkar said that no nation could progress without “tool men”. Besides, technical training had a vast future in the industrial development of the country.” ¹

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¹ : The Times of India, dated 10th May 1943.