

SCHEDULED CASTES MUST DISCARD HINDUISM

“Replying to the welcome addresses by three scheduled castes’ organisations, after the resolutions were disposed of at the Scheduled Castes’ Conference, held at Cawnpore*, on January 31 1944, Dr. Ambedkar set out the role of his community in India of the future and appealed to youths to forge sanctions by developing organisational strength behind the Federation so that no party, not even the British Government would dare refuse to recognise their importance in the future scheme of India’s constitutional development.”

“We must resolve that in a free India of the future we will be a ruling race. We refuse to continue to play a role of subservience or accept a position in which we could be treated as servants, not masters,” declared Dr. Ambedkar.

If and when a *Swaraj* Government is established in India, he asserted, Hindus, Muslims and the Scheduled Castes, 3 parties in the Country would share the political power.

He visualised the day when it would be possible to guarantee a minimum wage of Rs. 30 a month, provide housing for labour, and pensions as an insurance against old age to the poor.

His answer to those critics, who asked him to join the Congress, was simple, said Dr. Ambedkar. “I regard as more important the freedom of the scheduled castes in India, the community which has been the victim of domination and oppression for over 2000 years.” He preferred to work for the uplift of his community rather than *Swaraj* for the country.

Dr. Ambedkar asked the people to ponder over the causes for their sufferings extending over a long period of 2000 years. The Hindu Dharma, he asserted, was the main cause. Of all religions in the world it was Hinduism that recognised caste distinctions and Untouchability. This was the cover, the clock, for all injustices perpetrated on the Scheduled Castes by caste Hindus. The position even today, he regretted to say, was that in villages they could not live with self-respect.

* Kanpur.

He, therefore, reiterated his conviction that they must discard Hinduism and refuse to submit to Indignities any longer.

What struck him most was that his community still continued to accept a position of humiliation only because caste Hindus persisted in dominating over them. He exhorted the people to rely on their own strength, shake off the notion that they were in any way inferior to any other community.

Proceeding Dr. Ambedkar emphasised the need of building up sanctions by organisational strength behind their political body-the Scheduled Castes Federation. The British Government, he said, was ever ready to show consideration to Muslims. If the Congress leaders, after their release, reached a settlement with Muslims on Pakistan or fifty-fifty basis agreement, what would be the position of the Scheduled Castes ? If they were to share political powers, they must be organised as one solid unit before they could successfully fight for their due rights in the future Governance of the country.

Stressing the value of women's contribution he observed that their movement could not succeed unless their women helped actively the work of intensification. He attached the greatest value, said the speaker, to the formation of volunteer corps at each town and village to spread the message of the Conference and carry it to villages even 200 miles away from cities. He urged that they must realise their responsibility to wipe out internal divisions among the Scheduled Castes when they demanded of other's removal of Untouchability."

Winding up the proceedings, Mr. Shivraj declared the two-day session close amidst shouts in appreciation of Dr. Ambedkar's services to his community."¹

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1 : The Free Press Journal, dated 1st February 1944.