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UNITY IS OF SUPREME IMPORTANCE

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar delivered a speech at a luncheon party given by Mr. P. Bala Subramaniya, Editor, Sunday Observor at Connemara Hotel, Madras on 23rd September 1944.

Dr. Ambedkar said,

As far as I have been able to study, the advent of the Non-Brahman party has been an event in the history of India. Many people had not even able to realize that the fundamental basis of the Non-Brahman party was not the communal aspect which the word Non-Brahman indicated. No matter who ran the Non-Brahman party, whether it was what they called the 'Intermediate class' which lay between the Brahmins at one end and the Untouchables at the other. The party could be nothing if it was not a party of democracy. Therefore everybody who believed in democracy had a deep concern in the interests and fortune of the party. The organisation of the Non-Brahmin party was an event in the history of the country. Its downfall was also equally an event to be remembered with a great deal of sorrow. Why the party crumbled in the 1937 elections was a question that the leaders of the party should ask themselves. After all in Madras they had the regime of the Non-Brahmin party for practically 24 years before the elections came. Then what was wrong for the Party to make it fall like a pack of cards notwithstanding the long period of office ? What was it that made the party unpopular with a large majority of Non-Brahmins themselves ? In my view two things were responsible for this downfall. Firstly, they had not been able to realize exactly what their differences were with Brahminical sections. Though they indulged in virulent criticism of Brahmins could any one of them say that those differences had been doctrinal ? How much Brahaminism had they in them ? They were 'Nababs' and regarded themselves as second class Brahmins. Instead of abandoning Brahminism they had been holding on to the spirit of it as being the ideal they ought to reach. And their anger against Brahmins was that they (the Brahmins) gave them only a second class degree.

How could a party take roots when its followers did not know in clear terms what were doctrinal differences between the party to which they belonged and the party to which they were asked to oppose. So the failure to enunciate the doctrine of differences between the Brahminical sections and the Non-Brahmins was one of the reasons for the downfall of the party. The second reason for the downfall of the party was, it had very narrow political programme. The party had been described by its opponents as a party of job-hunters. That was the term the 'Hindu' had often used. I do not attach much importance to this criticism; for "If we are job-hunters, then the other side are no less than we are." One defect in the political programme of the Non- Brahmin Party had been that the party made it, its chief concern to secure a certain number of jobs for their youngmen. That was perfectly legitimate. But did Non-Brahmin youngmen for whom the party fought for twenty years to secure jobs in public services remember the Party after they had received emoluments for their jobs ? During the twenty years the party had been in office, it forgot the 90% of the Non-Brahmins living in the villages, leading an uneconomical life and getting into the clutches of the money-lenders.

I have examined the legislations enacted during this period and except for one solitary measure of land reform, the Non-Brahmin Party never bothered about the tenants and the peasants. That was the "Congress fellows stole their clothes quietly."

I have been greatly pained by the turn of the events. One thing I would like to impress was that a party was the only thing that would save them. A party needed a good leader, a party needed an organisation, a party needed a political platform.

But let us be too critical about leaders. Let us look at the Congress. Who would have accepted Mahatma Gandhi as a leader in any other country ? He was a man who had no vision, no knowledge, no judgement. He was a man who had been a failure all his life in public life. There was no important occassion when India was about to succeed when Mr. Gandhi had brought anything good. When Mr. Jinnah raised his Pakistan issue, two

or three years age, Mr. Gandhi called it a sin and turned a deaf ear. Ultimately the frankincense grew. Mr. Gandhi got frightened. He was grappling with it now by making a complete somersault. Yet he continued to be the leader in this country, because the Congress did not put its leader on his trial.

Let us take the case of Mr. Jinnah. He was an autocratic leader. You will be surprised to know that the league was entirely his show. But the Musalmans had rightly placed their faith in him. The Congress knew that any charge levelled against Mr. Gandhi would mean the disruption of the organisation and so tolerated a great deal of what was inconsistent with democracy. Therefore I would say to the Non-Brahmins, "Unity is of Supreme importance. Learn the Lesson before it is too late."

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