95

GANDHI WAS CONTENTED WITH PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

On 24th September 1944, Dr. Ambedkar attacked Srinivasan Shastriar and Gandhiji vehemently in his speech at Shivraj Memorial Hall, Madras.[1]

He said,

"..... In some of his recent speeches, the Rt. Hon. V. S, Srinivasan Shastriar has said that he considered Mr. Gandhi as the embodiment of India's soul, and that Mr. Gandhi should represent India at any international gathering and that great precautions should be taken to see that in no circumstances should persons like him (Dr. Ambedkar) be given a place at any future international conference.

"..... I was searching my heart in order to find out whether really in the whole of my public career which I am ready to admit is not so extensive as that of the Rt. Honourable Shastriar nor probably as glorious as that of his, whether during the short span of my public life, I have done something so disgraceful that India would be ashamed to see me sitting at an International gathering. I do not wish to use my abusive language, for I could have very easily said that the Rt. Hon. Shastriar was a 'lap-dog' of the British Government. He has been sitting on the lap of the British Government all this, while and if he had achieved any notoriety and greatness either in India or outside, it was largely due to the fact that the British Government had been pleased to make him a 'Show-boy'. I do not wish to say that what Mr. Shastri has said is really croaking of an old crow sitting on the tree with the diseased bowels.....". ".....What Mr. Shrinivasan Shastriar had said was probably typical of what most Congressmen had been saying, namely that the Scheduled Castes, in so far as they had been under his leadership, had been inimical to the general interests of the country. Most people did not know what Mr. Gandhi did at the Round Table Conference. They all thought that the part he played was a glorious one. The Mahatma went to the conference with a mandate to demand independence, something which was far beyond many sober politicians in

[1] : Khairmode, Vol. 9, P. 384.

India were prepared to ask. But what did Mr. Gandhi do ? This old medieval gentleman who went to the conference with a mandate to demand nothing short of independence said Sir Samuel Hoare that he was quite prepared to be content with provincial autonomy. (Cries of Shame)" [1]

●●

[1] : The Mail, Madras, dated 26th September 1944.