

I HAVE LOYALTY TO OUR PEOPLE ALSO TO THIS COUNTRY

“The 55th birthday anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, Saviour of the Scheduled Castes, was celebrated amidst joyful scenes of enthusiasm and rejoicing throughout Delhi. In view of the ban on public meetings in Delhi, on holding of public meetings to celebrate the function was given up this year but in accordance with the directive issued by the General Secretary of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, Federation Flags were hoisted in all important localities including the residence of the Hon’ble Mr. J. N. Mandal, Law member of the Interim Government. Prayers were also offered for the long life of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and all the Scheduled Castes houses were illuminated at night.

On the morning of the 14th April 1947, a purse of Rs. 1001, was presented to Baba Saheb on behalf of the Delhi Scheduled Castes Welfare Association (Karolbagh Branch). Another purse was also presented by certain individual members of the Scheduled Castes Federation.

Replying to the felicitations offered to him Baba Saheb made the following observations :—

“If I would have been in Bombay today, I would have been mobbed by our people. I deliberately came down here on the 13th to escape from the large crowds because I want peace and tranquillity.

Celebrations of birthdays from one point of view are not very happy. As you know man is mortal and he must pass away some day. Birthdays are reminders that there have been several deductions from one’s life. Of course, these deductions are not to be regretted by anybody because it is natural that man should spend his life. However, in a case where the life of a man is devoted to some public cause it does become a matter of some consideration.

Looking at the situation, I am, indeed, very happy to see that the Scheduled Castes all over India have now become so conscious of their disabilities and are now so well organised and so determined to achieve the fullness of their life that no man need despair of the future. As I told the Viceroy the other day, I do not mind telling it to you. I said to him "I would not have come to see you if you had not called me. I have no desire to run after the British." The British at one time had taken the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the Scheduled Castes. I had thought that they would take special steps to see that responsibility is carried out. If the British are going, I don't mind. But they are going without taking any special steps for securing such safeguards as we want in the constitution. It is for them to decide whether their action is right or not. It is not for me. Hundred times I had to persuade them that they ought to do something for the welfare of the Untouchables. I said, I am confident enough that the fate of the 60 million Untouchables will not be sealed simply because the British refuse to do their duty. I have no doubt in my mind that the 60 million Untouchables, without any support and without any power, would achieve what they want even if the Labour Government do not want to give them their due rights.

We, certainly today, are not the same old people, led by others with no consciousness and no organization. Everybody in this country knows that we are now quite different people. We, therefore, must cultivate more strength and power. Both the Congress and the Muslims League want our support and are making terms for that. This would have never happened if we were not so well organised. And I wanted to tell you this that unfortunately our issue has been completely clouded by the announcement of the British to quit India by June 1948. I have no idea what is going to happen. I have made some calculations, but I do not want to announce at present.

It may be that the British may have to stay here under circumstances quite different. But the decision of the British to quit has brought before the public some problems, which have, to some extent, obscured our demand for constitutional safeguards. I do hope that notwithstanding this clouding of the issue we shall succeed, if not wholly, to a very great extent in getting such political safeguards as are necessary for us.

I am glad to tell you that in the Committee for the formulation of the Fundamental Rights we have succeeded to a very great extent. A Memorandum which I had presented to the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee has been accepted by the Committee. There was one issue on which there has been certain difference of opinion; that was with regard to the discrimination in administration and in the matter of public service. I have proposed certain measures in order to prevent that sort of discrimination and I believe that I will be successful. If that happens, so far as the Legislature or the Executive Committees are concerned, we shall have ample protection from the Constitution itself. The Minorities Sub-Committee will meet on the 17th of April and will continue its work for some time. I am very sorry to say that two members of the Scheduled Castes who are in the Minorities Sub-Committee have sent in a Memorandum which is contrary to the general views of the Scheduled Castes. One has proposed joint electorates than the Separate Electorates. He has proposed Joint Electorate by the distributive system of voting which is nothing but political slavery (Again cries of shame: shame;). I proposed to fight with my back to the wall and I hope, I will be able to get the support from other minority communities in the Sub-Committee. I do not want to say at this stage what is going to happen; whether the Committee is supposed to decide the issue by its majority or whether it proposes to negotiate is a matter about which I have no definite mind. But, if they decide the issue by majority I shall certainly take very definite steps to dissociate myself entirely from the Constituent Assembly (Loud cheers). We shall then decide what exactly to do. In this political matter as you know we are concerned with double loyalty, at least I am. I have loyalty to our people inhabiting this country and I am determined that all difficulties that they have faced so far shall be met by political safeguards. I have also loyalty to this country. I have no doubt that you have the same. All of us want this country to be free. So far as I am concerned my conduct has been guided by the consideration that we shall place no great difficulties in the way of this country achieving its freedom although we were ignored by the Cabinet Mission in the proposals

which they formulated. You know that I have delivered many speeches which have been guided by the consideration that this country should find it easy to achieve its freedom. At the same time I am quite determined to say that if the 60 million Untouchables are not safeguarded by means of political rights and if I do not find proper gesture on the part of the Congress people in the matter of settlement of the safeguards for the Scheduled Castes, no one, I am sure, will blame me if I take that step *viz.*, to dissociate myself from the Constituent Assembly. You should, however, remember that in the Constituent Assembly of 292 or so I am one single, solitary individual. You should also bear in mind that no matter how great a man may have the intellect or the capacity to argue and to defend, he is after all one man, a single individual. If the rest of 291 are determined not to listen the reason, not to listen the argument but to oppose their opponent you can well realize my possible helplessness in the Constituent Assembly of 292 where I am only one.

I hope that good sense will prevail and we shall achieve what we want ultimately. What will count with us is an organization. You must also remember all political rights that we might get by our perpetual efforts are bound to be for a period. There will be a time when these rights will vanish, not only for us but for everybody in this country. When these rights vanish what we shall have to depend upon is our organization, our strength and unity. Therefore, we must be determined to unite. (Here Baba Saheb referred to the message sent to the Jai Bheem and narrated the story contained therein.)*

The only message which I can give you is suffering and more suffering. There can be no other method except through suffering and you should not be disheartened because our people in some villages have suffered and are undergoing great sufferings. We shall have to pursue our task with determination and decide to be organized. There need not be any fear of suffering in this country.

* See Pp. 83-85 Section I, part II, of this Volume, under title "Not to stop until the Untouchables Recover Manhood."

I am very glad to receive this purse from you. Now I have been thinking what I should do with this money. I propose to do one of the two things. One is that I should keep this money with some body in order that it may be devoted for the purpose of building the Club in Delhi for which I have arranged to purchase land. Though the sum is small we shall collect more for the purpose. The other thing is that this money should be returned to the Association so that they may use it for certain purposes. (The Association did not agree to take it back). All right, then it should be given to the fund collected for building the Club.” —F.O.C¹

●●

¹: Jai Bheem, dated May 25th, 1947.