

THE MINORITY MUST ALWAYS BE WON OVER IT MUST NEVER BE DICTATED TO

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar inaugurated 'Siddharth College Parliament' on 25th September 1947 at Bombay.

On this occasion he said,

"I have not got any clear line of action before me for the present, and so I am thinking to speak in a military way. This independence has come so sudden that we had no time to recall our forces and we had no time to arrange our forces even.

The British in spite of their promises to us for the last fifty years, in the end, deceived us in not recognising the Scheduled Castes as separate political entity. They did not help us in the task. They helped the Musalmans and Sikhs. It is very curious to note at this stage as to why the British helped only the Musalmans, Sikhs and not the Scheduled Castes. We are left with no support. We had to depend upon nothing else but our own strength. And as you well know that this strength also was divided in the eyes of the British Political Surveyors like Cripps and his fellow friends in the delegation. They saw this division because of the separate organization of the so called Harijan Party. It is true and was true in reality that the Scheduled Castes Federation was the only representative body of the Scheduled Castes.

I am glad to say that, when I had been to England and discussed with many of the leaders of different political groups there, the permanent Parliamentary Secretaries, who were in day to-day touch of the Indian situation, had fully supported my saying that the Scheduled Castes Federation was the only representative body of the Scheduled Castes. Not only that but people like Mr. Cripps and many like him were convinced by my mission, but in spite of this the British Delegation over-ruled everything, because they wanted to take political decision for their safety even

though it was far from reality, and thus they took the political decision at our cost. This loss to the Scheduled Castes was due to the shameless attitude taken by the Rashtriya Harijans. In the Minority Sub-Committee I stressed our demand for Separate Electorate by suggesting a solution that a successful candidate should at last secure 35% of the votes of the community he represented but there, the hasty action of the Muslim group in leaving the hall at the time of voting made my proposal to secure equal votes for and against, i. e. 7 v/s 7. I tried myself in the Advisory Committee and a strange thing is that Mr. Manuswami Pillay, Speaker from the Madras Assembly, supported my amendment. Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel also did not vote against it. But in the General Constituent Assembly, Mr. Pillay, one of my supporters, was one of the signatories to oppose this proposal. I was struck with wonder to all this. This is the second crooked role played by the Rashtriya Harijans to the permanent annoyance and common interest of the Scheduled Castes at large. It is for these reasons that I have not any clear line of action for the present.

Now, I must tell you one thing that the Separate Electorates alone are not only ends and means of the Scheduled Castes Federation. Separate Electorates with our means are good but in themselves, they are bad. You have got the Separate Electorates but no political safeguards. I don't know what will be their lot. I could succeed in getting you some political safeguards in Legislative Assemblies and services. It is because of my efforts that the rest of the minorities like Sikhs, Indian Christians and Muslims have some safeguards. Because it was only myself, who was so very insistent on this demand, the Constituent Assembly had no courage to displease me at this stage. I am glad to say that I could serve the minorities in the real sense of the term.

It is likely that you should have been disappointed and I am also not so much happy about it. Even then we have got to play our role in the future. I would like to tell you about the history of the British Labour Party. That party during the last 24 years has developed so much that today it has its rule.

The same party, when it was first organised, practically has no representation in the Parliament. What does it show ? It shows that not the success at the elections is the victory of the party, but the success of the principle and programme is the victory of the party. And I have no doubt that the Scheduled Castes Federation will have its role for the principles it stands for. It is for this, that I am not disappointed at all. It is for this reason that we must be aware of the following three things :

(i) The Scheduled Castes Federation must maintain its political existence under whatever circumstances. We have got the history of the Non-Brahmin Party before us. Before Congress came into prominence the All India Non-Brahmin Party was in its zenith. But when the leaders of the Non-Brahmin Party went individually in Congress for their individual purposes they were as if purchased, and as such they had no voice in Congress then and even now. Even though they are a vast majority they are ruled and their aid is greater responsible than the individuals;

(ii) You should have very able leaders. Yours leaders must have the courage and calibre to match the topmost leaders in any political party. The party without efficient leaders comes to nil. The defeat of the British Labour Party in 1931 was due to this fact. And this is equally applicable to the Non-Brahmin Party in India;

(iii) In any Party, just as the honest leadership which can never be sold is of vital importance, in the same way, devoted workers in the party is the second important thing essential for the growth of the party. The Scheduled Castes Federation has to create many but none to my satisfaction. In one way, the Scheduled Castes Federation has not to worry about because their leader will never be sold at whatever cost; but what of the rest of the organs ? When will they come up to the mark ? It is upto you to fulfil my need. I repeatedly tell you that Scheduled Castes Federation must maintain its political existence, not in my individual interest, but for you and me.

In the end, I tell you, make proper use of the facilities provided by the Siddharth College. I hope that therein only I shall be able to watch the rising star to the occasion to lead the Scheduled Castes and will prove his worth. Every man has two temptation in the world, first, the money and secondly, the wife and then the children follows. It is but natural; but our people do not understand the meaning of a few children. Then in the gulf, they have no time to look where Scheduled Castes stand. So it is upto you to stand to the need of the Scheduled Castes, at large. You must be able to create devoted workers. I do not know when our forces will be needed; but we should be on our guard to wait and see.

Hitherto, you must have noticed that while a large majority of our students had been interesting themselves in political movements they had not a clear realisation of what politics means, what responsibilities it involves and what methods must be pursued in order to bring political activities to function. There was, as I observe it, a complete dissociation of what we call academic life from the practical problems of life and politics. You will have to do two things :—

(i) to enlarge your minds, your vision, your capacity to think, your ability to solve problems; and

(ii) to bring that capacity, that vision, that ability to form judgment to bear upon the actual problems which the vast mass of the people of this country are facing today.

It is no more going to be mere incubation in our solitary room, in a chemistry or physics laboratory, it is something much wider than that. You will not merely learn political economy, political science, history, commerce, trade, currency, all the subjects which touch upon the practical life of people, but you will use that teaching, that learning to suggest not merely to yourselves but to the politicians in charge of the affairs of this country what are the right solutions of the problems before them and where they are going wrong.

There is one other things which you must also remember and it is this. In an autocracy where the laws are made by the wishes of a dictator or by an absolute monarch the art of speaking is unnecessary. No autocrat, no absolute monarch need pay any attention to eloquence because his will is law. But in a parliament where laws are made, no doubt by the wishes of the people, the man who succeeds in winning our opposition is the man who possesses the art to persuade his opponent. You cannot win over a majority in this House by giving a black eye to your opponent. A minority is not going to curb a majority by bringing goondas, nor is the majority going to record and obtain a victory by laying low the members of the minority. You will have to carry a proposition only by the art of speaking, by persuading his opponent, by winning him over his side by argument, either gentle or strong, but always logically and instructively. Therefore, a supreme qualification for success in a parliamentary institution is the capacity to possess the House. Therefore, you should go to Parliament fully prepared to make a serious contribution to a serious subject and I also want to add that you should learn, very seriously the art of public speaking. It is not a very difficult art as I can tell you from my own experience. I am not a very great speaker and I do not know if anybody who would care to write the history of people in India who have played their part in Indian politics would find any justification to put me among the best speakers in India. I do not cover that honour. At one time, I was so much overwhelmed by my shyness which made me so nervous that I was on the point of giving up a job of a Professor in the Sydenham College for nothing else except for the fear that boys will probably run me down. But I can assure those of you who have similar fear to cast it away and to make an effort to acquire the command over language which is not a very difficult task at all.

Then, there must be absolute unconditional obedience to the ruling of the Speaker. You must never question the ruling of the Speaker. If there is a difficult point of order on which there is no precedent, on which, he cannot off hand, give his ruling, he will call on different sides of the House to express their point of view as to what is the correct interpretation of a certain ruling. But

after he has heard all the sides and proceeds to give his ruling, then, that ruling you must accept as sacrament. No matter how wrong that ruling is. I have been in parliamentary institutions from 1926 to 1946 with a very short break. I have known speakers of different varieties, good and others but we have observed the ruling. You can move a motion that a certain standing order to be amended.

It is unfortunate that you have no opportunity of what I call 'visual institutions' of how parliaments work. If you get a chance to go to Paris and see the actual session there or to London and see the House of Commons or go to the U.S.A. and see the House of Representatives, you will see wonderful difference between all these three bodies. In Paris you will see a wonderful assembly. Once I went to the Lower House in Paris on two or three successive days. I could not distinguish that August Assembly from the Crawford Market. People were moving from one place to another, from one corner to another, there was no order, nobody was listening to the Speaker, the poor Speaker had a big log of wood on his table and big hammer also of wood. He continuously hammered, there was no attention paid to him. But just the opposite was the condition in the House of Commons. There is a rule that no member can stand in the chair when the Speaker is standing. Every member must sit. When one member is standing no other member can stand in the chair. He must sit and listen. No member can begin to speak in the House of Commons unless the Speaker calls on him. There is no duty nor obligation on the Speaker to call upon any particular individual to speak. There is a phrase "That the Speaker calls upon such person as are able to catch his eye." That is a very delusive phrase. A Speaker may catch an eye and may deliberately wink at it. The reason is obvious. The Speaker having been in the chair for a number of years knows every individual, knows his good points, knows his bad points. As that he does is now known as his family history. He rarely, allows a man to speak who is tedious and who speaks but says nothing.

We have today what is called Parliamentary Democracy. Let us know that word. It is a very singular institution. It differs from autocracy or unlimited monarchy because in autocracy or

unlimited monarchy there is no such thing as parliament. People's wishes count for nothing. The King or the autocrat is the sole master of the situation. He claims to represent the will of the people and governs the people according to what might be called his own will.

We have another system in vogue which is called today the dictatorship of the proletariat. The difference between the two from our point of view is very minor. Autocracy has taken upon itself the obligation to serve what are called the masses but fundamentally this kind of dictatorship does not materially differ from absolute monarchy because in neither of them the people play any part. Parliamentary Democracy is a midway between the two. It is very delicate institution. Its characteristics ought to be noted very carefully, in order that no violence has been described by a variety of political philosophers in a variety of different ways. Parliamentary Democracy has been described as Government by law. At one time this characteristic of Parliamentary Democracy that it was Government by law was undoubtedly very significant, very real. When monarchy was abolished in Europe and Parliamentary Democracy came into being and became operative, the generation which saw this change from absolute monarchy to Parliamentary Democracy could well understand that the description of the Parliamentary Democracy as Government by law was indeed very real and very significant. Because before it, the rule was personal rule. The ruler depended upon his wishes in the first place. Secondly, he always placed himself above the law. The law was for the people and not for himself. The rule of law which we now enjoy is a well established principle. We have so become used to it that we do not regard it as a matter of great virtue. But the significant fact that remains even now is that, when we make the law, we place even the makers of law below that law.

Some one has also said that Parliamentary Democracy is a democracy by majority. It is true that in our legislation there is a rule that all questions shall be decided by a majority. But I could ask to be very careful about that principle. It is one of the most dangerous principle that we have got. The majority rule has

been admitted merely for reasons for convenience. But for God's sake do not ride that principle too much. You will create a great deal of difficulties. In a certain sense the rule of majority is the wrong rule. I am prepared to argue that case. Let me illustrate. We are engaged in framing a Constitution. I have been placed at the head of it as its Chairman. We have to guard the fundamental right of the minorities. Do not forget that the fundamental right means that the majority has no right to do a certain thing. That is the meaning of the fundamental right. The fundamental right in a constitution puts absolute limitation upon the power of the majority to do a certain thing. As a matter of fact, the majority rule has come but by what I call a fluke.

If you examine the procedure of the House of Commons and the History of it, you will find that about the year fourteen fifteen hundreds of (what happened was this that) a motion was moved in the House of Commons: those in favour went and sat in one lobby, those who were against it sat in the other lobby. The Speaker asked the clerk how many were in Ayes' lobby and how many in Noes' lobby. He was told that there were 20 in the Noes' lobby and 50 in the Ayes' lobby. The Speaker did not declare the result of the motion. What he did was to tell the Ayes lobby to go into the Noes lobby and to persuade them to come and sit in the House and then only he declared the result. What does that mean, something very significant, that the majority cannot have a decision in its favour unless the speaker was confident that the minority, if not actively, at least passively was prepared to give consent. That was the original procedure. Later on for some reason this practice or this obligation upon the majority to go out and persuade their brethren in the opposite side to come back and to listen was dropped. However, although Parliamentary Democracy for the purpose accepted the principle of a majority rule do not think that you can by any way you like ill-treat or put to a disadvantage a minority. You will create a great deal of trouble for yourself in this very House. The minority must always be won over. It must never be dictated to.

There was another political philosophy - the philosophy of Walter Bagehot. He described parliamentary government as a government of discussion, which I think is very true description of parliamentary government. In a parliamentary government nothing is done behind the curtain, nothing is done as a result of the wishes of any particular individuals. Every subject is brought before the house either in the form of a bill or in the form of a resolution or some other motion.

When it is placed before the house it can be debated upon. It is a pity, great pity that we have not followed the great parliamentary practice of accepting of what we call the motion known as "enclosure" (Here the Speaker narrated in brief how Parnell harassed Gladstone and Lord Northbrook by making some of 48 hours, 36 hours and 24 hours and as a result of this how the practice of "enclosure" was brought into opposition).

However, notwithstanding the fact that all the legislatures now do have such a rule that the debate be closed and the question be put, there is always enough time for discussion. Remember that the discussion that taken place in the parliament has relevance not merely to the decision of the issue which it undoubtedly has, but has far wider relevance and far wider significance. If the debate is on high level and is properly reported in the papers, obviously there cannot be a greater medium of political education for the people in general than a debate in the House of Commons. This, therefore, is a very important aspect.

It has been said that the parliamentary government is a self-government. No doubt logically it is so. But the most important thing that you will most remember is that what the country needs is a good government and the question is how can you have a good government? A very important question ! I do not wish to dogmatise. There are one or two observations which I would like to place for your consideration because they need serious consideration. In my judgment there can be no dogma as to what constitutes good government. Different people may draw different ideas of good government. The capitalists think that a capitalist form of

government where there is a laissez faire is a good sort of government, the socialists, on the other hand, think that the socialistic form of government is a good government. There might be a variety of other people of their own brand. The fact is that there are a variety of opinions as to what constitutes good government. In a complex society, such as ours, with all its different ramifications, no sovereign remedy may be possible.”

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