

BECAUSE OF DIVINE LAW OF MANU OR YAJNAVALKYA, HINDU SOCIETY WAS NEVER ABLE TO REPAIR ITSELF

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar delivered a speech in the Law College, Delhi University, Delhi on the 10th April 1948.

He said,

“The responsibility for this decay lay in the failure of ancient societies to take upon themselves the task of removing the defects in their structure. Instead of removing the defects they submitted to be governed by the law laid down by the law-makers like Manu. The true function of law consists in repairing the faults in society.

Civilisation had never been a continuous process. There were states and societies which had at one time been civilized. In course of time something happened which made these societies stagnant and decayed. This could be illustrated by India's history itself.

There could be no doubt that one of the countries which could boast of a great ancient civilization was India. When inhabitants of Europe were living under almost barbaric and nomadic conditions this country had reached the highest peak of civilization. It had parliamentary institutions when people of Europe were mere nomads.

It looked to the laymen as if our parliamentary institutions today had borrowed all parliamentary procedure from European Countries, particularly from Britain, but I think anyone who refers for instance, to the pages of the *Vinay-pitaka* will find that there is no ground for such a view.

Some of the rules which are laid down in May's parliamentary practise were known to the people of India as students of *Vinay-pitaka*. People seemed to think that the procedure that there could be no debate in parliament unless there was a motion and no vote could be taken unless a motion was put, was something new. But I think this was a popular fallacy. In *Vinay-pitaka* which regulated meetings of the *Bhikkhus Sangh*, there was the well-known rule that no debate could take place except on 'Neti' motion.

We today think that secret ballot is something which was invented by the British people. That again is a mistake. In *Vinay-pitaka* there is a definite provision for tellers to count votes. They were called '*Salpatraka Grahaks*', *Salpatraka* (bark of tree) was used as ballot paper. There was also a system of secret ballot where the *Bhikkhu* himself could drop his '*Salpatraka*' in the ballot box.

I am referring to political matters because it has been said by many historians that wherever advancement they made in other branches of life the Indian people were politically very backward. I deny that proposition.

I admit that we somehow, lost that political genius. We lost all parliamentary institutions and we became subject to the autocratic king. It marked the decline of civilisation and the Indian society has been declining from time to time as all other societies have done.

Why is it that in modern times societies seem to progress continuously without many difficulties except those which wars give rise to ? Why was it not so in the ancient society ?

The difference between ancient society and modern society lies in the fact that in ancient societies law-making was not the function of the people. Law was made by God or by the law-giver. The function of the Society was merely to obey law that was made either by the divine power or the law maker. This was the fundamental reason for ancient societies not having any continuous civilisation.

The true function of law consists in repairing the faults of the society. Unfortunately ancient societies never dared to assume the function of repairing their own defects; consequently they decayed. One of the reasons for the decay of Hindu society is that it was governed by law which had either been made by *Manu* or *Yajnavalkya*. Law that has been laid down by these law-makers is divine law. The result was that Hindu society was never able to repair itself.

In Europe after a course of time, jurisdiction of ecclesiastical law was challegned by secular law with the result that today law in the West was purely secular and the jurisdiction of the Church was confined merely to the priest.

Unfortunately many writers who have carried on researches into India's past, including the great scholar Prof. Max Muller, have given currency to the motion that Indian law has not changed at all. This is in conformity with what the orthodox *pundits* maintain. But from such study as I have made I can say that it is a complete fallacy.

There is no country in the world which has undergone so many revolutions as this country. This country has been in a conflict between ecclesiastical law and secular law long before the Europeans sought to challenge the authority of the Pope. *Kautilya's Arthshastra* lays down foundation of secular law. In India unfortunately ecclesiastical law triumphed over secular law. Why did it happen ? In my opinion, it was one of the greatest disasters in this country. The unprogressive character of Hindu society was due to the notion that law cannot be changed."



ORGANISE UNDER ONE LEADER, ONE PARTY, ONE PROGRAMME

“Fifth Conference of united provinces of Scheduled Castes Federation was organised on 24th and 25th April 1948 at Lucknow.

Last year, an agitation was launched by Scheduled Castes Federation at the same place to establish the political rights as well as equality of human beings. In this agitation more than 2000 Dalit men and women had participated. All these were arrested at Luknow and kept in the jail. It was a very big sacrifice done by the Untouchables of United Provinces. All these men and women had intense desire to see and listen to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who was the emancipator of Dalits. The present lecture is the out come of these efforts.

This Conference could be made successful due to effect of Shri Gayaprasad, General Secretary, Bal Govind, Kanhayyalal Sonkar, Buddhadas Choudary and Mevalal Sonkar. More than one lakh Dalits had assembled for this conference. General Secretary of All India Scheduled Castes Federation Shri P. N. Rajbhoj was also present at this Conference. Shri Gopichand Vippal President, United Provinces, Samta Sainik Dal, Shri Tilakchand Kuril President, United Provinces Scheduled Castes Federation were the main organizing pillars.

This conference was important due to two specialities. (1) It was clear from the Conference that there is no end to miseries of Untouchables in the Congress ruled States. (2) Scheduled Castes Federation would never hesitate to do anything which is necessary for the progress of Untouchables. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar addressed the Conference on Sunday, 25th April 1948.”¹

He said,

“Political power is the key to all social progress and the Scheduled Castes can achieve their salvation if they captured this power by organising themselves into a third Party and holding the balance of power between the rival political parties—Congress and Socialists.

¹. Janata, dated 1st May 1948.

The Scheduled Castes cannot capture political power by joining the Congress. It is a big organisation and if we enter the Congress we will be a mere drop in the ocean. Congressmen have great pride and we cannot raise ourselves by joining the organisation. We will only increase the strength of our enemies by joining the Congress.

Congress is a burning house and we cannot be prosperous by entering in it. I shall not be surprised if it is ruined in a couple of years. Socialists have come out of the Congress. That will certainly weaken the Congress.

We must organise ourselves into a third party so that in case the Socialists and the Congress do not command an absolute majority, they will come to our feet to beg for our votes and we can, then, hold the balance of power and dictate our own terms to them for giving our political support.

I came to Lucknow 12 years ago as a member of the Lothian Committee. I am glad to see that there is more political consciousness among the Scheduled Castes now. We had *Satyagraha* in U. P.. I must congratulate you all for the sacrifices you have made for the Community. It shows that, if we are determined to attain our objectives, we shall attain it in spite of any obstacle.

My joining the Congress Government has created a great amount of confusion among the Scheduled Castes and I want to clear that suspicion and doubts. The British did not honour their declarations and recognised Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as the only Communities to whom power could be transferred.

I am asked why after a fight for 25 years against the Congress I choose to remain silent at that crucial juncture. After all, it is not the best strategy to fight all the time. We have also to restore to other measures.

The British left us in lurch and our Community was divided. There were many fifth columnists in our ranks. It was not in our interest to come into conflict with such a mighty organisation at that time.

We followed the policy of conciliation and have attained success to a great extent. If we did not get all what we wanted still we got a lot. We have received reservation in the legislatures and services and most of our demands have been accepted. The demand for Separate Electorate has not been conceded but we should not be ashamed of it as other minorities have also failed in this respect. That is not the time to come to a conflict with the Congress and we should get as much as we can by conciliation and cooperation.

I have joined the Central Government; but, have not become a member of the Congress and have no intention to do so. I was invited by the Congress to join the Central Government and I had joined it unconditionally. I shall come out any time. I think it is useless to stay there. Our condition is such that it is necessary that our men should be in the administrative machinery. There is no fear of just legislation, but even good laws may be badly administered and if the Government is composed of persons who are by tradition against the interests of the Scheduled Castes, then, there can be no hope for us. *Begar* Forced Labour has no sanction of the Law, but it is being enacted by the *Zamindars* and petitions of the Scheduled Castes have been ignored because the officers who receive these petitions were in many cases relatives of the oppressors. If some Scheduled Castes members had been in office, they would have given proper protection to their brethren.

If I join the Congress, I will do so after declaring my intention. If it will be in the interest of the Scheduled Castes, I will advise you to do so. But until I openly ask you to join the Congress, do not join.

The Backward Classes had suffered because of their aloofness. They must forge a united front in order to wrest political power from the higher classes. The system of adult franchise had brought political power to the masses and in my opinion if 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ crore Scheduled Castes and one crore Backward Classes people in the U. P. join hands against a common target they could return 50% of their

members to the legislature and capture political power. I shall have no objection if the Backward Classes form a separate front against higher castes. It is deplorable that the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes are not conscious of their power with the result that higher castes were dominating the administration.

You must organise yourself under one Leader, one Party and one Programme. You remove all caste distinctions and organise yourself under the aegis of the Federation.”

Dr. Ambedkar's statement

A statement issued by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in order to clarify and amplify certain matters included in the Lucknow speech is as follows :

“I have noticed a most distorted version of my speech delivered at the Conference of the Scheduled Castes Federation held at Lucknow on April 25 and I have also been pained to read in a local daily that I had made some ungracious remarks about my colleagues. I feel it necessary to clear the cloud and to state in outline what I said at Lucknow.

My speech was extempore, but I give below the points I made in my speech. They were all intended to meet the criticism that has been levelled against me by some of my own followers on various counts.

(1) Why I am silent ever since the departure of the Cabinet Mission ?

(2) Why I joined the Congress Government ?

(3) What I propose to do in future ?

In reply to (I) I said : The Scheduled Castes Federation demanded political safeguards—the most important of which was separate electorates. If the results of the primary elections were taken as the test, there was no doubt that the whole of the Scheduled Castes were behind this demand. Notwithstanding this, our demand was turned down by the Cabinet Mission. This was because of two reasons : (i) We were a weaker party as compared with the Muslims and the Sikhs and (ii) We were divided in our ranks which contained many fifth columnists.

The decisions of the Cabinet Mission seemed to wipe out the Scheduled Castes as a separate political entity and that without political safeguards the Scheduled Castes appeared to me to be doomed. There was complete darkness before me. That is the reason why I have not made any statement.

In reply to (2) I said :

It is true I have been an opponent and a critic of the Congress. At the same time, I do not believe in opposition for the sake of opposition. There ought to be the spirit of co-operation where we can gain something by co-operation. I thought there would be no use fighting against the Congress. I, therefore, decided to co-operate and by co-operation we got some safeguards in the Constitution which we might not otherwise have got and gave some instances to substantiate my argument.

With regard to my joining the Cabinet : I said there were two reasons which prevailed upon me to accept the offer—(i) the offer was without any condition : (ii) one could serve the interests of the Scheduled Castes better from within the Government than from without.

I said that the Scheduled Castes had no fear of bad laws being made to their prejudice. What they had to fear about was bad administration. This bad administration was due to the absence of men belonging to the Scheduled Castes in the administration.

The Administration was unsympathetic to the Scheduled Castes because it was maintained wholly by caste Hindu officers who were partial to the caste Hindus in the villages, who exacted *begar* from the Scheduled Castes, and practised upon them tyranny and oppression day in and day out. This tyranny and oppression could be averted only if more of the Scheduled Castes could find places in the civil service. This can be done better by being inside the Government rather than remaining outside.

In regard to third point, I said that there is no use joining the Congress. Safety lies in having two parties. There must be an opposition to criticise the Government. The Government may otherwise easily become dictator. It is a house which is burning. There are many inside the Congress who want to form an opposition, the necessity of which they feel quite strongly.

Secondly, the Congress itself is getting divided. The Socialists have gone out of it. How big they will grow one cannot say now. There are possibilities of their getting quite big. Hereafter, there will be two parties: (1) Congress and (2) Socialists—and the question is not whether we should join the Congress. The question is whether we should join the Congress or the Socialists.

I said that my advice is that you should form a third party so that the Scheduled Castes may be able to hold the balance and thereby obtain bargaining power. There is no use joining any political party as its mere camp-followers. If it gives anything, it merely gives office. It cannot give power.

Your conference has just now passed a resolution condemning the Pant Government for giving you only ten per cent reservation in the services when on a purely population basis you are entitled to something like 22%. The reason why Mr. Pant does not give you your full quota, is because for his majority in the United Provinces Assembly he is not depended upon you—and that can be only when you are united into a separate organisation worthy of negotiation—you can demand 22%, and he will have to give it to you.

I then turned to the question of unity between the Scheduled Castes and the so-called Backward Classes. This I did at the request of the leaders of the Backward Classes who were present at the Conference. I said it was a pity that the two classes whose needs were commn did not join together. The reason was that the Backward Classes did not like to associate themselves with the Scheduled Castes because they were afraid that such an association will bring themselves down to the level of the Scheduled Castes.

I said that I was not anxious to establish interdining and intermarriage between the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes. They may well remain separate social entities. There is no reason why they should not join hands to form a political party to remove their backward condition. I pointed out how the Scheduled Castes have improved their condition by playing their part in the politics of the country and there is no reason why the Backward Classes should not do the same.

I said that the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes form majority of the population of the country. There is no reason why they should not rule this country. All that is necessary is to organize for the purpose of capturing political power—which is your own because of adult suffrage. People do not seem to buck up courage because they are overwhelmed by the belief that the Congress Government is there forever. I said, this is a wrong impression. In a popular democracy no Government is permanent and not even the Government established by the two of the tallest Congressmen, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel. If you organize, you can even capture that Government.

I am sure, the reader will notice that any suggestion made that I attacked the Congress Organization or my colleagues is a travesty of facts.”

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PROGRESS OF A COMMUNITY ALWAYS DEPENDS UPON EDUCATION

At Manmad, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was presented with a purse on January 15, 1949*. “Speaking on the occasion, he declared,

that his people would establish real socialism in the land under the rule of peasants and workers. He also impressed upon his audience that the progress of a community always depended upon how they advanced in education.”¹

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* As per Janata, dated 22nd January 1949, the programme was held on Sunday the 16th January 1949—Editors.

¹: Keer, P. 410.

THE HINDU CODE WAS A RIGHT STEP TOWARDS A CIVIL CODE

Students Parliament of Siddarth College had organised a Student Parliament on Wednesday, 11th January 1950. Coinciding the presence of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Bombay. He was called specially to talk on 'Hindu Code Bill.' The programme was arranged in Sundarabai Hall. Even though the programme was at 9 a. m. the hall was full to its capacity by 8 a. m. only. Many outside dignitaries were present to listen to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. A special arrangement of loud speakers was made.¹

In his speech Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said,

"It would be wrong to describe the Hindu Code Bill as either radical revolutionary. He said that the Bill, while according sanction to the new ways of progress, did not oppose the orthodox practices. He further stated that the new Republican Constitution of India had given a positive direction that Government should endeavour to prepare a Civil Code for the benefit of the country as a whole. The purpose of the Hindu Code Bill was, he explained, to codify and modify certain branches of the Hindu Law. Dwelling upon its significance, he said that it was beneficial from the point of the country's oneness that the same set of laws should govern the Hindu social and religious life. He further told his audience that the Hindu laws were being revised not because the Hindus were a weak people to resist its revival but for uniformity's sake. The Hindu Code was a right step towards a Civil Code. The laws should be easily understandable and be applied to all society irrespective of regional barriers. Moreover, a Hindu was free to adopt anybody from the Hindu society and he could make a will denying inheritance to his daughter.

As regards the authority under which the Code was drafted, he said that the modifications proposed were based on the Hindu *Shastras* and *Smritis*. The property was governed by *Dayabhag* system ; the child belonged to the caste of the father under *Pitrisavarnya* ; divorce was supported by Kautilya and Parashara *Smriti*; and women's rights to property were supported by *Brihaspati Smriti*" he concluded." ²



¹ : Janata, dated 14th January 1950.

² : Keer, Pp. 417—418.

WE SHOULD ENSURE THAT INDIA IS NOT ENSLAVED AGAIN

“Tremendous mass enthusiasm marked a meeting of the Bombay Scheduled Castes Federation at Nare Park, Parel, on Wednesday evening, the 11th January 1950, when Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the moving spirit behind the drafting of the Indian Union Constitution, was presented with a book-shaped gold casket containing a copy of the monumental document.

The meeting, attended by over two lakhs* men, women and children, was a landmark in the history of the Scheduled Castes’ Federation. The serried ranks of humanity that overflowed from the Park to the main road was the biggest gathering ever seen.

Large processions of Harijans, carrying blue party flags and vociferously shouting victory slogans, converged on the Park from many localities early in the after-noon. The crowd was conducted by volunteers and remarkable discipline was maintained. Enthusiasm reached fever pitch when Dr. Ambedkar climbed the dais to attend his first public reception in the city in five years and shouts of “*Ambedkar Ki Jai*” rent the air. About 50 garlands covered the Law Member who was later joined by his wife Dr. Savita Ambedkar. The assemblage gave a rousing ovation to her also.

The large-seized casket was paid for by subscriptions raised by the Federation. Two thousand rupees, which were left over after meeting the cost of the casket, were also presented to Dr. Ambedkar by Mr. J. G. Bhatankar, the Federation’s Secretary.

Speaking immediately after receiving the gift, Dr. Ambedkar referred extensively to the past. He said,

“Because we had been fighting the Congress in all elections, Congressmen were so much against me that some of them openly said they would see any one in the Constituent Assembly but not me. Indeed, because our party’s strength here was not sufficient, I had to seek election to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal.

*Janata, dated 14th January 1950.

“The fact that I not only entered the Assembly but was actually entrusted later with the unique honour of drafting the Constitution. I consider not so much a tribute to myself as to the party. We were called stooges of the British and Muslims ; but we had to bargain with the former because we were not free and were compelled to safeguard our own interests.”¹

“He further stated that he had entered the Constituent Assembly with the object of safeguarding the interests of the Scheduled Castes and not with the ambition of drafting the Constitution. However, through some circumstances the responsibility for drafting the Constitution fell on his shoulders, and he was proud that his name had been associated with the framers of the Constitution, because one got such a unique opportunity once in one’s lifetime.”²

“Talking in a more personal way, Dr. Ambedkar declared, “Some people think that because I am in the capital I am losing touch with the Federation and that the ground is shifting from beneath my feet. But today’s gathering shows that I am on firmer ground than even before.

The Law Member, who kept up his serious demeanour throughout the impressive ceremony, recalled the bitter past between himself and the Congress but made a powerful appeal to the Harijans not to isolate themselves from other political groups but seek their co-operation for the good of the community.

“The political situation is not clear at the moment” he declared, “and it is too early to say with which party we will ally ourselves.” Speaking in a strain that sounded strange compared with pre-independence utterances. Dr. Ambedkar exhorted his community to think not merely of itself but also of the country as a whole. “India was enslaved by the Muslims and the British but today we are free and we should exert ourselves to ensure that history does not repeat itself,” he added.

“Though we were at logger-heads for a long time with the Congress, the present Government have done something at least for the Scheduled Castes. In a democracy no minority can achieve

¹ : Source material, Vol. I, Pp. 358-360.

² : Keer, P. 418.

much by itself. We are a minority, and will continue to be a minority, and, therefore, it is necessary to seek the co-operation of some parties.”

Dr. Ambedkar then came to the subject of elections. “We are a poor Community and we do not have large sums to spend on elections. So, I suggest that every adult contribute four annas per month to swell the party’s election funds. We must start on this task at once so that we may have collected enough before the elections”.

For hours after the meeting ended Harijans in Central and North Bombay, returning to their homes kept the streets lively with peaceful but noisy pro— Dr. Ambedkar demonstrations.”¹

However, there were additional dimensions in the speech of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, on the subject which were reported by ‘the Bombay Chronicle’. The dimensions were :

“The Law Minister said that his election as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee was a unique honour not only to himself, but a recognition of the Federation as a political force to be reckoned with.

In the past, they had to fight against formidable odds and there were many who dubbed him as a stooges of the British and Muslim League. Throughout the last 20 years, the Congress was at logger-heads with the Federation and they were determined to see that no representative of the Federation got a seat in the Constituent Assembly.

He never dreamt that he would be charged with the responsibility of framing the country’s Constitution. Now the opponents have realised that the Federation was a political force which could not be slighted or ignored.

Dr. Ambedkar said that, hitherto, the Federation had followed a narrow path, namely putting their own interests about those of the country, and he admitted he was partly responsible for it. Now that India has achieved independence, the time has come to change their attitude, and strive for the national good, while, of course, safeguarding their own interests, he observed.

¹ : Source material, Vol. I, Pp. 360.

During the British regime, he added, the Federation followed its own policy, keeping aloof from other political parties. “We are after all a minority and a minority cannot be successful in the elections without the support of a more powerful political party”. He said that their organization, therefore, would have to seek the support of some other party during the next elections. Dr. Ambedkar made a fervent appeal to the audience to contribute to the election funds liberally.”¹

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¹ : The Bombay Chronicle, dated 12th January 1950.

MAHARASHTRIANS ARE MORE SINCERE, MORE DUTY CONSCIOUS TO THE NATION

Republic day was celebrated ¹ with much fun and fare at the new Maharashtra Bhavan. Maharashtrian Institutions of New Delhi on 27th January 1950. Various programme were arranged on this occassion. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was specially invited and honoured on this occasion Mr. Kakasaheb Gadgil welcomed Dr. Babasaheb and Mrs. Ambedkar. Replying to the address,

He said,

“The Maharashtrians were more sincere, more conscious of their duties to the nation and were ever willing to sacrifice for the cause of the nation. He was proud that two Maharashtrians were in the Central Cabinet and the Governor of the Reserve Bank, too, was a Maharashtrian. In politics, in learning and in the cause of sacrifice, Maharashtrians were far ahead,” he concluded.²

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¹. : Janata, dated 4th February 1950.

². : Keer,P. 419.

RELIGION NO LONGER BE INHERITED BUT BE EXAMINED RATIONALLY BY EVERYBODY

“A Dramatic development of great national importance and interest throughout South-East Asia took place in the capital New Delhi; tonight, the May 2, 1950 when Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, India’s Law Minister, called upon 70 million Harijans to embrace *Buddhism*, speaking at the triple anniversary of Lord Buddha at a crowded meeting.

Later, Dr. Ambedkar told the “*Bharat*” representative that he was on his way to embracing *Buddhism*. Mrs. Ambedkar was present at the meeting.

It is also authoritatively learnt that about 15 Harijans will embrace *Buddhism* in Delhi tomorrow. Similar directives, it is learnt, have been sent to Dr. Ambedkar’s followers all over India.

Yesterday, the actual day of Trinity-birthday, “*Parinirvana*” day, the day of death of Lord Buddha, Dr. Ambedkar went to the local *Vihar* to pay his respects and homage to Lord Buddha.

According to a high *Buddhist Bikkhu*, Dr. Ambedkar prayed for

Buddham Saranam gacchami

Dhammam Saranam gacchami

Sangham Saranam gacchami

He also accepted five tenets of *Buddhism*, all generally interpreted as near solemnisation.

Buddhist Renaissance

A ranking *Buddhist Bhikkhu* who was present while Dr. Ambedkar was making his speech, said that now India had attained freedom. *Buddhism* must come to its own. Emphasising the political significance of the possible *Buddhist* renaissance in India, he declared that India would require *Buddhism* to guard her freedom and spiritual strength.

Dr. Ambedkar, in his 30 minutes speech in flawless Hindi, emphatically asserted that *Buddhist* renaissance had again commenced in India. He supported this assertion by pointing out that the President of the Republic had to approach *Buddhism* for the symbol over free India’s national flag *Ashoka Chakra*, finding nothing from a search into *Brahminism*. *Buddhism* again came

forward to furnish to the Republic her emblem of the three lions, and when the first President of the Republic was being sworn in, at that history making occasion, idol not of any of the countless Hindu Gods or Goddesses but of the Lord Buddha was installed to record the event, added Dr. Ambedkar.

Neither Rama, nor Krishna, infact no *God* matched the Lord Buddha, he said. No greater seer and leader would be born, Dr. Ambedkar declared.

Dr. Ambedkar recalled several instances from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* and questioned the greatness of Ramachandra and Lord Krishna who were “alleged to have behaved that way.” He said *Hinduism* propounded the twin theory of one truth and one’s love for one’s own as bigotry which shirked disputes and sought to maintain preponderance of its following intact.

He accused *Brahmins* of having securedly held all the rights except that of Crown which incidentally took the wearer to hell according to *Hindu shastra*. He asked, how could that religion be loved by those tens of millions on whom perpetual condemnation was perpetrated ?

Time had arrived, he declared, when religion should no longer be inherited from father to son like goods and chattels, but should be examined rationally by everybody before personal acceptance.

Dr. Ambedkar made it clear that he did not believe as Socialists and Communists did, that religion was unnecessary. He stated categorically, “I believe that religion is necessary for the mankind. When religion ends the society would perish too. After all no Government can safeguard and discipline mankind as *niti* or *dharma* can”, Dr. Ambedkar added.

Burma’s Ambassador, Sir Maung Gyee, who presided over the meeting, stated that the world which was in pain and trouble would find peace, and solace in *Buddhism*. An official of the *Mahabodhi* Society declared the Society’s rejoicing over the fact that “Dr. Ambedkar has joined our ranks”.

“Dr. Ambedkar is arriving in Bombay tomorrow.”¹



¹ : The Bharat, dated 3rd May 1950.

NON-BELIEVERS SHOULD BE CONVERTED TO THE EIGHT-FOLD PATH

The Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists was held at Candy (Ceylon) from 25th May to 6th June 1950. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar attended the Conference.

On 26th May 1950 the representatives of 27 countries came together in the 'Temple of the Truth' to discuss the subject of Revival of Buddhism. The resolution regarding brotherhood in the world was passed in the Conference.

Thereafter Dr. B. R. Ambedkar addressed the Conference.¹

Dr. Ambedkar in his speech said,

"I am an interested observer, not a delegate. I came here with some very serious purposes. You probably know that there are people in India who thought the time had come when an effort might be made to revive Buddhism in India. I am one of them. The definite objects of my visit are first, to see Buddhist Ceremonial. Ceremonial is an important part of religion. Whatever rationalists might say, ceremonial is a very essential thing in religion. By coming here I thought I would be able to see the ritual that formed part and parcel of Buddhism.

Secondly, I wish to find out to what extent the religion of the Buddha is observed here in its pristine purity and to what extent His Gospel is encrusted by superstition, with beliefs incongruous with Buddhism and Buddha's doctrines.

My third objective is to find out to what extent the Order of Bhikkhus as established by Buddha has been of service to the community and whether that Order is merely engaged in maintaining what is called "purity of life" for itself, or whether it is engaged in serving the laity, advising and making it perfect in the way the Buddha wished it to be. I am interested in finding out to what extent the religion of Buddha is a living

¹ : Dalit Bandhu, dated 28th May 1950.

force or whether it is something which exists by reason of the fact that the people of this country happen to be Buddhists in the traditional sense of the word and having inherited it merely passed it from one generation to another, whether there was the dynamics of religion so far as the country is concerned. The best way I could find out if religion is static or that it has momentum and is dynamic is to study and observe the interest the younger generation of the country displayed, to what extent they devoted their time to religion, to what extent their belief in religion was giving them salvation (not in the theological sense of salvation after death, but in the life of the world). Buddhist countries should have not merely fellowship, but promote religion and make sacrifices. Merely to send *Bhikkhus* to lecture on the Message of the Buddha does not make people accept His way of Life.

If the peace of the world is to be assured, it is not by mere lecturing. Those who do not believe in the virtue of the Path should be persuaded to accept it, and it is obvious that countries where Buddhism exists should make sacrifices, establish missions and find funds, so that they can carry on the work of not merely spreading the gospel, but of converting men and women to the Eight-Fold Path.”¹

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¹: Report of the Ceylon Conference and Proceedings of the First Session of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held from 25th May to the 6th June 1950 (B. E. 2494)

BUDDHISM PAVED WAY FOR DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISTIC PATTERN OF SOCIETY

The Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists was held in Ceylon from 25th May to 6th June 1950. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar attended the Conference.

Addressing an International gathering at Colombo, on June 6th, 1950, Dr. Ambedkar said,

“Most people who have studied rise and fall of Buddhism in India would admit that this subject had not been adequately dealt with as it should have been. I have not been able to find any authentic material explaining why Buddhism rose to the height it achieved and why it disappeared in India.

To know a subject thoroughly, one must know its relevant traditions exactly and precisely. Similarly, the significance of Buddhism would not be understood unless the exact circumstances which gave birth to it are understood. I disagree with the view that Hinduism has all along been the religion of India. Hinduism is the latest development of social thought in India.

The religion of India has undergone three changes. Vedic religion which was practised first gave way, in course of time, to Brahmanism and this in turn to Hinduism. It was during Brahminic period that Buddhism was born. This was because Buddhism opposed inequality, authority and division of society into various classes which Brahminism had introduced in India.

It is easy to practise the Vedic religion. In it, performance of *yagya* (*yajnas*) is the main *puja*. The Vedic Aryans used to worship innumerable Gods. They used to please them by performing *yagyas*. The *puja* to be performed for these Gods should necessarily be sacred and superb. In those Agrarian times, cows were the chief wealth of the Aryans. Therefore, they used to sacrifice cows to honour their deities. In this way, Vedic Dharma encouraged violence. Brahmins succeeded in organising the society only by adopting *Vedic yagyas*. The Brahmins also

divided the society into four sections (Varnas)—*Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*. The division of the society into four varnas (Castes) created great inequalities. They said that the Brahmins were born of the *Brahma's* mouth and *Shudras* from his feet. Can anybody believe that the basic principle of any religion could be to divide the society? Yet, this is what *Brahminism* has perpetuated. On the other hand, equality is the main feature of Buddhism. The religion of the Buddha gives freedom of thought and freedom of self-development to all. To abjure violence is another essential teaching of Buddhism. It has never taught to achieve salvation by sacrificing animals or any living being to propitiate Gods. I would say that the rise of Buddhism in India was as significant as the French Revolution. Prior to the advent of Buddhism, it was impossible to even think that a *Shudra* would get throne. History of India reveals that after the emergence of *Buddhism*, *Shudras* are seen getting thrones. Verily, Buddhism paved way for establishment of democracy and socialistic pattern of society in India.

It is a perplexing problem how Buddhism, which had acquired a highest place, disappeared from India. There is very little material to tell us about the condition of Buddhism upto 274 B. C. It is, however, seen that Buddhism was at its climax of popularity in the reign of Asoka. How such a great and popular religion lost ground in India is a painful phenomena.

Buddhism appears to have met strong opposition in 185 B. C. when the last Mauryan King was assassinated by his Chief Commander. This was one of the lawful actions of the Brahmins to save their religion. But it is a pity that the historians have not given sufficient importance to this incident. While going through the Buddhist literature, I find that 90 % followers of the Buddha were Brahmins. Brahmins used to come to the Buddha for discussion and argumentation, and when defeated, used to become faithful to the Buddha and ultimately accepted Buddhism. The Buddhist literature is full of such incidents. Therefore, how is it that Buddhism that had flourished amongst the majority of Brahmins was later on destroyed by the Brahmins themselves.