

Even a simpleton can imagine what answer they are likely to return. I am sure that a theory which produces such a result will be regarded as an absurd one on all hands without exceptions. How then can such a theory be applied to India where the difference between the governing class and the servile class is the same both in degree and in kind as the difference between French and Germans, Turks and Russians or Chinese and Japanese ? The fact is that the governing class in India blinded by self-interest is unmindful of the absurdity of the argument of naked efficiency and being conscious that it has the power to convert its opinion into law does not bother what the servile classes have to say on the point.

The governing class does not bother to inquire into the ways and means by which it has acquired its supremacy. It does not feel the necessity of doing so, partly because it believes that it acquired its supremacy by dint of merit and partly because it believes that no matter how it acquired its power it is enough that it is in a position to dictate its policy on the servile classes. Assuming that the governing class did not find it necessary to examine the ways and means by which it obtained its supremacy what would it find ? Strange as it may seem the governing class has obtained its power by the same system of reservations which it is now opposing on the ground of communalism. Many may find it difficult to accept the truth of this statement. Those who have any doubt need do no more than read the *Manu Smriti*, the Bible of the Hindus. What will they find in it ? They will find and will no doubt be shocked to know that the Brahmins, the chief and the leading element in the governing class, acquired their political power not by force of intellect—for intellect is nobody's monopoly—but by sheer communalism. According to the *Laws of Manu Smriti* the post of the Purohit, King's Chaplain and Lord Chancellor, the posts of the Chief Justice and Judges of the High Court and the post of Ministers to the Crown were all reserved for the Brahmins. Even for the post of the Commander-in-Chief the Brahmin was recommended as a fit and a proper person though it was not in terms reserved for him. . All the strategic posts having been reserved for the Brahmins it goes without saying that all ministerial posts came to be reserved for the Brahmins. This is not all. The Brahmin was not content with reserving places of profit and

power for his class. He knew that mere reservation will not do. He must prevent rivals shooting up from other non-Brahmin communities equally qualified to hold the posts and agitate and blow up the system of reservations. In addition to reserving all executive posts in the State for Brahmins a law was made whereby education was made the monopoly and privilege of Brahmins. As has already been pointed out the law made it a crime for the Shudra, i.e., the lower orders of Hindu Society to acquire learning, the infringement of which was followed by not only heavy but cruel and inhuman punishment such as cutting the tongue of the criminal and filling his ear with hot molten lead. It is true that these reservations do not exist under the British rule. But it must be admitted that though the reservations made by Manu have gone, the advantages derived from their continuance over several centuries have remained. In asking for reservations the servile classes are not asking for anything new or anything extraordinary. The demand for reservation is a demand for protection against the aggressive communalism of the governing class, which wants to dominate the servile class in all fields of life and without imposing on the governing class any such ignominious conditions as was done by the Brahmins for their own aggrandisement and for the perpetuation of their own domination on the Shudra, namely, to make it a crime for the governing class to learn or to acquire property.

This argument of naked efficiency has also to be considered from the point of view of public welfare. It was said by Campbell Bannerman in the course of a debate in the House of Commons on Ireland, that self-government is better than good government. The statement had become so popular in India that it had become more than a mere slogan. It had become a maxim. As it stands the statement is quite absurd. Campbell Bannerman was not contrasting self-government with good government. He was contrasting self-government with efficient government or rather with "resolute government" to use the phrase of his opponent Lord Salisbury. There is no denying that self-government must be good government, otherwise it is not worth having. The question is, how is good government to be had. Some people seem to be under the impression that as self-government is a sovereign government it is bound to result in good government. This is one of the greatest delusions from which most people in dependent

countries are suffering. Those who are living in such a delusion had better read what Prof. Dicey has to say on this point. Discussing the question what persons and bodies with full sovereign powers can do Dicey has the following observations to make :—

“The actual exercise of authority by any sovereign whatever and notably by Parliament, is bounded or controlled by two limitations. Of these the one is an external, the other is an internal limitation.

“The external limit to the real power of a sovereign consists in the possibility or certainty that his subjects or a large number of them, will disobey or resist his laws.

“This limitation exists even under the most despotic monarchies. A Roman Emperor, or a French King during the middle of the eighteenth century, was (as is the Russian Czar at the present day) in strictness a ‘sovereign’ in the legal sense of that term. He had absolute legislative authority. Any law made by him was binding, and there was no power in the empire or kingdom which could annul such law . . . But it would be an error to suppose that the most absolute ruler who ever existed could in reality make or change every law at his pleasure . . .

“The authority, that is to say, even of a despot, depends upon the readiness of his subjects or of some portion of his subjects to obey his behests; and this readiness to obey must always be in reality limited. This is shown by the most notorious facts of history. None of the early Caesars could at their pleasure have subverted the worship of fundamental institutions of the Roman world . . . The Sultan could not abolish Mahomedanism. Louis the Fourteenth at the height of his power could revoke the Edict of Nantes, but he would have found it impossible to establish the supremacy of Protestantism, and for the same reason which prevented James the Second from establishing the supremacy of Roman Catholicism . . . What is true of the power of a despot or of the authority of a constituent assembly is specially true of the sovereignty of Parliament ; it is limited on every side by the possibility of popular resistance. Parliament might legally tax the Colonies ; Parliament might without any breach of law change the succession to the throne or abolish the monarchy ; but everyone knows that in the present state of the world the British Parliament will do none of these things. In each case widespread resistance would result from legislation which.

though legally valid, is in fact beyond the stretch of Parliamentary power.

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“There is an internal limit to the exercise of sovereign power itself. Even a despot exercises his powers in accordance with his character, which is itself moulded by the circumstances under which he lives, including under that head the moral feelings of the time and the society to which he belongs. The Sultan could not if he would, change the religion of the Mahommedan world, but if he could do so it is in the very highest degree improbable that the head of Mahommedanism should wish to overthrow the religion of Mahomet; the internal check on the exercise of the Sultan’s power is at least as strong as the external limitation. People sometimes ask the idle question why the Pope does not introduce this or that reform? The true answer is that a revolutionist is not the kind of man who becomes a Pope and that the man who becomes a Pope has no wish to be a revolutionist . . . ”

I have already pointed out that it is not enough for the servile classes to be content with the mere fact that their country has become an independent and a sovereign state. It is necessary for them to go further and to find out who are likely to be the instruments of the State, in other words who is going to be the governing class. Dicey’s observations and the profound truth which underlies them no one can question—add a further point namely that for good government, ability and efficiency of the governing class are not enough. What is necessary is to have in the governing class the will to do good or to use Dicey’s language, freedom from internal limitations arising out of selfish class interests. Efficiency combined with selfish class interests instead of producing good government is far more likely to become a mere engine of suppression of the servile classes.

In selecting the instrumentalities of the State considerations of class bias in the instrumentalities cannot be overlooked. It is in fact fundamental to good government. It is unfortunate that the importance of this fact is not generally recognized even by those who regard themselves as the champions of democracy. Karl Marx was the first to recognize it and take account of it in the administration of the Paris Commune. It is unnecessary to say that it is to-day the basis of Government in Soviet Russia. The demand for reservations put forth by the servile classes in India is essentially based upon the same considerations

pointed out by Dicey, advocated by Marx and adopted by Russia. Only those who belong to the servile class can be trusted to protect the interest of that class. This consideration is so important that the principle of efficiency cannot be allowed to altogether override it. If the governing class in India stands on the principle of efficiency and efficiency alone it is because it is actuated by the selfish motive of monopolizing the instrumentalities of Government.

IX

The foregoing discussion has extended over such length that the foreigner is likely to miss the points which it is intended to bring out. It may therefore be well to assemble them together with a view to underline them.

The main problems, which those desirous of establishing democracy in India must face, are:—(1) the position of the governing class of India, (2) the aims and objects of the governing class towards the servile classes, (3) the *raison d'être* of the demands of the servile classes for constitutional safeguards and (4) the relation of the governing class to the Congress.

Regarding the first point the argument is that the position of the governing class in India is quite different from the position of the governing classes in other countries of the world. It is not easy to understand this difference, nor is it easy to state it in expressive terms. Perhaps the illustration of a bar and a hyphen may help to give a clear idea of what the difference is. Nobody can mistake the difference between a hyphen and a bar. A bar divides but does not link. A hyphen does both. It divides but it also links. In India the governing classes and the servile classes are divided by a bar. In other countries there exists between them only a hyphen. The resultant difference is a very crucial one. In other countries, there is a continuous replenishment of the governing class by the incorporation of others who do not belong to it but who have reached the same elevation as the governing class. In India, the governing class is a close corporation in which nobody, not born in it, is admitted. In other countries where the governing class is not a close preserve, where there is social endosmosis between it and the rest, there is a mental assimilation and accommodation

which makes the governing class less antagonistic in its composition and less antagonistic to the servile classes in its social philosophy. In other words, the governing class in countries outside India is not anti-social. It is only non-social. In India where the governing class is a close corporation, tradition, social philosophy and social outlook which are antagonistic to the servile classes remain unbroken in their depth and their tenor and the distinction between masters and slaves, between the privileged and the unprivileged continues for ever hard in substance and fast in colour. In other words the governing class in India is not merely non-social. It is positively anti-social.

As to the demand for reservations by the servile classes the reason behind it is to put a limit on the power of the governing classes to have control over the instrumentalities of government. The governing classes are bent on giving the reservations a bad name in order to be able to hang those who are insisting upon them. The real fact is that the reservations are only another name for what the Americans call checks and balances which every constitution must have, if democracy is not to be overwhelmed by the enemies of democracy. That the reservations demanded by the servile classes are different in form from the American sort of checks and balances does not alter their character. The forms of checks and balances must be determined by two considerations. The first is the necessity of establishing a correlation between the political constitution and social institutions of the country if democracy is to be real. As the social institutions of countries differ in their form the checks and balances in its political constitutions must also differ. For instance, where a country is ridden by the caste system the checks and balances will have to be of a different sort from what they need be in a country pervaded by a spirit of social democracy. The second is the necessity of providing a firm flooring to the servile classes against the possibility of their being pressed down by the governing classes by reason of their superior power. In some countries adult suffrage may be quite enough for the servile classes to hold their own against the governing classes. In India unlike other countries the governing class is so omnipotent and omnipresent that other remedies besides adult suffrage will be necessary to give adequate power to the servile classes to protect themselves against exploitation by the governing classes. Looked at in the

light of these observations, the reservations demanded by the servile classes, though different in form from the checks and balances embodied in the American Constitution, are fundamentally checks and balances, and must be considered as such by the foreigner before he forms an adverse opinion against them.

The facts bearing on the last point namely the relation of the Congress to the governing classes have also been fully set out. From these facts the foreigner should be able to see how intimate is the connection between the two. The same facts will explain why the governing class in India has placed itself in the vanguard of the Congress movement and why it strives to bring everybody within the Congress fold. To put it briefly the governing class is aware that a political campaign based on class ideology and class conflicts will toll its death knell. It knows that the most effective way of side-tracking the servile classes and fooling them is to play upon the sentiment of nationalism and national unity. It clings to the Congress because it realizes that the Congress platform is the only platform that can most effectively safeguard the interest of the governing class. For if there is any platform from which all talk of conflict between rich and poor, Brahmin and non-Brahmin, landlord and tenant, creditor and debtor, which does not suit the governing class, can be effectually banned, it is the Congress platform which is not only bound to preach nationalism and national unity,—this is what the governing class wants, as it is on this that its safety entirely depends—but which prohibits any other ideology inconsistent with nationalism being preached from its platform.

If the foreigner bears in mind these points he will realize why the servile classes of India are not attracted by the Congress brand of Swaraj. What good can the Congress brand of Swaraj bring to them ? They know that under the Congress brand of Swaraj the prospect for them is really very bleak. The Congress brand of Swaraj will either be materialization of what is called Gandhism or it will be what the governing class would want to make of it. If it is the former it will mean the spread of charkha, village industries, the observance of caste, Bramhcharya (continence), reverence for the cow and things of that sort. If it is left to governing classes to make what it likes of Swaraj the principal item in it will be the suppression of the servile classes by withdrawing the facilities given by the

British Government in the matter of education and entry in public services.

Some people hope that under Swaraj there will be a reform of tenancy laws, factory legislation, compulsory primary education, prohibition and construction of roads and canals, improvement of currency, regulation of weights and measures, dispensaries and introduction of other measures for the servile classes. I am not quite sure that these hopes are well-founded. Most people forget that what leads the Congress to-day to mouth such a programme is the desire to show that the Congress is better than the British bureaucracy. But once the bureaucracy is liquidated, will there be the same incentive to better the lot of the masses ? That is the question. Firstly, I entertain very grave doubts as to how far this will materialize. Secondly, there is nothing very great in it. In the world of to-day, no governing class can omit to undertake reforms, which are necessary to maintain society in a civilized state. Apart from this, is social amelioration the be-all and end-all of Swaraj ? Knowing the servile classes as I do that is certainly not the fault of the servile classes. They certainly do not intend to follow the teaching that 'the meek shall eat and be satisfied.' The want and poverty which has been their lot for centuries is nothing to them as compared to the insult and indignity which they have to bear as a result of the vicious social order. Not bread but honour, is what they want, That can happen only when the governing classes disappear and cease to have control over their destiny. The question for the servile classes is not whether this reform or that reform will be undertaken. The question is: Will the governing classes in India having captured the machinery of the State, undertake a programme for the reform of the social order whereby the governing class will be liquidated, as distinguished from a programme of social amelioration ? The answer to this depends upon whether the future constitution of India will be with safeguards or without safeguards for the protection of the servile classes. If it will have safeguards it will be possible for the servile classes to liquidate the governing classes in course of time. If the constitution is without safeguards the governing class will continue to maintain its dominance over the servile classes. This being the issue, the foreigner should note that the much-advertised representative character of the Congress is absolutely irrelevant. The Congress may be a

representative body and the Congress may be the body which is engaged in what is called the Fight for Freedom ; but these things have nothing to do with the decision of the issue. A true lover of democracy before he befriends the Congress will demand that it should produce its blue print of the constitution and be satisfied that its constitution does contain unequivocal and positive provisions for the safety, security for the life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for the servile classes.

X

The foreigners who take interest in Indian politics fall into two classes. The first class includes those who are travellers and tourists who come 'to do' India for a short while and who are not equipped with a knowledge of the intricacies of the Indian Political problems, the theoretical apparatus to pronounce a correct opinion on the attitude of the different parties to these problems. Those who fall into the second class are the leaders of democratic public opinion such as Louis Fischer in America, Kingsley Martin, Brailsford and Laski whose knowledge and equipment none can question. I would have had no regrets if the foregoing discussion had been called for by the needs of correcting the unthinking bias of the tourists and traveller class of foreigners in favour of the Congress. But unfortunately the same sort of bias is also to be found in those foreigners who fall into the second class.

That there should be foreigners of the tourist sort who cannot understand the intricacies of Indian politics and who therefore support the Congress on no other ground except that which Mr. Pickwick gave to Sam Weller—to shout with the biggest crowd—is quite understandable. But what annoys most is the attitude of the leaders of the British Labour Party, heads of radical and leftist groups in Europe and America, represented by men like Laski, Kingsley Martin, Brailsford and editors of journals like the *Nation* in America, and the *New Statesman* in England championing the cause of the oppressed and the suppressed people in other parts of the world. How can these men support the Congress it is difficult to understand. Do they not know that the Congress means the governing class and that the governing class in India is a Brahmin-Bania combine ? That masses are drawn in the Congress only to be camp followers with no say in the making of Congress policy ?

Do they not realize that for the reasons for which the Sultan could not abolish Islam or the Pope could not repudiate Catholicism, the governing class in India will not decree the destruction of Brahmanism and that so long as the governing class remains what it is, Brahmanism, which preaches the supremacy of Brahmins and the allied castes and which recognises the suppression and degradation of the Shudras and the Untouchables as the sacred duty of the State, will continue to be the philosophy of the State even if India became free ? Do they not know that this governing class in India is not a part of the Indian people, is not only completely isolated from them, but believes in isolating itself, lest it should be contaminated by them, has implanted in its mind by reason of the Brahmanic philosophy, motives and interests which are hostile to those who are outside its fold and therefore does not sympathise with the living forces operating in the servile masses whom it has trodden down, is not charged with their wants, their pains, their cravings, their desires, is inimical to their aspirations, does not favour any advance in their education, promotion to high office and disfavours every movement calculated to raise their dignity and their self-respect? Do they not know that in the Swaraj of India is involved the fate of 60 millions of Untouchables ?

It would be impossible to say that the leaders of the British Labour Party, that Kingsley Martin, Brailsford and Laski whose writings on liberty and democracy are a source of inspiration to all suppressed people, do not know these facts. Yet if they refer to India, it is always to support the Congress. It is very, very seldom that they are found to discuss the problem of the Untouchables which ought to make the strongest appeal to all radicals and democrats. Their exclusive attention to Congress activities and their utter neglect of other elements in the national life of India show how misguided they have been. One could well understand their support to the Congress if the Congress was fighting for political democracy. But is it ? As every one knows, the Congress is only fighting for national liberty and is not interested in political democracy. The party in India who is fighting for political democracy is the party of the Untouchables who fear that this Congress fight for liberty, if it succeeds, will mean liberty to the strong and the powerful to suppress the weak and the down-trodden unless they are

protected by constitutional safeguards. It is they who ought to receive the help of these radical leaders. But the Untouchables have been waiting in vain for all these years even for a gesture of goodwill and support from them. These radicals and leftists in Europe and America have not even cared to know the forces behind the Congress.

Ignorant or unmindful one does not know, but the fact remains that these leftists and radical leaders have been giving blind and unquestioning support to the Congress which admittedly is run by capitalists, landlords, money-lenders and reactionaries, only because the Congress calls its activities by the grandiloquent name of "Fight for Freedom." All battles for freedom are not on equal moral plane for the simple reason that the motives and purposes behind these battles of freedom are not always the same. To take only a few illustrations from English History. The Barons' Rebellion against John which resulted in the *Magna Charta* could be called a battle for freedom. But could any democrat in modern times give it the same support which he would give—say to the Levellers' Rebellion or to the Peasants' Revolt in English History, merely because it could logically be described as a battle for freedom? To do so will be to respond to a false cry of freedom. Such crude conduct would have been forgivable, had it proceeded from groups not intelligent enough to make a distinction between freedom to live and freedom to oppress. But it is quite inexcusable in radical and leftist groups led by Messrs. Laski, Kingsley Martin, Brailsford, Louis Fischer and other well-known champions of democracy.

When pressed to explain why they don't support Indian Parties which stand for true democracy, they are reported to meet the charge by a counter question. Are there any such parties in India? Insist that there are such parties and they turn round and say: If such parties exist, how is it the Press does not report their activities? When told that the Press is a Congress Press, they retort: How is it that the foreign correspondents of the English Papers do not report them? I have shown why nothing better can be expected from these foreign correspondents. The Foreign Press Agency in India is not better than the Indian Press. Indeed it cannot be better. There are in India what are called foreign correspondents. In a large majority of cases they are Indians. Only a very few are foreigners. The selection of Indians as foreign

correspondents is so made that they are almost always from the Congress camp. The foreign correspondents who are foreigners fall into two groups. If they are Americans they are just Anti-British and for that reason pro-Congress. Any political party in India which is not madly anti-British does not interest them. Those who are not in the Congress will testify how hard it was for them to persuade the American War Correspondents who trooped into this country in 1941-42, even to entertain the possibility of the Congress not being the only party, much less to induce them to interest themselves in other political parties. It took a long time before they recovered their sanity and when they did, they either abused the Congress as an organization led by impossible men or just lost interest in Indian politics. They never got interested in other political parties in India and never cared to understand their point of view. The situation is no better in the case of foreign correspondents who are Britishers. They too are interested only in that kind of politics which is first and foremost anti-British. They are uninterested in those political parties in India whose foremost concern is to make a free India safe for democracy. The result is that the foreign press provides the same kind of news about Indian politics as does the Indian Press.

These reasons cannot be beyond the ken of these radicals. Correspondents or no correspondents, is it not the duty of radicals to keep in touch with their kindred in other parts of the world to encourage them, to help them and to see that true democracy lives everywhere ? It is a most unfortunate thing that the Radicals of England and America should have forgotten the class to whom they owe a duty to help and have become the publicity agents of Indian Tories who are just misusing the slogan of liberty to befool and befog the world.

The sooner they get out of this fog created by the Congress and realize that democracy and self-government in India cannot be real unless freedom has become the assured possession of all, the better for them and the better for the people of India. But if they persist in giving their blind support to the Congress on the basis of an empty slogan without examining its relation to facts and intentions, I for one will have no hesitation in saying that far from being the friends of India they are a positive menace to the freedom of the Indian masses. It is a pity that they do not seem to distinguish the case of a tyrant

who is held down and who pleads for liberty because he wants to regain his right to oppress and the case of an oppressed class seeking to be free from the oppression of the tyrant. In their hurry to bring freedom to India they have no time to realize that by siding with the Congress what they are doing is not to make India safe for democracy but to free the tyrant to practise his tyrannies. Is it necessary to tell them that to support Congress is to let tyranny have freedom to enslave ? It is to save their own reputation as the champions of the Oppressed and suppressed classes that they should reconsider their attitude towards the Congress.

●●

DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

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