

LOK SABHA DEBATES

Date: 23.03.201

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

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LOK SABHA

Thursday, 8th December, 1956

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

12 hrs.

DEATH OF DR. AMBEDKAR

The Prime Minister and Leader of the House (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have to convey to the House the sad news of the death of Dr. Ambedkar. Only two days ago, I believe, the day before yesterday, he was present in the other House of which he was a Member. The news, therefore, of his death today came as a shock to all of us who had no inkling of such a thing happening so soon.

Dr. Ambedkar, as every Member of this House knows, played a very important part in the making of the Constitution of India, subsequently in the Legislative Part of the Constituent Assembly and later in the Provisional Parliament. After that, he was not a Member of Parliament for some time. Then, he came back to the Rajya Sabha of which he was a sitting Member.

He is often spoken of as one of the architects of our Constitution. There is no doubt that no one took greater care and trouble over Constitution making than Dr. Ambedkar. He will

be remembered also for the great interest he took and the trouble he took over the question of Hindu Law reform. I am happy that he saw that reform in a very large measure carried out, perhaps not in the form of that monumental tome that he had himself drafted, but in separate bits. But, I imagine that the way he will be remembered most will be as a symbol of the revolt against all the oppressive features of Hindu society. He used language sometimes which hurt people. He sometimes said things which were perhaps not wholly justified. But, let us forget that. The main thing was that he rebelled against something against which all ought to rebel and we have, in fact, rebelled in various degrees. This Parliament itself represents in the legislation which it has framed, its repudiation of those customs or legacies from the past which kept down a large section of our people from enjoying their normal rights.

When I think of Dr. Ambedkar, many things come to my mind, because he was a highly controversial figure. He was not a person of soft speech. But, behind all that was this powerful reaction and an act of rebellion against something that repressed our society for so long. Fortunately, that rebellion had the support, not perhaps in the exact way he wanted it, but in a large measure, the principle underlaying that rebellion had the support of Parliament, and, I believe, every group and party represented here. Both in our public activities and in our legislative activities, we did our utmost to remove that stigma on Hindu society. One cannot remove it completely by law, because custom is more deep-rooted

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

and, I am afraid, it still continues in many parts of the country even though it may be considered illegal. That is true. But, I have no doubt that it is something that is in its last stages and may take a little time to vanish away. When both law and public opinion become more and more determined to put an end to state of affairs, it cannot last long. Anyhow, Dr. Ambedkar, as I said, became prominent in his own way and a most prominent symbol of that rebellion. I have no doubt that, whether we agree with him or not in many matters, that perseverance, that persistence and that, if I may use the word, sometime virulence of his opposition to all this did keep the people's mind awake and did not allow them to become complacent about matters which could not be forgotten, and helped in rousing up those groups in our country which had suffered for so long in the past. It is, therefore, sad that such a prominent champion of the oppressed and depressed in India and one who took such an important part in our activities, has passed away.

As the House knows, he was a Minister, a member of our Cabinet, for many years, and I had the privilege of co-operating with him in our Governmental work. I had heard of him and, of course, met him previously on various occasions. But, I had not come into any intimate contact with him. It was at the time of the Constituent Assembly that I got to know him a little better. I invited him to join the Government. Some people were surprised that I should do so, because, it was thought that his normal activities were of the opposition type rather than of the governmental type. Nevertheless, I felt at that time that he had played an important and very constructive role in the making of the Constitution and that he could continue to play a constructive role in governmental activities. Indeed, he did. In spite of some minor differences here and there, chiefly, if I may say so, not due to any matters of principle, but rather linguistic matters and language used,

we co-operated in the Government for several years to our mutual advantage, I think. Anyhow, a very leading and prominent personality, who has left his mark in our public affairs and on the Indian scene, has passed away, a personality who was known to nearly all of us here, I suppose, and I feel sure that all of us feel very sad. We know him well. He had been unwell for a long time. Nevertheless, the passing of a person is painful. I am sure that you, Sir, and the House will be pleased to convey our deep condolences and sympathy to his family.

There are various rules laid down in our Rules of Procedure in regard to such occurrences, in regard to adjournment of the House. Normally speaking, those rules apply to Members of the House. Dr. Ambedkar was not a Member of this House. He was a Member of the Rajya Sabha. He was an ex-Member of this House. The rule says that in such cases, a reference may be made in the House, but there may be no adjournment unless he comes in the category of outstanding personalities, in which case, total adjournment may be made. There can be no doubt that he comes under the category of outstanding personalities. According to the strict rule, it says, token adjournment may be made. I submit that, without doing any violence to this rule or to the spirit underlying this rule, the present case deserves for some reasons which I have mentioned and others which I have not mentioned, that the House do adjourn for the day. That is subject to your wishes and the wishes of the House.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat): Sir, I join the Leader of the House in requesting you to convey to the members of the family of Dr. Ambedkar the condolences of our party and our colleagues.

We, younger Members, never had the privilege of working with him.

We had also our difference. But, today, we all of us cannot forget how he brought to the forefront of our people's conscience the disabilities suffered by a section of our people owing to our oppressive social system. Personally I feel that, although we have passed the Hindu Code Bill in parts, the principles which Dr. Ambedkar had embodied in his original draft were wiser in many aspects. We also pay our tribute to his outstanding intellect which rose against social inequality and narrow prejudices, and he became one of those who were known as the architects of our Constitution, and I am sure the country will remember him embodied in that Constitution. I also join with the leader of the House in requesting you to adjourn this House as a mark of respect to his memory.

Shri Asoka Mehta (Bhandara):
I wish to associate myself with the tribute that has been paid to Dr. Ambedkar.

I was privileged to be associated with him on more than one occasion, and in his remarkable and fascinating career, there were many facets. We who come from Bombay remember him as a teacher, we remember him as an economist, we remember him as a labour leader, we remember him as political leader. Apart from the great work that he did in this House and as a Member of the Government, as far as my part of the country is concerned, he brought a new awakening. It was because of him that large sections of people on our side were given a sense of social significance, they were given a sense of confidence. I believe if he had not been there, perhaps my part of the country would not have been what it is today.

I am sure in paying our respect to his memory and in trying to do honour to him by adjourning today, we only pay the great debt that many of us owe to him for the great services that he has rendered to our society.

श्री वि० च० बैशापाडे (गुना) : अर्घ्यसमर्पण, मैं समझता हूँ कि डा० अम्बेडकर के निवन समाचार से केवल संसद् में ही नहीं बल्कि समूचे राष्ट्र भर में एक दुख की लहर फैल जायगी। डा० अम्बेडकर ने भारत का विधान बनाया था और उसको तैयार करने में उन्होंने अधिक परिश्रम और योग्यता का परिचय दिया। इसके अतिरिक्त डा० अम्बेडकर हिन्दू समाज के एक महान नेता थे हालाँकि डा० अम्बेडकर ने हिन्दू समाज पर बड़े प्रहार किये, तीखे और कड़वे प्रहार किये, लेकिन मैं समझता हूँ कि उसका भी एक कारण था और यह था कि डा० अम्बेडकर का जन्म जिस जाति में था उसके प्रति सर्वत्र हिन्दुओं ने बहुत पाप किये हैं और उन पापों को देखने के पश्चात् डा० अम्बेडकर का कभी इतना तीक्ष्ण होना समझ मैं आ सकता है और यह भी हमारे पापों का फल है ऐसा मैं मानता हूँ।

डा० अम्बेडकर की योग्यता और पांडित्य इतना ऊँचा था और इतना महान था कि मैं समझता हूँ कि दूसरे किसी कारण से नहीं तो इसलिए कि उनका व्यक्तित्व इतना महान था कि जिस को ले कर उन्होंने अस्पृश्यता के विरुद्ध इतना धोर संग्राम किया, डा० अम्बेडकर को मान देना अत्यावश्यक था। डा० अम्बेडकर ने अस्पृश्यता निवारण के लिये जो जीवन पर्यन्त प्रयत्न किये वह कभी भुलाये नहीं जा सकते और हालाँकि उनके पहले से अस्पृश्यता निवारण का आन्दोलन किसी न किसी रूप में इस देश में चलता आया है पर अस्पृश्य लोगों को एक मनुष्य के नाते खड़े हो कर लड़ने और झगड़ने का काम अगर किसी ने सिखाया तो यह डा० अम्बेडकर न सिखाया और उन्होंने हिन्दू समाज के इस पददलित वर्ग को उठाया और उनको बताया कि वे भी दूसरों की तरह इन्सान हैं और इस नाते अस्पृश्य लोगों के प्रति की गई उनकी सेवाओं को देश कभी नहीं भुला सकेगा। आज हमारे बीच से एक महान नेता उठ गया है और मैं समझता हूँ कि उनकी मृत्यु से जो स्थान रिक्त हुआ है उसकी पूर्ति

निकट भविष्य में होती मुश्किल नजर आती है। सदन के नेता ने जो उनकी मृत्यु पर दुःख प्रदर्शित किया है उसमें मैं पूरी तरह उनका साथ देता हूँ।

Shri Frank Anthony (Nominated—Anglo-Indian): I would like to associate the Independent Group with the sentiments that have fallen from the Leader of the House.

It has been my privilege to know Dr. Ambedkar for many years, and I feel that no adequate tribute can be paid to him in the course of a few minutes. His was a versatile mind. He was not only a deep, but a profound scholar, and, as the Leader of the House said, he was a controversial figure. But what I believe was the dominant characteristic of the complex personality was the characteristic of being an indomitable fighter, and it was that indomitable spirit which enabled him to triumph over personal disabilities which perhaps would have crushed persons of less tenacious character.

We may not have agreed with his politics. Perhaps we did not agree sometimes with the way that things were said by him, but having heard from him the bitter personal disabilities with which he was confronted from his earliest life, I would not presume to judge the fact that perhaps in some respects the iron had entered his soul and his bitterness to that extent, if not justified, at least was understandable. There is no doubt that Dr. Ambedkar started from the humblest beginning, but his name will be writ large on the scroll of Indian history, and I believe not only his community, but that the country has reason to be proud of a very great son. I would ask you to convey our condolences to his family.

श्री काजरोल्कर (बम्बई नगर-उत्तर—रक्षित—अनुसूचित जातियाँ): अध्यक्ष महोदय, आज का दिन सम्पूर्ण भारत के लिये और विशेष करके हम हरिजनों के लिये बड़ा दुःखद और अघकार का दिन है। डा० बाबा साहेब

अम्बेडकर भारत के बड़े महान् नेता थे और उन्होंने देश की कई रूपों में सेवा की है। देश के वे महान् नेता थे ही लेकिन हम हरिजनों के तो वे प्राण ही थे और हरिजन सदा उनके ऋणी रहेंगे। उन्होंने जिनकी भर हरिजनों को ऊपर उठाने के लिए प्रयत्न किया और आज के दिन हरिजनों की जो अवस्था में सुधार हुआ है और हम कुछ ऊपर उठे हैं, उसका मुख्य श्रेय बाबा साहेब को ही है। बाबा साहेब का जन्म एक गरीब अछूत घराने में हुआ था और उनको अपने जीवन में अनेक कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ा लेकिन उन्होंने हिम्मत नहीं हारी और उन्होंने सकलतापूर्वक सारी कठिनाइयों का सामना किया और उन पर विजय पाई। उन्होंने जीवन भर इस अस्पृश्यता के कलंक को हिन्दू जाति के माथे पर से हटाने का प्रयत्न किया और अस्पृश्यता निवारण के लिये धोर संग्राम किया। आखिर उन्होंने यह निश्चय किया कि मेरा जन्म तो उस हिन्दू धर्म में हुआ लेकिन मैं ऐसे हिन्दू धर्म को जो कि अस्पृश्यता को मानता है, अपना धर्म नहीं मानूंगा और हमने देखा कि उन्होंने अपनी यह प्रतिज्ञा पूरी भी की। भगवान से मेरी प्रार्थना है कि उनकी आत्मा को शान्ति मिले और मैं समझता हूँ कि उनकी आत्मा को सच्ची और वास्तविक शान्ति सभी मिलेगी जब कि यह अस्पृश्यता का कलंक हिन्दू जाति से मिट जायगा।

Shri Gadgil (Poona Central): Normally after the Leader of the House and my party has spoken, there is no justification for me to speak, but I plead this justification that I had the privilege of Dr. Ambedkar's friendship for over 35 years. He was ten times dearer to us Maharashtrians than what he was to India as a whole. It was he who created a sense of self-respect and importance in the most down-trodden community in our area. Undoubtedly he was very bitter in his tongue, but his heart was sweet. His faults we all know, but his virtues outweighed them.

What he did in the matter of framing our Constitution is sufficiently well known. But, essentially, he was a rebel against the injustice in the *status quo*, whether the sphere was social or economic.

Lastly, he was thinking on much more progressive lines. Very recently, I had some discussion with him, and he said, 'No more privileges to the Scheduled Castes. Now, they must come into their own and fight against the injustice that is still there, along with the rest of the members of the whole Indian community.' Such a man has passed away; but, everything in this world must pass away.

Let us, therefore, remember what good he did, and deserve by what he did and progressively achieved—the objects for which he stood.

I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by other Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker: I fully associate myself with all the sentiments expressed on the floor of the House by the Leader of the House and the leaders of various groups, and I am sure the House will equally associate itself with those sentiments.

Dr. Ambedkar was a great and dynamic personality. He rose from humble beginnings and became a leader of the Scheduled Castes. He was a great scholar and writer, and, more than all, he was a powerful speaker.

He piloted our Constitution. In the field of social reform, he initiated many wholesome measures. In his death, India has lost one of her great sons. I shall convey the sentiments of this House and the condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

As a mark of respect, I am sure the House would like to adjourn today. In sorrow, we shall stand for a minute in silence.

The Members then stood in silence for a minute.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now stand adjourned as a mark of respect to him, and meet again at 11 A.M. tomorrow.

12-23 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, the 7th December, 1956.