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JUSTICE POLITICAL PAMPHLETS No. 1

Justice's Day Save us



THE
SOUTH INDIAN
PEOPLES' ASSOCIATION, LD.

ITS OBJECTS
AND
AIMS

MADRAS:
THE JUSTICE PRINTING WORKS
1917

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THE MANIFESTO

FOREWARD

At a conference held in Madras on the 20th November and attended by several non-Brahmin gentlemen of position and influence both in Madras and in the mofussil it was resolved that measures be taken to start a company for publishing a newspaper advocating the cause of the non-Brahmin Community and also that a political association be formed to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the same community. In accordance with this, a Joint Stock Company has been started under the name of "South Indian Peoples' Association" for conducting a daily newspaper in English, Tamil and Telugu respectively, and also a political association has been formed under the name of "The South Indian Liberal Federation." The South Indian Peoples' Association has issued the following manifesto addressed to non-Brahmin gentlemen throughout the Presidency under the signature of its Secretary, Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chettiar.

INTRODUCTION

The time has come when an attempt should be made to define the attitude of the several important non-Brahmin Indian Communities in this Presidency towards what is called "the Indian Home Rule Movement," and also to indicate certain facts with respect to their present political position. Not less than 40 out of 41½ millions, who form the population of this Presidency, are non-Brahmins, and the bulk of the tax-payers, including a large majority of the zamindars, landholders and agriculturists, also belong to the same class. But, in what passes for politics in Madras, they have not taken the part to which they are entitled. They have made little or no use of their influence among the masses for the general political advancement of the country. In these days of organised effort, they maintain no proper organisations for protecting and promoting their common interests and for preventing professional and other politicians, with hardly any corresponding stake in the country, from posing as their accredited spokesmen. Nor have they a Press of their own to speak the truth on their behalf. Their political interests, therefore (as compared with those of the Brahmins who number only about a million and a half) have materially suffered.

FACTS AND FIGURES : PUBLIC SERVICE

The Hon'ble Sir Alexander (then Mr.) Cardew, now a Member of the Madras Executive Council, in his evidence before the Public Service Commission in 1919, described, in detail, the relative positions of the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins in the Public Service of this Province, not certainly as a champion of non-Brahmin interests, but with a view to show that if simultaneous examinations in England and India for admission into the Indian Civil Service were introduced, the Brahmins whom he characterised as "a small rigidly exclusive caste," would swamp that Service. He is reported to have stated that in the competitive examinations for the Provincial Civil Service, which were held between 1892 and 1904, out of sixteen successful candidates fifteen were Brahmins giving a ratio of 94 % of Brahmin success. In the Mysore State where open competitive examinations for the Mysore Civil Service were held during the preceding 20 years, Brahmins secured 85 % of the vacancies. In the competition for the appointment of Assistant Engineers in Madras the number of successful candidates, during the same period, was 17 Brahmins and 4 non-Brahmins. Similar results were produced by the competitive examination for the Accounts Departments. Out of 140 Deputy Collectors in Madras at the time, 77

were Brahmins, 30 non-Brahmin Hindus, and the rest Muhamadans, Indian Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians. It is curious to note that even where competitive examinations did not exist, as for instance in the Subordinate Judicial Service of the Presidency, the major portion of the appointments was in the hands of the Brahmins. Sir Alexander Cardew stated that out of 128 permanent District Munsifs in 1913, 93 were Brahmins, 25 non-Brahmin Hindus and the rest Mahomedans, Indian Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians. From these and other figures of a like nature he naturally concluded that an open competition for the Civil Service in India would mean an almost complete monopoly of the service by the Brahmin caste and the practical exclusion from it of the non-Brahmin classes. Of course, he did not invite the attention of the Public Service Commission to what prevailed in the important Native States, directly under the control of the Madras Government, where, too, the preponderance of Brahmins in the Government Service then, as now, was not less marked. Nor did he go into the figures relating to the Subordinate Services which are recruited under a system almost wholly of patronage. Surely, in these services the preponderance of Brahmins would be still more striking!

With regard to what obtains at the present mo-

ment in the various branches of the Government service, it is needless to go into the figures. But we cannot help calling attention to the highest appointments open to the Indian in this Presidency and the principle upon which they are distributed. Since the Executive Council of H. E. the Governor has been opened to Indians, three Indian gentlemen have been admitted into it in succession, the two latter being Brahmin lawyers. Of the five Indian Judges of the High Court, four of them, *i.e.*, all the Hindu Judges, are Brahmins. In 1914 a new Secretaryship to Government was created, and a Brahmin official was forthwith appointed to it. The Indian Secretary to the Board of Revenue is a Brahmin; and of the two Collectorships open to the Members of the Provincial Civil Service, that which has fallen to the share of Communities other than the Mahomedan has nearly always gone to a Brahmin official.

PUBLIC BODIES

What is true of Government Service is equally true of local and other public bodies. Where an electorate is composed of a large number of Brahmins, the non-Brahmin Indian has hardly a chance. It nearly always happens that while the non-Brahmins, do not concentrate upon a single candidate, Brahmin or non-Brahmin, the

Brahmins nearly always unite and support their caste-man. The Madras University, of which the majority of Indian Fellows, classified under the several Indian groups, are Brahmins, has never returned a non-Brahmin Indian to the local Legislative Council, so much so that no non-Brahmin Indian, however well qualified otherwise, indulges the hope of getting elected as a Member for the University in the Legislative Council, unless it be with the support of the European Fellows. At a meeting of the Madras Legislative Council, held in November 1914, in reply to an interpellation by the late Mr. Kunhi Raman Nayanar, it was stated that the total number of registered Graduates of the University was 650 of whom 452 were Brahmins, 124 non-Brahmin Hindus and 74 belonged to other communities, and that since 1907, when election of Fellows by registered Graduates began, 12 Fellows were elected of whom with one exception all were Brahmins. We are not aware that neither before 1907 when a sort of election of a few Fellows by Graduates of a certain number of years' standing was allowed, nor since 1914 when the statement referred to was made in the Legislative Council, the Graduates of the Madras University of whom the majority have always been Brahmins, elected a non-Brahmin as a Fellow of the University, so that the non-Brahmin, however

distinguished, has little or no chance of getting into the Senate of the Madras University through what is called the open door of election. In the election to the Imperial and local Legislative Councils and to Municipal Bodies, one finds the same truth illustrated, so far as these elections could be controlled by the "rigidly exclusive caste." If occasionally, a fair-minded ruler endeavours to correct the inequality arising from the preponderance of Brahmins on any public-body by having recourse to nominations of individuals from comparatively unrepresented interests, he is severely criticized in the Brahmin press. How His Excellency Lord Pentland was dealt with by some of the papers in connection with the recent nominations to his Legislative Council may be cited as the latest example of this kind of hostile and unfair criticism. Outside these responsible bodies, more or less under the control of the Government, even in the case of existing political organisations in the City of Madras as well as in the Districts, the figures regarding election, if gone into, will tell the same tale. To quote one of the latest instances, of the 15 gentlemen elected from this Presidency to represent it on the All-India-Congress Committee, with the exception of one solitary non-Brahmin Indian, all are practically Brahmins, and yet the decision of this committee, which is the executive

of the Congress, upon matters of grave import, such as the revision of the Indian constitution after the War, will be held up to the world's admiring gaze as the considered opinions, among others, of the 40 millions of non-Brahmins of this large and important Province. It is our unfortunate experience also that as concessions and rights are more freely bestowed, the rigidly exclusive caste grows still more rigid and exclusive.

NON-BRAHMINS AND EDUCATION

In defence of all this practical monopoly of political power and high Government appointments which make for that power, it is pointed out that though the Brahmins are only a small fraction of the population of this Presidency, they are far ahead of other communities in regard to University qualification. No one denies this. Old-established traditions, the position of the Brahmins as the highest and the most sacred of the Hindu castes, the nature of their ancient calling, and the steady inculcation of the belief, both by written texts and oral teaching, that they are so many divinely-ordained intermediaries without whose active intervention and blessing the soul cannot obtain salvation and their consequent freedom from manual toil,—all these helped them to adapt themselves easily to

the new conditions under British Rule, as under previous epochs, in larger numbers and far more successfully than the other castes and communities. Apart, however, from the question of English education, are large material stakes, traditional and inherited interests in the soil and the social prestige that goes with it, influence among the masses, quiet and peaceful occupations that tend to the steady economic development of the Province, and overwhelming numerical strength itself, to count for nothing? Should not the classes and communities that from time immemorial, have stood for these, receive encouragement from the Government? In the matter of education itself the advantage is not all on the side of the Brahmin caste. Though rather late in the field, the non-Brahmin communities have begun to move. They now represent various stages of progress. Some of them such as the Chetty, the Komatti, the Mudaliar, the Naidu, and the Nair, have been making rapid progress; and even the least advanced, like those who are ahead of them, are manfully exerting themselves to come up to the standard of the new time. The spirit of educational progress is abroad, and it is a significant circumstance that, among some of the non-Brahmin Communities, the development is more harmonious and less one-sided than among the Brahmins. In spite of the singular solicitude

which, for reasons not apparent, the Department of Education has been showing for the education of Brahmin girls and especially of Brahmin widows, as if the Brahmins were a backward class, the percentage of literates among the women of such non-Brahmin communities as the Nairs is higher than among the Brahmins. In a variety of ways and in different walks of life, the non-Brahmins will now be found unostentatiously and yet effectively contributing to the moral and material progress of this Presidency. But these and their brethren have so far been groping helpless in the background, because of the subtle and manifold ways in which political power and official influence are often exercised by the Brahmin caste.

WANT OF ORGANIZATION

We do not deny that in these days of fierce intellectual competition the skill to pass examinations is a valuable personal possession. But it passes our understanding why a small class, which shows a larger percentage of English-knowing men than their neighbours, should be allowed almost to absorb all the Government appointments, great and small, high and low, to the exclusion of the latter among whom may also be found, though in small proportions, men of capacity, enlightenment and culture. The fact

cannot be gainsaid that, in spite of the numerous obstacles in their path, as executive and judicial officers, as educationists, lawyers, medical men, engineers, public men and as successful administrators of large and important estates, the non-Brahmin communities have produced men of distinguished attainments and unquestioned eminence, some of whom have found no equals in the Brahmin caste. Guided by their own sense of self-respect and enlightened self-interest, had they and their communities always acted in concert, even in the matter of Government appointments and political power, they would have been at the top, a place which is theirs by right. As it is, for want of efficient separate organisations of their own and of the instinct or the inclination to make the freest and the most effective use of the modern weapon of publicity, their interests have not received their proper share of attention and recognition.

PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL DEVELOP-
MENT WANTED AND NOT
UNAUTHORISED CONSTITUTION-
MAKING

Not satisfied with the possession of the key to the present political position, the radical politicians of this Presidency, who are apparently never so happy as when they ask for fresh political concessions, irrespective of their suitability to the

existing conditions, now ask for Home Rule ; and from previous experience, we fear, that if a discordant note is not sounded at the proper time, it will, of course, be made out that all India is keen about Home Rule. It is not necessary for our purpose to go into the details of this extravagant scheme, or into those of the other submitted to His Excellency the Viceroy by nineteen members of the Imperial Legislative Council. We are not in favour of any measure which, in operation, is designed, or tends completely, to undermine the influence and authority of the British Rulers who alone in the present circumstances of India are able to hold the scales even between creed and class and to develop that sense of unity, and national solidarity without which India will continue to be a congeries of mutually exclusive and warring groups, without a common purpose and a common patriotism. While we dissociate ourselves entirely from unauthorised Indian Constitution-making, which seems to be a favourite occupation with a certain class of politicians, we must say that we are strongly in favour of progressive political development of a well-defined policy of trust in the people, qualified by prudence, and of timely and liberal concessions in the wake of proved fitness. In the early days of the Indian National Congress, when that movement was directed and controlled on the spot, by

such sagacious and thoughtful men as the late Messrs. A.O. Hume, W. C. Bonnerjee, Buddrudin Tyabji, S. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Rangiah Naidu, Rao Bahadur Sebanathi Mudaliar and Sir Sankaran Nair, enlightened non-Brahmins all over the Presidency gave it their hearty loyal support. It was then, though not in form and name, but in spirit and method, a truly national institution. Some of the old ideals are still there. But the spirit in which, the method by which, and the persons by whom, it is at present worked, cannot, all of them, commend themselves to the thinking and self-respecting section of the non-Brahmin public of this Presidency. The social reactionary and the impatient political idealist, who seldom has his foot on solid earth, have now taken almost complete possession of the Congress. Democratic in aims, an irresponsible bureaucracy now manipulates its wires. We sincerely hope that sane and sober politicians who know the country and its people, and who feel their responsibility to both, will soon reassert their mastery over the Congress machine, and direct it in strict accordance with the living realities of the present.

NO CASTE RULE, PLEASE

For our part, we deprecate, as we have suggested, the introduction of changes not warranted

by the present conditions. We cannot too strongly condemn caste or class rule. We are of those who think that in the truest and best interests of India, its Government should continue to be conducted on true British principles of justice and equality of opportunity. We are deeply devoted and loyally attached to British Rule. For that rule, in spite of its many shortcomings and occasional aberrations, is, in the main, just and sympathetic. We, indeed, hope that our rulers will, as their knowledge of the country expands, be more readily responsive to public feeling when, of course, that feeling is clearly manifest and decidedly unambiguous, and that before they take any action they will examine the interests and wishes of each caste, class and community with more anxious care than heretofore and in a less conventional manner. When the spirit of social exclusiveness and the rigidity of class and caste begin to disappear, the progress towards self-Government will unquestionably be more satisfactory. But for the present, the practical politician has to concern himself with what lies immediately in front of him.

SELF-GOVERNMENT BASED ON EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

After the triumphant conclusion of the war, the Indian constitution will doubtless come before

the British Statesmen and British Parliament for revision. India has earned the right to demand that the basis of her constitution should be broadened and deepened, that her sons, representing every class, caste and community according to their acknowledged position in the country and their respective numerical strength, should be given a more effective voice in the management of her affairs, that she should be given fiscal freedom and legislative autonomy in matters affecting her domestic policy and economic position, and that, lastly, she must be accorded a place in the Empire conducive to the sense of self-respect of her children as British subjects, and not inferior in dignity and power to that occupied by any self-governing Colony.

THE IMMEDIATE DUTY OF NON-BRAHMINS

We appeal to the enlightened members of the non-Brahmin communities to be up and doing. Their future lies in their own hands. Great and pressing is the task with which they are confronted. They have, in the first place to educate their boys and girls in far larger numbers than they have yet done. Associations under the responsible guidance of leading non-Brahmin gentlemen should be started and maintained in a state of efficiency, in every populous centre, not merely to induce the various non-Brahmin

communities to avail themselves more freely of the existing facilities for education, and to create such facilities where they do not now exist, but also to find adequate funds for the education of such of their poor but intelligent boys and girls as cannot obtain instruction without extraneous pecuniary help. Indeed a more vigorous education policy for the non-Brahmins has long been overdue. Side by side with the starting of associations for the advancement of the education of the non-Brahmin classes, must also be maintained, social and political organizations, and, where they are needed, well conducted newspapers of their own, both in the vernaculars and in English, to push forward their claims. By their attitude of silence and inaction they have failed to make their voices heard, and others more astute than they have used them for their own ends, with the result that there is a great deal of discontent among the non-Brahmins about their present lot as compared with that of their Brahmin Fellow-countrymen, of which, perhaps, the Government is not fully aware. The discontent is growing every day and the attention of the Government will be drawn to it. But the non-Brahmins must first help themselves. Let them do everything needful to ensure a continued educational, social, political and economical development on a

broad and enduring basis ; and, then, their future as British subjects will be brighter and more prosperous than it is to-day. What is designated as " Nation building" is a laborious task, involving and indeed necessitating, in the slow process of evolution, the due performance, in the proper time, by each class and community, of the duty it owes to itself, first and foremost. It is our firm conviction that in India, for sometime to come at any rate, every community has primarily to put its own house in order, so that, when it has to co operate with other communities, possibly with higher social pretentions, it may do so not as a dependent and helpless unit to be made a figure-head or cats-paw of, but as a self-respecting and highly developed social organization, offering its willing co-operation for the promotion of common objects on terms of perfect equality.

OURSELVES

The policy of this paper has been defined and explained in the manifesto, which is republished elsewhere. What that document contains, is not the product of a momentary impulse. It expresses the deliberate convictions of the bulk of the intelligent sections of the people, whose feelings, wishes and wants it is the duty of "Justice" to give voice to. These convictions have, for decades past, been growing stronger and stronger, until at last action could no longer be deferred. Superficial critics are apt to set them down for the personal ambitions or the individual preferences of a few designing persons, or disappointed placemen. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Unquestioning obedience to the pontifical authority of a pretentious hierarchy was, perhaps, a social necessity, so long as the intellect was held captive and the moral nature was not allowed free play. In the name of the soul and the spirit which looked for no rewards here below, every treatment, however unjust, was meekly submitted to, as if it were an august decree of the all-seeing Providence. But with the

advent of British Rule and the dawn of the new light which accompanied it, the outlook on life, the angle of vision as it may now be called, began gradually to change. Not less than two or three generations were needed for the young idea to assume an organic shape. History tells us that no great change was the outcome of a sudden, unexpected and violent shifting of the centre of gravity. To those who could see through the past, it was all as plain and visible as a material object is to the uninstructed sense of the average man. What the actors in the final scene do, is to assist in the denouement. It is even so in the present case. It would be interesting to follow out the investigation of the subject more fully. But the question has no direct relation to our immediate object. When, however, the new leaven began to work, the result was assured. A new epoch, full of promise, has just been ushered in, and the force of circumstances has made organised action imperative. But with the process of levelling down, the new organisation of which "Justice" is the principal record and organ will not concern itself. To the more patriotic and fruitful task of levelling up, it proposes strenuously to devote its energies.

Criticism is the chief function of the press. What is criticism? To vary the words of a great teacher of mankind, criticism is the endeavour,

in all branches of human activity, to see the object as in itself it really is, so as to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces and to make the best ideas prevail. Of course, these words were written in another connection. But they are equally applicable and relevant to the high purpose we have set before ourselves. We shall do our best to see that sound views of men, things and institutions prevail. But the basic principle upon which we propose to proceed is unswerving loyalty to the British connection. That in no way deters us from subjecting every action, measure and policy of the Government and their subordinate agents to the closest, the most searching and fearless scrutiny, not in a hostile spirit to be sure, but with a view to render their task easier and more productive of good to the country at large. Not less outspoken shall we be in our criticisms of the conduct of Indians of every shade and school of political and social thought. We have arrived at a stage of transition, at a parting of the ways, if we may so describe it. We have yet to win the war in which the Empire is engaged, and we must strain every nerve and exploit every resource to bring about that devoutly-wished-for consummation as speedily and as effectively as possible; for the progress and the higher life of the

kind India looks forward to with confident hope, can only follow upon complete victory to the arms of Great Britain and her faithful Allies. Purely domestic matters of an insistent nature cannot certainly be ignored on this ground, and Government themselves do not intend to do so. Such matters must, however, be discussed and settled, not in the interests of any narrow party, however articulate, but with a view to the lasting benefit of every section of the Indian population. It is not proper, for instance, to avail ourselves of the Imperial pre-occupations of British Statesmen, in order to press upon them political projects which will not stand the test of political practice for a single day without precipitating a crisis. Ill-conceived and clumsily constructed schemes of reform reveal in the authors a want of sense of proportion, and ignorance not only of the plain facts of recorded history, but of the existing conditions of the country. That the people of India of every class, caste and creed, are fit for a large instalment of political reform, which will enable them, through the chosen representatives of each section and in accordance with their relative importance and status in the land, to participate more largely and effectively in the management of their own affairs, no sane man will ever deny. But we have yet to come across a scheme drawn up in the

right spirit of social justice, a scheme which will be accepted for the present by the classes and communities concerned, as a proper solution of the existing difficulties and as workable in practice. We are, however, in hopes that the Government, in consultation with the responsible representatives and wise men of every community, caste and class, will prepare a scheme which, ripened and perfected by subsequent public discussion, will be found to be sound in every part and suited to the conditions of the people and the country at the present moment.

But politics is not our only, or principal concern. The great community which we represent and the Moslem and Indian Christian communities whose active friends and well-wishers we shall ever remain, have never been mere non-productive consumers of wealth. For long ages they have been the actual producers, possessors, and distributors of the wealth of this land. Even were it possible for the Government to distribute all the appointments in their gift among these communities and especially among the non-Brahmin Hindu Community only an infinitesimal fraction of them could be benefited by it. They claim their legitimate share of Government patronage because of the political power it confers; and the exercise by them of the political power, which is their due, will be beneficial alike to them and to

the Government whose staunch and loyal supporters and adherents they have always been and will be ; for, from the ranks of these communities were drawn the men who fought at Arcot and Plassey, and who stood by the British in the struggle with Hyder and with Tippu and who thus helped to lay the foundations of British Rule in India. Warmed by their example and animated by the same spirit, the descendants of these men are ever ready to do the same at the call of their Government. In connection with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Indian Public Services and in every other connection the claims and rights of the communities with such historic past will be most respectfully pressed upon the attention of the Government. But, as the manifesto has emphasised it, the future of all these people lies in their own hands. To the agricultural, industrial, and commercial development of the country, they have to apply themselves, with renewed vigour and energy and also with the improved knowledge which the resources of modern science and the history and methods of highly efficient organisations in the West, in America and in Japan, have placed before them. It will equally be the sacred duty of their organisations, which, we hope, will come into existence in every district, taluk and village and wherever else they are needed, to bestow their thought and

attention upon education under every head of it, primary, secondary, higher, technical, professional, with special reference to the talents and the opportunities of the boys and girls concerned. Every boy and girl in the land should be bred up to some useful trade or calling, useful alike to the individual, to the community, and to the country. That is the ideal towards the attainment of which the various communities referred to must, as an organised whole, labour incessantly, of course with faith, with hope and in a spirit of mutual trust and brotherhood. Nor are the arts and the sciences, the cultivation of which helps to sweeten life and conduces to the preservation of health and strength to be neglected. We have a bright future before us, and this paper, speaking in the interests of the thirty-five millions of non-Brahmin Hindus and with the authority certainly of most of their acknowledged representatives and leaders, appeal to them all to make the new movement a success of which the fruits, in ever-increasing plenty will; we doubt not, accrue to succeeding generations of the people of this country without reference to caste, colour or creed and redound to the glory of the British Government.
