



H.P.

It was sometime ago that I had raised the question of discontinuing grants-in-aid to those educational institutions which are named after a certain caste, e.g. Kayastha Pathashala (the one at Alahabad was, perhaps, the first caste institution to be brought into being), Vaish High School, Rajput or Kshtriya College, Jat School, etc., Similar action has to be taken against denominational institutions also, like the DAV High Schools (they are already thinking of changing them into simple 'Dayanand'), Hindu or Islamic Colleges, etc; but this can wait. It is the caste which is the greatest ~~stubb~~ stumbling-block in the way of national solidarity to-day. It narrows one's vision and limits one's loyalty, and it was mainly owing to this narrow vision or limited loyalty engendered by the Caste system that our people during the last two thousand centuries fell such an easy prey to whosoever adventurer from foriegn lands chose to try his luck here.

I am pained to find that this bitter lesson has not yet been learnt even by the best of our leaders or public workers some of them occupying the top offices in the pre-eminent political organisation like the Congress. Only yesterday I have come across ~~to~~ a news item saying that so and so -- a personage occupying a high place in public life -- will preside over a session of the All-India Agrawal Mahasabha to be held in Delhi on 1st, ~~and~~ 2nd and 3rd October next. If we, the leading men of the province or country, cannot resist such temptation or rise above the narrow grooves of caste and sub-caste, then very gloomy future, indeed, lies ahead.

I would urge that the very first step in this direction is to compel a change in the names of the educational institutions where our generation is getting its ~~aks~~ schooling in its tender impressionable age. It is here that our boys, next to their homes, catch the infection and, consciously or unconsciously, ^{are} led to think in terms of caste. It does not require any legislation; a mere directive from the Department will do the trick. Only if we make our intention clear to the managements, they will change the names ~~post~~ ^{post} haste; in my opinion intelligent public opinion



is ready to welcome any concrete steps that Government may choose to take against the citadel of caste.

I know H.P. is already seized of this demand; but he is so busy with his multifarious work that I thought it proper to press it on his attention once again in writing.

Sd/-

Charan Singh
30.9.49

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CM (through ME)

Quite a good number of educational institutions in the State recognised by, and receiving financial aid from, Government bear the name of a caste, members whereof generally are running them. This name itself leads to the narrowing of the minds and hearts of their alumini. Young students are forcefully reminded daily that they belong to a particular caste - a caste which is higher than another one and superior to it in this characteristic or that. This warps their outlook for the rest of their entire life.

If our political slavery can be ascribed to one single cause, I think it is the rigid, hide-bound caste system based on birth. It even debarred certain castes and sub-castes from unsheathing the sword or fighting shoulder to shoulder with other countrymen of theirs in defence of their common Motherland. This had little to do with the pristine teachings of the Hindu faith. The caste feeling has so permeated our society that even Muslims and Christians, who are mostly drawn from the original Hindu stock, are not free from it. The virus is, one should be sorry to note, becoming more and more virulent since the attainment of independence and introduction of adult franchise. In the pre-1947 days those in whose hands the political and administrative power rested, had no caste-men or blood relations of their own in this country and the franchise was limited to an insignificant number of our people.

Caste based on birth, as it is practised, whatever purpose it may or may not have served in the past, is a narrow concept which should find no place in a democracy. The two are inconsistent: one of them alone should survive. It limits a man's sympathies and renders him unfit for service of the society as a whole. It creates an atmosphere in which one belonging to a different caste is rarely given credit for honesty ^{or efficiency} by those belonging to another. Accusations and untrue but sometimes not quite without basis, are flung about so that the whole environment gradually gets vitiated. In many a local body - and it cannot be said that the Legislatures are entirely free - casteism plays a prominent part and public interest is relegated to a secondary place. This feeling, I am afraid, has slowly begun to corrode even the State services. - 51 -

With the foreign domination gone, our differences are coming to the fore. With no common enemy left to fight against, we are ^{force} hunting for enemies in our own midst. (Besides linguism) caste is the greatest ^{Centralised threat to our solidarity.} even consider this caste based on birth as one of the major causes which led to the partition of the country. It is time, therefore, we did some serious thinking about it.

I think at the governmental level there are two remedies open to us. Firstly, we can provide that only those persons shall be allowed to enter the legislature and gazetted services of the State or Union who, if they have married after a certain date, have done so outside their caste, or, if they are bachelors, propose to do so. We do not compel anybody, but simply ensure that those only enter the services and the legislature who have given proof of catholicity of their outlook and concrete evidence that they will not be governed by caste-feelings in discharge of their duties. In my opinion young men and educated girls of to-day are quite prepared for this step. Our ancient history also provides examples of inter-caste marriages even in pratiloma form. But I know this is a far cry, indeed, and most of us may not be prepared to go so far. Also, it may require an amendment in the Constitution; so, no question of consideration of this proposal by our Government arises today.

The next ^{step}, though a very moderate ^{one, which} step we may take, is to lay down a rule that no educational institution shall be recognised which is named after a caste. I had raised this question some four years ago also, but certain legal difficulties were pointed out and the matter was shelved. I think it should be taken up again. Legal difficulties can and should be got over.

sd/-

(Charan Singh)
22.9. '53

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