

THE PROPOSED ANDHRA PROVINCE.

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The young generation may resignedly swallow their disappointed hopes and aspirations in public life, because they are working their own fated future by disregard, if not defiant disrespect to the wholesome advice of well-lived age and dearly-gained experience of their successful elders, who heartily wish for their welfare. The doubts and indifference in the holy cause of their religion and delinquencies in the ever-abiding spiritual concerns draw them away to a distance from God's only sure help, and they have to fight their battles of life on materialistic strength, which is, more often than not, uncertain and illusive. They must never allow themselves to be misled by the faddists of modern times, and their all too powerful yet empty orations. It is waste of breath and bodily energies to thunder from the platform or rush into sensational outbursts through the press on matters which should be settled on amicable terms by common consent and not, at any rate, enforced through the aid of the legislature.

For instance what is the use or advantage of the Post-Puberty Marriage Bill? If its advocates truly believe it is good, let them follow it, but why should they press it on others who distinctly see it is dangerous and sinful. They moved Heaven and Earth to get the so-called modern Telugu recognised as a literary dialect, but an overwhelming majority of scholars condemned it, the Government were wise and considerate enough to respect the public opinion and throw cold water on its face. What amount of money, and physical and mental energies were wasted on it! Now their Post-Puberty Marriage Bill is one of the present-day topics

engaging the minds of thousands of people unnecessarily; for every one man in favour of the bill, there are thousands against it. This also will share the same fate.

Our Hindu leaders are waging a far greater and destructive war against our caste. They say openly in large conferences that 'caste should go,' as if it stands at their beck and call—an institution which has so firmly withstood the ravages of cut-throats and other more dreadful destroyers of the peace of India. It is not the caste that must go, because its existence even in the present slighted condition has been exercising a wholesome check on at least many an open sinful act, in spite of such disregard and defiance to its rules and authority. There is still a considerably large proportion of people within its fold who willingly abide by its regulations. It enforces, practically, loyalty and good conduct on all who follow it. It alone is responsible for whatever good there is, which still remains in the people, and for their contented state arising from their religious knowledge and adherence to its tenets.

In the absence of anything more sensational, they are for the present busily advocating and advertising the grand benefits which would arise by the creation of a separate "Andhra Province." They say it is the grandest salvation of all the districts concerned. The idea of having more honourables in a smaller area and a Lieutenant-Governor touring more frequently in the isolated districts, the elaborate addresses and costly entertainments to His Honour, and probably a larger list of title-holders are alluring enough to young and sanguine minds; and no wonder some existing honourables express themselves in favour of the measure.

The parents and guardians of wards allow them certain privileges as a trial in a given latitude to start with, and if they have done enough justice to their trust and show true

capacity for greater responsibilities, the parents will only be too glad to give them broader scope and relieve themselves cheerfully of their own trying labours. But if what has been granted is not satisfactorily utilised, they would be disinclined to grant more, for it would be unwise to do so. And it may even be just and proper to curtail what has been already extended. It is natural that whenever an attempt is made to obtain more than what we have or has been allowed to us, we should convincingly prove the necessity, for we should show that we deserve before desiring for more. A retrospect into the affairs of the past—at least two decades prior to the present day—can hardly fail to show the much-improved position of the Indian in the political field—a position which the past or the passing generation had hardly any idea of.

An impartial view of the existing conditions ought to convince the most bigoted advocate of Andhra Province, that what has been granted to the people hitherto has not been properly taken advantage of. All the intermediary institutions between the Village Panchayat and the Council—the highest of Indian questions—of the Secretary of State for India are represented fairly by the Indians, and they enjoy a free hand in most of the institutions; at any rate much more free than they ever had before.

Water, air, and dwelling are the birthright of every man and are necessary for his well-being. Go to a village and see if it has even one single drinking-water well containing sufficient wholesome water and whether the villagers are not infrequently under the necessity of going to neighbouring villages, miles away, for securing drinking water. How many wells or isolated drains are in them which are deep in stinking silt—the accumulation of weeks! Is any one attending to them? Are their houses worthy the name

of human habitation either in point of safety, sanitation or accommodation ?

There is a city, a portion of which is inhabited by poor people living in long rows of continuous thatched houses divided by a road running between them. Almost every summer these houses used to get burnt, and entail on the inmates indescribable suffering and misery by the loss of almost all their property and the lives of some of their dear ones at times. It was almost an unpreventable annual calamity and the owners were too poor to substitute safer roofs. A rich and noble-hearted lady who used to spend almost every summer in the cold regions of the country, happened one year to remain in her own town and witness the conflagration which was the greatest that year. Almost all the houses were entirely burnt down, many lives were lost, including an old woman and some infants. She felt sorely grieved to see the sufferings of so many fellow-beings and offered Rs. 10,000 as a contribution towards a fund to be raised for the construction of tiled houses for the helpless people, and the gentleman who was instrumental in bringing this about had himself offered Rs. 5,000 as a loan without interest repayable five years after date. But the Local Body rejected the offer on the ground that it would constitute a bad precedent, as other poor people would be induced to set fire to their houses in hopes of similar help. They evidently did not like the man who arranged the measure to get the credit for public spirit, or no wise man, much less a body of men, would act in this manner.

Then again, the improvement of congested areas which has come into vogue of late years is a crying evil for the poor, who alone monopolise the congested and unhealthy areas. They are ousted from their dwellings and the compensation goes to their creditors and they have no houses to live in. They are shown marshy and unhealthy sites where

they have died in numbers and many live houseless and shelterless at the mercy of the seasons. The Government would never grudge granting sufficient contribution to enable the construction of decent buildings for them, but only the City Fathers are very close-fisted in such matters. Are the wise and practical suggestions made in the good and impressive lectures of such a learned and experienced expert as Prof. Geddes to be a mere formality—only to please the ear for the time being ?

The water-cess is levied on poor people who carry their water to their houses but get no saving of labour as no house-service is allowed or is possible to them. The water tax as well as other cesses are collected with merciless rigour even from them. Not one listens to, or redresses their grievances.

A member of a District Board, probably an elected member, was so defiant and discourteous in his behaviour at the Board's meetings as not even to say 'Good Morning' or 'Good-bye' to the President who was a European I.C.S. officer. This kind of continued discourteous conduct became so marked as to exasperate the President beyond toleration or reasonable limits. He asked the member to say 'Good-bye' to him, but the member stubbornly refused to comply with the request. Then the President abruptly got out of his seat and perforce took and shook the hand with so much warm pressure that blood gushed out of his finger tips. By a mistaken notion of the noble ideal of independence, some of our champion leaders act unwisely and impertinently and bring slur undeservedly on others of the community.

The Palghat Municipal muddle of 1911 furnishes yet another glaring instance of the harmony, co-operation and wise discretion of our City Fathers as well as their administrative capacity and zeal for popularity. Rightly or wrongly,

the Government upheld the action of the executive, however unwarranted and reprehensible it appeared to be. The great heroes of verbal warfare at once took their stand, convened indignation meetings, passed severe resolutions on the action of the authorities, and threatened to hand up the Government to the tender mercies of the Secretary of State for India! They did not resort to the mild and effectual methods of representation by appealing to the sympathy of the authorities. Their indignation and threats were not modulated by any gradient procedure of step-by-step but reached the extreme point all at once. Their conspired action and the indignant meetings in Madras, Palghat and other places only indicated an impotent rage; all the heat and fervour, without achieving anything useful, cooled down tamely much sooner than they rose. The huge mountain did not bring forth even a mouse in the end. Almost a similar state of affairs at one time prevailed in the Vizianagram M. C., but a wise and politic Collector did not allow its pernicious effects to grow, but nipped them in the bud. These and a host of real grievances loudly cry in vain for redress, but who is to listen to them? But for fear of space, many such instances can be quoted which do not reflect credit on the conduct of Local Self-government. They were confined within walls, but with the Andhra territory constituted into an independent province, they extend much further and interest on-lookers in broader ranges.

A Member of Council paid a visit to an old Municipality where there is a splendid and strong hospital building which well withstood the effects of weather and the wear and tear of time for nearly half a century or more. For reasons best known to himself, he arranged to get the sanction of the Government for the construction of another hospital building—for which there was no need, necessity nor request—at an estimated cost of a quarter of a lakh of rupees. The Municipal Council was voiceless in the matter. This large sum

could have been much better spent on some real needs of the town.

Prior to the advent of the East Coast Railway the district roads and country cross-roads were maintained in a good enough condition. The land-cess, road-cess, village-cess and a host of other cesses used to be collected from the people, even afterwards, the cesses have continued undiminished to be fully realized. But the main and other roads are in a bad condition—too bad for cart traffic and worse still to drive on—as bad as driving through fields. There does not seem to be any retrenchment in the recurring charges of the Engineering department or any less rigour in the collection of taxes or falling off in the demand. Like municipalities, prior to, or during the inspection tours of the Sanitary Commissioner, the district roads used to be kept in the best possible order when the Governor or such great personages used to visit the district or drive through it. Now they travel by the train and even those periodical ornamentations of roads have ceased. The members of Boards follow suit and no voice is heard to improve the condition of communications, as though in revenge for the reduction of profit from the Travelling Allowance at half a rupee a mile to something very much less than what will cover the train charges and halts. Is it not the duty of the members to see to this and agitate until the roads are restored to good order?

Where is the record of any good or appreciable work turned out by the members of the Local or Provincial Bodies, for getting into which they so vehemently contest during the time of elections. More or less the same want of public spirit appears to pervade even the higher Councils. The aspirants for the hand of honour make themselves conspicuous during the *swayamvara* of election with supplications and prayers for the gift of votes for the celebration of a tentative marriage contract for a few years.

During the interval they stand high and erect in the air like the long uplifted pole of the piccota, which after stooping to the low level of the water to get its bucket full, does not bend again even in the least until the imminent want of another bucketful of water is felt. Similarly these gentlemen show themselves to their constituents only when it is necessary to seek re-election for prolonging their term of honour.

After all what are the abiding good results of the work which these honourable gentlemen can assert to have done for the country, the interest of which they loudly profess to have so much at heart?

For certain things they have done, they cannot justly be denied the credit. They have shown to the world that they can make lengthy speeches, and would have impressed the public all the more with their powers of oratory could they but succeed in getting the Government to publish with vernacular translations the full text of their extensive speeches, but unfortunately on grounds of economy, if for nothing else, that body perhaps reluctantly declined to accept the suggestion. Another mark of glory that they have established for themselves in the ladder of ranks, though tentative, and only contemporaneous with their short-lived office life, which they suppose sheds credit on the communities they belong to, is the high-sounding name. They are also pleased at the idea of their being the means of raising the standard of Hindu social life by enjoying, through the medium of their membership, the rare and otherwise unattainable honour and pleasure of being invited to partake of the dinners and garden parties in the company of the highest in the ranks of the ruling race, even though they had to trample on the tender bosom of their mother religion thereby. In order to gain the credit for frankness

and public spirit and secure greater sympathy and support of the authorities, they have bitterly exposed, in distorted aspects, what to them appeared to be the intolerable defects and shortcomings of the domestic, social and even religious life of the Hindu through the press and platform, and even solicited, and are soliciting, the Government's legislative help to inflict their own fads on the public at large. But the wise Government have so far kept aloof from such controversial matters; and the leaders have also failed to prove or produce anything improper or incriminating in the life of the Hindu subjects which warranted official interference.

If in the best of interests and with the purest of motives the paternal Government wisely held exclusively in their own hands the monopolised prerogative over the evil one in its dangerous departments of disease, death and destruction, our people have spared no pains for themselves or their votaries to convene indignant meetings of protest and pass strong resolutions criticising the conservatism of Government and requesting them to extend the prerogative broadcast. There seems to be no public opinion appreciating Government action, however benevolent and generous that might be. To draw certain flaws from which no human power can be immune and dilate and harp thereon seems to be the order of the day of recent years. Several instances can be quoted in support of this view, but one would be quite enough for the present.

It would appear the Government maintained a policy of not recruiting their armies from certain classes of certain districts. Certain leaders arose from among them and felt it was a great slur on those districts not to be allowed to join the army, and they kept hammering at the subject in vain for some time and eventually resolved to wait on the authorities in deputation for the withdrawal of the interdict and the

consequent stain on the honour and prowess of the concerned people. It would appear that the authorities yielded to the pressing request of the deputation and granted the prayer. This agitation acted in the end as the invitation into the house of the Devil that was passing in the street; those overwhelming crowds that were burning and bursting with the desire of distinguishing themselves for their courage actually dwindled into infinitesimal numbers, and some of them are said to be undergoing the penalties for turning out either turncoats or violators of their pledges. That body which has fought for the extension of the privilege aforesaid is now silent and obscure from public notice and its voice is not heard encouraging men to enlist. Perhaps they will ask for conscription for India also !

To the layman or general public the existence of our leaders in the highest administrative circles, with the most honourable exceptions as in the case of the sainted and selfless Gokhale, does not convincingly assert itself on the whole as being attended with any notable acts of public usefulness and benefit which had not been enjoyed before, beyond sentimental uplift of persons or their followers.

No doubt these gentlemen have been exhausting themselves, and probably Government also, with a host of wearisome and unimportant interpellations, some of which savour more or less of maize-stock questions than anything else. These questions could have found useful, easy and practical answers from the district or divisional authorities to whom they relate on the whole. If, with their exalted positions, privileges and high-sounding names, these gentlemen approached with a spirit of deference and advocated before the administrative heads and ministerial officers of the district for the redress of the real grievances of the people in general and the ryot population in particular, they would be listened

to, and results will be more practical and beneficial than the bothersome, unending and time-wasting string of questions put to the Government, who command more the general methods of administration than the minor details or ordinary matters which are left to the discretion of the executive staff.

As at present constituted there is enough of representation of almost all the interests in all councils and boards; the results are still far from what should or could be desired. It would be childish frivolity and caprice to agitate for more and larger administrative concessions at this stage of experiment of administrative capacity ; such an agitation would savour more or less of the adage of a poor man praying for more children while the many that he already has are famishing for want of food.

The many important and long-lived professions which secured means of livelihood to large sections of communities have sadly been annihilated as a consequence of the irresistible forces of imitation to which our modern civilizationists have become slaves. The Indian chuckler, potter, weaver, goldsmith and others are obliged to disappear from the market and give place to foreign shoemakers, chinaware manufacturers, cotton mill-owners and jewellers who manufacture most beautiful and cheap ornaments with baser metals excelling genuine ones for the time being. These foreign workmen, especially the German, have become adepts in the art of dissimulation as the very evil one in its own prototype of falsified realities, *e. g.*, the German silver electroplated ware, Taits diamonds, imitation silks, false limbs, &c. How can a country improve or be self-governing if its indigenous trades and professions are wantonly ruined ?

One of the principal causes for the agitation for an Andhra Province, so far known, is the greatness of the southern people with which the Andhras have failed to

compete with any amount of success. The greatness of the southerners as well as the northerners and westerners of India is not due to any super human capacity on their part, but mostly to the climatic benefits which nature has bestowed upon them. The holy rivers, the waters of which they bathe in and drink, the wholesome crops of the lands which those rivers fertilise and the salubrious effects of the atmosphere have a great deal to do with the expansion of their intellect as well as their physique. But for this covetable partiality of nature there could be no earthly reason why the whole of the Telugu districts put together have not been able to produce one distinguished person comparable with any of the following—Sir Seshadri, Sir Muthusami, Sir Bhashyam, Kanade, Gokhale, Surendranath Banerji and Sir Rabendranath Tagore.

In order to equalize intellectual and physical conditions, which alone justify competition, the best and most reasonable thing would be to propose to the rulers of the land to irrigate the sterile, essenceless Vindhya regions by channels constructed from those living rivers and by huge dams to divert the streams and prevent the enormous quantity of water emptying itself into the sea. This would be a more practical and really beneficial proposal to make than to agitate for a segregated Andhra Province.

This movement results in an irreconcilable contest between the sons of the same soil as is evidenced by our Bengal brethren for whose administrative convenience and benefit the bifurcation of Bengal was made and even pronounced to be a settled fact. But such a tremendous hue and cry was set up by those people as resulted in the terrible upsetting of the peaceful conditions of the country by the perpetration of brutal crimes, the consequences of which have not still died out. Those people persisted in their strong representations

of the evil effects of the measure to such length that it became necessary for H. M. our King-Emperor to cancel the partition as the greatest boon conferred on Bengal. Now the earnest efforts of some of our leaders in the Madras Presidency are directed towards a quite contrary achievement. The Bengalis held: "divided we fall; united we win." The present endeavour enunciates the opposite maxim. The majority of the leading men in India are striving hard towards the construction of a united India. Submitted to an impartial judgment on broad and charitable principles, this agitation does not fail to forecast service of personal interest on a more extensive scale with veneered statements of greater opportunities to improve the deplorable state of existing conditions.

It is not by securing control over more extensive areas that the administration would improve really so much as by sincere and strenuous efforts, and steps actually taken and realised, to improve existing trusts, the neglected state of which will be an impassable impediment in the way of broader concessions. It cannot be denied that the condition of villages, towns and cities is a reproach to the equitable and humane self-government. "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves" is a true saying which holds good in the present case. If in the minor details of supplying the necessary wants of the poor villagers and other people, the utmost that can be done under existing circumstances has been actually realised, greater concessions follow of their own accord without even asking for them.

Andhra Province is a misnomer for those districts, the grouping of which is now advocated. There are two main sections of Brahmins—Goudas and Dravidas. These are again sub-divided into five sections each. One of the five sub-sections are Andhras who are again sub-divided into

twelve branches, if not more. The two main sections include only the Brahmins and do not even include the other Dwijas. They exclude all other castes. If the Andhra Province is to be constituted, would its benefits be monopolised by the Brahmins only? Are other castes to agitate for their respective provinces just as our people are trying to establish separate universities and just as they established different colleges for the different sections of the same community? And, above all, what will be the state of the ceded districts then? Would they not be placed in a more disadvantageous position than at present, and are they to agitate for a separate province for themselves? Will the Andhras inhabiting the Nizam's Dominions be left uncared for and separated from their brethren in the Northern Circars?

The very idea of a divided province connotes a spirit of aloofness and faction because the Andhras cannot compete with the Tamilians successfully and win for themselves a fair share in the field of honour and position. They want to exclude them and try their fortunes in their own sphere of inferior intellect and within a smaller arena. For the matter of that, they may give up the spirit of friendly rivalry and competition even in ordinary concerns such as a panchayat membership and remain contented in their own dwellings and exclaim with supreme satisfaction: "I am monarch of all I survey; my right there is none to dispute," or "Happy the man whose wish and care, a few paternal acres bound, content to breathe the native air, and live on his own ground."

It is not the disparity nor the difficulty at competition, as the baneful results of faction that is at the root of so much mischief and heart-burning amongst almost all public concerns. The section that is predominant helps the cause of only its partisans to the detriment and disadvantage of

others in the opposite section in spite of their greater merit. Has any one troubled himself to remedy this spreading evil, if not to eradicate it? Who is to guarantee that its unchecked existence and progress do not find their way into the new councils and sustain the same unsatisfactory result?

Have our leaders succeeded in establishing harmony, public spirit, just and upright conduct, the management of all our local bodies? Have they made the Collector of the district who is the agent of the Governor, and for all practical purposes as good as a Lieutenant-Governor, their confidant and sympathiser of their cause?

It would not be unreasonable to expect that the attitude of the Lieutenant-Governor would be different from that of District Heads. His Honour will of course be a greater personality whose views will carry more weight, drawing attention, greater consideration and more scrutiny. But who can predict with any amount of assurance that His Honour will take the cue from, and perpetuate the ever-green memories of Lords Ripon, Hardinge, Carmichael, Pentland or Willingdon—noblemen whose names are most respected and beloved throughout the whole of India? Assembled, at intervals few and far between, like the combination of auspicious stars in the heavens, we have at present most noble-minded rulers who have the welfare of our country at heart and govern it with the true magnanimity of the British. What assurance is there that His Honour will not elect to follow the example of some of the like potentates who are so unsympathetic as not to allow a last chance of a possible pardon in the case of a death sentence, or that he will not prefer to walk in the footsteps of a higher dignitary who so generously threw serious impediments in the path of Indian progress by the adoption of highly repressive measures calculated to retard the educational advancement of the

people? Distant hills are smooth and an old master is better than a new one. Our leaders may be carried away by hopeful anticipations of the would-be potentate making it a study to render his regime a pure bed of roses and himself as self-sacrificing, benevolent and mild as an old good milch cow. Who can say that he shall not be fitful, and, at the first instance of opposition to his views and wishes, that he will not bristle up with all the thorns of his office? With our Indian tactics, our different versions, our conflicting interests, what potentate can maintain imperturbable equilibrium? Our advocates for a separate province look as shortsighted and sanguine as an ignorant son who exults over the idea of his father's re-marriage, being unaware of his future misery on account of a step-mother's affection. Too much vicinity of kings or their representatives, says the poet, is as great a nuisance which should be avoided as too much rain, a long drought, rats, locusts and parrots. There may be greater scope for bringing forward a larger number of resolutions before that Council, but what certainty is there that they will not be rejected or withdrawn as at present? Does it reflect credit, to place an overwhelming number of resolutions before the august Council with perhaps one per cent. carried or accepted and as much as the remaining 99 per cent. lost for want of support or discredibly withdrawn? How much more satisfactory and creditable and practical would it be if those resolutions were discussed in a friendly spirit with the concerned authorities at private interviews and their views ascertained beforehand. Such procedure would enlighten both sides and the subsequent action would be more effectual.

The speeches from the platform and stirring articles in the papers are managed easily enough without any cost to speak of. Should the advocated province unfortunately happen to be an accomplished fact, it will not be a cheap

affair as the speeches and resolutions, and it will absorb an enormous annual outlay of recurring charges for administration and large allotments for the initial cost of public buildings, offices and quarters. Who is to bear this huge burden? The public expenditure of India is heavy enough already without this extra charge. No suggestion, it is hoped, will be made by our patriots in the direction of additional taxation. Why should the tax-payer be made to bear extra burdens for no benefit of his? What are the additional benefits the tax-payer will receive which are not possible now, and which are not enjoyed by him owing chiefly to the indifference and callousness of his advocates?

The Government are a prudent people and on the whole incline on the side of economy and never of extravagance. This is certainly a hopeless agitation, but it will find for some time to come enough employment for brain, hand and purse and then wither away as all overwrought brains and bodies.

How much more praiseworthy, fruitful, and popular would be the work of these educated and influential men, could they but successfully preach their gospel to the wealthy and powerful native chiefs and landed aristocracy, and take strong repressive measures against the spirit of faction so embittering the life in almost all public concerns, and see that merit, wherever it existed, finds its due recognition and reward! If only help, not hatred, kindness, not cruelty, useful action on popular lines, not merely laboured and lengthy speeches, be substituted for the present order of things, no better state of things can be desired; and all the people will co-operate with and support them so long as there is nothing to indicate an intention to tread on the tender corns of religious customs or observances and thus provoke the people. Otherwise there will be a strong pulling on both sides from opposite ends and the people concerned will be

compelled to exclaim "Save us from our friends and o country from its reformers." The noble and selfless life the ever-lamented Honourable Mr. Gokhale is a very worth ideal for all well-meaning people to work to.—*The Hindustan Review*.



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