

Shri S. Nagappa (Madras: General): Mr. President, Sir, I congratulate the majority community and also the Minorities Advisory Committee that was appointed in order to go through the problem of the minorities in this country. Sir, there are three parties to this. Firstly, we have to congratulate the Honourable Sardar Patel on his wonderful achievement which could not be achieved by two centuries of British rule. He could do it within two years. Divisions were created by the Britishers in order to continue their rule over India perpetually. Now, that would not be done in two centuries has been done within two years. Now the minorities themselves come forward and say that they do not want any reservation. That is an achievement. The second party is the Minorities Advisory Committee and the third party is the minorities themselves. We have to congratulate all the three. Now, people may ask, "How is that you have not foregone your reservation?" I do not think we are getting reservation because we are religious minority. We are not a religious minority. We are an economic, political and social minority. We have got rid of two disabilities. Mahatmaji was kind enough to grant us two freedoms, social freedom and political freedom. Now, Sir, the majority community happens to be larger in number. You have seen where the Kauravas were hundred in number and Pandavas were five in number, they had an equal right to the kingdom. Though Lord Krishna failed in his last avatar to get independence of rather the due share in the administration of the country, yet in later generations Mahatma Gandhi achieved at the cost of his life the political freedom for Harijans; he not only achieved political freedom: but while we were hated, teased, tortured and ill-treated up to 1932, after 1932 the hatred was converted into affection. Some honourable Members have said that the Scheduled castes must have no reservation. Without asking us, this majority community has given us reservation. My honourable Friend Mr. Lari and other friends were saying: "Why should these Scheduled castes be given reservation"? We are not asking for reservation for our community. We are the people who have given protection to all the people. Three thousand years ago we gave you shelter. It is our community that gave protection to everybody. Our community does not seek protection. Well, Sir, the Britisher could not rule this country without us; the Muslims could not conquer this country without our cooperation and the Congress could not achieve freedom. It is only in 1942 that we joined the movement, and it is as a result of our joining it that we were able to drive out the Britishers. So, Sir, without our co-operation without our help no one in this country can exit. We are the right royal owners of the whole country and as the descendants of the oldest inhabitants of India, we have every right, but we are not so narrow-minded to drive others out. We have been giving protection; we have been tilling the soil; we have been toiling and mowing for the sake of others. Look at the sacrifice we have shown. We have been ill-treated for centuries and yet we have been sticking to our religion. There have been some scapegoats who have joined Sikhism and Christianity. But today seven crores of people continue to be in the Hindu religion and this only means the "suffering attitude", the sacrifice and toiling that denotes this community. So, Sir, I am not seeking protection of you, the majority community. I know you have 'one man, one vote'. After all, do you think that you are the majority community? I can convert you into a minority community. It is only a class question that comes into existence and not the casts question. When this is the case, I need not seek any protection. I am thankful to you for the protection given by you. When you are offering the hand of help, why should I reject it? We Scheduled Castes have not invaded this country from Arabia. We have not come here from outside and we do not have a separate state to go and live if we cannot absorb other people. We are not a separate nation; we are the blood and bone of the same religion, same culture,

same custom; we are the true sons of the soil. How can we be treated differently? So let not my honourable Friend make use of us and our community to plead his cause. I would request them, if at all they have any affection for us, let us have reservation for our own sake. For our part we can safeguard our interests better than anybody else. Self-help is the best help; that is a slogan and it is true. They say: "Why should you require reservation"? Freedom is not complete unless and until it is full of the three aspects. The first is social, the second is political and the third is economic. That is most important and vital to independence. I know the whole country is lagging behind so far as the economic freedom is concerned, but much more is this particular community. Even today, here and now, I am prepared for the abolition of the reservation, provided every Harijan family gets ten acres of wet land, twenty acres of dry land and all the children of Harijans are educated, free of cost, up to the University course and given one-fifth of the key posts either in the civilian departments or in the military departments. I throw a Challenge to the majority community that if they are prepared to give this much, I will forego the whole reservation. Let my Muslim friends know that we Harijan are not lagging behind in nationalism. It is we that have to fight more because it is our country. After all, you are the invaders, immigrants; you do not have as much interest as we have in this country and we are the people that produce the whole of the national wealth of country either by agricultural labour or by industrial labour. Unfortunately, just like the bees that gather honey, we work hard, but we are away from the honey; but the time will come and if you continue to be so selfish as you have been all these days, the same thing that was done to the Britisher will be repeated to you. What about you who have migrated from Central Asia, Mongolia and Manchuria? You will have to go back to your places. Even there you will be sent out. It is we that have a greater right than anybody else on the face of this country. So it is not a favour that you have done us, but you have rightly done it.

I have been telling you that the economic problem is the most important problem so far as this country is concerned. It is very easy question that can be solved if you make up your minds. You have been abolishing the zamindari all over the country. You have got lakhs and lakhs of acres of land. If you can give us, every Harijan family that is not possessing land; all the landless Harijans, at the rate of ten acres of wet land and twenty acres of dry land and educate the children to the University course, I am prepared to forgo the reservation. Here it is.

Shri S. Nagappa: Even if the Brahmin is granted lands, then how to till? He has been having lands till now. He has to seek our protection; he has to employ us. It is something like entrusting *Rambha* to a *Napumsaka*. To my Brahmin friends I say; "What is the good of your asking for land? Land should be given to the tiller of the soil, he must be the owner of the soil. You do not want to own it for owning's sake. You must find utility for the property that you possess." It is no use my Brahmin friends saying: "I come forward and say I am prepared to be a Harijan." A Harijan cannot be converted, like a Christian or a Muslim. You must be a born Harijan, you must have birth as a Harijan; today you can become a Christian or a Muslim; the next day you can become a Sikh, if you grow a beard, but you cannot become a Harijan except by birth.

Shri S. Nagappa: Do not think the Harijan community has been converting everybody. If you are prepared to take to the Harijan community, you must be prepared to scavenge and sweep. You do not want to do that and feel some dignity. You say "I am a Hindu and I cannot scavenge and sweep for others." You want to have the option: I am for the heads, but not for the tails. If at all I lose, I must lose the tails and not the heads." Is this your principle?, I ask Mr. Mohan Lal Gautam who has been kind enough to offer to become a Harijan.

As regards my honourable Friend Mr. Lari's amendment, that the reservation for the Scheduled Castes should be abolished, I thank my honourable, Friend for giving this idea to the House. But, let it remain as an ideal; it cannot be put in action. After all is said and done today, let my honourable Friend Mr. Lari remember that once upon a time, if not today, some time ago, he was a Harijan. It is the Harijans that have contributed to all these communities.

Shri S. Nagappa: If you can scavenge, you can become a Harijan. Nobody prevents you. Community has come according to duties; no one has been labelled that he is so and so. Only if you do the work of a teacher, you can be called a teacher. If you scavenge, you are a scavenger; if you sweep, you are a sweeper. If you are so fond of becoming a Harijan, the duties are also open to you. All the friends that are prepared to scavenge, sweep.....

Shri S. Nagappa: Let me come to the point. My honorable Friends who have been jealous of my community, I hope will not be so for ever.

We have already abolished reservation. I ask where was reservation for this House. We were mixed with the Caste Hindus and they have elected us. We represent the Caste Hindus. I am today giving the law not to the Harijans alone, but to all the thirty crores of people. The Constitution is not made for my community alone. I have not been returned by my community alone. Therefore, in practice, we have abolished reservations. This Parliament, this Constituent Assembly, has been elected on the basis of joint electorates. This has been accepted in the case of Christians, Sikhs, Harijans and Hindus. Only my honourable Friends who were preaching the two-nation theory have been returned by their own people. I tell you, Sir, there are some shortcomings. This good-will of the minority community has not been utilised by the majority community in a proper way. I can quote instances where they have gone back, where they have not been large-hearted. Take Madras where there are eighty lakhs of Harijans. According to the Cripps' proposal, for every million of the people, one representative should come. We are only seven. We would have been eight if there had been reservation according to the population. But it is a minor matter whether seven or eight are here; the work done is the same. Take Travancore. It is a State that is supposed to be the first and foremost so far as the Harijans are concerned. It is the first State that introduced Temple Entry. But, that State has failed to give representation to Harijans in the Constituent Assembly. Out of a population of

sixty lakhs, thirteen lakhs are Harijans. These thirteen lakhs of Harijans have been ignored and four lakhs of Muslims have been given a seat. They have robbed Peter to pay Paul. That is why we want reservation, It may be stated that it is a State. Take the United Provinces. There are twelve millions of Harijans in the U. P. according to the Census of 1931. I find only six members from that province. What about Bengal? I am not in possession of the correct figures in Bengal. What about the Punjab? My honourable Friend Pandit Thakurdas Bhargava has been saying that there are eighteen lakhs of Harijans and four lakhs of Sikhs Harijans, altogether making up a total of twenty-two lakhs. I find a solitary representative from the Punjab so far as the Harijans are concerned. According to the Cripps proposal, there should have been two. Let us go to the States. What about Patiala State? Out of a population of thirty-six lakhs, nine lakhs are Harijan. There should have been at least one representative in this House. Take Madhya Bharat. Out of a population of seventy lakhs, seventeen lakhs are Harijans. When His Excellency the Governor-General visited that State, the Harijan represented to him, Sir, we are only three members in a House of seventy, though our population happens to be seventeen lakhs'. Look at the justice done by the majority community. We appeal to you, we do not claim, we appeal to their good sense, not only with folded hands, but also with bended knees, to do us justice. We crave for mercy. After all, we are voiceless, our voice is feeble. In Madhya Bharat, there are only three members; in the Constituent Assembly, nil. Because of this selfishness of yours, you are compelling us to ask for reservation. This was your testing period. If you had been large- hearted, we would have been the first and foremost persons to come and say, 'we do not want any reservation'. The fault lies in you; not in us. That is why Mahatma Gandhi said, "for the sins committed against them in olden days by your fathers and forefathers, become Harijan sevaks to wipe off those sins." It is you who are on the wrong side. If there is a dispute between a *mandir* and a *masjid*, it is our throat that was offered at the alter. If there was any Hindu-Muslim riot, it is we that fought the battle. What is the reward we get? "All right, be toiling", this is the reward. "You were my watch dog; be my slave or serf", this is the reward. Are you justified in this? You could have done this all these days when we were ignorant. Mahatmaji has removed that ignorance. He has put enough patriotism, enough conscience into our minds. You may think that Mahatmaji is no more. But you must be aware that his spirit is everywhere; his soul is everywhere. We cannot see him today; but he is watching our doings. The Congressites who have been claiming to be the descendants of Mahatmaji know that he is watching this Assembly. I leave it to you. It is for you to abolish the reservation whenever you want. I have thrown the challenge. it is for you to accept.

As regards my honourable Friend, Pandit Thakurdas Bhargava, who claims the amendment to be his, namely, that the provisions regarding reservation of seats and nomination will last for a period of ten years, I would say this. We, almost all the Harijan Members of this House, sat together and the Honourable Pandit Nehru was kind enough to explain to us that in our own interests this will be the best thing. According to his advice we have come to a decision on this point. After all, this is a question that has to be reopened by Parliament. If, after ten years, our position happens to be the same as it is today, then, it is open to the Parliament either to renew it or abolish it. This does not prevent you from coming forward within the next five or ten years or even two years with an Act of Parliament saying "Harijan have been granted their demands, they are now on a par with others and they need not have this reservation of seats". It is open to you as it is worded today. Therefore, we accepted that the reservation should continue for ten years to come from the commencement to the Constitution.

I once again thank the honourable members of the Minorities Committee, the President of it, our Honourable Sardar Patel, who has taken so much trouble in order to safeguard our rights. I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity you have given me.