

THE ROLE OF PARSEES



— **Dr. M. Channa Reddy**
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh

Speech delivered by Dr.M.Channa Reddy,
Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh at Parsees function at
Zorastrian Club,Secunderabad on January 14, 1990.

THE ROLE OF PARSEES

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am overwhelmed with the affection and consideration you have shown to me this evening and honoured me by celebrating my birthday in this marvellous manner. I was informed by Mr. Dittia that there was some important occasion for the Parsee community, and the Hon'ble Minister from Maharashtra is also coming and therefore, I should make it positively convenient to attend this function. Till I came here and actually sat down to listen to what Mr. Patrawala stated initially, I never realised it was my birthday. In fact, I am already one day old and yet your celebrations are great gesture. I thank the Zoroastrians or Parsees of the Andhra Pradesh State and all of you for your affection.

I never realised that Parsees have a capacity to differ with each other. Zoroastrians, wherever they lived, made it a basic point to integrate into life of the society so much that for all practical purposes they lose what you call their separate identity, identity in the sense of narrowness of looking only upto a point and not beyond. But, now Mr. Patrawala has pointed out that if there are two Parsees,

there will be three opinions. Perhaps he does not know, a general characteristic of our nation, if there are two people there are five opinions. You achieved an improvement and I want you, if possible, to reduce it further by making it two opinions. It is difficult to imagine this country's freedom without this special characteristic of assimilating and integrating all that we get from anywhere in the world. And, that is how a country like ours, a nation with people belonging to different communities, religions, languages, even cultures and yet exhibit in a remarkable way the basic essence of unity.

Whatever one might say, politically, or socially, one has to derive great satisfaction in finding that since Independence what we have achieved in this great country is unprecedented integration of mind and thought. Right from Kashmir to Cape Camorin, we have problems and difficulties. We are facing challenges of all dimensions but all of us are confident we will be able to get over all these small trials and tribulations and sustain national integrity. Division of the country had its own reasons, but even there in the midst of disastrous and most inhuman happenings around us, our leaders kept a mental balance in a tremendous manner and we did not take to base, mean and weak attitudes of squeezing out the non-Hindu

population. If India can boast of anything, it is this and at all costs and on all occasions, we will try to maintain this basic principle which has been handed over to us by our great leaders. Sri Rajiv Gandhi had displayed great courage of conviction on the eve of the election when he took a stand, it cost him very much as he openly declared, that we shall not allow this country to belong to any one community. In the context of the controversy on the Ramjanmabhoomi temple and Babri Masjid, and on the eve of elections, he had openly declared a stand which had cost the Congress in the North very heavily. But, I say that this would go down in history of Indian freedom and integrity that here was an young statesman and not merely a politician who cared more for the country than for his immediate party gains. The Congress had lost in the North and the Central Government. But, I tell you after some time when we get back, we will have the satisfaction that we had sustained the integrity of this country. Otherwise, we would have been double losers . Even if we came back to power then, India would have been terribly divided between Hindus and Muslims and others.

So we are proud of these traditions. The Zorastrians have a tremendous role, despite being a microscopic

minority. They are having a positive impact on the integrity of the country. What great proof is needed than the fact that the great Congress organisation was benefited by the association and leadership of Dadabhai Nauroji during the freedom movement from its very inception. So I could not agree with Mr.Dittia that he finds himself in such a small minority. As was rightly pointed out by Mr.Patrawala, the Parsees are over-represented, not in the Assemblies and Parliament, that is just a very small matter according to me, but in the public esteem. In the social and political policy of this country, you played a tremendous role till now when you talk of either Sir Homi Mody or several other eminent people who contributed in their own way for the lasting values of integration and tolerance in this country. As some people are born only to tolerate and in that process they act as such strong buffers that they ensure a great future or long future for the nation or the society to which they belong and if I may say so, you belong to that category. The society gratefully looks to you for imperceptible but dominant role that you have been playing in this manner.

I quite understand that you do not have a representation in either Government or even in Technical wings of the Universities and Colleges. It is certainly

not a very happy factor, but I tell you it only shows and reflects your very sharpness of understanding that you always exercised. What you generally take up is a more profitable business in the society than what you are thinking in terms of Government service. I would never like my own son to come into Government service. I would also never like my son to get into Medical or Engineering courses. Incidentally, it is so in my personal case, not that I am trying to project some kind of a lame excuse but actually if you analyse the social structure or the economic perspective of this country, these become so very un- important that they cease to have the original status which almost come to be a symbol of social status and nothing more. In all walks of life we find the great churning. Reservations are one of the by-products that we have come to create. Unfortunately this great country allowed some selfish people, in the name of religion, shastras, and traditions to keep large sections of society far away from the minimum privileges of the society, I think this generation has to pay a heavy cost for their fault. It was only a great leader like Gandhiji that even during the days of fight against British imperialism could think of these evils and today but for his constructive and farsightedness, India would not have been able to remain integrated. He opined that weaker sections would

have to survive by protection even at the cost of the other sections of the society. But I think we have to tolerate it to compensate for all the sins that our predecessors had committed for centuries, intentionally and also unintentionally. Though we have been destined to face such embarrassing situations, we still have to discharge our duty of service to the humanity as a whole and particularly to a microscopic minority like yours.

You stand on your own legs, with convictions, self-respect and determination and live in a very honourable way and yet be a part of society and keep all your energies reserved for the preservations of this great principle of national integration. I, therefore, feel that your analysis may not be quite correct. But all the same if it is some body who threatens and tries to create some problems to your older generation, who are heart patients, and give restless moments in your life, then I think it is not pardonable. We should be very clear that while you play this part, we also play our matching part. It is what you deserve. The society must contribute not only to your physical well-being but also to your mental peace. I can assure Mr.Patrawala and Mr.Dittia that this Government will try to do its best, to what is really possible and necessary. Mr. Patrawala has made a beautiful analysis

of the political content of our country as far as you are concerned. It would always be our endeavour to keep these things in view.

As for the proposal of having a Medical or an Engineering College, I would personally feel as a medical man myself and as an administrator with many years of experience and with personal experience of things around us, that to day our country is suffering from more Medical Colleges than we really require. Ours is such a fast changing society that politicians and administrators do not have the necessary courage to take some drastic decisions on these matters. Several people from other countries tell us openly that we do not require so many higher educational institutions. We have more than what we actually require. If higher education institutions have only to enable the students to achieve a symbol of social status, I would not allow it at the cost of the public exchequer or at the cost of others. What you really require you should be able to determine and nothing beyond that should be allowed. When I want 100 Scientists and just for their fancy if I allow 200 Scientists to crop up, it is unemployment, it is frustration that we derive from it. In a country like China you are definitely told you can't have more than the required number of higher educational

institutions. In spite of poverty and the backwardness in our country, in spite of more than 30 percent of our population being still below the poverty line, we have a number of scientists and science graduates, perhaps much more than we can possibly utilise. When it comes to the number of scientists in this world, probably we rate very high. And most of our people have to find gainful employment outside our country. What a foolish economy it is. We are producing something for catering to the needs of countries like U.S.A. I know individuals are being benefited. We cannot think in isolation, but all the same in view of the hard realities of economies, are we not doing some foolish mistakes? And I think it is time that the administrators and the planners had the courage and conviction, to take this obvious factor into consideration in preparation of plans.

As you said the Zoroastrian community is such a very potential one that they can certainly sustain any good effort. Mr. Patrawala, I belong to this constituency. The Parsee support to me was so cordial so strong that for my winning at polls I owe much to them. And it would be a matter of pride that I am celebrating my birthday amidst this affectionate people. Let me tell you the State Government would like to associate itself with drawing out



plans in an effective manner and you can play your part. Use this land adjacent to it. Do not allow the Government now or later to threaten you that they would take it over. I would like this to be preserved by your community and for a purpose which not only you would be proud of, but which would be useful to the people in general and Hyderabad and Secunderabad people in particular. I never really anticipated a problem of this type but I will keep it in my thought. I will keep in touch with Mr. Dittia and through him with this community and see exactly what we can do and how we can play a helpful part so that the youth and elders of your community feel that something substantial is being done for your community.

I say always what I mean and I am very clear and firm about it. And that is why I must have paid lots of avoidable penalties in my political life. But I did not bother myself about it. I always believed that politician should be able to say what he does and do what he says. That is the only way of assuring democratic set up and avoid the credibility gap which we politicians suffer from. It was only the day before, I had asked a Police Officer about a certain incident, I really found him in fits and he had to be taken to the hospital in a state of almost coma. They get a shock of their life and mind you, the

same officer had a very pleasant lunch with me at 4.30 the day before and at about 7.30 when I came across certain misdeeds for which he was directly or indirectly responsible, I had taken a very firm stand. I would not like to spare him or any body, including myself, while protecting the common man. And that is our strength and strength of the political parties that we have the honour to belong. I am, therefore, glad and very happy that I have the solid support of this potential community here and in future, not merely support the plans related to the adjacent vacant land which belongs to you, but in several other fields that you can play a helpful part.

I am happy on this occasion, I could meet here Mr.Patrawala. We used to meet about 10 to 12 years back. But, now he has come to our city and I heartily welcome him. I want to assure him that he is always welcome. I heard about him and mind you, a Cabinet Minister given the portfolio of General Administration is something rare. As Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh I would not share my General Administration with any Cabinet Minister. But, if Mr. Patrawala can transfer himself to Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh, I would be the first man to give him General Administration here also. I am sure this is an occasion when he can become a voter here and very

soon when we have our Legislative Council, I will get him nominated to the Legislative Council and then induct him into my Cabinet. Mr. Sharad Pawar might not be happy about it, but still I would like him to consider this proposal seriously. I think all of you will join to welcome him to Andhra Pradesh.

Politics represent a change, democracy is a change, not that there is any threat for me or for any one in the party or anywhere. You know we have been fortunate enough to get almost an overwhelming support when many were believing that Mr. Rama Rao was invincible. We have not thrown him out but the people of Andhra Pradesh have rejected him. But we require the affection and confidence of the people more and more. And you in a microscopic minority can play a tremendous part in providing that impact and I beg of you to provide the same in the interest of not merely my party or my administration, but in the interests of the people as a whole.

I once again thank you Mr. Dittia, you have made a very kind reference to our past association. Many times we met, many times we worked together and incidentally we belong to the same locality.

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