

RAJAJI

I arrived in Madras on the evening of the 28th September. Rajaji was to leave for Hyderabad and Kurnool on the 30th evening to meet the Prime Minister and attend the Andhra State Inauguration Ceremony. I therefore went straight ^{on the morning of the 29th} to him ~~immediately~~ after my talk with Dr. Krishna Rao, Labour Minister, without previous appointment and he saw me immediately.

He said: "I am very grateful to you, Kanji, for having come to see me. What brings you here?"

I replied, I had some work with Dr. Krishna Rao, the Labour Minister for the Metal Box Company, but I wanted to make my pilgrimage to Rajaji. Rajaji said: "Not pilgrimage to me, but to Rameshwaram." I said: "No Rameshwaram, but to Rajaji". Rajaji - "Oh, I see. You have not given up your flowery language." I replied "My flowery language is generally confined to criticism, but today I am not criticising." Rajaji said: "Have you kept up writing your political and other notes?" I said: "Yes, my latest story was 36 pages on Kashmir in four parts."

Rajaji said: "Thank you, you have no idea how grateful I feel to you for having come to see me." He continued: "The country has gone to dogs, there is nothing left, no morals - nothing. Nothing can be done to save the country."

I told him: "Rajaji, you have thirty years more to live!" (the old boy is now about 74 and was looking very shaky and weak. He had gone terribly thinner since I last saw him in Bombay when he was the President on 9th January 1949). Rajaji said: "Why do you curse me. Why do you want me to suffer by living? What is there to live for? Over and above my terrible physical suffering, everything is dark and what is there to live for?" I told him: "You are a philosopher, so am I Besantine philosopher and whilst we do our work in the outer world and meet many difficulties which look ~~like~~ unscourmountable, we have an inner life which keeps us going and keeps us cheerful." Rajaji - "No, Kanji, it is all over, nothing matters now."

I told Rajaji that it was very kind of him to let me see him without an appointment and could I have another opportunity of a longer talk with him. Rajaji said: "No, no use. What will our discussion lead to? nothing - nothing."

He then asked me my age. He said: "Look at you, you are healthy and strong and you have twenty more years of activity. But I am finished."

Rajaji's Secretary had warned me not to take too much of his time, as he (Rajaji) had too much to do. I therefore asked for leave to go and Rajaji came out to ~~see~~ me off and once again said: "I am grateful that you came to see me".

I have taken the trouble to report this twenty minutes talk in ~~great~~ detail to show how unhappy and depressed and pessimistic Rajaji is. His mind is as acute as ever before. Adlai Stevenson had seen him a few months back and had carried with him the highest impression about Rajaji and in his article in the "LOOK" in June he has referred to him as the Great Sage. I had heard reports about Rajaji getting senile and blind and deaf. I found no traces of any of these deficiencies in him. I was speaking to him in a low voice and he ~~heard~~^{followed} it all. His power of observation was as keen and penetrating^{as} ever before as I found from a personal remark he made about me. I found his memory good and there was no sign of his going senile. It has shaken me terribly to find Rajaji so pessimistic about the future. Internal conditions in India are ~~terribly~~^{hopelessly} bad. I estimate the figure of unemployment in the country as between 60 to 70 millions. Stevenson had put down the figure as between 60 and 100 millions. This is ~~hopelessly~~^{too} bad, particularly as Nehru's Government is not taking any effective steps to help remove ~~the~~ unemployment and on top of it there is prevalent practically in all the States corruption, nepotism and inefficiency. The Congress Party has disintegrated and there is now open unashamed struggle for power as between groups and groups and individuals and individuals. Nehru's yielding on the question of separate Andhra State has made the situation much worse and there is

clamour from small men all over the country for cutting up the country into linguistic states. Then there ~~are~~^{is} the ~~hoax~~^{hoax} and frauds of the Shodan Movement. There will be a rude awakening in regard to this movement and I am therefore not surprised that Rajaji should feel so ~~terribly~~ unhappy, though I myself am not a party to ~~the~~ defeatism and pessimism.

Rajaji looks so weak in health that I am afraid he will not last for more than six months.

Bombay,
11-10-1953.