



PERIYAR E V Ramasamy (1879 – 1973) was a Tamil Indian social activist who championed rationalism, self-respect and women's rights, and in 1947 begged the British not to abandon Indians to perpetual slavery through independence.

He stated: 'Please continue to rule us, even if you have to do so from Britain, rather than abandoning us into the hands of the higher castes from whom freedom is

impossible.'

He said this because of the inhuman ideology in a higher caste Indian religion that justified treating the lower castes as untouchables.

This was the reason for his public repudiation of north Indian gods. He was aware of the detriments of colonisation but compared to what he saw and experienced, he preferred colonial rule to the unfair treatment of the caste system.

Reflections

True freedom

Colonisation and Christianity brought Indian women freedom from sati, female infanticide, remarriage, healthcare, education for all castes — this was reserved for the higher castes — and many more benefits.

As Nelson Mandela said: 'For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others'. True freedom is about mutual joy and peace.

The world envies Britain for its

incredible stamina in safeguarding freedom in the face of threat and hostility of all sorts. It is the guarantee of freedom and safety in Britain that draws the world to its lap. True freedom comes with responsibility. When there is a lack of responsibility, freedom is abused and misused.

The recent statistics on relationship breakdown, sexual violence in universities, racist incidents, teenage pregnancies and the overall crime increase should invite us

to check if our freedom is enjoyed responsibly.

Perhaps the following text from St Paul would help us to examine our present understanding of freedom. 'For you were called to freedom brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another' (Gal 5:13).

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