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OUR STUDENT SHOULD LEARN AND LEAD

A Message by Dr. Ambedkar to The All India Scheduled Castes Students, Federation Conference

Nagpur 25-27th Dec. 1946

The second conference of the 'All India Scheduled Castes Students' Federation' was held at Nagpur from 25th to 27th December 1946 with the aim of framing the constitution for the Federation*. The foundation of this organization was laid on 12th May 1945 with the First Conference at Bombay.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had a desire to attend this Conference to be held at Nagpur, but due to his prior appointments, he could not. However, he advised Mr. Jogendranath Mandal, Law Member, Interim Government of India to be the chairperson of this students' conference at Nagpur.

This Conference was a historic one. It was arranged within a very short period. The reception committee was formed on 16th December 1946 and the Conference was held between 25th and 27th Dec. 1946. In spite of this short period there were about three thousand boys and five hundred lady student delegates from all over India. The other visitors were about thirty thousand. The delegates from Bombay, UP, C. P. & Berar, Madras, Bengal, Hyderabad and Delhi were accommodated at Chokhamela Kanya Shala, New Colony, Nagpur.

This Conference was held in a spacious ground at Kasturchand Park in a nicely decorated pandal. Mr. Jogendranath Mandal was the President of the Conference. The huge crowd of forty thousand people greeted him at Nagpur Railway Station at 6.30 p. m. on 25th Dec. 1946. The 'guard of honour' was presented by ' Samta Saanik Dal' and 'National Muslim Guards'. He was also welcomed by leaders of Scheduled Castes Federation, Muslim League and Government Officials.

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* See Appendix—1

Message

" 2, Western Court,
New Delhi,
20-XII-1946.

My dear Gedam,*

I am very sorry that owing to my many pre-occupations I was not able to write to you earlier.

I am very glad to know that you have decided to hold a session of the All Indian Scheduled Castes Students' Federation separately from the Session of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation. It is a wise decision with which I entirely agree.

I have spoken to the Hon'ble J. N. Mandal. He is coming definitely to preside over your Conference. I wish I could come. But unfortunately this does not seem possible. I am, however, sending my good wishes for the success of the Conference. Our boys should learn two things. Firstly, to prove that given the opportunities they are inferior to none in intelligence and in capacity. Secondly, to prove that they are not merely to tread the path of personal happiness but to lead their community to be free, to be strong and to be respected.

If the Conference can inculcate upon the minds of our students these two objectives, it will have amply justified its existence. I am sure it will.

With kind regards,

Yours Sincerely,
B. R. AMBEDKAR."[1]

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* T. V. Gedam, General Secretary, C. P. & Berar Scheduled Castes Students' Federation.

[1] : Chahande V. D. ; Report of the Conference

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Dr. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR'S MESSAGE TO 'MARATHA MANDIR'

I could never have persuaded myself to believe that I was in any way qualified to give a message to the Maratha community as to what ideals and objectives it should pursue. Since I have been pressed by the organizers of the Maratha Mandir to say a few words stating my view as to what the Marathas seeking the advancement of their community may usefully do, I have agreed to respond to their wishes.

I am convinced that the Marathas-and this applies to every Backward Community-must attend to two things-to Politics and Education if they wish to avoid suppression. A community can keep afloat only if it is able to maintain a controlling influence on the State. However a minority community can maintain its supremacy in Society by having a controlling influence on the State, is well illustrated by the position of the Brahmins in India. Controlling influence on the State is essential because without it, it is not possible to give a direction to the policy of the State and progress depends upon the policy of the State.

It is equally essential to attend to education. It must, however, be borne in mind that what counts in the struggle for position between different communities, is not mere education but higher education. By higher education I mean education which will qualify a Maratha to hold what is a strategic post– a post from which he can survey, control and protect persons of his community from injustice. Here again the case of the Brahmin community is in point. The Brahmin Community is able to maintain itself against all odds, against all oppositions, it is due to the fact that strategic posts are held by Brahmins.

That being my view, I must say that Maratha Mandir would not be serving the community if it spent its energy on the easier tasks of spreading primary education or secondary education. The Governments of many Provinces in India have been planning for the spread of Primary education and many people in India are feeling a sense of satisfaction and even gratitude. I confess that this move for the spread of Primary education leaves me cold. Far from creating any enthusiasm in me, I look upon it as a snare. I cannot forget–I regret that most people are not even aware that the caste

system in India, the difference between the high and the low, between the Brahmins and the Non-Brahmins has lasted for centuries and bids fare to last for many more centuries, it is due to the educational disparity between the Brahmins and the Non-Brahmins. This disparity is not going to be removed by the spread of Primary education. The disparity in social position between Brahmin and Non-Brahmin can be removed only by adopting a policy of education whereby some Non-Brahmins will be so highly educated that they will destroy the monopoly of strategic posts which the Brahmins now have. I am of opinion that this duty of educating Non-Brahmins upto the stage necessary to qualify them for strategic posts, should be undertaken by the State. If the State does not do it, the Maratha Mandir should.

There is another point I like to mention. The middle class as compared with the aristocracy and the lower classes have certain faults which are the faults of that class all over the world. The middle class has not the generosity of the aristocracy to tolerate the advance of the lower classes. And it does not possess the idealism of the lower classes. This makes the middle class the enemy of both the classes. It hates the aristocracy because of its superior status. It hates the lower classes because it does not like it to rise equal to itself. The Maratha are the middle class of India and any one who has worked with them, will know that they have the faults of the middle class outlined above. There are two ways for the Marathas to proceed : one to join their superiors and to prevent the lower classes rising to the level or to join with the lower classes and destroy to those who are the superiors of both. There was a time when they joined the lower classes. Recently they have joined the higher classes. It is not for me to say which is the right path for them to follow. There is no doubt about it that the destiny of not only of others but of the Marathas themselves must depend upon which of the two roads they will choose. That must be left to the wisdom of the Leaders of the Marathas of which there appears to be great dearth.

(Sd.)

B. R. Ambedkar.[1]

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[1] Magazine Maratha Mandir's special Number, March 23, 1947.