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TRAINING SCHOOL FOR ENTRANCE TO POLITICS

Editorial Note

In 1962, a resolution was moved by Prof. K. T. Shah in the Parliament whether there should be any formal qualifications for the members of Parliament and State Legislatures. The Members felt that there should be some minimum eduational qualifications. But such a prescription would deprive a large number of people from contesting. On this, Dr. Ambedkar, as Minister of Law, suggested that instead of any formal qualifications, the contestants should have knowledge (*Pradnya*) and Charater (*Sheel*). Relevant extract of his speech is as follows :

"However, I suppose those who have supported his resolution have correctly interpreted his mind and taking into account the various speeches that have been made in support of Prof. Shah's Resolution, it appears that many members who are keen about adding some qualification other than those mentioned in the Constitution have in their mind some kind of an educational qualification. But none of them has been very precise : none of them has given me any idea as to what is the standard of education that they would like to prescribe in order that the candidate may become lawfully entitled to stand.

Now it seems to me that education can hardly be the sole qualification for membership of this House. If I may use the words of Buddha, he said that man requires two things. One is *Gyan* and the other is *Sheel. Gyan* without *Sheel* is very dangerous : it must be accompanied by *Sheel,* by which we mean character, moral courage, ability to be independent of any kind of temptation, truthful to one's ideals. I did not find any reference to the second qualification in the speeches I have heard from Members who have supported Prof. Shah. But even though I myself, am very keen to see that no Member enters this August Assembly, who does not possess *Sheel* in adequate degree, I find it extremely difficult to find any means or methods to ensure that valuable qualification.

Coming to the question of education, I do not wish to be understood that I regard ignorance to be a virtue : let that be quite clear. I regard education to be a very necessary qualification for possessing that degree of competence which is very necessary for the performance of one's duty. In this House there are people who, although they are not educated, are very competent to voice the grievances of the class whom they represent. I am sure about it. A more educated person would not be able to discharge that function, because he does not know and does not have that experience. But my friends who come from these classes and with whom I have naturally very great sympathy do not realise that what is more necessary for bringing relief to the class of people whom they represent is not merely making speeches in this House but to suggest remedies for the removal of their grievances. To make speeches and to ventilate grievances is a very easy matter but to formulate remedies is a very difficult matter. It requires education and therefore education even from the standpoint of the backward classes, scheduled classes or tribal areas is a very necessary ingredient. How can we ensure it ? When I examined the suggestion that there ought to be some kind of educational qualification, I found that a proposition which is very good in theory or in its academic aspect cannot be given effect to without producing other evils. That is my difficulty. Where will you fix the standard? Will you say that only B. As. should be qualified to be Members of this House? Supposing you do that, what is the result ? Members probably might know that there are many people who are educationally and intellectually far more competent than any graduate, although they have never been inside any college or university. There are any number of them. Are you going to shut out these people who have privately educated themselves, who are equally competent or better than B.As. or M.As., merely because they have not been able to obtain a certificate from a university ? I think that would be a very unfortunate result.

Take another consequence. In this country education is in the lowest grade. Not only that is so but for some reason which all of us know, education has not been universally spread among all the communities in this country. There are communities which are highly educated and there are communities where education is very, very low. Supposing you make B. A. or even matriculation as a standard, are you not making the membership of this House to be a monopoly of the few ? I fear that will be the consequence, supposing you lower down your standard, say, for instance, to the fourth standard, to the study of the three 'R's. or to literacy in order that no community may be excluded from the opportunity of sending its members to this House. Is that qualification any good ? It is of no value at all.

Therefore, my submission is this, that it is a good thing. I am not going to outcry the feeling that there ought to be some education in Members who come to represent their various constituencies in this House. But I just cannot see how you can give legal effect to it. Therefore, my suggestion is that this is a matter which had better be left to the people themselves, or to the political parties who will run the Government. I have no doubt about it that if the political parties, for their own particular purposes, do not attend to this matter, people themselves in course of time will attend to it. People are not going to allow persons who cannot discharge their functions properly in this House to be continued and returned for ever. They want results. They want their welfare to be attended to, and I am sure about it that they will realise that the only instrumentality through which they can achieve this purpose is to send good men to this House. Therefore, I think the proper course is to leave the matter to the people."[1]

Dr. Ambedkar was very much aware that although the elected candidates may have knowledge and character, but still, they need to possess a training of parliamentary legislative procedures. With this thought lingering in his mind, he proposed to establish a 'Training School for Entrance to Politics.'

[1] : Writings and speeches, Vol. 15, Pp 189-191.

In order to invigorate the democratic forces in India and to bring new blood in his proposed Republican Party, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar established 'The Training School for Entrance to Politics' in July, 1956. Dr. Ambedkar was the Director and Shri S. S. Rege was the Registrar. The school was meant for those who cherished the ambition of joining the legislature and it was the first of its kind in the country. He insisted that the new comers must develop oratory in order to put forth their views on various subjects like Economics, Political, Social and Parliamentary procedural matters.

He was in search of a principal with a good personality, wellversed in the subject, having a good delivery on an attractive personality. He was convinced that the reputation of the school greatly depends upon the ability and speaking capacity of the teacher. The school started with 15 students and worked from July, 1, 1956 to March 1957.

Dr. Ambedkar planned to deliver lectures on oratory in the month of December 1956 for the students of this school. But due to untimely demise he could not visit the school.[1]

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[1]: Keer, Pp. 491-492 and Rege, Pp. 80-81.

SECTION II

DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR ON CABINET MISSION AND TRANSFER OF POWER