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WITHOUT STRENUOUS EFFORTS OUR SOCIAL POSITION MIGHT GET EVEN WORSE

"A stringent attack on the working of the *Panchayats* of the *Mahar* community in the city was directed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the presence of many of the prominent members of the *Panchayats* at a public meeting of the Depressed Classes held in the Bhatt High School Hall, Bombay, last night, the 28th March 1941 to consider the financial position of the Depressed Class students' Hostel at Thana.

The *Panchayats* had been levying taxes of all sorts and under various pretexts on the community, he said. Most of that money used formerly to be spent on drinking bouts. But now that prohibition was introduced in the city the money was being spent on eating *"battasas"* and distributing sweets.

"What has come over you, the elders and senior members of the community" asked Dr. Ambedkar, "that you should behave like children and want to indulge in sweets purchased out of public funds while the community has to face increasing competition with other communities in the struggle for life. Unless we discard these childish activities and take to the serious work of the social and educational advancement our position might get even worse than it is to-day."

Dr. Ambedkar held before the Depressed Classes the example of the advanced Indian communities. Among the advanced communities, he said, there were always a number of men who devoted themselves exclusively and life-long to educational and other social institutions in their communities without any hope of reward or even appreciation.

Among educated youths of the Depressed Classes, however, the speaker witnessed the tendency to look out for seats on local boards,

municipalities and similar other positions and if they did not get these-and all of them could not possibly get these—then they gave up all interest in public work and sunk into total indifference to the fate of the community.

There were others who were so unsteady in their public work that they nibbled at one type of work for some time, then turned on to another, then shifted to third one, leaving every institution they handle in a chaotic condition."[1]

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[1] : The Bombay Chronicle, dated 29th March 1941.