

STUDENTS SHOULD SEE THAT DEGREE CARRIES POSITIVE KNOWLEDGE

“The view that there had been a marked deterioration in the educational attainments of the student-world of the present generation was expressed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, addressing a meeting of students of the Scheduled Castes held at the Students’ Hall, Calcutta yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon 2nd January 1945.* Prof. J. C. Mondal of St. Paul’s College presided.

In his speech Dr. Ambedkar attacked the All-India Students’ Federation and asked the students to dissociate themselves from it and form an all-India organisation of the Scheduled Castes.

The All-India Students’ Federation was a well-known body, he said, about whose activities they had often read. There was for some reason a separate organisation formed-Muslim Students-even there. He did not know the reasons but the Muslim students found it necessary to start their own organisation.

Many of them probably did not know, remarked the speaker, that politics was not his usual pasture. He had been driven into it. The field to which he took delight, the field to which he hoped to return after his term expired was the educational field. He had been a professor of economics and law and therefore he might be forgiven if he made some trenchant comments on the All-India Students’ Federation from his intimate experience of the student world.

Dr. Ambedkar had no hesitation in saying that education in India had considerably deteriorated at present. Comparing the first products of their universities with the students that he had met during his professorial career, he had no hesitation in saying that there had been a marked deterioration in educational attainments of the student world. Mentioning in this connection the names of Justice Ranande, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gokhale, Sir Surendra Nath and Sir Sivaswamy Iyer, Dr. Ambedkar said: “I do not think I shall be regarded as very hostile or very ungenerous if I say that none of you of this generation would reach even the knees of those people.”

* Source of Date—Janata : dated 6th January 1945.

After pointing out that Government spent larger sums on education now-a-day than in the past, Dr. Ambedkar said that one of the reason for this deterioration was that students were more interested in politics than in learning. According to him that had been the bane of their education. He positively differed from the view that a set of politicians held that politics was legitimate pursuit of a student's activities.

Criticising the activities of the All-India Students' Federation, Dr. Ambedkar said that all those discussions of the Federation of which they found so much hub-bub in the Press, all that it was doing, was nothing but seconding the Congress resolutions in a very stale manner. He had found no originality in their discussions.

Giving his suggestions as to what students of the Scheduled Castes should do, Dr. Ambedkar said that, he advised them to form a separate organisation because he wanted them to keep themselves aloof from politics. It was necessary, he said, that they should dissociate themselves from the All-India Federation and bother more about the problems that were germane to the life of a student. He wanted them also to concern themselves with the difficulties which confronted them in their educational career. In this connection he said that he had heard that in private colleges no consideration was shown to the economic or social difficulties of the Scheduled Castes. No special provision was made for their admission and no special provision was made in the matter of scholarship. "All Students" he remarked, "are treated on the same footing, the rich and the poor, the multi-millionaire and the beggar."

If there had been an All-India organisation of the students of the Scheduled Castes communities and it had collected necessary data of their difficulties, they would have been able to compel the Government or the governing elements in the country to make due provision for allowing them to have a look into the matter. Dr. Ambedkar advised the students not only to get a

degree but to see that the degree carried with it some positive knowledge or attainment, that they had qualifications which they called 'sterling'. They must regard education as a serious matter and not a tea-time enjoyment.

In asking the students to form an All-India Organisation, Dr. Ambedkar said that, there had not yet been an All-India consciousness among them. They had been upto now living a provincial life.”¹

● ●

¹ : People's Herald dated 10th January 1945.