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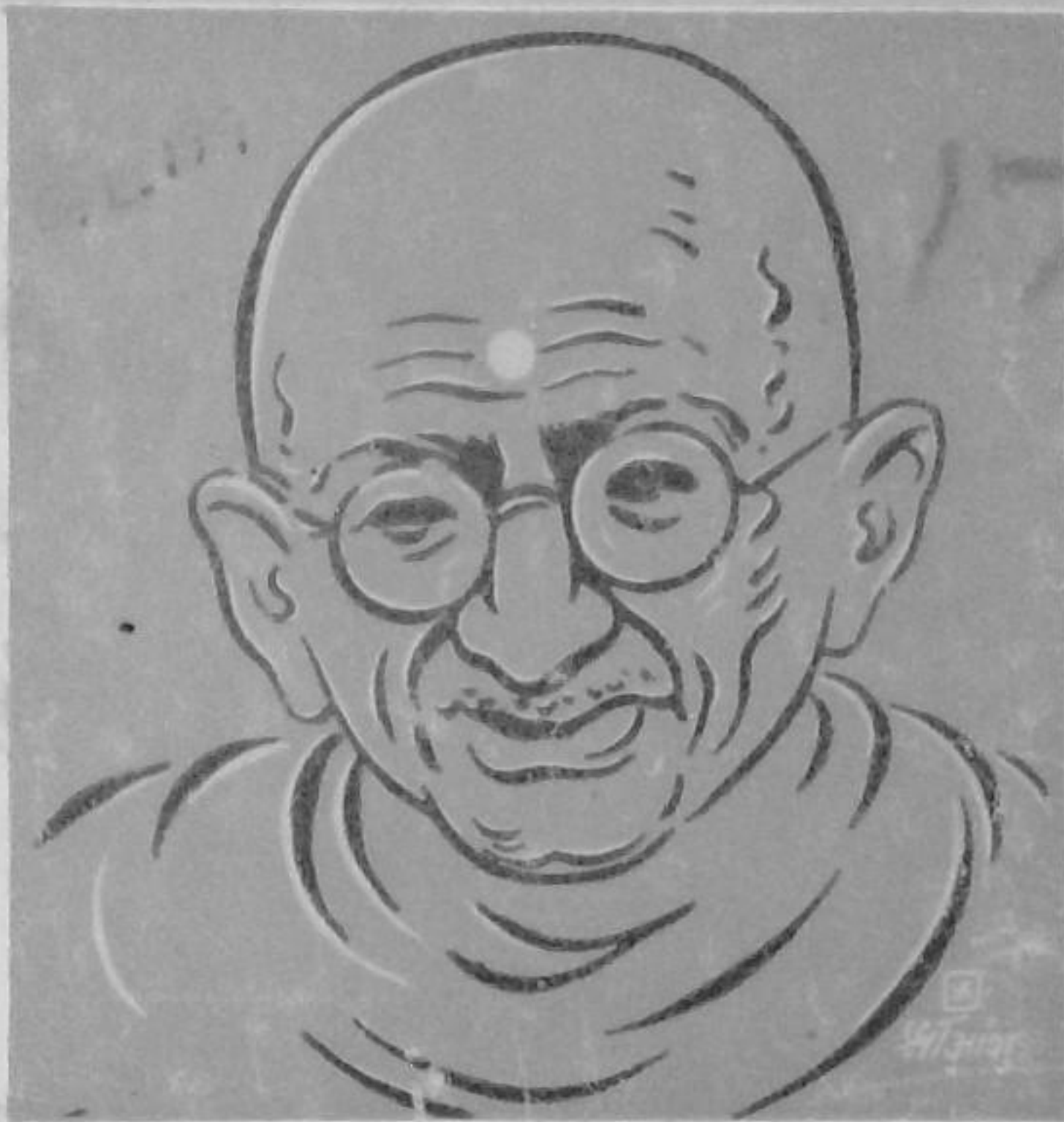
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GANDHI
IS
MY STAR



RAMESHWARI NEHRU

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"Gandhi
is my star"



GL 199



G.L.162

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RAMESHWARI NEHRU

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"
Gandhi
is my star"
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RUPEES TEN ONLY

Speeches & Writings of Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru
collected and edited by Professor Somnath Dhar

Introduction By
His Excellency Sri M. S. Aney

Foreword By
Dr. Kalidas Nag

Appreciation By
Sri A. V. Thakkar



His Excellency Sri M. S. Aney

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Introduction

I am asked by the learned editor to write a foreword to this book. I do so with pleasure but not without some diffidence.

In the early days of British rule a class of reformers came into prominence. The inequalities in the social and economic structure in the Hindu polity attracted their attention and a campaign for the removal of those inequalities was started. Caste distinction and women's disabilities were the first major problems on which the social reformers concentrated. The cause of the depressed classes, backward classes and the aboriginal tribes was championed by a certain section of political reformers. Their plea was in the nature of a preliminary effort to attract the attention of the powers that be and the enlightened public also. But almost all these well-meaning reformers came from the educated section of the upper classes of the people and not from the suffering classes. It took some time for such leaders to come from the sufferers. The movement of reform to secure justice to the women was patronised and sympathised with by a very large section of the educated classes. Stray efforts were being made to introduce some reforms like abolition of Sati and widow remarriage, etc. But for

all these years the movement had somewhat of an academic character. But it gradually became a dynamic one when Indian women's cause was championed by the women themselves. Their conferences were no longer meetings of a few enlightened and advanced reformers but mammoth meetings, attended by thousands of women coming from every strata of society. The decisions of the women's conferences, held under the leadership of Indian women, found ardent and enthusiastic champions among the legislators. A number of bills regarding marriage and women's rights of inheritance and maintenance, etc. was introduced in the old Central Assembly and there was a fairly favourable support from the general body of the representatives in both the Houses.

Among those talented Indian women who took a prominent part in bringing about this great change in the public opinion Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru is one of the foremost. The collection of her writings and speeches in this volume can give the reader a fairly comprehensive idea of the various activities she has participated in during the last forty years.

Although Mrs. Nehru treated the Indian women's problem as a part of the worldwide labour and Socialist movement, her outlook is not entirely economic or material. In her long association with Mahatma Gandhi and his constructive programme for the uplift of Harijans she has caught his spiritual idealism.

Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru is respected throughout India and abroad, not merely for her manifold social services

but for her adherence to the ancient ideal of Indian womanhood, which is represented in her domestic and private life. She feels that the Indian womanhood will attain to its full stature if the Indian woman is emancipated. The shackles have, according to her, dwarfed her growth and rendered her almost a liability instead of an asset to the community so far as the public life of the country is concerned.

Indian Rishis have definitely allotted a very high position to the women in the social and communal life :

"Gods feel happy at the place where women are honoured"

In the modern democracy the responsibilities of citizenship have to be shared by men and women alike. Every effort that adds to the strength of those who are weak, disabled and crippled is welcome. Mahatma Gandhi, in his inimitable way, drew a large section of the Indian women for public service and volunteer work. An age-old custom like Purdah has been discarded by thousands of ladies belonging to the aristocratic families under his inspiration.

Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru has played a very important part in this great awakening. She is like a skylark, to use the language of the poet Wordsworth.

"Type of the wise who soar high but never roam,
True to the kindred points of heaven and home."

PATNA
May 5, 1950

M. S. Aney
Governor of Bihar

FOREWORD

FREEDOM movement in India is a veritable Great Epic, which still waits for articulation in the lyre of some Indian Homer yet unborn. Attempts are being made, however, to compose isolated episodes of that Epic ; and the contribution of the male fighters for freedom have been recorded. But it is a matter of regret that, with the exception of some outstanding women leaders, our women fighters have not yet received the public recognition they deserved. Many of them were in the forefront, nay in the "firing line" ; but millions of our mothers and sisters have played their silent though no less important role in that titanic struggle. Mahatma Gandhi fully realised this truth and mobilised the indomitable moral force of Indian womanhood. In that, as yet, vaguely delineated cohort of women workers of India, Srimati Rameshwari Nehru undoubtedly occupies a very prominent place.

Daughter of the renowned leader of the Punjab, Raja Narendra Nath, she started her earthly career with the birth of the Indian National Congress. Married to Pandit Brijlal Nehru, she found her public career linked up with that of the family of Pandit Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru. Allahabad came to be the centre of her social activities, and from that historical city she edited for sixteen years the important Hindi Magazine Stri-Darpan (Mirror of Womanhood). Thus she was the contemporary

and co-worker of Srimati Sarala Devi Chowdhury (wife of Pandit Rambhuj Dutt Chowdhury of Punjab) who edited the renowned Bengali Journal Bharati of her mother, Srimati Swarnakumari Devi, sister of Rabindranath and one of the early woman delegates to the Indian National Congress. Thus, already fifty years ago, we saw the emergence of women pioneers in various fields of Indian national reconstruction.

Srimati Rameshwari Devi has worked bravely and served the Nation uninterruptedly for over forty years ; and it is difficult to record in a few lines her multifarious services. We are proud of her and grateful for all that she has done, especially for the rehabilitation of Indian womanhood. Very rightly she remembers tenderly two of the greatest Champions of Indian Womanhood : Raja Ram-mohan Roy (1774-1833) and Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883). Very rightly she observes : "The problems of women's education, early marriage, purdah system and widow-remarriage which form the subjects of Resolutions passed at the Social Reform Conferences year after year, are as much a part of the women's movement as they are of the social reform movement ; but this is only a part. The women's movement stands for all this and much more. It stands for the full equality of woman with man, in all spheres of life and her complete emancipation from the legal and customary disabilities inflicted on her during the present times".

As early as 1909, Rameshwari Devi started the Mahila Samiti of Prayag. In 1926 we see her as the Founder-

President of the Delhi Women's League and in 1928 she was a Member of the Government of India Age of Consent Committee. Between 1931 and 1938, she visited different parts of the world including Russia and Australia studying the conditions of women abroad and enlarging thereby the horizon of the women's movement in India.

But above all (as Margaret Cousins spoke about her) she was Gandhiji's right hand woman in the Harijan Seva Sangh. She had been serving in its Committee since 1935 and conducted personal investigations into the conditions of seventy millions of the untouchables in different parts of India. Very worthily she was elected President of the Children's Aid Society and also President of the All India Women's Conference (1940). Bengal is grateful to her specially for her motherly aid to the victims of the famine of 1942 and for organising Bengal and other Affected areas Relief Committee. In 1944 she started collection for Kasturba Memorial Fund as the President of the Kashmir Committee. As President of the Punjab Civil Liberties Union she tried her best for the release and the amelioration of the condition of the detenues and political prisoners. With the dawn of Independence we find her as the Hony. Director of the Women's Section of the Ministry of Relief & Rehabilitation.

We admire her specially because she is keeping alive the sacred flame of Gandhian idealism as a true spiritual daughter of Mahatmaji. Her life represents

the silent yet significant unfolding of the Gandhian values in our society and polity. With her unfailing womanly intuition she realised that our society could be renewed only on the sure basis of social service and creative personality. In the "selection" of her thoughts worthily presented by her Publisher and devoted admirer Acharya Ramlochan Saran of Bihar, we find many chapters of her creative activities which, I am sure, will inspire generations of Indian Womanhood.

So I join him and many of her silent admirers in offering Srimati Rameshwari Nehru our respectful homage and profound gratitude for her solid contributions to the cause of the dispossessed and the down-trodden millions of India.

Post Graduate Dept.
University of Calcutta
2nd April, 1950

Kalidas Nag

APPRECIATION

SHRIMATI Rameshwari Nehru, who comes from the illustrious Nehru family, is an impressive figure among the reformers of our epoch. I came in contact with her in 1932, when the Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded and she became its Vice-President. Often I have travelled in her company in different parts of the country in connection with the various Harijan problems peculiar to each province or state. Whether it was a trek in the sandy desert of Sind to study the questions of Megwals and Bhils, tour in the state of Travancore to agitate for the admission of Harijans to Hindu temples famous for their conservatism or climb in the hilly district of Garhwal at the foot of Himalayas for the study of what is known as Dola-Palki problem, it was a great delight and inspiration to me to be in her company for days together. But her hurricane tour in Travancore State before the opening of Hindu temples to Harijans was a wonderful piece of agitation work when she addressed thousands of men and women in that most highly educated part of the country. At her urgent insistence I have accompanied her during her visits to the sweepers' localities in the city of Lahore before the partition of India and the immense liveliness with which she mixed with the sweeper women,

heard their daily grievances and their family quarrels, was revealing to me in spite of my long experience of city sweepers and their life.

Political upheaval in the country has thrown up a band of public workers of fine intelligence and patriotism. However, the number of women workers in the constructive field of social reform, education and the advancement of women is small though their contribution is significant. Shrimati Nehru's work in social reform as a member of the committee which went round the country for gauging public opinion with regard to Sarda Act is well-known. She is one of the prominent top workers of the All-India Women's Conference ever since its formation and was its president for a year. Work among women, in this country as in all others, can best be done by women themselves. Once talking to me about the removal of purdah and the necessity of giving greater freedom to our women, both in home and in society, it was amusing to hear that she herself had to remain in purdah for five years after her marriage, well-educated and grown up in years as she was then. Even at the present time our women, I mean, the forward section of them, have to remain in such a cramped condition that they cannot express themselves or move about freely. It is a delight to witness the public work of such ladies like Rameshwari Nehru and others of her stature. Born and brought up in an aristocratic family, widely travelled the world over, but all the same taking prominent part in democratic organisations, such women are rare among us. Indeed,

I consider myself fortunate and happy to come in close contact with her in public life.

In 1946 she accepted the welfare work of rural women and children in the undivided Punjab and Kashmir State in connection with the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust as an Honorary Agent. The zeal with which she attended to the work and collected a group of women devoted to such constructive work in backward and unknown areas was exemplary and a model for workers in that line.

The recent years, however, have been most eventful. So many far-reaching events have taken place in this land. The British domination in India and Indian states has gone, fortunately blood-lessly and in perfect peace. 15th of August, 1947, gave us independence but we have had to pay a very heavy price in the form of the partition of the country into two—Pakistan and Indian Union. Practically all Indian states have now acceded to the Union of India as if it were to compensate the mutilation of the subcontinent. The migration of about 50 lacs of people on either side of the border involving the uprooting of such large masses of Hindus and Muslims from their homeland has been an event of unparalleled magnitude in the world.

The welfare work of Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru among the lacs of women and children, especially Punjabi's and Sindhi's, has been wonderful. Her beneficent work has earned her the popular name of Mataji, the Revered Mother.

She has organised a large number of women's homes, girls and children's training classes and is now planning rehabilitation work of our Harijans. She has been doing all this as an honorary adviser of the Government of India in spite of her delicate health. She has worked personally in several relief camps when the migration was going on. Her name will ever be enshrined as a charitable Devi in our Hindustan.

In her ambitious scheme of work, in her moral sensitiveness and in her positive intention she is the true Gandhian pilgrim.

Harijan Sevak Sangh,
Kingsway,
Delhi,
19th June, 1949.

A. V. Thakkar.

Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru is one of the first lady reformers who have changed the moods and manners of their time. Her genius and zeal have found their scope in giving a Gandhian twist to the social process. Her utterances are intimate and homely and illuminate the prison-house of Indian womanhood. Five decades ago she casts off the lucid veil of aristocracy and begins a realistic study of social attitudes. Her life becomes an experiment in social diagnosis and advance. After her contact with Mahatma Gandhi her work gains in its expressive and dynamic quality. In these sensitive pages her revolt against the forces that enslave and distort the human essence thrills and convinces us. She asks no more of life than the power to kindle the imagination and seek the truth. She looks at the Gandhian star through the windows of identity, truth-force and moral striving. This book gives what our tormented epoch needs—a new social tone.

She believes in a working philosophy of practised goodness. Her kindness, easy grace, simplicity and spiritual fortitude can be shared alike by all women. This lady of a rich social background is blessed with a heart that responds toward the largeness of an ideal.

In this volume Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru has avoided the higher walks of intellectualism. Naturally, there is no faking or affectation in her style. From these pages she

steps out as a magnificent woman who has worked honestly to her best and who seeks a robust reality. We have great pleasure in offering this book which is the living heart of the Gandhian idealism and technique.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to His Excellency Sri M. S. Aney for graciously contributing a masterly Introduction to this volume. Our thanks are also due to Dr. Kalidas Nag and Sri A. V. Thakkar for their charming tributes.

The Publisher

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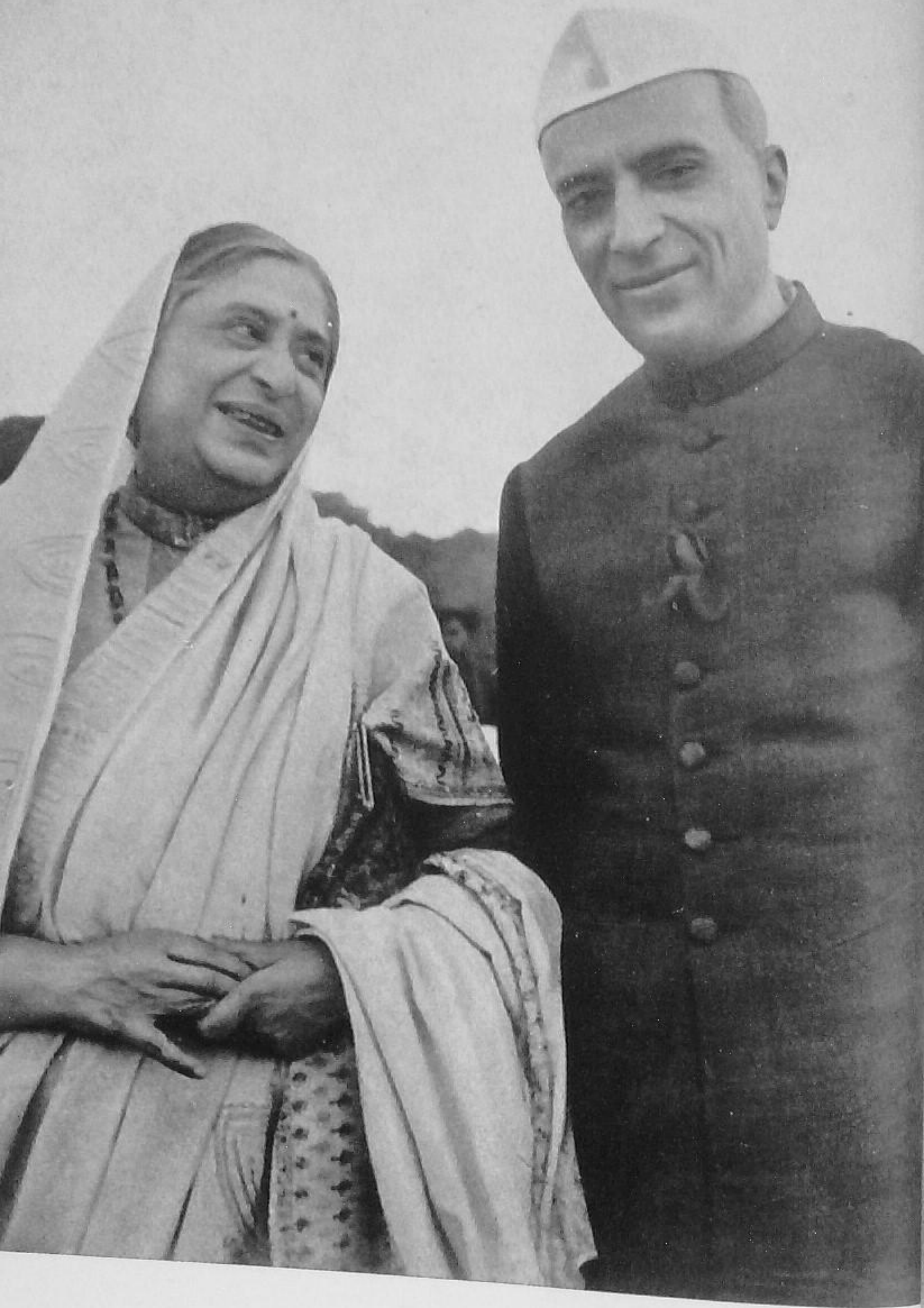
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Cover designed by Sri Asu Bandopadhyaya
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WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

[Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru is an old stalwart of the Indian feminist movement. Here is her 1929 review of the Women's Movement in India which is still worth attention and useful study. Giving due historical perspective to the subject she discusses the status of women in civilisations of the past, declaring that "women never attained equal rights with men either in law or in practice". She naturally admires Russia for having granted women the greatest amount of share in the administration. Tracing women's movement in India back to Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayanand she pronounces the need of removal of disabilities of women so that they may participate in and strengthen the Swaraj Movement in India.*]

A great deal is heard now-a-days of the women's movement. It is a worldwide movement. Though the grievances of women are as old as the world, it is only comparatively recently that organised efforts are being made to remove them. It is really a part of the labour and socialist movements of the present day and is much more effective and far-reaching in revolutionising the present system of society than any of those movements. While they touch and affect a certain class only, this affects half the population of the world. And though both equally challenge the principles on which the constitution of the present day society is founded, the women's movement is bigger in magnitude because of the greatness of the numbers it involves.

* Reprinted from The Hindustan Times, Congress Number, 1929.

The fate of woman has varied with the rise and fall of nations. Her status in society has differed in different civilizations and at different times in the same civilization. The saying of the poet that men and women rise and sink together is true in this sense that whenever nations have risen and civilizations are at their best and highest, women have enjoyed comparatively more rights. But the fact remains that in known history women have never attained equal rights with men either in law or in practice. While they have shared all hardships with men, they have never enjoyed the same rights or privileges. Wars have brought the same if not more miseries on women than on men. Death on the battle-field is comparatively easier than the lingering miseries of those who are left behind. Bad government and unjust administration cause as much misery to women as to men. While they have equally suffered the consequences of men's misdeeds, they as a class, have never had a share in moulding their destinies. Stray cases of a powerful Queen adorning the throne of her forefathers or a skilled woman administrator holding the reins of Government may be found in the pages of past history, but they are all exceptions which go to prove the rule.

The fact of women's subjection in a more or less acute form in all regions and at all times, stands out prominently throughout history. Now there is a revolt against it. Women are not satisfied with merely being the subject of men's actions. They claim to have a hand in the administration of their affairs. They have to a great extent, though not yet completely, succeeded in western countries. The hard-fought battles of the suffrage days before the war when women were fighting to get the right of voting, are yet fresh in the people's minds. The ever-growing number of women serving

on the legislative and executive bodies in most of the western countries is a monument of the success they have achieved. And it is noteworthy that their number is greater in the countries which are inclined towards socialism or towards the recognition of the rights of individuals as opposed to the rights or privileges of classes. Thus Germany and Finland have the largest number of women serving in their parliaments. In Russia women are serving on all administrative bodies. Even in England, the last elections have produced 14 women members of Parliament. The number of women serving on local bodies all over Europe is so great that it is impossible to enumerate them. And all this has been achieved in about forty years. Never before were women seen working so freely and in such large numbers in the public bodies of their countries.

When the world forces were growing so strong, it was impossible for Indian women not to be touched by them. The emancipation of women is closely connected with the social reform movement in India and this movement is at least a century old if not older and starts back from the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayanand. The problems of women's education, early marriage, purdah system and widow re-marriage which form the subjects of resolutions passed at the Social Reform Conferences year after year are as much a part of the women's movement as they are of the social reform movement. But this is only a part. The women's movement stands for all this and much more. It stands for the full equality of woman with man in all spheres of life, her complete emancipation from the legal and customary disabilities inflicted on her during the present times.

Women's battles have so far been largely fought by men in India. The franchise was given to them without any opposition and without much effort on the part of women themselves. But the use of that franchise has yet to be made and real test will be in making that use. It is only women themselves who can do it, nobody else can do it for them. They have realized this now and hence the recent efforts at organisation all over India. It may be that as they proceed and progress, they will find their path as smooth as before. There will be difficulties in achieving the ultimate object. The demand for equal rights of inheritance, equal marriage laws, equal moral standards, equal rights of work and the like are already creating a little stir in society and women workers, the leaders of the movement, are not unoften asked the question—"Where will all this lead to? What will be the constitution of society in which there will be no difference between men and women?" The only answer which can be given to this question is that it will lead to liberty, fraternity and equality and the future constitution of such a society will be based on love, truth, beauty and wisdom.

India at present is engaged in her fight for freedom which means life and death for her. At this time of her need, she cannot afford to neglect any section of her people, however insignificant. The awakening of women means redoubled reinforcement of her resources. The fear that other activities besides the political may divert attention from the real issues and thus weaken them is not right. Swaraj cannot be attained by people whose other halves are stricken by paralysis. The process of curing that paralysis, of shaking the sleepy partner out of her inertia, of infusing life into her, cannot but bring strength to the whole nation. The battle

of Swaraj has to be fought and won by men and women alike. The women of India who are suffering from innumerable disabilities and are the victims of bad customs and unjust laws, are incapable of performing the duty of fighting for Swaraj in any large numbers. The woman who is married before puberty, becomes a mother before she knows what it is to be a mother, and if widowed is not only condemned to a lifelong widowhood but is made to undergo all sorts of hardships and deprivations, who is not entitled to the possession of money except in a most restricted form, who must live in perpetual dread that her husband may marry another wife, who cannot go outside the four walls of her zenana, cannot make a fit companion for the soldiers of Mother India. Instead of being an asset, she is a burden and needs looking after at all steps and stages.

WOMAN IN THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

[Invited by the R. S. D. College, Ferozepur, in 1940, Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru delivered an extempore talk on the above-mentioned subject. The college authorities took notes of her speech and printed it subsequently in the present form for distribution. Mrs. Nehru outlines the work of the Women's Sub-Committee of National Planning Committee of which she was a member. The bulk of the talk is divided into four heads ; educational, social, economic and political position of women in the present and the new social order, forming altogether a compendium of information on women's movement in India. Mrs. Nehru arguing against sex discrimination observes that principles of freedom and equality should be applied to women as much as they are sought to be applied to men. Editor]

You have asked me to speak on "The place of woman in a planned Society". I shall try to confine my remarks within the four corners of the title although its nature is such that it is difficult to do so. My difficulty arises from the fact that what 'Planned Society' means is not defined. It can be interpreted in different ways and is being interpreted in many ways by different people. The term 'National Planning' has come into vogue during the last several years. Russia was the first country which used this word and made its plans for the development of the country. Later on the word and the idea was taken up by other countries. Germany, Italy, America and others who followed Russia in making their national plans and

prosecuting them with vigour. Lately the idea has been taken up by India, and as you are aware, a National Planning Committee has been formed and has been working strenuously for nearly a year now. The work of Planning for India is more difficult than it was in other countries. For while other countries like Russia, Germany and Italy planned to certain accepted ideologies, those of communism, nazism and fascism, and had the support of the people behind them, India has no such preconceived ideology. The Indian people as a whole or the Indian National Congress are not committed to any of the "isms" of the west for the promotion of which the Planning Committee could work. It has therefore, set before it the aim of finding ways and means of raising the general standard of living in the country. In that noble task it has the support of the whole country.

But the question of raising the general living conditions of the masses is not an easy one to deal with. An adequate handling of it may necessitate fundamental changes in the whole framework of society. It is true that it is principally an economic question. But economics cannot be dealt with apart from other spheres of life. Social and even religious problems have to be tackled before achieving any real success in raising the standard of the masses of the people. It is because of this interdependence of all aspects of life that the Planning Committee had to extend itself till it seemed to cover life itself. It now has 29 Sub-Committees dealing with different subjects relating to all phases of national life. Women being the integral part of the nation could naturally not be left out. They were to be deeply affected by any suggestions the Committee might make with a view to lay the foundations of the new order

of society visualised by it. They had, therefore, to be consulted and their wishes ascertained. It was with that object that the women's Sub-Committee was appointed to make recommendations as to the role women were expected to play in the planned society of the future. The Sub-Committee was asked to make recommendations for the removal of all disabilities of women whether legal, social, economic or political, so as to bring their status on an equal footing with men. The Sub-Committee therefore had to deal with all the questions which were under the consideration of different Sub-Committees. Thus its scope became wider and its work more comprehensive and difficult than that of any other Sub-Committee.

The principle which this Sub-Committee adopted for its guidance was that of securing perfect equality with men in all aspects of life. In one word, therefore, the position of women in a planned society as visualised by this Committee is that of an equal partner of man who will share with him his sorrows and his joys, his duties and his rights. Indian woman is no longer in a mood to tolerate an inferior or a subordinate position. She may have to suffer hardship for the achievement of this objective but as far as I can see, she is prepared for all the sacrifices needed for it.

I may say in parenthesis here that the views I am expressing before you this afternoon are my personal views and they have nothing to do with any organisation. But I may also tell you that they are, in main principles, upheld, by most women's organisations and by all advanced women in the country. I am sure that I have the backing also of most of the ladies present here this afternoon.

I shall divide my talk into four main heads : educational, social, economic and political. I Shall try to show you the present position of women in all these spheres of life and then make suggestions based on the principle of sex equality.

Women's education no doubt has made great strides in India recently, yet it is still far behind that of men. In all grades, from the primary to the university stage number of girls is much smaller than that of men. The literacy figures in India as a whole are 2% for women and 6% for men. The amount of money spent also both by Government and the public, is much more on men's education than on that of women's. Although among certain classes in urban areas women's education is valued, it is yet considered a bad investment. Even amongst the advanced sections there is a lack of enthusiasm where women's education is concerned. In rural as well as in urban areas masses are still opposed to the idea of educating their women folk which they consider not only as unnecessary but as bad and harmful. We have therefore to work hard to change the ideas of the common people, also to persuade the Government and the people to spend much more money to bring women's education on a par with that of men. Much leeway has to be made before we are able to achieve equality in the sphere of education.

I might say a word in connection with the kind of education to be given to women. I am not an admirer of the present system of education prevailing in the country ; it is all the more unsuited to women. The only change ordinarily demanded is that woman should be taught her duties as a mother and wife. A sort of atmosphere is created in which it is forgotten that she is a human being and a citizen also. All that is remem-

bered is that she is a wife and a mother. It breeds a complex which dwarfs the mental and ethical growth of the women ; a sort of 'lady-like' education is given to her which is artificial and superficial. I, therefore, do not want separate syllabus for women. The only difference which I advocate in the education of the two is that home-science and mother-craft should make compulsory subjects in women's education. In any other way a woman's education should be as wide as that of man. She should be given equal opportunities for training to adopt any profession she likes and must be given a free choice to follow her own path in life.

To me it seems an un rebuttable fact that women occupy a much lower status in social life than men. But there are men who refute this axiom and who say that it is only due to a perverted aggressive view engendered by Western suffragist ideas that such assertions are made. In their opinion Indian women have nothing to complain of. Their status in the home and society and the country is enviable. In support of their opinion they quote much that great writers and renowned poets of olden days have written in books about women. But these good-intentioned people while indulging in the hyperboles of poets overlook the facts of life.

I shall first draw your attention to the unequal marriage laws obtaining in society. Marriage is a sacrament amongst Hindus. The marriage tie is eternal which even death cannot break. It is a good ideal, but it has lost all its value owing to its one-sided observance. While it is binding on women, it leaves men absolutely free to do as they choose. They can marry as many times as they like and there are many who take advantage of this freedom. Even the restrictions which were formerly observed have lost their force. According to

the "SHASTRAS" men were allowed to remarry only in case they did not have a male issue and that also with the consent of their wives. Now-a-days the sweet will of man is sufficient to give him a right to remarry in the life-time of his former wife and in the presence of any number of children. The wives' position is further deteriorated owing to the fact that often the second wives postulate before marriage that the former wife will not stay in the house. Thus the poor deserted wife's condition is pitiable. She not only loses her home, husband and children but often has to forego even her maintenance allowance to which she is legally entitled. In many ways she is in a worse position than a widow. No one must imagine that such cases are rare. Even amongst the educated and the wealthy people such marriages are taking place every day. And what is worse and more regrettable is that many educated young women succumb to the temptation of marrying wealthy, well-settled men even though they are saddled with families. It is a great shame that such cases are tolerated in good society and not a word of protest is raised. In the face of these facts, who can say that the eternal tie idea of the sacramental marriage is truly observed by the Hindus ?

While men are free to treat their living wives in the manner indicated above, women, even virgins, have to undergo enforced life-long widowhood in memory of their dead husbands. The number of virgin widows in India is appalling. They are the serfs of the family. Custom and prejudice deprive them of all the amenities of life. They cannot eat well. They cannot dress well. They cannot take part in the gaieties of life. They are considered 'inauspicious.' Their only part in life is service to the family. The ideal of service is good but

it should be voluntary, to be of any value. Enforced service is no better than slavery.

Propaganda is being carried on in the country to remove the prejudice against widows for a few scores of years. That great philanthropist, the late Sir Gangaram, was a great friend of the Hindu widow. He placed large sums of money to be spent on bettering their conditions. With his money some societies for the protection of widows and for promoting their remarriage have been started. I have been in touch with the work of one such society. After hard work of nearly 20 years and after spending large sums of money that society was instrumental in getting only 600 widows married. Considering the labour spent, we do not feel that it can be considered a great achievement. The Widow Remarriage Act validating widow remarriage is there but very few marriages take place in spite of all the propaganda done in its behalf.

For the removal of injustices perpetrated in this sphere I suggest the replacement of the present unequal marriage laws by a monogamous marriage law and by the grant of divorce in hard cases with safe-guards, for the maintenance of the divorced wife. This right of divorce under specified conditions has to be granted to avoid possible immorality which might result in the wake of enforced monogamous marriages.

We have to do a great deal of propaganda against the double moral standard maintained in society. We judge the right and wrong of actions not according to the merits of the case but according to the sex of the agent. While it is considered only natural that young-men should sow their wild oats, any slip on the part of a woman regardless of the difficult conditions in which it may occur is sufficient to condemn her for life. How

many cases of such occasional errors, many of which take place owing to ignorance or for want of experience cost young girls and widows a whole life's misery? Even parents are hard-hearted enough to throw girls out into the streets in such cases. Every day Hindu girls in such predicaments are either becoming Muslims or are swelling the ranks of the prostitutes. There is no other alternative left to them. The existence of the DEVADASI system and commercialized vice are also due to the same double standard of morality obtaining in society. I suggest that both men and women should be judged with the same standard and in the case of both the moral standard should be high. A great deal of suffering can be removed and the evil of prostitution can be abolished only if the moral standard of men is raised.

The laws of the guardianship of children place women at a disadvantage. In cases of separation the father is considered to be the natural guardian of the child. Male relatives, especially in rich families, are given preference over widowed mothers. All that is very unjust. A mother who gives birth to the child and makes sacrifices for it, ought to have some right of guidance and control over the child in the eyes of the law. I suggest that the mother should be considered the natural guardian of the child and should be deprived of her right only in cases of proved inability.

The economic dependence of women has been more or less a world-wide question. But few countries in the modern age can beat the Hindu woman in her lack of rights over property. From birth to death she depends on her relatives for maintenance. Without going into the intricacies of the Hindu Law which is very complicated indeed, I can say without fear of contradiction that

in actual practice she has no right over the family property except that of maintenance. In her maiden state, in addition to the right of maintenance from the parental property, she has the right of dowry on the occasion of the marriage. In the married state she has unlimited right over the STRIDHAN and can claim maintenance from the husband in all circumstances. In the widowed state, under certain conditions, she has a limited right over the property but in actual practice she seldom has full control even on the income of her property. It is not possible for me to go into the details of this vast subject in the short time at my disposal. Suffice it to say that the laws of inheritance are unfair to the Hindu woman from the beginning to the end and require a thorough overhauling. People's attention is sufficiently drawn towards this injustice and various measures are being taken to make the laws more equitable. But all that is being done is half-hearted and does not meet full requirements. My suggestion is that husband and wife should be made co-owners of each other's property and earnings with equal legal rights and responsibilities. It may be the practice already followed in some cases but unless it becomes legally binding the status of women will not improve.' The miseries of the deserted wives and widows which are so common to-day will be considerably mitigated if the above suggestion is embodied in law.

I would like to point out that all my remarks about marriage and inheritance concern the Hindu women only. In both these matters Muslim woman fare much better than their Hindu sisters. Their laws especially the SHARIAT laws are much more equitable.

Apart from the inheritance question which applies to a very limited number, it is most essential that women's

right to earn money should be recognised. Even in the most advanced circles to-day a woman's following a profession is looked upon with disapproval. It is considered to be subversive to the family well-being. But while these ideas are entertained by high and middle class people, it is forgotten that a very large percentage of our women are forced to follow economic pursuits out of sheer necessity. They have to engage themselves in work outside their homes for inordinately long hours just to find food for the hungry mouths of their starving children. They are indeed needed at home, but owing to grim poverty they can make no arrangements for the looking after of their little children. I should think we ought to be more concerned about the well-being of these women and their families than that of a well placed educated women who choose to adopt the unfrequented course of earning for herself.

I would, therefore, repeat once again that there should be absolutely no ban to a woman's following any profession she chooses. Owing to her different physiological make-up, she will naturally be restricted in her choice but no legal or social limitations may be put in her way. On the contrary, all facilities should be provided to her to attain economic independence.

In the political field Indian women have achieved a very good status without much effort or exertion. Women have the right of franchise and have representation in the legislatures of the country. According to the new Constitution of 1935, the voting qualifications of women are not the same as those of men. The women of India as represented by the All India Women's Conference and other women's organisations protested against the invidious distinction based on sex and urged complete equality. The wife-hood qualification according to which

wives of qualified voters were entitled to vote was especially objected to. Women are given reserved seats in all the legislative bodies, both Councils and Assemblies. As a result of this the number of our women legislators is very large say, 54 or 55 which is more than any one country can claim to have. Women have also been given responsible position in autonomous provinces under the constitution and everywhere they have discharged their duties well. We have had two women ministers, one in U. P. and the other in Bihar, 2 Parliamentary Secretaries one in the Punjab and one in Bombay, 2 Deputy Presidents of Legislative Assemblies. Moreover there are any number of women municipal councillors, members of Educational Advisory Boards and various other executive and advisory bodies. Women's work in all these bodies has been universally acclaimed and it is admitted on all hands that everywhere their work has made a rich contribution towards the progress of the nation.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that in the Punjab, even in the year 1940, women are deprived of the right of municipal franchise. It is a great blot on the fair name of our otherwise progressive province. Men and women should both make an effort to remove this anomaly. The Punjab Branch of the All India Women's Conference has put forth the demand in a resolution passed a few months back. I hope it will have the support of all and soon our Province will come into line in this respect with the other advanced provinces of the country.

I have tried to show you as best I could in the short time at my disposal, what our present position in society is today and what we want it to be in future. We may not forget that the question of women's emancipation is

only a part of the larger question of emancipation of submerged and suppressed humanity. Old notions have got to be discarded, deep psychological changes have to come before women can achieve the objective they have placed before them. For a full realization of their aspirations the whole framework of society may have to be changed. Human freedom is inherent in women's freedom and those who are working for the latter cause are automatically promoting the former.

There may be a few vacillating souls amongst us who may doubt the wisdom of the course adopted by the women's movement and who may also doubt its practicability. But it is only lack of faith which raises such doubts in the mind. Freedom and equality are principles which are universally accepted as good for the human race. India is also a great devotee of these golden principles. We must therefore, make sure that they are applied to women as well as to men and that the mutual relationship of the sexes is regulated in strict accordance with them. To my mind there is not the slightest doubt that a new world of love and freedom, of peace and happiness, of mutual appreciation and helpful co-operation will come into being when women obtain an equal status with those of men in actual practice and live as equal partners with them. The beauties of such life can only be realized by experience. I therefore appeal to all to discard their fears, to have faith and to work for the day when men and women may live and love and work together as equal companions of one another.

REFLECTIONS ON THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

(Here is a very thought-provoking article by Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru on women's movement in India under the All India Women's Conference. With profound irony she mocks at the hollow praises which men shower on women in musharias. Is woman not the Queen Bee still? But the guarded Queen, thanks to the movement, which Mrs. Nehru defends with convincing arguments, is stepping out of the four walls of the home, determined to fight the evils arising from, what Mrs. Nehru calls 'double standard of morality'. Women must have a fair deal from men. In replying to the criticisms levelled at the A. I. W. C., Mrs. Nehru dispels fears of men against the activities of women, whose emancipation, she points out, will bring nearer the day of deliverance of the nation.)

The All-India Women's Conference has its supporters, as well as its critics, among the men-folk of the country, and each year, they, have a chance of expressing their opinions on the work of the Conference.

Messages of good-will are received from men, as well as from women, and this year at Allahabad the number of men wishing luck to the Conference far outnumbered the women. A convention has grown that a civic address is presented to the President and the delegates of the Conference on the occasion of its annual sessions. Also, on the opening day, prominent men of the locality are invited to speak. On these occasions, great encomiums are paid to the Women's Conference and friendly advice is also given and this is most valued.

This year, in addition to all this, poems composed by renowned Urdu poets were read and a MUSHAIRA (poetic symposium) was also held, where unstinted praises were showered on the leaders of the movement. It is amusing to hear those encomiums. Most of them are altogether unreal and other-worldly. Their very exaggeration betrays a feeling of uncomfortable uncertainty on the part of those who indulge in them.

Women are angels, women are goddesses, they are the personification of all goodness, power, energy and strength. They are the inspirers ; they are the dictators. On their behests hang the fate of men. Theirs is but to command, and it is the joy of men to obey. All this is said about them and more. Great poets and writers are quoted in support of this view and examples from history are given, where empires have been made or marred by a smile on a women's lips or a tear in her eye.

One wonders what place all this has in the deliberations of the Conference. Do men really mean it ? Why are they so extravagant in their praises ? But a little rider, which is almost always added to these panegyrics, clears the position. It betrays the doubt lurking in the minds of these chivalrous learned men, who disdain to condemn the women's movement openly, but who cannot get rid of the suspicion with which they secretly look at this new venture. They emphatically stress the fact that the women's sphere is her home. She is the uncrowned queen of the household. All superhuman powers, she is supposed to possess, have to be brought into action through the male medium of her husband, sons and brothers. She may not resort to direct action.

Like the Queen Bee of the hive, she has to take her place in the centre of the home, accepting loving and

willing service of her male folk, and giving them in return for the future work of the world children and such service as pertains to this particular sphere of her work.

This world of love and ease, of comfort and luxury, depicted in the glowing words of the poets is most alluring. Some happy women who consider those of us mad, who turning our faces against this heaven on earth, have taken to a life of struggle and strife and hard work, would be justified if this world of imagery really existed. But unfortunately facts divulge other conditions, and facts are facts, which cannot be changed by beautiful words, and have to be dealt within their stark reality.

Who can value the home more than a woman? Whose yearning heart finds its consummation in the love of a child, a husband and a brother more than that of a woman? To give them tender care and service, to work for them, to slave for them night and day, is her greatest joy. Her home is her castle and therein she finds her happiness and her security. She does not stand in need of being reminded by man that her place is in the home for she knows it already. It is evident that there must be something that drives her out of her home, and urges her to undertake hard duties and difficult tasks.

A look around the world and the facts of history give an answer. It is an admitted fact, that in spite of all the lip homage that is paid to her, woman has never had a fair deal from the world of men. In all climes and in all ages, the customs and practices of society and its laws have been unfair to her. The objection raised by the modern woman to her subordinate position in society is not due to any sentimental reasons, as is generally believed by her opponents. Nor is it a theoretical desire to obtain equality with man that has lead her on to wage

a war against the present conditions. She has adopted this course, because she feels convinced that the whole moral standard of society has gone down owing to this fundamental injustice of inequality in its foundations. The subjection of one half of the population to various kinds of disabilities cannot contribute to the growth or proper evolution of the other half.

Dealing with India alone, early marriage, enforced widowhood, economic dependence, seclusion behind the PURDAH, polygamy on the part of men, desertion of wives, enforced limitation of their activities to the four walls of the home have caused untold sufferings, and have resulted not only in their demoralization, but the demoralization of the man as well. The observance of a double standard of morality has given rise to such evil practices as commercialized vice, of the deva-dasi system and the ugly custom in certain tribes of using their women folk for prostitution. But the learned men with whose opinions we are concerned just now give full support to the removal of the social evils enumerated above. They want women to be educated, to come out of PURDAH, to take their proper place, as they see it, in home and society. But they FIGHT SHY at the prospect of her economic independence, at her claim to choose her demand for a single moral standard of conduct in life. Most of them use a garbled language veiling their innermost feelings, which they can hardly conceal. But sometimes as was done by a great man this year at Allahabad, even this thin veneer of a courteous language is dispensed with and, in plain language, it is suggested that women are outstepping the boundaries of decent behaviour. Accordingly it was remarked that the demands of women as expressed by the Women's Conference savoured of licence in the name of liberty.

My object in recapitulating the above remarks is to point out humbly that in sheltering such doubts, men neither do justice to themselves nor to their women. The short history of the women's movements shows that they have maintained a stable and healthy outlook from the beginning. They have refrained from adopting an aggressive sectarian view in any of their decisions, they have consistently given a foremost place to the well-being of the whole nation. At times as in the case of their franchise demands, they preferred to forego sectarian advantages and took their stand on absolute national lines. It is with the same big viewpoint bringing within its ambit the well-being of the whole nation that they seek to change the foundation of society and to eliminate injustice and exploitation from it.

To-day what is happening is this that owing to a faulty construction of society, the very things which are so highly valued by our men are perforce denied to an astoundingly big proportion of the population. For instance, while we are perpetually reminded that our place lies in the home, it is forgotten that there are millions of women who are driven out of their homes by force of circumstances to search food for their hungry children. They need as much protection, their children need as much care, their homes need as much looking after, yet our equanimity is not disturbed nor do we find any sacrilege of our principles when we see them employed in economic pursuits. We have become so accustomed to the conditions of the present day world, that we take them in the natural course of events as necessary parts of the scheme of things. Our chivalry on many occasions is misplaced and often enough it does not come into play when it ought to. If it did, we would not be daily faced with the cruel spectacle of

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labouring women working hard even during advanced pregnancy or immediately after child-birth. There would not be so much difficulty in securing maternity benefits from employers whether in their individual or public capacity.

All that the women of to-day are trying to do is to draw the attention of men and women alike to women's problems and their difficulties. The glaring injustices that they suffer from are so common that on that very account, they escape notice. They exist in all strata of society in various forms. Social conscience has to be awakened and redress found.

It is a noble piece of work which women are engaged in. Their work will bring nearer the day of deliverance not only of women but of the whole Indian people. No one need be afraid of this work. No one should have mental reservations with regard to it. It is worthy of the support of all people. We want no praise, nor do we need to be raised on a high pedestal. All that we wish for is whole-hearted support for our cause without fear or favour. I, therefore, appeal to all men and women to cast off their fears and help the cause which is not only the women's cause but the cause of the nation.

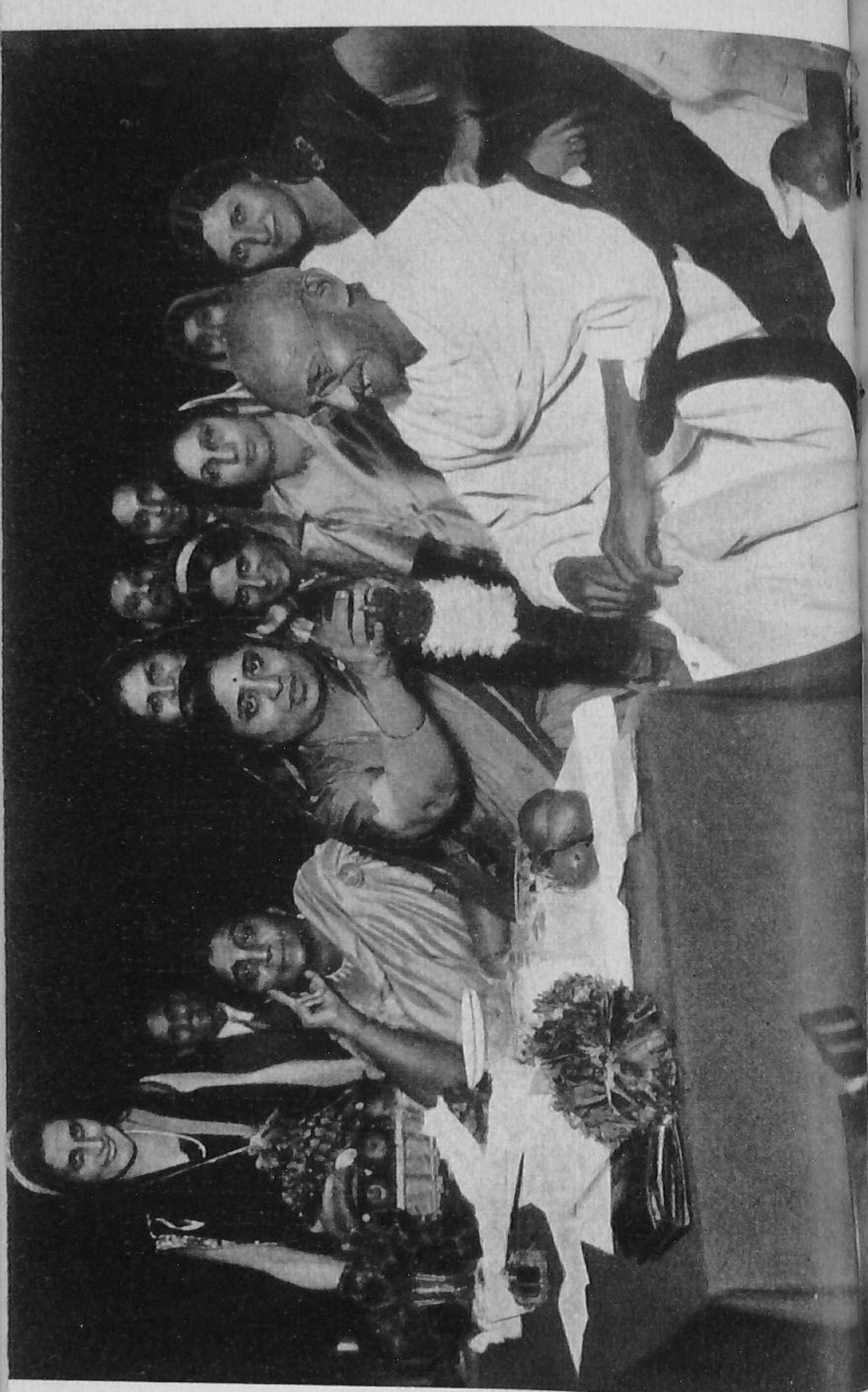
* This address was delivered in London in 1932, at a session of the British Commonwealth League.

THE HINDU LAW OF INHERITANCE

The Hindu Law is a growth of centuries. It is based on the Shrutis and Smritis, the revealed and other Shastras and innumerable commentaries on these Shastras, the various customs and practices followed by different people, and last but not least, on the rulings given by the British Courts of Justice.

The original Shastras can be approached only through the various commentaries written by a large number of learned Rishies at different times. These commentaries, in relation to women's right of inheritance differ considerably in their verdict. and have given rise to separate schools followed in various parts of India. Of these. Dayabhag and Mitakshara are the two chief schools, Dayabhag being followed in Bengal, and Mitakshara in the rest of India. Mitakshara is again subdivided into Bombay and Benares schools, which differ from each other in many details. The long-standing customs and practices, varying in different parts of India, are given preference over any established school of law. The Hindu law is a mass of intricate complications which defy all uniformity.

The rulings of the British Courts have further complicated matters but they have crystallized and hardened that which was loose and flexible before. The rulings



of these courts are binding and Case Law, as it is called in legal language, supersedes all other forms of law.

The effect of these rulings has been very prejudicial to the interests of women. The British Judges, when they first started their judiciary work, had to rely solely on the translations and interpretations of the texts as they were made by the Pandits who were engaged for that purpose. These Pandits interpreted as suited their own inclinations, and as at that time, laws concerning women were not very liberal in England, the partiality of the interpretations in favour of men did not strike the judges as anything unnatural or reprehensible. Compared to the Law of England, which till 1882 did not allow married women to possess any property, the Hindu Law was much more advanced. Naturally, therefore, the judges, to whom the whole spirit of the Hindu Law was absolutely foreign and difficult to comprehend, could only see it in the light of their own experience, and in the light in which it was presented to them. Many cases to the point can be cited and are being cited as examples of the above statement. But it is not possible for me to quote them here.

The Hindu Law is a system which works primarily for the benefit of families, and takes cognizance of individuals only as constituents of families. It therefore aims at the preservation of property for the legitimate use of the members of the family rather than the enjoyment of it. It makes the property a constant factor which continues while the family members come and go. This system has worked satisfactorily for several centuries, but present-day conditions are entirely different to those of olden days, and the system is ill suited to them. Besides, certain abuses have crept in, which have stultified it. A steady tendency towards the lowering of

the status of women is the worst and the most serious evil which is greatly responsible for its disintegration.

A study of the History of the property rights of Hindu women under Hindu Law shows that they were never so low as they are today. Under the Law as it is practiced to-day, the nature of a woman's ownership is of two kinds, absolute and limited. These will be dealt with by me as simply and briefly as possible, while at the same time I shall point out the disadvantages from which women suffer and the steady decline in their status.

All sons born into a Hindu family have an inherent right in the family property, and are called coparceners. Coparceners are entitled to receive education and maintenance (in keeping with the status of the family), at the expense of the family property and are entitled to demand a partition of the family property whenever they like. Female children of the family are not considered coparceners, but their maintenance and marriage expenses are necessary charges on the family property. According to some schools, an unmarried daughter is entitled to one-fourth part of the brother's property after the death of the father. It has been argued that she is allowed this share in lieu of maintenance and marriage expenses to which she is entitled. Even in those parts, therefore, where she is entitled to inherit a portion of her father's property, she is not considered a coparcener. On account of this view, she loses in status, and foregoes all the privileges, which necessarily go with coparcenership. She has no legal right in the family property, and her education is left to the sweet will of her relations. Her maintenance is assured if she continues to live with the family and she is entitled to a dowry on marriage, but no amount or proportion

is fixed for the dowry. It often happens that daughters of rich parents are given away in marriage with a dowry utterly inadequate to the status of the family. In many cases she loses her right to the fourth portion of her brother's share if no partition takes place, and she has no right to claim a partition.

Thus it happens that in most cases, the daughters do not receive anything from their ancestral property except what is given as dowry at the time of marriage. In cases where the father is divided from the family, and is the sole owner of his property, dying intestate without male issue, the daughter inherits the property. But there exists a difference of opinion in the various schools as to the nature of her estate in the property.

As has been already said, the nature of woman's estate in her property is of two kinds, absolute and limited. The absolute ownership of women is called her STRIDHAN. Mitakshare included every kind of property a woman obtained through partition, inheritance, purchase, gift or finding, to be her STRIDHAN. But, unfortunately, this liberal interpretation of STRIDHAN is not accepted by all schools. The following is regarded by all schools as her absolute property, to be disposed of as she likes without any restrictions :—

(1) All that she receives as gifts at the time of marriage and after from her parents or husband or anybody else.

(2) All that she acquires through her own efforts.

(8) All that she inherits from her mother's STRIDHAN.

With regard to (2) there are certain conditions in certain places. If, in acquiring wealth, the wife has used the husband's capital or in any other way made use of his belongings, the husband has a voice in the disposal of the property so acquired.

The property that a woman inherits from her father's home is also classed as her STRIDHAN by some. The Bombay School makes a great distinction between the women born in the family and those brought into the family by marriage, holding that all that the daughters of the family inherit becomes their STRIDHAN.

On the point of women's right of inheritance arising out of her marital relationship, which, according to the law current in India at present, is confined to limited ownership, there has been much controversy among learned jurists. The most progressive maintain and that by the fact of marriage a woman loses her rights in the family she is born in and acquires them in the family she adopts by law. According to this view, the moment a woman marries, she becomes a co-parcener with her husband. The great jurist, Dalla, says : "Wealth is considered as common to the married pair". They become co-owners of the property. A proof of this is given in the fact that at the time of partition she is given a share in the property of her deceased husband equal to that of each son. The late Babu Golap Chandra Lanka a profound Oriental scholar and great jurist, said : "She gets the share in virtue of the co-ownership she acquires from the moment of her marriage in her husband's property, by reason of her being the lawful wedded wife. It is erroneous to suppose that partition creates her right to get a share, for according to Mitakshara, partition does not create any right. on the other hand, the other schools hold, and they are supported by case law, that wife does not become a co-parcener with her husband, and the share to which she is entitled at the time of partition is given her in lieu of her maintenance charges. This view changes the situation entirely, and, as in the case of the daughter, so in the case of the

wife lowers her status considerably. She again has to forego all the privileges which are inseparable from co-parcenership, and is reduced to the position of a charge on the family entitled to maintenance alone.

While a son, in virtue of his being a co-parcener with his father has the right to protect the family property by impeaching any transaction of his father, on the score of want of necessity and immorality, the wife who has the same interest in the property as the son, cannot do anything. The debts of the husband, contracted for whatever purpose, moral or immoral, are given preference over her claim of maintenance. And thus a bad and spendthrift husband can reduce his sonless wife to a state of penury leaving her utterly destitute, and thus defeating the very object of this complicated and most elaborate law. However, the fact remains that though she still gets a share equal to that of her sons at the time of partition, all she can rely upon is maintenance allowance, the amount of which depends on the sweet will of the family members or the Courts of Law. In cases where there is only one son, the question of partition does not arise at all. She stands the risk of being treated merely as dependent of the family, which risk is sometimes too real, especially when the son is a step-son or an adopted son.

Her rights in the property of her husband, ancestral or otherwise when she does inherit it in the case of partition or the absence of male issue, is always limited. She can neither sell it nor mortgage it, nor can she dispose of it otherwise. Only the income of the property can be used as she chooses in her lifetime. After her death, the property goes to the reversionary heirs, comprising no less than two hundred souls, starting from the nearest blood relations and extending to the

most distant agnates who may never have seen the deceased owner of the property. This fact of limited ownership gives rise to many abuses and much litigation. A married woman under the present circumstances stands a better chance of inheritance when the family is divided than when it is joint. There are many other complications, intricacies, differences of opinion and practice, which provide exceptions to all rules. But I have tried to give that version of the laws which is most widely followed and generally accepted.

A change in the present law, making their status absolutely equal with that of men, is urgently demanded by the Hindu women.

THE HINDU CODE

The Hindu Law Committee, presided over by Sir B. N. Rau, is touring the whole country for the purpose of eliciting public opinion on the draft Hindu Code which has been before the public for some time and which in its present form represents also the views of the Select Committee to which it was referred some time ago. The salient points dealt with in the draft bill are (1) succession to property both intestate and testamentary (2) marriage both sacramental and civil (3) adoption (4) guardianship of children.

It is the first time in history that an effort has been made to codify the Hindu Law which in its diffused subtleties and contradictions has defied the most powerful legal minds of the country. This lack of codification has given rise to a great deal of litigation which has been the bane of Hindu society. It is common knowledge that some civil cases of Hindu Law have lasted for as three generations, while the expenses involved in litigation practically swallowed the whole properties involved.

The Hindu Law as it is practised today has considerably deviated from the aims and objects which that law was originally meant to serve. In the beginning it represented a society which was much more equitable and just to its different members than it is today. It reflected in its flexibility the needs of a living society

which can never be static. It, therefore, lent itself to change which was brought about by the Rishis and Munis of different periods who interpreted the Shastric rules as they considered best for the common welfare. That which once was its chief virtue has now become its greatest complication involving mutually antagonistic scripts which provide a most fruitful ground to learned lawyers for argument.

The Hindu Law of the present times has also been shaped to a great extent by the rulings given by the British Courts at different times. These rulings reflect the opinions of Hindu society as it then existed, influenced by the preconceived notions of the English judges of the day. The rulings are generally on the conservative side refusing to women equal partnership in all spheres of life which came within its fold. This was the natural result of the ideology prevailing in those days both in Hindu as well as English Society which ideology lacked a consciousness of social justice between the sexes.

There is another feature of the Hindu law which is worth noting. Customary Law is a recognised branch of the Hindu Law which takes precedence over the authorities of all Smritis and their commentaries. There are all sorts of good and bad customs in the country which pass as the recognised laws of the land. For instance in Southern India the practice of marrying the eldest daughter of one's own sister is prevalent amongst some high caste Hindus and it is recognised as being in consonance with the spirit of the Hindu Shastras. Likewise amongst the Maharashtrians first cousin marriages are allowed. Such instances could easily be multiplied. But they are only meant to show that these things are taking place in recognised Hindu society without exciting even the slightest notice. It conclu-



sively proves that the Hindu Law in vogue to-day is not the unadulterated gift of our ancient Rishis but is a concoction prepared by the degenerate society of a decadent period. Slogans raised on the basis of interference with religion against any attempts to amend its prevalent forms are therefore false and baseless.

On the contrary the attempt now being made of codifying the Hindu Law with certain minor amendments will definitely bring it more into conformity with the original ideas of our lawgivers. It will simplify it, clarify it and purify the society which it seeks to cover. There is nothing in it which goes against the spirit of the Hindu Shastras or of the Hindu Dharma in any material sense. It has come in the wake of several Acts which have been passed by the Legislature amending the Hindu Law seeking to rectify some of its glaring wrongs. Such piecemeal tinkering having been found to be unsatisfactory, the present exhaustive Bill has been prepared to replace them all. It is by no means the final word. It is open to amendments and suggestions provided the main principles it adumbrates are kept intact. In the next instalment of this article I shall deal with the broad items of the bill and the objections raised against them.

* Reprinted from "The Tribune", Lahore, May 1945.

2

I have enumerated before the four broad heads under which the subject of Hindu Law is treated by the Code. I shall now deal with the different heads seriatim. In this short article there will not be room enough to treat the subject in any great detail but I shall try to bring out relevant points. The first is succession. In this connection the two material changes effected by the Code are that (1) daughters, both married and unmarried, will be allowed a share equal to half that of the brother in the father's heritable property, and (2) the widow will be allowed absolute right over all movable and immovable property. No other provision in the Code has raised as much opposition as the above two proposals. The reasons given by the opposition are that it will tend to (a) the break-up of the joint family (b) the creation of dissensions in the home (c) the wastage of property owing to the incapacity of woman to look after it and the danger of its misuse. (d) the fragmentation of land.

(a) Without questioning the desirability of preserving the joint family or giving arguments for or against it, let me point out that the system is already rapidly falling into disuse and under the changing conditions of life it cannot remain intact in its old form. It was a necessary concomitant of agricultural society and its need and justification cease with the change in the basis

of society. Moreover I do not see how the joint family breaks up because of the daughter getting a share in the property. If anything, it expands since a dispossessed member of the family is brought into its fold as a beneficiary.

(b) Next comes the fear of creating dissensions at home. If the law is faithfully followed, there does not seem to me to exist any cause for dissensions. Women are peaceful by nature. They hate to go against those they love and whom does a woman love more than her own brother? If the brothers are honest and just there is absolutely no reason for fear of any dissension. A sister is prepared to tolerate much more from her brother than a brother from a brother. If, therefore, any dissensions arise it is because the seeds of such dissensions already exist in the joint family and the existing form of the Hindu Law. The proposed code is meant to reduce chances of such dissensions and consequent litigation.

(c) The third objection which is based on an assertion that women are incapable of managing property is most surprising. To entertain ideas of this kind particularly in the present times when women have proved their worth in all spheres of life is, to say the least, going against facts. Life would have come to a standstill long ago, had it not been for the valuable contribution made by women. Time and again on occasions of crisis they have come out of their spheres and saved civilization and humanity from ruin. There is no fear of their mismanaging property. There are innumerable instances even in the modern days, when education in the literary sense is so lacking amongst Indian women, where women are managing properties with acumen and proficiency which can stand comparison with the manage-

ment of any man. As for misuse, I do not think it will need much convincing that property in the hands of a man young or old is more liable to be used for unworthy causes than in the hands of a woman in India.

(d) The last argument brought forth by the opposition is the question of fragmentation of land. In the first place, the provisions of the proposed code do not apply to agricultural land as it is outside the jurisdiction of the Central Assembly which is the only Assembly competent to deal with the subject matter of the Code. But there is no denying the fact that once the Code becomes the recognised law of the land, legislation to bring provinces into line with the law will follow. But it must be remembered that fragmentation of land in our country has gone to the extent of reducing individual holdings to an uneconomic state. It has become a problem in the country which is engaging the attention of all thoughtful men. Some solution of this acute problem has to be found by which economic holdings are preserved consistently with the claims of male heirs which can easily be shared by the women heirs also. But I feel that fragmentation of land is only used as an argument behind which the desire to preserve large estates is hidden. On the assumption that the influence and status of a community depends on the amount of riches possessed by some of its topmost families, a cry is raised from certain quarters that the proposed division of property is a subtle device to impoverish Hindu society and reduce its influence and status. This fear is entertained on a wrong assumption and it is forgotten that the influence and status of a community depend on the character of its men and not on the amount of riches they possess. Even looking at it from a narrow community point of view a strong

enlightened middle class, with backbone and mettle to work, serve and sacrifice, is a thousand times better than a few rich families at the top. Moreover the time-spirit is working against the concentration of wealth in a few hands. There are proposals even from authoritative quarters of levying death duties, inheritance duties and enhancing income-tax charges. Taxes on high incomes have already been enhanced and they are likely to be enhanced still further in future. This unwillingness to part with property to the extent of refusing a share in it even to one's own flesh and blood will not save it for the chosen few. It is, therefore, better to discard these ill-founded fears and face facts as they are.

It is worth while noticing that the above proposals are applicable only to heritable intestate property. They can easily be thwarted by making a will the free right of doing which is given to every individual. From certain points of view, it is a questionable right. But it exists and may suit the purpose of some to whom the proposed laws of inheritance are distasteful.

3

Next to inheritance come the laws relating to marriage. The main changes suggested in the bill are (1) nullity and dissolution of marriage under certain specified circumstances. (2) Monogamy and (3) removal of caste restrictions.

At present dissolution of marriage amongst high caste Hindus is not allowed on the ground that a Hindu marriage is a sacramental tie which is binding for ever and from which there is no breaking away. It is a merging of two elements into an indivisible unity, mingling of two elements into one organic whole from which there is no separation. The grandeur of this beautiful ideal has been fully realized, appreciated and preserved by the Hindu women. They have cherished it with love and care and have nourished it with the sacrifice of their own youthful desires and life. But alas the ideal has suffered because it has been observed unilaterally by women alone while men have flagrantly violated it. A double standard of morality exists in society which judges men and women from different standpoints. While a man is allowed to sow his wild oats with impunity, a woman is heavily punished for the slightest slip in her conduct. It is only social workers who are painfully aware of the extent to which this double standard of morality has played havoc with young lives. It is difficult to tell, how many women from good families

owing to a wrong step in early youth finally find their way into rescue homes and widow's homes and how many go out of the Hindu fold altogether. While our laws are rigid, social conditions are putrid. It is to save these victims of social tyranny that the law is sought to be changed. An effort is being made to find a legitimate place in the Hindu fold for those who by nature or on account of social environments find it impossible to live up to the high ideal. It is merely a permissive measure and does not affect those who have no need for it or who do not choose to avail themselves of it. It therefore does not touch the class of women whose idealism is strong enough to enable them to sacrifice their all for its sake. I give below the six conditions on which dissolution of marriage is allowed under the Code. They are :—

1. Unsound mind, pronounced incurable after 7 years of careful and continued treatment.
2. Virulent and incurable leprosy.
3. Desertion for not less than seven years.
4. Conversion to another religion.
5. Venereal disease in a communicable form which has persisted for seven years.
6. The keeping of a concubine for man or living the life of a prostitute for a woman.

They apply either way both to men and women. But their importance lies in relation to women only, for under the present conditions men are free to marry with or without these conditions as many times as they like and a good few, even from amongst the educated classes, take full advantage of this.

Demand for the relief of women under these hard conditions which has been growing for sometime has found its expression in several bills seeking dissolution of

marriage which various people have from time to time tried to place before the legislatures of the country. The late, Mr. Srinivasa Iyenger was one of those who sponsored a bill of this nature and prefaced his draft with the following words :—"That dissolution of marriage should be allowed to a minimum extent where justification for it is of the plainest description and where it will raise the standard of morality, but not to such an extent as will lead to a general loosening of the marriage tie and promote immorality and the ruin of the Hindu family ideals". This shows that the proposed changes are meant to elevate the moral standard of society and not otherwise as is generally alleged by the opposition.

Nullity of marriage is allowed under certain conditions of which lunacy is one. Most of these conditions are pre-requisites of a valid marriage and some of them exist even today. For instance marriages between Sagotras and Sapindas and within the prohibited degree are disallowed. Caste restrictions are removed.

The only other provision which has met with opposition is the proposal to make marriage monogamous both for men and women. Men are not willing to forego the right of polygamy enjoyed throughout centuries and the plea of religion is raised for a second marriage in case of there being no male issue. But since adoption is allowed and practised by Hindu society, this plea loses its force. Civil marriage between two Hindus is allowed and brought under the operation of the Code. Under the present law those who contract civil marriage are cast outside the family for legal purposes and the Indian Law of Succession is applied to them for inheritance. Now even those who contract civil marriage will legally remain integral parts of the family and will be governed by the same laws of inheritance, as others.

The existing special enactments dealing with such marriages are proposed to be deleted. All marriages sacramental as well as civil will have to be registered and certificates obtained.

The changes proposed with regard to guardianship and adoption are so insignificant that they make very little difference to existing conditions. In the case of guardianship the mother is given the next place to the father and in the case of adoption the law is made uniform for the whole country allowing a widow to adopt a son if not expressly prohibited from doing so by her dead husband.

INDIAN HOME

House-keeping and home-making are two different things. A paid house-keeper can keep the house, can make it look neat, tidy and clean but only a wife or a mother can make the home. Both require training. Living is an art and has got to be learnt. How to get the best out of life is the object of all education. This art of living does not consist so much in exterior objects. These objects have their place in life but they do not make the fundamentals of life. Housekeeping is concerned with the ulterior objects but home-making touches the fundamentals.

The common English saying that an Englishman's home is his castle, reveals the sense of security associated with the home. It is or it ought to be a haven of peace where one finds or ought to find an escape from the worries and troubles of life. Four walls of a house, however beautiful, with a few individuals living in it do not make a home. It is only when perfect understanding and confidence subsists amongst the members of the family that the home can really be called a home.

With all the domestic science taught in the schools and colleges, these days, housekeeping is receiving its due share of attention but much thought is not yet, given to home-making, in spite of the fact, that it is the more important of the two. It is true that men and women have a natural urge for home-making. It is

instinctive. But that instinctive urge cannot take us far in teaching us to run a household properly. Our young boys and young girls are confronted with this great task without the mental equipment required for it. No doubt much of that mental equipment can be acquired only through one's own experience but other people's experience can be requisitioned and much training can be imparted both to young men and women on that account. In the Western countries researches are made into the causes of misunderstandings between the married couples and subsequent unhappiness in the homes. As a result marriage-hygiene associations and clinics are started where young wives and husbands bring in their difficulties and get useful advice from experienced people. These methods have succeeded in saving many a home from break-up and have brought happiness and contentment to them.

Sex education has so far found no place in our curriculum. A false modesty taboos even a mention of this subject. But many a tragedy of life are enacted for want of a proper education in sex questions. Its importance is being increasingly recognised in the West and it is more and more becoming a necessary part of young people's education.

It can be said that these are all newfangled ideas and even a charge of blind imitation of the West may be brought against them. But a little reflection will show how necessary is this knowledge for a happy relationship between husband and wife who form the central pivot of the home. Many people believe that Indian marriages are happier than marriages in the West ; and it may be argued that if such good results could be achieved without any sex knowledge where is the necessity for it now. But I am afraid, I do not agree with

this view. It is difficult to compare, but I can say this much, that there is very little of companionship and fellow-feeling and mutual understanding in Indian marriages. There exists no doubt a sort of a working peace between husband and wife but in most cases (there may be some rare exceptions) it is the outcome of the domination of the man over the woman. There is no life and joy in that peace. It is the peace of death, the peace of the graveyard. We may not be proud of it. It will be better for us to shatter it to pieces even though the immediate result is chaos. But whether we consciously do it or not, the time spirit and women's education is doing it for us. That peace of the graveyard cannot last much longer. The symptoms of its breakdown are visible on the horizon. In spite of the proverbial endurance of the Indian woman, we already see her raising the banner of revolt and disturbing that peace.

In the heart of the Indian woman has arisen a desire to live the life of companionship with her mate with an equal status in life. With that desire awakened, conditions are becoming different and a new adjustment of things is needed. It is just the right time when new adaptations have got to be made. We must therefore take advantage of the experience of the West, and adopt methods which have proved useful and effective in their case.

To the pages of the "Modern Girl" I do not write as an advocate of sex equality. In spite of having been an ardent protagonist of women's rights all my life I do not think that home should be made a forum for woman's battles. To the "Modern Girl," therefore, I write with an entirely different point of view. It is with a point of view to help the young girl to make a peaceful,

harmonious, beautiful home in keeping with the needs of the country at large.

With that view I shall make a few suggestions to my fair readers. Those are the things I have learnt from experience and I would like to share that experience with them.

Let the wife not expect too much from the husband. In fact the less the expectations, the better will be the results. Instead of expecting from the husband, let the wife give and give freely without wanting any return for it. This giving is not of money or of material but of the spirit. The desire to give unreservedly must be cultivated. The husband's tastes and desires may be studied in small details and complied with as far as possible. Interest should be taken in his affairs and things looked at from his point of view. In fact, wife should make the husband feel that his will and pleasure is her joy.

She may not harbour anger and resentment against the husband's misdeeds. Anger does not remedy anything. It only makes matters worse and weakens the person who indulges in it. Instead of getting angry. Therefore, one should try and find remedies for the wrong things of life. I know that all this is very difficult to practise especially when only the wife has to do it. In an ideal home such consideration should be mutual. I also know that in most homes men are the greater culprits in breaking these rules. But just now I am not concerned with what the man does. I am concerned only with the girl and the solution of her difficulties. No wife may be afraid that a voluntary subjugation of her husband in matters of detail in the house will make her position inferior. If the giving in is voluntary and joyful, it will make her stronger. But if the joy is not

there, the giving in will merely be a suppression which will not only weaken her but utterly fail to achieve the object desired. Like the non-violence of the strong, this giving in must be out of strength and not out of weakness. In other words, it must be the voluntary sacrifice of love.

With this spirit of the sacrifice of love, guided with wisdom and knowledge, home may be turned into a haven of peace and a castle protected from the worries of the outside world. The husband and the wife thus merging into each other in spirit can together save the household, drawing each member near the other, uniting the whole family with ties of love, promoting its welfare as a whole. Even the servants must be made to feel that they have a place in the family and are parts of it ; their interests are as much the concern of the family as those of their own members.

Love, sacrifice, service, mutual consideration and promotion of each other's welfare ought to be the watch-word of the home and they must begin with the house-wife. Of all the four ashrams, grihastha-ashram is given the highest place in our shashtras. It is considered to be a period of life given to discipline and purification. There is no room for indulgence in it. A beautiful home thus can be built only on the basis of love, knowledge and sacrifice. *

* Reprinted from "The Modern Girl", October 1938.

THE IDEAL HOME

The home has a very big place in an individual's as well as in nation's life. It is the foundation on which all civilization is built. It is the nursery in which men and women of a nation are brought up. It gives colour and shape and form to the individual and the nation. Its stamp is indelible ; its influence far-reaching and everlasting. It is, therefore, necessary that sufficient attention be given to the building up of home life and this important work be given its rightful place in national planning.

We hear a great deal about the raising of the living standards of the people. Much talk and planning is done about the economic reconstruction of the country, but no thought is given to the reconstruction of the home in the changing conditions of life.

It must be borne in mind that the educational, social and economic change in the country have brought about radical changes in our homes. They are not what they were fifty years ago. The circumstances and the needs of those times, the psychological make-up of the people determined the pattern of our homes. That pattern has broken down and a new pattern is evolving which has not yet taken a definite uniform shape.

I will not indulge in comparisons, nor have I material enough to judge whether the old or the new home was

the better of the two. But I can say this much with confidence that the old pattern cannot serve the new times, that it has become fossilized, out-dated and unsuitable for the modern people. It fitted into the then prevailing social and economic framework of the village and agricultural life. It engendered the idea of centralised authority which beginning from the home was woven into the whole fabric of society. Authoritarian rule of the pater familia is out of joint in a world from which authoritarian political rule has been ousted. It is incompatible with the expanding freedom and emancipation of women. Nor am I so sure of the desirability of maintaining the old pattern, for I am very doubtful if it represented the true picture of an ideal home. This, however, is certain that we must make an effort on a national scale to evolve a home which meets with the needs of the present day people.

It is essential that I say something about what I consider an ideal home. It is a word associated with a world of love, loyalty and security. It is meant to be a haven of peace, a resting place free from the struggle and strife of the outside world, where ever-wrecked humanity retires to seek comfort. These qualities of the home do not arise out of material objects ; they are the resultant of the inner reactions of the persons, who constitute the home and their mutual relationship. A poor man's hut, thought without any worldly goods but full of friendship, understanding and confidence is a better representation of a sweet home than castle stocked with costly articles inhabited by mutually warring individuals. Our homes today, particularly of those belonging to the so-called educated and well-to-do families, in most cases lack these qualities. The central authority has dissolved, the home no longer represents

that feudal, hierarchical civilization of which it was the smallest unit. Boys and girls from early life were trained to fit into this picture. There was a code of morality, manners and behaviour which they imbibed from the atmosphere and which was strictly observed. Every person in the household had a place according to his merit and that place was willingly given to him by all concerned. This is not the case today. The gulf between the older and the younger generation has become wider. The two mostly cannot pull together. As a result of which the size of the family has become much smaller. But even in the small sized family, the atmosphere of peace, confidence and complete understanding is lacking. What is the reason? I put it down to defective education. Our school and college education, which was planned by the British to serve a specific end, never aimed at educating the complete man. No thought was, therefore, given to prepare boys and girls for home life. The framework of the family having already been disrupted no training centre remained where the most urgent and needed art of human relationships could be taught.

To remedy this defect I am definitely of the opinion that human relationship should form a part of our curriculum. Rules of behaviour, manners and the art of dealing with relations, friends, acquaintances, businessmen and others should be taught at schools and colleges. It should have a theoretical and a practical side to it, of which the details can be evolved by educationists.

This from the personal point of view, but there is a public side to it also, which is as important as the personal; perhaps under the present circumstances, it is even more important.

Our homes must not be self-centred. We must realise from the very beginning that we are but a part of the whole, which is our nation. We must live as such, forming an organic part of the corporate life of the people. Our oneness with the large masses must be realised, and a child from early days should be trained to feel that he cannot live an isolated or a separate life. That his good and bad is inextricably woven into the good or bad of the country with which he sinks or swims together, and, therefore, he must not do anything contrary to its well being. Anti-social practices should be considered as sins to be shunned at all costs. A new view of religion, emphasizing the merging of personal life into the community life should be stressed. A conviction should be brought home early in life that the responsibility of one's country and the people rests completely on our own selves. If things go bad, it is because of some lack in us, and if they go well, the credit is ours. We must no longer think of the government as anything apart from us that the government is a creation of ours. We can make or mar it. We are ultimately responsible for its actions ; that we are larger and bigger than the government and have to do everything on our part to ensure its right functioning.

In short the home and the family spirit have to be extended till we learn to look upon not only our own country, but the whole world as a part of our own family. It is only then that we can bring peace on earth. It is only then that we can oust war, misery, suffering and exploitation.

Our home then will be an ideal home, which instead of being exclusive will be inclusive of all beings.

* Broadcast from All India Radio, New Delhi, in January, 1948.

2

The home has a big place not only in the life of an individual but also in the life of a nation. Just as it is said that civilization can be measured by the position it gives to its women, so it can be asserted without fear of contradiction that the culture of a people can be judged by the condition of its homes. Homes are the cradles where nations are nurtured. It is there that the average men and women, young and old, have their roots. Just as good and healthy soil is necessary for the growth of a tree so a good and healthy home is needed for the growth of man. No society can flourish unless its homes are sound. The home is the foundation on which the structure of society is built. It is, therefore, evident that it plays a great part in the evolution of man and no people can afford to neglect it.

Indian homes at present are in a state of great disintegration. There are no set standards or rules to regulate or govern households. During this age of transition when the old order is breaking down, households are in a state of chaos, as the new order has not yet taken its place. From the orthodox to the ultra modern, we have a whole range of men and women who build our homes, and give them life and shape. As their ideas and values differ there is a perpetual clash which has resulted in the breaking down of old traditions and

customs and practices without giving place to new established ways. The result is a stale-mate, On the one side we have homes which are cheap second-hand copies of the west and on the other we are still living in the Vedic or pre-historic times. In between the two extremes a whole conglomeration of all sorts of ways and practices are noticed which have no outside rules to govern them except the sweet will and pleasure of those who indulge in them. Thus every home or rather every individual is a law unto himself and there are no patterns or regulations to follow. This state of things may give scope for the exercise of originality but it leads to a lack of homogeneity which divides the people from one another. Uniformity of ways and manners and customs amongst a people is a cementing force which unites and binds them together. It leads to a better mutual understanding and sympathy. Dissimilarity of ways and customs and manners on the other hand acts as a wedge which divides people and makes them feel like strangers even though belonging to the same country.

Thus the disintegration of our homes has brought in disintegration of our society, which has made our lives particularly drab and dreary. We lack common ties and in many cases live individual lives. Not only that this defect is reflected in our national life where the lack of cohesion and discipline are daily felt. We have therefore, to pay great attention to our homes, if only to remove our national defects. If we want to become a nation with a place of respect in the comity of the nations of the world, we have to reform our homes and put them on a sound national basis.

In this work of reform, we must always remember two things. Firstly that growth and change is the

principle of life. No nation can live which refuses to change with the changing spirit of the times. We can neither stagnate and keep still, nor we can go back. We cannot bring back the ancient Vedic times and live them once again. We must not therefore resist all change. On the contrary we should gladly welcome it, adapting ourselves to new conditions and circumstances. Secondly, blind imitation is suicidal to life and growth. No people can build their lives on the foundations of mere imitation. That way we can only turn ourselves into cheap copies of other people. Borrowed plumes can never help one to soar high. Instead it dwarfs and stunts evolution. We should, therefore, give up altogether this habit of copying everything western.

We have to bring about a synthesis between our own past and the present West. With that goal in front of us, we should always be alert to find out the best in the West and should always be ready to adopt it. At the same time, we can never afford to forget that we can best express ourselves through our own genius. The soul of a nation is as much a living entity as the soul of an individual. Like the individual soul, it can never shed itself of its previous "samaskaras". In other words there is a continuity in life, the present is made out of the material of the past. We cannot change completely over-night. Any attempts to do that are bound to meet with a disastrous failure resulting in the degeneration of the whole national life. Our history and traditions, therefore, must continue to play an important part in the formation of our lives and homes. At the same time there must be room for the inletting of the new light and life.

Every home is an expression of the spirit of the men and women who make it. Their innermost ideas and

feelings are involuntarily reflected in the surroundings of the home. To produce a model, modern home one has to bring one's mind in conformity with the growing national life in a liberal spirit.

You can never make a home look beautiful by stocking it with a lot of foreign machine-made articles, however expensive. Simplicity and harmony must be the governing spirit of the home. If there is peace and harmony, co-operation and co-ordination, love and understanding amongst the members of the family in the home, the atmosphere is surcharged with those qualities which the house radiates all over. It is homes like this in harmony with the outside world which breed real good citizens who make the nation.

HAPPY HOUSE-WIFE

A successful home is a happy home and the woman who can pervade the atmosphere with cheerfulness is a successful home maker. It is not in one's power to be always cheerful. You may say, it depends on the circumstances and the temperament of those with whom you live. It is true to some extent but we should never forget that to a large extent we make our own circumstances. Cheerfulness like most other qualities can be consciously cultivated. The idea prevalent amongst many people that discontent is a concomitant of intellectuality is a wrong idea. A happy and contented life is in fact synonymous with a good and godly life. The purer the heart, the more the happiness. One of the qualities of God is supposed to be happiness and as God created man after His own image, It is in our nature to be happy. If we are unhappy, it is the result of some unnaturalness, some mal adjustment somewhere. There is a great deal of self-imposed unhappiness in the lives of most educated people which can be avoided. Unhappiness comes from unfulfilled desires and it may be urged that it is natural for a young heart to have desires. Often we entertain desires, which in their very nature are incapable of fulfilment. They have, therefore, to be brought under control and with reason the impossible ones mercilessly cast off. Our faulty education, our social system and ignorance mostly

tend to arouse those desires in us which result in unhappiness. Young, healthy men and women, provided that they are not crushed with abject poverty, have no reason to be unhappy. According to Bertand Russel happiness can be conquered if one made a reasonable effort to conquer it. We find the same idea in our Shastras in fact in all religions. But the religious way of attaining a happy state of the mind is different and more difficult, although I am sure one eventually leads to the other. In this little article, I want to deal only with the worldly way as our object in the Modern Girl is to find ways and means of making the short span of our life here in this world happy.

A narcissist or a magalo-maniac can never be happy nor a person who considers himself a sinner says Bertand Russell in his very useful book "The conquest of happiness". The words Narcissist 'magalo-maniac' and 'sinner' need an explanation. 'Narcissist' is one who is always admiring himself and therefore longs to be admired by others. The desire of women to get compliments is an exhibition of this frame of mind. A magalomaniac also has too high a notion of himself wanting power over others. He therefore longs to be central figure everywhere and never satisfied for his desire for power is always more than what he can get. A sinner is one who has set much too high an ideal before him. Compared to the ideal, he always finds himself unworthy. He is therefore constantly blaming himself and fighting against his own personality. This is a personality divided against itself. He cannot attain the heights he desires to attain and consequently is always unhappy.

All these defects of character arise from a faulty training, from a faulty objective in education. For our

education and training does not so much concentrate on teaching us how to live a happy life as in teaching us how to be successful in the struggle of life. It is inevitable in a society which has its foundations on the basis of competition. The individual has to make an effort to liberate himself from the shackles of early training and society.

Unfulfilled desires lead to self-absorption which is one of the chief causes of unhappiness. Constant thought of the self gives a wrong perspective. Exaggerated expectations from others arouse a desire that they should conform to your own way of thinking. When that is not done it is nursed as a grievance and leads to bickering and unhappiness.

To avoid all this one has to be always on one's guard, checking and correcting one's self, cultivating forbearance, toleration and charity. I shall now give a few positive suggestions which in my opinion are conducive to make life happy.

"Work". It is the most essential factor for the making of a happy life. But it must be constructive and productive work. All occupation is not work and has not the same results. I am of opinion that most women of the well-to-do classes, whether educated or not, are suffering from want of work. The old productive occupations like spinning grinding, pounding, churning, sewing and various others like that have been discarded without being replaced by new ones. The result is worklessness, ennui and boredom. Cinemas and social parties are an easy escape from this boredom and that is why they are so popular in the modern world. Rushing from place to place in search of occupation and pleasure is most exciting but it is not happiness and betrays a shallow and empty mind. It is the duty of every

house-wife therefore to keep herself usefully employed so as to be able to keep cheerful and make the house-hold happy.

"Impersonal Interest". This gives great zest to the work in hand, the drudgery of its details wears off. The faith in the cause gives something outside the personal self to live for. Such work connects the individual with the outside world and with the world of the past and that of the future., Whether the work is in the sphere of art or poetry, literature, political or social, it at once makes you a part of the great army, which has lead mankind towards a civilized existence. "In individual mind is concentrated what ever of value the known universe contains and a man who mirrors the world becomes as great as the world," says Bertrand Russel.

"Selfless service". It is an inexhaustible spring of peace and happiness. This is one of those very few qualities in which a modern young girl is much behind herolder forbears. The women of the older generation were capable of giving much more selfless service than the educated girls of to-day, The lack of it vitiates all education. If education does not teach us to give disinterested service, it is not worth having. Sense of rivalry, envy, competition and jealousy, which is a great source of irritation, is eliminated if disinterested service is the only motive of our actions. Work then is a pleasure and a source of great joy.

"Chaste love". Love and beauty and God are said to be the same. Love is called divine. But only that love is divine which makes one forget the self ; which urges one to merge the identity with the object loved. Such love raises one above this mundane world to divine height. The heart rejoices because of the very fact that it loves. It wants nothing in return, it expects

nothing. Its only joy is giving and the privilege of loving and serving. That is real love which is worth while. When that is perfected all struggle and pain and sorrow melts, all that remains is peace and joy and love and happiness. The worldly love is often narrow, possessive, selfish. It gives rise to fear and jealousy. The person loved gives a sort of security and protection which the lover values. It narrows and causes unhappiness. The love of most wives for their husbands and even the love of some mothers for their children is of this variety. All efforts should be made to purify love and make it of the divine variety.

"Happiness is of two kinds" says Bertrand Russel, "Plain fancy or animal and spiritual." Cultured people cannot be satisfied with plain or animal pleasures alone. They are of the body. But men of culture need something more than that. They need the satisfaction of the spirit and the intellect. The duty of a modern house-wife therefore does not cease with the care of the brute in the man. She has to cater for the spiritual and intellectual needs of the family. Such satisfaction, she can give best by engaging herself in useful work, by cultivating impersonal interest and the qualities of selfless service and chaste love. The more she purifies herself and the more she perfects herself, the happier will be the family of which the wife and the mother is the life and centre.

HOME AND SOCIETY

I like the idea of looking upon the home as a castle well fortified with the armaments of love and mutual understanding to repel the onslaughts of the struggles of life. But for that purpose it need not be exclusive. Communication with the outside world is essential for the spiritual, intellectual and physical wellbeing of the home. The love of the family may not be so absorbing as to leave no room for others. True love has a great capacity for expansion. It should be given an ever wider scope with the ultimate object of bringing the whole world into its orbit. Charity and unselfish love for others should, therefore, be consciously and constantly cultivated. There is no fear of the home ties getting slack on that account.

The more the home unit is consolidated the stronger will be the link binding the individual with the nation and humanity at large. Our ideals of home life in the past have been somewhat exclusive. There has been an over-emphasis on family loyalties. The play of emotion was confined to the circle of the family so that every family got centred in itself. Sympathies and interests became narrow. A disinterested aloofness to what happened in the country and the world became the habit of men and women. The affairs of the country were left to a few individuals with whom no one else

had any concern. The words of Tulsi Das, Nanak and Kabir who said.

Any one may be the king what does it matter to us.

Tulsidas.

Look after your own affairs, why do you brother about other peoples.

Nanak.

Let us quietly watch from the balcony the play of Ram in this world.

Kabir.

Give a true picture of the minds of the best men and women of our society of some time ago. This selfish mentality of aloofness is pathological. It causes the disintegration of society as it has done in India. We would never have been reduced to the present condition of degradation, if that had not been the guiding philosophy of our life. Moreover human civilization and our country have reached a stage when such aloofness is no longer possible. There is so much of interconnection and inter-dependence that no one can live an isolated life in the modern world. A reconciliation has to be brought about between the family and the outside world and both have to be saved and conserved as both are equally needed by the individual. This reconciliation is not very difficult except in rare cases where the demands of the outside world on the individual are so pressing and numerous that they begin to interfere with family life. But we have to deal with average men and women and in their case there is no clash.

I make a few suggestions below which if carried out faithfully would enable every young house-wife to serve the country effectively without interfering with her household duties. A determination should be made : (1) to make exclusive use of swadeshi, with preference to khadi. This should apply not only to

cloth but to other articles of domestic use as well, (2) To make at least the domestic servants and their families literate. Wonderful results can be achieved if one hour a day is regularly given to this work. (3) To give 10% of the income for charitable purposes. For those whose income is below Rs. 500 a month, the percentage may be a little less. But those getting five hundred and over should decidedly be able to give 10%, if not more. (4) To spin the charkha regularly for half an hour a day. These are very simple things to do, very easy if one has the will, very difficult if the will to do them is not there. But they are an earnest of the bonafides of the modern girl. If her education is true and if she has really benefited by what has been taught to her in school and college she ought to find no difficulty in adopting the above suggestions. By following them she will be making a great contribution towards solving some of the very grave problems of the country. This quiet work at home will be more valuable than much of the noisy work which finds cheap publicity in the newspapers. It will also bring peace of mind and satisfaction of conscience.

EARLY MARRIAGE

When and how the custom of early marriage was first started in India, it is difficult to say. But it is a historical fact that in the Vedic times early marriage was unknown. The evidence of the ancient Sanskrit dramas and the Puranic literature goes to show that marriages were contracted between grown-up men and women and that also in many cases as a result of the free choice of the couple.

There are instances in the Puranas of young women and young men marrying each other even in defiance of the wishes of their parents and guardians. Later on the custom of Swayambar prevalent amongst the Rajaput Kshatriyas proves that till so late as the tenth or the twelfth century, the girls were free to choose their own husbands which it is evident they could not possibly have done in their infancy. At what age exactly the custom of early marriage began, no student of history has yet been able to ascertain. There is a section of people who believe that this practice came into vogue with foreign invasions. Some put it down to the time of the Muslim invasions while others go so far back as the Greek invasions. They believe that in those days of general unsettlement, the practice of early marriage was adopted by the people as a measure of security. The large majority of the Hindus led by the orthodox Pandits think that the custom has its sanctions

in the Hindu religion and therefore it is as old and Sanatan as the Hindu Dharma. Whatever may be the reason or time of its origin, it is evident that the custom is an old one and pervades throughout the whole of India more or less in all communities barring some numerically very small ones.

With the spread of women's education and the rapidly changing economic and social conditions the rigour of the practice is toning down and among the educated classes the marriage age of girls all over India is steadily rising. A much larger number of girls are taking advantage of collegiate as well as high school education than before and the bulk of such girls who are going to high schools and colleges are unmarried. But India is such a large country and its schools and colleges form such an infinitesimal part of the whole that in spite of the great improvement visible in its towns the change has not appreciably effected its masses. The practice continues amongst the villagers and also amongst the majority of the unenlightened townfolk.

According to the calculations made by the Age of Consent Committee on the 1921 census 42.2 per cent of girls under the age of 15 were affected or likely to be affected by early marriage. The 1931 Census Report reveals little improvement. Girls still are to be found in the married state as well as in the state of widowhood from the infant age of one onwards. A comparison of the two census reports of 1921 and 1931 as well as of the former decades shows very slight improvement, if any. An extraordinary large number of child marriages before the 1st of March, 1930, the date on which the Child Marriage Restraint Act was brought into force considerably swelled the number of married children for the 1931 census.

Thus while there were 9.2 married girls per hundred between the ages of 5 to 10 years in the year 1921, their proportion rose up to 19.5 in 1931. But between the age group of 10 to 15 years a slight improvement is noticeable, the figures being 39.8 percent in the years 1921 and 38.1 in 1931. This shows that on the whole, the improvement is almost imperceptible. Taking by communities, the practice, is common amongst the Hindus as well as the Muslims ; the Christian and Sikh communities being comparatively free from it. Its greatest rigour is to be found in C. P. Berar, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and also in the United Provinces where it is equally practised by the Muslims and the Hindus. The Frontier Province is least affected by it, the percentage of married girls there under the age of 15 being 12.6 in the year 1921. Next come the provinces of the Punjab. Madras and Assam. In the latter two provinces, amongst Muslims and the non-Brahmins, it is customary to allow their girls to remain unmarried till they attain puberty.

In the Punjab, the work of Swami Dayananda and the Arya Samaj has successfully moulded public opinion to sufficiently raise the average of marriage age of girls.

The crusade against early marriage was waged long ago. The abolition of this evil practice formed the very first item in the programme of the early social reformers. The movement is about 3 score years old and it has had very many powerful protagonists amongst them being Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohon Roy. Latterly the movement has assumed great force. By the English educated people, it is now considered to be beyond the pale of controversy.

The only educated and cultured people who still believe in early marriage are the orthodox Brahmins

who support it on the ground of religion. They and their followers believe that they are bound by religion to give their girls in marriage before they attain puberty. According to them the mere ceremony of marriage which alone must be performed before puberty leads to no bad results. They maintain that it is the consummation of marriage and maternity which ought to be avoided and not the ceremony of marriage. In those parts of India where Muslims are practising early marriages, many amongst them also have adopted the same views and the same arguments. Against all accepted theory and practice of the Muslim law they maintain that marriage amongst the Muslims is as much a sacrament as amongst the Hindus. That although there is nothing in the holy Quran to enjoin early marriage on its faithful followers, the practice is hallowed by the prophet's own example who according to their version married Ayesha, his last wife, at the age of twelve. The number of the Muslim Maulanas who hold this view is very small and it can easily be said that they have adopted this view merely to support an old practice to which they have got accustomed for centuries.

But the views of the orthodox Brahmins cannot be dismissed so easily. They are based on the fact that amongst the Hindus marriage is a religious sacrament and as such has to be performed according to a certain prescribed ritual which must be observed before puberty. Fortunately there is a sharp division amongst the Brahmins themselves. There is a large number of learned Shastris who claim that pre-puberty marriages are not enjoined by Shastras. Many Shastrarthas (learned discussions amongst the pandits) have taken place on many occasions in different places amongst the learned theologians and the eminent

pandits have come to opposite conclusions. This division of opinion has added great strength to the movement of the abolition of early marriage.

There is not a single person in India, not even amongst the most ignorant, who favours pre-puberty consummation of marriages. All look upon it with abhorrence and indeed, as a custom, it is not followed anywhere. Amongst all early marrying people, a second ceremony is performed after which consummation takes place which ceremony is known by different names in different places such as Dwiragaman, Gauna, Ritushanti, Garbhadan, Rukhasati, Doli and the like. The evidence taken by the Age of Consent Committee showed that this ceremony generally takes place soon after puberty. Sufficient time is not allowed to pass after puberty to allow the girl's body to mature properly and hence early maternity is the result.

Early marriage by itself without early consummation and early maturity is bad enough. Its psychological effects are devitalizing to the moral and intellectual growth of the race. It might have fitted in with the older scheme of life when the exigencies of the joint family required the early introduction of young and pliable girls into the family circle to be brought up according to the traditions of the family under the stern discipline of the mother-in-law. But under the changed economic and social structure, it is an utter misfit and serves no useful purpose. But the results are disastrous when early marriage is followed by early motherhood as is generally the case in India.

There are no figures to show to what extent maternity is prevalent. But there is plenty of evidence indicating that maternity at the age of 14 and 15 is not uncommon.

Coupled with the poverty and malnutrition of the masses it leads to the abnormally high maternal and infant mortality of which it is admittedly one of the contributory factors. We have no accurate figures of maternal mortality in our country but on an average 2,00,000 women die in child-birth every year. The figures of infant mortality go up so high as 400 per 1,000 in some places the average of the whole of India being 181 per 1,000. Most of the victims of maternal mortality are young girls in their teens and many who escape death are physically damaged for life.

This appalling wastage of young human life can be considerably reduced if early marriage and maternity is abolished. The enormity of these figures can be brought home, if we realize that according to a rough calculation the maternal mortality in India is estimated to be 24.5 per thousand while in England it is only 4.5. In the same way the figures of infant mortality are 60 per million in England to our 400 in India.

Then the misery of a widowed life to which many girls are subjected is also easily preventable. The right of a second marriage which all the Shudra women enjoy is really no remedy for the afflictions of widowhood.

The policy of the Government of India has been that of strict religious neutrality to which they are pledged by the Proclamation of Queen Victoria which says "In framing and administering laws, due regard be paid to ancient rites, usages and customs of India." Marriage laws and practices being governed by religion, the Government naturally abstained from interference. But as early as 1860 when the Indian Penal Code was enacted, sexual intercourse of the husband with his wife below the age of ten was brought under

the scope of rape and was made punishable exactly on the same terms as rape outside marital relationship. This was an indirect method adopted by the Government to prevent hard cases of cruelty. The age of 10 was raised to 12 in the year 1891. At about this time the attention of the Government and the public was drawn towards several cases in Bengal which were brought to light where girls of tender years either died or were mutilated as a result of consummation of marriage. The proposal for the raising of the age of consent within marriage from 10 to 12 was widely opposed throughout India but both the Government and the advanced public took a firm stand and the bill was passed. Sir Andrew Scoble, the sponsor of the bill, met the objections raised on the basis of religious neutrality on the ground that it was "the right and duty of the state to interfere for the protection of any class of its subjects, where a proved necessity existed."

Great hopes were entertained from this act but experience proved that it remained ineffective. It was not surprising that the law did not work. The difficulties of administration lay inherent in the law itself. The problem of early marriage could not be dealt with flank attacks of this kind. It was bound to fail and so it did. A few stray cases did take place under the act but generally its very existence was unknown to the public. Barring a few lawyers nobody even knew that such a law existed and when in 1925 the age of consent was raised to 13 years, the general public remained as oblivious of the fact as before.

After the Montford reforms in the enlarged councils the popular element was increased. It was generally

felt that the help of the legislatures ought to be obtained to abolish the custom. With this object in view, many private bills were brought in the Legislative Assembly to raise the age of consent as well as to prohibit child marriages by law. It was in dealing with this private bills in the year 1928 that the Government appointed a committee to go into the question of the age of consent inside the marital state as well as out-side it. The Government being a foreign Government was unwilling to take the responsibility of enacting a law which affected the religious susceptibilities of the people. They therefore wanted to ascertain public opinion before any such law was passed. The exhaustive evidence taken by this committee showed that there was a preponderating bulk of opinion in favour of such an enactment.

As a result of the report of this Committee, after a great deal of discussion and debate 'the Child Marriage Restraint Act' introduced by Rao Bahadur Harabilas Sharada was passed in the year 1930, which was brought into force on the 1st March, 1930. The act penalises marriages below the age of 14 for girls and 18 for boys. The husband if of age, the parents or the couple, the priest who celebrates the marriage are all liable to the punishment of imprisonment or fine or both in the case of the breach of the law.

There was stiff opposition put up by a section of the Muslims and the Brahmins and in the beginning certain amount of deliberate defiance of the law was resorted to. Unfortunately the passing of this law synchronized with the Non-co-operation Movement of 1930 and 31 and the Government at that time could not afford to create trouble for itself by rigorously applying the law and incurring the displeasure of that very section on whose support it relied. The Government therefore slept over

the breaches of the law and in stray cases where prosecutions were held, it is understood that Government instructions went round for lenient treatment of the culprits.

Thus the Act had a very unfortunate beginning and it is common knowledge that up to this day it is honoured in its breach more than in its observance. In the villages, the illiterate masses are happily unaware of the existence of such a law and infant marriages are taking place every day as a matter of course. In the towns some flout the law deliberately, others who are more law-abiding adopt the device of crossing over to a neighbouring Indian State or foreign territory where such a law does not exist and thus evade it. But the bulk of the breaches of the law take place in British India without being noticed.

But from this it must not be deduced that the act is absolutely a dead letter. Prosecutions under the act are common though they form an insignificant part of the breaches of the law. Cases of such prosecution are reported almost daily in the press. Social reformers have organised Sharda Committees for the purpose of making the law effective in many parts of the country. These committees are slowly working and their record is not striking. Public social conscience is not sufficiently aroused to instil vigour and life into these committees. The support of the Government is practically nonexistent. They have therefore to work against great odds.

It was in the Punjab only last year that a small but vigorous and alert organisation of the Harijans succeeded in securing conviction in a prosecution after a great deal of expense and worry. It was the case of a village leather worker who had married his daughters of 7 and

9 years of age to two boys of about 11 and 12 after the repeated warnings and regular preachings from the members of this association. The association is an organisation of the enlightened Harijans pledged to reform. They are poor and can ill afford to spend money. But such was the desire for reform that the members spent money beyond their means and fought the case. The trying magistrate convicted the guilty but the punishment given was only a fine of rupees five ! This ridiculously light punishment was a blow to the work of reform. The association had spent several times more money than what the culprit had to pay.

I could repeat many more instances like this which have made the work of the reformer difficult and have shown a spirit of apathy if not of antipathy towards the reformer by the Government.

The working of the act has shown that it is defective in many ways. It needs certain amendments badly. At present no action can be taken under the law to prevent its breach. Prevention is always better than punishment. Much more action could be taken, if there was power to prevent under-age marriages. It is therefore very necessary that the power of injunction is given to the magistrate to prevent the proposed marriages against the law.

When the Age of Consent Committee recommended the fixing of the age of marriage by law, they also recommended certain other measures to facilitate the working of the law.

1. The most important recommendation made by the committee was that wide publicity should be given by the Government to the sections of the act so that the masses may get familiar with its existence. The mere enactment of a social measure like the one in question

is not sufficient to make it effective. The act must be deliberately worked and the first thing necessary for the working of the law is that masses should know through the Government channels that such a law existed and that the Government meant to enforce it. The very fact of the Government officials giving publicity to the contents of the law will have a salutary influence on the villagers. They will begin to think twice before they have the courage to break it.

11. The registration of marriages was another important recommendation made by the committee. The very necessity of approaching a Government official registrar for registering a marriage against the provisions of the law is bound to act as a check. The registrar can also utilize these occasions for doing propaganda for the law and as was recommended by the committee can report breaches of the law to the nearest magistrate.

I know for a fact that the prosecutors of the breaches of this law have found it difficult in many cases to prove the very fact of marriage. They have not been able to secure sufficient witnesses for lack of public sympathy. This difficulty could be easily avoided by making registration compulsory.

111. Another recommendation made by the committee was that proper registration of births in rural as well as urban areas should be made compulsory and birth certificates should be issued to the parents giving the name and all other details of the child.

A sort of birth registration is enforced at the present time. But it is so inefficient that it can hardly ever be relied upon. To prove the age of an individual is an exceedingly difficult task. Even doctors are not able to do it definitely. Many prosecution cases have been

wrecked because the age could not be proved. The birth-registers have almost always failed to come to the rescue especially in rural areas. To facilitate the working of the law efficient registration of births and the preservation of birth registers is most essential.

IV. The writer of this note as a member of the committee had recommended a close association of the Government with social reform organisations for the working of this law. She had recommended that such organisations wherever they existed should be recognised by the Government and linked up with local bodies. They should be given facilities of prosecution and propaganda and made to submit periodical reports of their work to the authorities. Unfortunately none of the recommendations made by the Committee have been given effect to. The law has merely been passed ; placed on the statute book and left to work out its own destiny.

In the course of my public work during the last two or three years I have had ample opportunities to watch how difficult the task of the reformer has been in the rural areas. He has ploughed a lonely furrow, fighting public opposition and Government apathy at the same time.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act has been passed with the willing co-operation of the Government. In this matter there is perfect agreement with the Government and the educated section of the people. It is therefore most desirable that at least for the operation of this law a happy Co-ordination should subsist between the two. Best results can only be achieved if and when the public and the Government work together. If a Kemal Pasha could bring about a social revolution in the course of a few years, why not the Indian people and the Government abolish a time-worn

custom which is admitted to be an evil at all hands ? The only thing needed is the combination and co-operation of the two great forces of the Government and the people. If that could be genuinely and truly secured, much could have been achieved during the five years that have passed since the passing of the Act. Is it too much to hope that if not in the past, in the future this union will be secured.

* A contributed to "Our Cause" a symposium by Indian Women.

HINDU MARRIAGE

Hindu marriage is supposed to be a sacrament and all opposition to the proposed bills is based on that ground. In the past also whenever similar changes in the law of marriage were proposed, orthodox opposition always came forward armed with the same eternal argument. This idea of the sacrament is so saturated with beautiful romance and has the backing of such long history that it easily succeeds in concealing the ugly facts of life which lie hidden under cover of its sentimentalism. Stability of marriage is essential, for the stability of all society ; idealism and romance are the most necessary requisites of marriage. The argument of the sacrament, therefore, has its own weight and use and cannot be brushed aside lightly. But the facts of life have to be faced and things must be decided in the light of those facts.

Sacramental marriage is not an exclusively Hindu idea. It is found amongst Roman Catholics who do not recognise divorce. But although the church does not recognise it, society recognises and practises it. Marriages are dissolved amongst the Roman Catholics in large numbers not through the church but through the instrumentality of the civil courts. It shows that the followers of the Catholic religion found it impossible to rise to the high standard laid down by the church and devised ways and means to get out of its hold.

Amongst the Hindus with whom the sentiment of the indissolubility of marriage is stronger than with anybody else there are many instances in the Shashtras where women in ancient times married in the life time of their former husbands. In the Manu Smriti and in the Dharma Shastras it is expressly enjoined that under certain conditions marriage can be dissolved and a woman can remarry. Divorce is recognised by the Arya Samajists whose faith in the Vedic Dharma is as strong as that of the Sanatanists. But although such permission is given in the Satyarth Prakash—the authoritative book of religious injunctions—owing to long custom and non-recognition of the British courts, it is not practised. But the religious sanction is there all the same. All this proves that in spite of the idea of the sacrament, marriages even in ancient India were dissolved and their dissolution was recognised by society. Conditions are different at the present time amongst the Hindus whose higher castes absolutely forbid divorce. All the same, in practice, this injunction is altogether one-sided. Owing to the existence of the custom of polygamy man has a veritable right of divorce in as much as he can marry as many times as he likes in the life-time of his wife or wives. He has to give no reason and find no excuses for this act. His sweet will and pleasure is sufficient reason for him to marry again.

As had been pointed out by Mrs. Subbarayan in the aims and objects of her bill to restrain polygamous marriages amongst the Hindus, conditions in modern times have changed for the worse for the women. In former times as the co-wives lived together and shared the husband and the home, though life was hard and difficult so much injustice was not involved.

Under modern conditions this is not possible, especially where parties are educated. In such cases it invariably happens that when the second wife comes, the first wife is chucked out of the house like rotten fish. She does not only lose her husband but her home and often her children as well. Considering the enormity of the act, and the small number of the educated people, such instances are not very rare. One such case is glaring and ugly enough to spoil the whole tone of society and there are many such cases to be seen in all big towns. Women's sufferings under these conditions are great. In many cases they are not even financially provided for and have to look to their relatives for support. The legal right of maintenance is not of much avail in such cases as the first wife generally is unwilling to go to court and even if she does, she is not always sure of getting justice.

This conclusively proves that the idea of the sacrament and that of the indissolubility of the marriage tie does not work in practice. As it happens amongst the Hindus, it has only succeeded in brutalising man and in his inflicting great injustice on woman. There is no wisdom, therefore, in demoralizing man and society in the vain effort to work an impossible ideal.

It is often rightly urged that a high ideal should never be given up owing to the difficulty for average men and women of reaching it. There is truth in that. But the ideal and the law are two different things. Ideal has to be high as it points the goal which we want to achieve. Our progress towards it is gradual and in conformity with the strength within us. Law is binding on all. It has to take cognisance of the strength and capacity of the people whom it governs. It is no use having laws which are honoured merely in their

breaches. Such laws only result in the demoralization of society, in as much as people resort to under-hand and dishonourable means to escape them.

It has already been pointed out that owing to the practice of polygamy, men who form half the population are exempted from the hardships entailed in the present form of the Hindu marriage. Thus it affects only the other half, the women. Of these women also the Harijans and Sudras are all exempted as the Hindu Law does not apply to them. Thus it is comparatively only a small section of the Hindu population, who are forcibly compelled to abide by these laws which are meant to preserve the spirit of the sacrament. All these facts must be considered when we take into consideration the bills which seek to amend the laws of marriage.

A TRIBUTE TO MAHATMA GANDHI

Mahatma Gandhi is the personification of the spirit of the ancient Hindu Dharma. In the everyday detail of his life he practises all that is taught in the Bhagwad Gita. He is a lover of all humanity with whose welfare he has identified himself. The message of his mission is not only for India but for the whole world. But the centre of his work, naturally, lies in India, the place of his birth. Millions worship him in this country and there is not a single individual whose respect he does not command. He is the best known and the most loved man in the whole world. The doctrine of Ahimsa which is the guiding principle of his life is the secret of his success. That is the Guru Mantra he has to give to all who seek his advice. It is an ideal much too high for ordinary individual to achieve in its entirety. That is why, compared to the millions who give him their love and worship, there are few who in their conduct can reach the standards laid down by him. The path he shows may be difficult, long and arduous but that is the only sure path to the goal of peace and the only cure for this aching world of strife, struggle and suffering.

In India, with its centuries-old traditions of peace and good-will, it ought to be easier for people to understand him and follow him. Unfortunately even in this country there exist a few men of little faith who doubt the efficacy of his leadership. They will do well to

remember on this day the 71st year of his birth, that it is he who has led India to the present stage of its progress and it is under his banner alone that India can hope to reach its goal of freedom. He is the greatest uniting force in the country. He knows best how to bring about a synthesis between the different clashing interests, keeping in view the well-being of all.

I hope that India will prove worthy of his great leadership on which Hindus and Muslims, Zamindars and peasants, capitalists and workers, can equally rely. In his hands the justifiable interests of all are safe. May he live for years more to bring back to India its lost greatness and glory. *

* A message to "The Tribune" on the 71st birthday of Mahatma Gandhi in 1941

THE HARIJAN MOVEMENT

Harijan is a new and generic name, which Mahatma Gandhi has given to the community of the untouchables. As a matter of fact, there is no compact community, which may be termed as such. It is a group of several communities, or castes of the Hindus, loosely knit together, suffering from common disabilities. They were called Achuts or untouchables, till Mahatma Gandhi found for them the above innocent name, indicating their nearness to God. This has now successfully replaced the former offensive designation.

The dictionary meaning of the word "Harijan" is "Man of God." Mahatma Gandhi has given them this name, because he believes that, though they are despised on earth, they are near to God and loved by Him. The name is now well established, and is recognised, even in Government documents.

It is practically impossible to give a complete list of the castes, which are considered as untouchables, owing to their being so numerous. Moreover, there is hardly any certainty about them. There are castes treated as untouchables in one province or in one locality, which are absolutely free from any disability in another province or locality. For practical purposes, therefore, all the castes classed as scheduled castes by the Governments in different provinces are accepted as Harijans.

A great controversy, particularly in Bengal, arose on this question at the time of the introduction of the 1935 Constitution, when as a consequence of the Poona Pact and the communal award, special political privileges were given to the Harijans. Certain castes which were included in the scheduled lists, were not untouchables in practice, and others, which happened to be left out of the lists suffered from the disability. There is, therefore, no absolute certainty with regard to the castes, with some exceptions, which may definitely be classed as Harijans.

The whole matter needs investigation and the Harijan Sevak Sangh has taken it in hand, and has appointed two scholars to do research work in this connection. They are making their investigations in different provinces and their report is awaited.

In addition to the difficulties already mentioned there is also no certainty about their numbers. Different Government reports have given different figures. They are to be found in all provinces and states of India. Their number is largest in the U. P., where they form 23 per cent. of the population. "Taking the Hindus separately, they form a little over one-fifth of the whole Hindu population of India."

The extent and the manner of the observance of untouchability differs from place to place. Before the 1935 Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore and the entry by the Harijans into the temples of Madura and other places in Tamil Nad (south-eastern Madras) during the last few months, Kerala (Travancore. Cochin and Malabar) and Tamil Nad were supposed to be the worst where even unapproachability and invisibility were observed. It was in these areas that certain public roads and localities were prohibited to the Harijans.

The terrible stories of those days, recounting cruel injustices perpetrated on these unfortunate beings, are on the lips of people in the whole of India even to-day. But those who still relate those stories are not aware of the great change that has come over the minds of men in those parts, where untouchability has lost much of its sting. To-day they form the most forward bloc in this direction throughout the whole of India, in as much as in those parts exist the largest number of temples, which in actual practice, are open to the Harijans. To my knowledge it is now some of the Indian states which could easily be considered to be the most backward.

During recent years British Indian Provinces have made great progress with regard to Harijans. Yet there are certain disabilities which are common to all, with a slight difference of degree in each place. These common disabilities are non-admission to (1) temples, (2) public wells, (3) public schools (in some places), custom and (4) residential segregation.

In some places, they are refused the use of public buses and other vehicles. In some parts of Rajputana, caste Hindu prejudice against them has gone so far as to interfere in their ordinary human rights of eating good articles of food, wearing costly clothes and jewellery and various other matters of that nature. Most of these disabilities are not legal, but based only on social prejudice.

Most of the Harijans are poverty stricken. Previous to my association with Harijan work I had never seen such poverty in my life. The majority of them possess no land. Their housing conditions are appalling. Their remuneration in all branches of work is very small. In towns, as well as in villages, they generally occupy segregated areas, far away from the caste Hindu

quarters. Generally the locality they live in is situated in the dirtiest part of the town or the village. Owing to their disability of not being able to use the public wells, they generally suffer for want of water. This need is particularly great in the villages where in many places, it is difficult for them to get clean water, sufficient even for drinking purposes.

Even so, one should not be carried away with the idea that there is no wealthy individual among them. Stray individuals may always be found who have managed to accumulate wealth. Most of these people have done so by charging exorbitant interest from their own caste people.

In education Harijans are behind all other communities, their literacy throughout India being 2.35 per cent. One of the reasons for their educational backwardness is their disability to attend common schools, and this disability up till now has been very common in some parts. In spite of this, however a few highly educated Harijans are to be found in all parts of India, some of whom occupy high positions.

Their occupations are many and varied. The majority of them, of course, work on the land, mostly as labourers. All the so-called "dirty work" is entrusted to them by society. They remove dead cattle, prepare articles made of leather, weave cloth and mats, make ropes, baskets brooms and other sundry articles of everyday use. Some of them are masons and majority are workers on roads or fieds on paltry daily wages.

They are undoubtedly most useful members of society, and on whose labours it rests. Its whole edifice would come down with a crash, if their work was withdrawn for even a short time. Yet Hindu society has failed to recognize their services,

and for centuries they have been terrible victims of prejudice.

More or less such injustices prevail in all countries and in all societies but untouchability is a form of prejudice peculiar to India. I do not think its equivalent can be found anywhere else in the world.

History throws no light as to the beginning and cause of this abominable custom. Many secular theories have been launched, but none of them are convincing. The popular mind, backed by a few orthodox pandits, associate the custom with religion. But a large number of very learned Brahmins whose number is growing daily, have proved it to the hilt that this evil practice has no sanction in the "shastras." On the contrary, the preachings of all the Hindu "Shastras" lay great stress on the cultivation of the practice of treating all human beings as equals, regarding them as the manifestations of the one and the same God, from whom all draw their sustenance.

By ignoring this great truth Hindu society has done indescribable harm to its religion. This damage has not been confined to religion alone, but has spread out to other fields, which have stunted the growth of the whole nation.

2

Work for the removal of untouchability, and the emancipation of the Harijans, is by no means of recent growth. In some form or other, it has continued for centuries. Practically all the Hindu religious reformers belonging to all parts of India are known to have paid special attention to the removal of this evil custom. Beginning from Bhagwan Buddha, down to the present day of Mahatma Gandhi, a series of illustrious saints can be recalled, who have regularly striven to befriend the Harijans.

Chaitanya, Tukaram, Nanak, Kabir and Dayanand Saraswati may be mentioned as examples of few among them. But barring the last-named, the efforts of all the rest were confined to only bringing about a change of ideology. By steady and persistent preaching and precept, they hoped to change the practice.

Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was the first in recent years to draw the attention of his followers to the desirability of undertaking practical steps. As a result of that, much good has been done through the agency of the Arya Samaj, particularly in the Punjab.

In the Maharashtra, Shri V. R. Shinde's work through his mission has been noteworthy. In the South and in the Punjab, Christian missionaries have worked among

the Harijans, but their work cannot be called the work of Harijan emancipation, because almost invariably, they converted them to Christianity. Agencies like D. C. Mission, Nandnar Math, and others have also contributed to this work. But an all India organization of the size and status of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, as started by Mahatma Gandhi, was never visualised before.

It was in the year 1932, in the month of September, at a public meeting held in Bombay, that the foundations of the Harijan Sevak Sangh were laid. It came out of the travail of Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast, which he had undertaken to protest against Communal Award of Mr. Ramsey MacDonald so far it related to the representation of the Harijans in the constitution of 1935. It is well known that his fast succeeded in getting the award revised, and it was replaced by what is called the Poona pact.

But the mere revision of the award was not sufficient for Mahatma Gandhi. He wanted to erase altogether the distinction of the Harijan and the caste Hindu. He considered untouchability to be against the Hindu "Shastras" and held the opinion that it damaged immensely not only Hindu society but the whole Indian Nation.

He, therefore, started work for the removal of untouchability early in life and from the time he took control of the Congress organization, he made it a necessary item of the constructive work of the Congress. The Harijan Sevak Sangh, however, is not an organization of the Congress. It is an independent non-political body, whose activities are strictly confined to the removal of untouchability. But it may be treated an allied organization of the Congress, as much as many workers are common to both, though Shri G. D. Birla and Shri A. V.



Thakkar, the President and Secretary of the Sangh respectively are both non-Congressmen.

In 1933 and 34, Mahatma Gandhi toured throughout India, to collect funds for the Sangh, and to rouse public opinion against untouchability. The tour drew the attention of the whole country to this important problem and centres of work were established in all provinces and many Indian States. The All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, with a board having 42 members from all parts of India, is responsible for the carrying out of all the work. It has its head office in Delhi.

The board meets only once a year, but there is an executive committee, which meets more frequently, and to which is entrusted the day-to-day work of the Sangh. There are 25 Provincial and State Boards, with 169 district committees working under them. All these centres of work have a two-fold mission—that of converting the hearts of the caste Hindus, and that of bettering the social, economic and educational condition of the Harijans. More stress is laid on giving social service to the Harijans than on doing propaganda on which a very limited portition, only 5 per cent of the expenditure is incurred.

Greatest stress is laid on education, At one time, the Sangh was running as many as 1,298 preparatory school of which 37,089 Harijan children were taking advantage. Such separate schools were necessary in the early stages, because of their peculiar social and economic conditions. The Harijan children were not taken into the ordinary schools, and even if they were, owing to their depressed mental condition, they were not in a position to take advantage of them. As conditions have improved, and a fair number of these children are being admitted into public schools, the number of schools run

by the Sangh has now been considerably reduced. Hostels for girls and boys—94 in number—are run by the Sangh. For bringing a change in the lives of the children these hostels are more effective than the schools. The lessons of cleanliness, unselfishness and discipline, which the children learn there, are likely to revolutionize not only their individual lives, but the life of the whole community.

There are two big residential vocational schools, one in Delhi and another in Madras, where over one hundred boys are being trained in different handicrafts. Another big centre is being developed at Allahabad. By the Central Board alone, scholarships to the value of Rs. 10,000 a year are given to college boys and girls. The provincial boards and the district committees provide their own scholarships, and this raises considerably the number and value of scholarships given. Large sums are spent annually on providing reading material and examination fees etc., for the children.

Medical aid is provided by having dispensaries near the Harijan quarters. At present 13 such regular dispensaries are working and thousands take advantage of them daily. Over and above this, provision for medical aid is made in most centres. It is one of the most popular of the Sanghs work. Much relief is given to the Harijans by providing wells for them. The Sangh has an ear-marked "pani fund" for this purpose, and up till now about 1,700 wells have been constructed and repaired under its auspices.

On the cultural side, 'Harikirtans and Katha' recitals (the reading of the sacred books) are held in their quarters. Caste Hindus are induced to join them on these occasions and on festival days.

"Panchayats are strengthened, sweepers unions are

formed, co-operative credit societies are started wherever possible. In several places, housing societies and colonies have been started through the instrumentality of the Sangh. The giving up of drink, carrion eating and better and frugal living is encouraged. In the South as well as in some parts of Central and Western India, some workers are living in Harijan quarters in remote villages. All this has a very salutary effect on the lives of the Harijans, who are advancing very rapidly. But the problem is so great that all this effort is like a drop in the ocean, and only serves to show how much more remains to be done.

When a vast population of 50,192,000 souls is concerned work among a few thousand cannot take us far. The need for workers is very great and a whole army is required. The central Sangh has started a corps of workers, who have pledged themselves to the service of the Harijans for five years.

Provision has been made for 50 such workers to begin with. It is proposed to have such service corps for the Provinces as well. The devoted service of these men, pledged to work on a mere pittance of a living wage, is bound to bear fruit. It is a long-felt want, which has now been fulfilled. It is hoped that, with the coming in of this corps of service, the work of the Sangh will be much enriched.

3

The acceptance of office by the Congress in July 1937 marked a definite advance in the path of Harijan progress. Its commitment to the removal of untouchability and the Poona Pact (to which Gandhiji was a party), which was its great moral obligation, made it incumbent on the Congress Governments to do their utmost to restore the Harijans their lost status in society. During their short stay in power, they exerted themselves in a variety of ways to fulfil their obligations, and looking back on their work of nearly two and a half years duration, one has every reason to be proud of their achievements.

The very first act of these Governments was to share their newly acquired power and responsibility with their Harijan brethren, by giving them ministerial and secretarial offices in the different Provinces. Accordingly, three had Harijan Ministers, of which Assam had two Bihar and Madras one each. U.P. had two Harijan Parliamentary Secretaries and Bihar and Madras one each.

The appointment of so many men belonging to a community condemned to untouchability by a large section of the people was bound to have a tremendous psychological effect. It perforce taught the people to respect those whom they were in the habit of despising. It also put hope and inspiration into the hearts of the

Harijans, who were given a practical demonstration of the fact that henceforth there did not exist any bar in their way of achieving the highest positions in the land. That was a great step forward, but there were many other ways in which the interests of the Harijans were promoted.

The measures undertaken on their behalf could be classed under the headings of legislative, administrative and educative measures. Bombay and Madras were foremost with regard to the first, 'viz'. legislation. Bombay was the first to pass the Bombay Harijan Temple Worship (Removal of Disabilities) Act, which is a permissive measure, enabling the trustee of temples, if they so desired, to admit Harijans into the temples, notwithstanding the prevailing custom or the instrument of trust, or the terms of dedication, or anything else debarring the Harijans from entering into the temples.

The Government also framed the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act, which as the name indicates sought to remove all legal disabilities placing the Harijans in full possession of their civic rights of the use of all roads, wells, schools, conveyances etc, on the same terms with others. Unfortunately the ministry had to resign before it was possible to get this Bill through the legislature. Similarly Madras has to its credit the Malabar Temple Entry Act and the Removal of Disabilities Act with the same objective in view as the above mentioned Bombay Bill. But while the Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Worship Act applies to the whole of Bombay Presidency the Madras Act applies only to Western portion of Madras called Malabar. There is no other big difference. The Malabar Temple Entry Act is much more broad-based than the Bombay one. According to this Act the fundamental authority is the ordinary

temple worshiper who is required to give his own decision. Each big temple in every taluka has to take a referendum. It is only on the result of the referendum being favourable that the temple door can be thrown open to the Harijans. Likewise the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act establishes the legal right of the Harijans to the use of all social amenities maintained by public funds.

The C.P. Government had also introduced a Temple Entry Bill which was referred to a Select Committee before it resigned.

It is impossible to eradicate an established social evil of centuries which has so deeply sunk into the life and customs of the people as untouchability by mere enactment. But these acts have placed a great weapon in the hands of the reformer, who has used them for his own purpose. One may not imagine that these Acts have brought about an immediate revolution. The life of an average Harijan continues to be the same hard life beset with difficulties and hardships. The complaints that in most areas the Acts are inoperative are common, but a beginning has been made, and seeds are sown which are bound to fructify in the very near future.

Much has been attempted by means of the administrative machinery to which efforts have been made to give an equalitarian orientation.

Thus copious instructions have been issued to various departments mostly in Madras and Bombay not to tolerate the caste distinction in any aspect. Revenue and police officers have been especially instructed to see that the Government policy of the removal of Civil Disabilities is fully implemented. Authorities controlling public hospitals, wells, Schools, dispensaries and

"dharamshalas" have been impressed with the desirability of giving equal treatment to all. Government pressure has been brought on keepers of public entertainment and public service conveyances to disallow all distinctions of caste. This has created a wholesome effect and injustices, which were taken for granted a few years ago, are resented, brought to public notice and repaired where possible.

Madras and Bombay have been foremost in using the administration for the removal of untouchability but other Provinces have also done their bit by following their lead in issuing instructions to the same effect. Both Madras and Bombay created machinery to look after the interests of the backward and depressed classes long before the year 1937, when the Congress Governments came in. It is the same machinery that has now been consolidated and enlarged and brought more in touch with the public workers. In both these provinces, boards and committees have been established composed of officials and non-officials in most districts to further the education and the general well-being of the Harijans. The U.P. also has a special officer in charge of depressed class education. The duties of these committees and boards and officers range from finding out grievances and needs of the communities in their charge, suggesting ways and means of removing them, looking after their education and giving advice.

Big steps have been taken by all Provinces in the sphere of education. In spite of financial stringency, they have all ear-marked sums for Harijan education much in advance of what the previous Government did. Bihar has provided over Rs. 18,000 for giving scholarships and another Rs. 1,140 for industrial and

technical training. Orissa has also made a special grant, over and above the usual amount.

More was accomplished by other means than by the actual sums spent on education, which under the circumstances, had to be limited. Thus in the C.P. and Berar all education from the primary class to the university degrees has been made free for the Harijans. Even examination fees are not levied. Likewise the Bihar, Madras and Bombay Governments had issued orders making in all colleges education free for them. U.P. has also done the same with regard to Government schools and colleges. Free hostles have been started in many places. Even in provices, where education has not been made absolutely free exemptions from fee are given on a generous scale, both in schools and colleges. Notwithstanding all these facilities, separate schools for Harijan children are run by the Government, where reading and writing materials are supplied free. Scholarships are everywhere given for all classes of education. In Madras, and Bombay, the Governments refused recognition and aid to schools where any distinction of caste was observed. It is the duty of local board teachers to show the actual attendance of scheduled class pupils before their schools are entitled to any grant from the Government.

Relief work has been done practically in all provinces by constructing wells for them for which particular sums were earmarked annually. Land for sweepers' colonies has been granted by some. Co-operative credit societies have been started. In the case of appointments preference is given to scheduled class candidates, where other qualifications are the same. In some places reservations are made for them and facilities are provided by giving them age and other

exemptions. In the U.P. two Harijans have recently been appointed to the Provincial Civil Service.

Most of this work has been started and accomplished in close co-operation with the Harijan Sevak Sangh. In the C.P., U.P., Bihar, Bombay Presidency, Orissa and Madras Presidency the Governments even give financial aid to the Sangh Committees in different districts. Bihar, Assam and Orissa requisitioned the services of the general secretary of the Sangh to frame schemes for the promotion of Harijan well-being.

The deplorable service and living conditions of the employees of the municipal committees all over the country have attracted the attention of the Sangh for some time. But no appreciable work was done on any large scale by Provinces in this connection. Under the presidentship of the General Secretary of Singh, the C.P. Government appointed a committee to make recommendations for the betterment of this class of public servants. But the Government had no time to give practical effect to the recommendations of the Committee before it resigned. Similarly, the U. P Government also appointed a committee for the same purpose with two workers of the Sangh as its members. This Committee has not yet finished its work.

And so this in brief, is the story of the work of the Congress for Harijans in the different Provinces. This is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. Their good intentions and earnest efforts are transparently clear from what has been done. A start has been made. I am sure the work will continue, and very soon the time will come when Harijans will enjoy an equal status with the rest of the people in all aspects of life.

4

It has often been said by the leaders of the Harijan movement that temple entry by the Harijan is the crux of the whole movement. This assertion has been hotly contested by another section, who think that the real problem is economic, with an educational and social side to it. They maintain that, if Harijans had education and their economic conditions were good, untouchability would disappear by itself, and even if it did not, it would not matter much.

There is difference of opinion among the Harijans themselves. There are men of faith among them, in very large numbers, who are keen on entering the temples, whose joy is boundless when they are admitted into them, and are allowed "darshan" and worship. There is another section consisting of young men, many of whom are affected by Western ideas, in whose eyes the right of temple entry has no value. Often enough these men put us the question—why we, the Harijan Sevaks, waste our energy in getting the temples open for them—temples in which young men and women of education are fast losing faith?

There are a few who even impute motives, and allege that as the caste Hindu clientele of the temples is diminishing, Harijans are being forced into the temples to replace them. But the number of those who hold the

latter view among the Harijans, as well as the non-Harijans, is very small. Much larger portion is of those who consider temple entry the acid test by which the removal of untouchability can be measured.

Untouchability, in its wider aspect of high and low, exists in all countries and societies. It is a curse of civilization, which has come in with the civilization of mankind. But physical untouchability is a phenomenon, which is peculiar to India, and which is commonly believed to have its sanctions in religion. It is this most deep-rooted aspect of untouchability which gives its importance to temple entry. To destroy it root and branch, it has to be killed at its very source of origin. All other work of education and economic emancipation however intensive cannot take the place of temple entry, futile though it may appear to the few who are lacking in faith.

India's vast masses are still full of faith. Their lives are woven around the temples and the numerous sacred places of pilgrimage. Sacred days of festivals are still like little bright lighthouses in the otherwise dark and dreary ocean of their existence. It is, therefore, very important that in these places of worship, and on these occasions of festivals, men and women of common faith should meet each other on terms of equality, forgetting the prejudices which have kept them divided for centuries. Any other course would be like destroying the branches while manuring the roots.

Work on this behalf began long ago. It was in the year 1924 that the first organized satyagraha was started for this purpose in Kerala, though the object was very limited—opening of roads leading to Vaikom temple, the most orthodox spot in the whole of India. Since then the work of propaganda has continued, entailing another

satyagraha in 1932, culminating in Shri Kelappan's fast unto death, which was suspended at Gandhiji's intervention. From Guruvayur the movement spread on to other areas. Madura and Srirangam in Madras followed later taking a referendum on the subject. The results of this referendum were very encouraging, as many as 80 per cent. of the temple going population declaring themselves in favour of temple entry.

Mahatma Gandhi's fast in September 1932, his Harijan tour in 1933-34 and the setting up of the Harijan Sevak Sangha gave great momentum to the movement. During Mahatma Gandhi's fast in 1932, several temples in odd corners of India were opened, but as this was done in the heat of the moment, without much previous preparation, in most cases this opening was temporary. The first real success achieved in this connection was the opening of the Travancore temples by a Royal Proclamation of H. H. the Maharaja of Travancore in the year 1935. It was a complete transformation which Mahatma Gandhi called a miracle as in Travancore even the shadow of a Harijan was considered to bring pollution to a caste Hindu.

Great and intensive work, with which I was closely associated, preceded the proclamation. In May 1935 six months before the proclamation, I toured the whole State and was privileged to address scores of meetings attended by thousands of people. During that tour practically the whole Hindu population of the State declared themselves to be in favour of temple entry, and with one voice, requisitioned the Maharaja, in whom the power was vested, to open the temples for the Harijans. It was in response to this powerful public opinion that the proclamation was issued and that was the reason why it was so spontaneously acted upon. To

day Harijans worship at the temples on the same terms as the caste Hindus and the old distinction has practically gone.

This deep and genuine reform in the most orthodox centre touched the whole of India. Stray temples in different parts continued voluntarily to open. Several were opened in the Bombay Presidency after the Temple Entry Act of 1938. The Maharaja Holker followed the footsteps of Travancore and opened all State temples by a proclamation. Public opinion in the State not being ready for the reform, the implementing of the proclamation was postponed and took place by a fresh order of the State in March 1939. Some other minor States such as Lathi, Aundh, Sandur, Dewas and others have also opened their temples.

By far the greatest achievement was the opening last year of the ancient temple of Meenakshi-Sundareshwar at Madura, and along with it, several others in Tanjore, Kuttalam, etc., in Tamilnad. The most significant feature of this event was that it was accomplished peacefully without the pressure of law or police or authority. Sri Rajagopalachariar, who gave his whole-hearted support to the cause, was very keen that temples should be opened without the aid of law by the voluntary free will of the people. Consequently a campaign similar to the Travancore one was organized by the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Scores of meetings, which were attended by thousands, were held all over Tamilnad. I had the honour of presiding at most of these meetings, where I beheld the joyful spectacle of all sorts of men vying with each other in giving their support.

Among them were men and women who in their thoughts and way of living were otherwise orthodox.

With full faith in the "Shastras" on the basis of which temple entry was denied to the Harijans, they fervently supported the cause, declaring it to be absolutely in conformity with the dictates of their religion. No one can deny that in Tamilnad, as in Travancore, temples were opened in deference to a strongly expressed public opinion.

Of course, an act was passed by the Government of Sri Rajagopal achariar, later on, after the entry of the Harijans into temples was already an accomplished fact, indemnifying and safeguarding against legal prosecution all those who took part in the reform. An ordinance by the governor was also issued for the interim period with the same purpose.

There are yet a few who oppose the movement and of late have been very active in their opposition. They still take their stand on the "Shastras." But their numbers are constantly dwindling and they are fast losing ground. There are learned Pandits among them, well versed in the "Shastras," who are still debating the point. But the reformists claim an increasing number of learned people, who have spared no pains in proving that the ancient "Shastras" have no sanction for untouchability. Books, pamphlets, articles and leaflets are being constantly issued propagating that view. I have no doubt that, with the growing volume of public opinion on our side, the few resisters will soon be convinced of the justice of our cause.

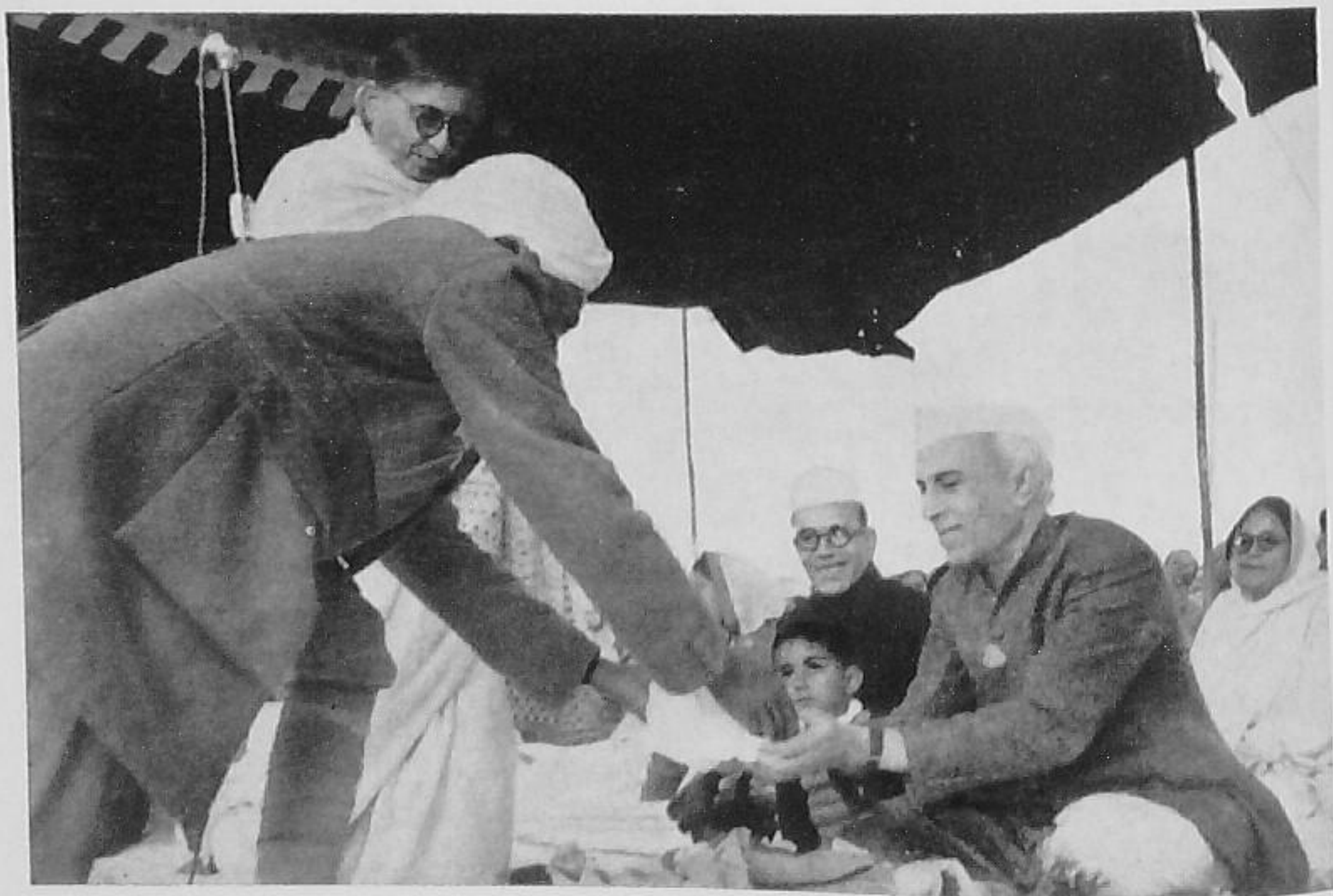
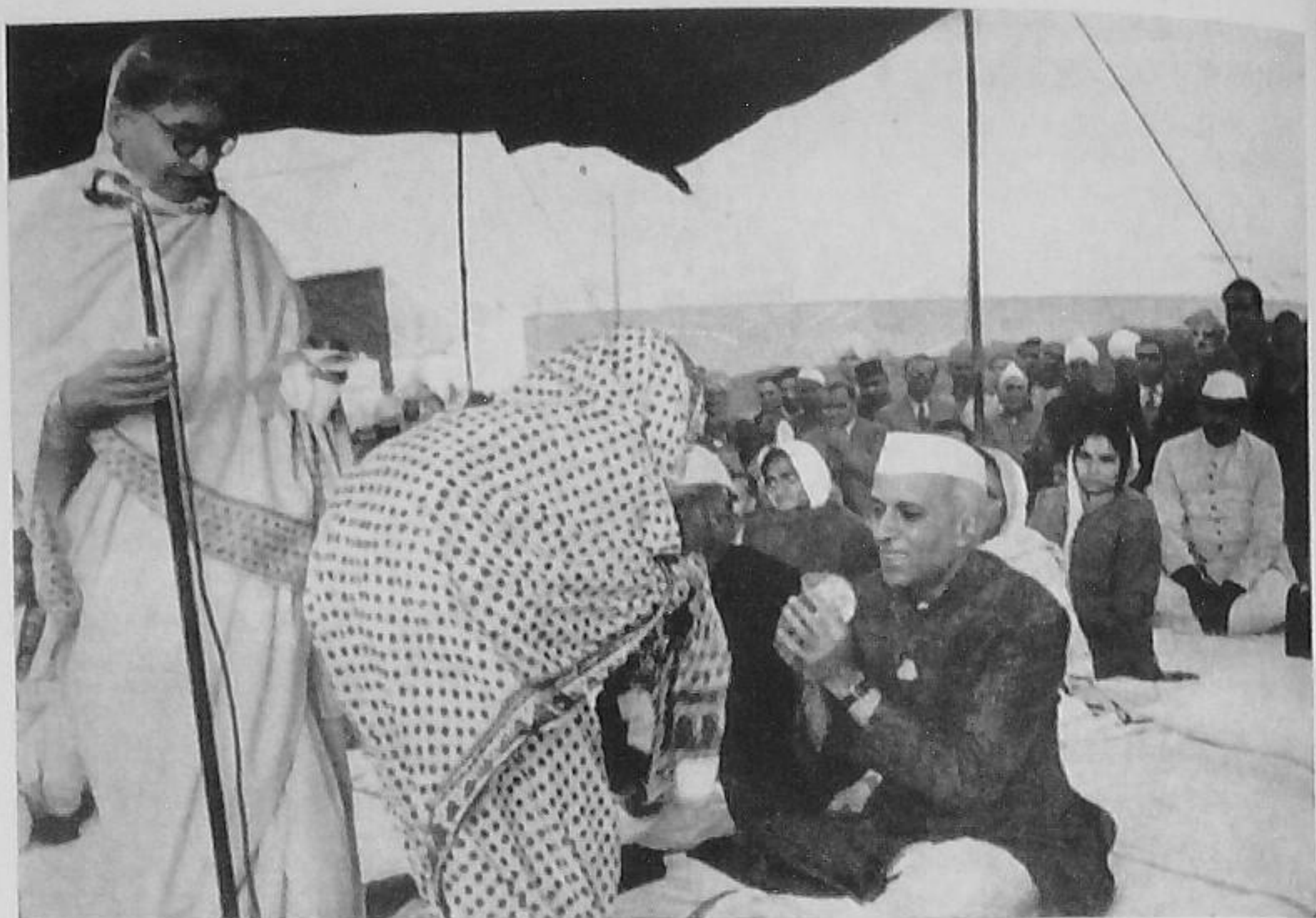
With untouchability living, Hinduism was in great danger. Under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, a great wave of purification has been set in motion. It will wash off the accumulated toxins of centuries in the old body of Sanatan Dharma, and give it a new

life and vigour. It will release forces of love, goodwill, equality and freedom, which have great potential value in curing a great many ills of the world. Who knows this apparently small and comparatively insignificant reform may be the prototype of some great movement destined to bring peace to an aching world? Most great movements have been known to have had small beginnings.

HARIJAN BASTIS IN DELHI

I have seen scores of Harijan Bastis all over India but it somehow happened that so far I did not visit the Bastis in Delhi. During the Harijan week last month, along with my co-workers, I went to some of them. Among others I visited the sweepers Bastis. I have worked among the sweepers and I am fully acquainted with their living conditions in many parts of India. It forms a sorry tale all over the country but I was not prepared for the terrible sight that met my eyes in Delhi. Used though I am to seeing poverty and the conditions attendant on poverty, the surroundings in which the Delhi sweepers live, gave me the shock of my life. Never before had I seen even sweepers living in such filthy conditions. In the Suiwalan Basti and the Naya Bazar their quarters are situated within a few paces of the public latrines. In both places on one side of the narrow courtyard open carts besmeared with human and animal filth deposited and in these carts the filth of the town is accumulated. The whole sight and the atmosphere is suffocating and it was painful to stay there for any length of time. In the rainy season I was told that the filth in liquid form came right up to the verandahs of the sweepers.

The Ajmere Gate sweepers quarters are situated in the vicinity of a slaughter house on the brink of a big open drain into which, I was told, little children often fell down while playing.



I do not want to make any attempt at describing these abodes of human misery. They defy description. I would only suggest that my readers should go and see themselves. As for description a detailed and clear account of these Bastis is given in the report written by professor Malkani and issued by the Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1933. That account stands true even today for though the Harijan Sevak Sangh drew the attention of the Municipal Committee and the general public towards these repositories of filth and dirt, where human beings are compelled to live, nothing substantial has been done to better the conditions during these three long years.

The existence of these Bastis in the heart of this Imperial city is a great black spot on the fair name of the Delhi citizens. It is a shocking sight to see that behind the grandeur and beauty and wealth of the great town, there lies this utter misery of its most useful citizens, on the sweat of whose labour the town's health and cleanliness depends. That these conditions exist is the proof of the fact that we have very little sense of social justice. All this suffering is preventable. The oft-repeated plea of scarcity of money is only an excuse. It is not necessary to make the sweepers live in close proximity with filth for the sake of economy. These things happen not because of our poverty but because we have closed our hearts to a certain section of the people whom we have got accustomed to exploit. If money can be found for parks and gardens and roads and lighting and a hundred other things, it can easily be found for bettering the living conditions of the sweepers.

It is the clear and urgent duty of the Municipal Committee to remedy this shameful state of things without delay. It is not the concern of the Hindus alone, for the sweepers deserve better treatment not because of their

caste or religion but because of the service they render to the community. It would be difficult to find a parallel for this state of affairs in any other country. Decency demands that these servants of the people are no longer allowed to live in such wretched conditions.

As long as the sweepers live in their present surroundings, no work can be done amongst them by any reformist organisation. It is no use trying to teach them to be clean or to keep their children clean, when they are forced to live in the filth, from which they cannot get away. It is surprising that in spite of this nauseating atmosphere, they manage to live such healthy lives. For the interior of their houses were clean and I even noticed an attempt made by certain inmates at beautifying the surroundings by rearing a few flower plants in the pots. How they have the heart to do it and how they manage to keep up their spirits, it is difficult to understand ! They undoubtedly try to make the best of their surroundings. Under these circumstances nothing by way of educating them or of raising their social status can be done.

I, therefore, appeal to the Municipal Committee, not to let things drift. Several Municipal Committees in India have provided quarters for their sweepers and many have formulated schemes and are planning to do it in the near future.

There is no reason why the premier municipality of this great city should lag behind others. This duty has been neglected long enough. It is high time now that the Committee made up for its past sins and provided decent and sanitary quarters for its sweepers. I hope that my appeal will not fall on deaf ears.

* Reprinted from The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 1936.

HARIJAN TOUR IN CENTRAL INDIA

At the instance of Shriyut Date, the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Gwalior, and Central Indian States, Thakkar Bapa and I undertook to tour Central India and a few of the South Rajputana States. The object of the tour was to consolidate the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh wherever it existed, to start new centres in areas where our work did not exist and to do propaganda for the removal of untouchability. We started our tour on the 20th of November from Gwalior and ended it at Kota on the 21st of December. During the course of one month we visited 14 States namely, Gwalior, Datia, Bhopal, Narsinghgarh, Rajgarh, Devas, Indore, Barwani, Dhar Banswara, Dungarhpur, Kotah, Jhalawar, Sitamat. Later on I also visited the state of Jaipur. Shriyut Date accompanied us all through the Central India States and Shri Omduttaji, the Secretary of the Rajputana Harijan Sevak Sangh through the Rajputana States. Shriyut Pustake who is the moving force behind the Harijan work, in fact behind all public work in those parts, was with us part of the time. Local secretaries and several other public workers also took the trouble to travel with us in their own areas. We were made the guests of the states practically everywhere and all facilities of travel were placed at our disposal. We were fortunate in having the co-operation of the officers of the States who very kindly showed us round

all that we wanted to see and gave us all necessary information. In most places the dewans or their officers presided at our public meetings. In some places they even organised the meetings for us and did all they could to make our visit a success. Had it not been for this great co-operation of the States, our tour would not have been as fruitful as it was and we are truly grateful to the States for this response. Our thanks are also due to the public workers whose share of work in no small a degree contributed towards the success of the tour. Everywhere crowded public meetings, women's meetings and students meetings were held at which Gandhiji's message of the removal of untouchability was given to thousands. At women's meetings in different places, I had the touching experience of young ladies pledging themselves on the spot to swadeshi and the removal of untouchability. The size of these meetings swelled with the progress of the tour till at last in some places it became unmanageable. The popularity of the cause was evident from the splendid receptions given by the public at the railway stations and elsewhere. Crowds collected together practically at all intervening stations in the Jaipur State on my journey from Jaipur to Mukandgarh. This general rousing up of the public was a symbol of the rising spirit of the masses. Even in remote places, some of which were nearly 80 or 90 miles from the nearest railway station, there was a stirring up and the people seemed to be anxious to get the light and hear the message. Of course, the name of Mahatma Gandhi had gone round and naturally the poor masses were anxious to hear the tidings of one they loved so well.

On my part, I was happy to make contacts with so many people. It was an inspiration for me to meet

many of our workers who have voluntarily torn themselves asunder from all contacts with outside life and are living dedicated lives for the sake of the cause. Their names are not advertised in the papers and not many people know them. But their work is enriching the country just as much as the work of the tallest amongst us. It was a privilege to know them and to see their work.

We interviewed the rulers and their ministers in all states and represented to them the cause of the Harijans and urged on them the necessity of the states taking up the educational and welfare work for them. Practically everywhere we were given the assurance that our representations would get the favourable consideration of the States. On the public side, we were able to revive some of the moribund committees which had ceased to work and also established new committees where they did not exist before. We are hoping that these committees will take up the work in all earnestness in all these different places.

This tour has filled my heart with hope. * It has provided one more proof of the fact that untouchability is on its last legs and that the cause of the Harijans has the general support of practically the whole of the Hindu society. The death of untouchability is a certainty and a matter of time only. I shall now give in brief a little account of each place we visited.

* This tour was undertaken by Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru in 1941.

1

The Harijan work takes me practically to all parts of India, and my visits are not confined to the Provincial and State capitals or to big towns only. I have the privilege to tour right into the interior of the country where means of locomotion are few and to cover distances I have often had to go on buses, bullock-carts, camel carts, ponies, camels or any other conveyance which may come handy. In company with Thakkar Bapa I have just finished one such tour in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur, the three premier States of Rajputana.

Rajputanr is a bulwark of orthodoxy. Very little of the light of modernity has yet penetrated into the darkness which envelops this part of the country. People are yet living as it were in the past, in the conditions of a hundred years ago. Old traditions and ancient customs still govern the minds and thoughts of men. Naturally, untouchability, with all its concomitant inhuman practices, reigns supreme here.

14% of the total population in these parts belongs to the Harijan castes. Yadavs, Chamars, Raigars, Machis, Bhambis, Balais, Nagarchis (in Jodhpur only), Jogis, Mehtars, Naiks, Dhobis and Dhilis form the whole compendium of the group now classed as Harijans. They are practically all landless and poverty-stricken, but the one redeeming feature of these parts is that nearly all

of them own their own houses. This fact is a little oasis of brightness in the desert of the desolation of their lives. Their occupations are the same as all over the country, namely, leather tanning, shoe-making, stone-breaking, wood or grass cutting, house-building, rope and basket-making, scavenging etc. These are the occupations which bring them their scanty bread. It is painful to see how old and young, sick and healthy, men and women, children, adolescents and adults, all have to toil for long hours to keep their bodies and souls together. The sight of tiny little toddlers winding their way home from the jungle, along with their mothers with a little bundle of a few faggots of firewood on their heads, is a common sight. And we all know that the home that awaits them at the other end is lightless for want of burning oil, and the food they are destined to satisfy their pangs of hunger is nothing more than a piece of cold and cheapest grain available. Such is the grim poverty in which they live.

Much of their employment is uneconomic and even that is not in abundance. That is why, large numbers of these people migrate to kindlier lands where hard, honest labour at least ensures a square meal. They go as far as Karachi, Hyderabad and even farther and in many places have taken to scavenging work for want of a better occupation.

The disintegration brought about by modern economic conditions has disturbed the even tenor of their lives and has deepened their poverty. The demand for their products has gone and with the loss of market, most of them have lost their skill too. Their tanning and carding, spinning and weaving are most crude and consequently unremunerative. A fresh training in the arts and crafts they are already engaged in, a re-organisation of the

production and sale of their hand industries on the lines of the Charkha Sangh is their crying need. The work of the Rajputana Charkha Sangh is confined mostly to Jaipur, and even this touches only the single industry of spinning and weaving and its allied arts. Where is the regeneration of all arts, particularly leather tanning. Neither the public nor the State Governments have so far done anything to meet this great need. I hope that both will now give their attention to the economic regeneration of these starving millions.

From the social point of view their condition is not much better. The vanity of the caste Hindus, based on the false idea of superiority of birth, still finds expression in meaningless objections to the many innocent acts of the Harijans. The Yadavs, who are educationally and economically better off than the other castes of the Harijans, wanted to instal the image of the god Chaturbhuja in their own caste temple in one of the villages in Udaipur State. The Rajputs forthwith raised the objection that the Yadavs had no right to the worship of that particular deity. The same Yadavs planned to take out the procession of their "Phuldol"—the decorated palanquin of their god—through a particular path. The Rajput god was usually taken out in that route. How then could the deity of the Harijans tread the same path? That became a matter of great dispute. The affair remained under investigation of a Government Committee for a long time and at long last a separate route was chalked out for the Harijan deity which was taken out under police protection.

In like manner, a Raigar bridegroom put on a "turra" on his turban. Down came the caste Hindu Rajputs armed with lathis. They not only forcibly removed the turban but beat and looted the bridegroom's party.

This happened in the village of Karju in Udaipur state in the last week of January, 1942. A report was made to the Prime Minister who instituted an enquiry forthwith. Such are the conditions under which the Harijans have to live. Temples and public wells and even tanks are barred to them. The bar against the tanks is a great hardship in these desert areas. The Harijans have to wait for hours with their pots till somebody out of pity fills them with water. On occasions they even have to buy their pots of water with money.

Theoretically no restrictions are laid by the Government on the admission of Harijan boys to schools but they (particularly the sweepers) are conspicuous in schools by their absence. Under the circumstances it is no wonder that we find only four literate persons in a thousand Harijans. A further disability of the sweepers is that they are not allowed seats in buses. They are made to sit on the top of the bus, even if all the seats down are vacant. We found that the remuneration given to the sweepers in all the three States was very meagre. Each household, regardless of the number of inmates, gives two pice or one anna a month, with one or two "roites" a day to the sweepers. The highest pay reported to have been given was annas eight a month with a "roti" a day, and the lowest just a "roti". Accordingly, the pay given by the Municipal Committees is also very little. In Jaipur it is Rs. 7/8 to men and as low as Rs. 1/12 to women, in Jodhpur Rs. 10 to men and Rs. 8 to women in Udaipur Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 in Chitori coin which has usually a lesser value than the British Indian coin. Conditions in all the three States are very much similar.

2

JAIPUR The first six days of our tour were spent in the state of Jaipur, during which we visited Sanganer, Chomu Bansa, Govinda Garh, Navai Banasthali and Sambhar.

A Rajputana Branch of the Harijan Sevak Sangh came into existence in the year 1934 after Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast. This branch was one of the flourishing branches till about four years ago. Since then its activities have greatly slowed down and now its work is confined mostly to the state of Jaipur. The nature of the work is mainly educational. The Sangh is instrumental in running 20 small primary schools some of which belong to the Sangh and others are given subsidies. We inspected all the schools situated in the areas we visited. A residential vocational school on the lines of the Delhi Harijan Industrial School has been recently started in the Jaipur City by the Rajputana Branch. There were only 7 boys in the school at the time of our visit. But the prospects, of the further development of the school are good and I feel sure that these 7 boys are the precursors of many others who will join later on.

These little institutions are doing their bit in giving primary education to the Harijan boys but the problem of their education is so vast and it has so utterly been

neglected that this small effort is like a drop in the ocean. The Harijans are not in a position to take advantage of the existing educational machinery of the State. It is difficult to find Harijan boys in the State schools. Their own destitution, social backwardness and the practice of untouchability are great barriers in their way. An active policy on the part of the Government is required to meet their special needs.

We were not able to interview any of the ministers of the State personally, but on behalf of the Harijan Sevak Sangh we sent representations to the Government pressing on them the desirability of adopting such a policy. We requested them to set apart a special sum of money in the annual budget for giving educational facilities to the Harijan boys in the form of scholarships as is done by most advanced Governments elsewhere.

It is a regrettable fact that this state is not spending a pie for the welfare of the Harijans apart from what is spent on the general welfare work of the state.

The Headquarters of the Rajputana Charkha Sangh is situated in Govind Garh, where Shri B. S. Deshpande with his little band of co-workers has been working for the last fifteen years. We had the privilege of being his guests at Chomu, Bausa and Govindgarh all of which are centres of Khadi production. These little villages situated in the midst of dry sandy deserts with hardly any vegetation have been turned into busy hives where women are spinning and men are weaving, printing, washing and doing other allied crafts.

I shall ever cherish the memory of the days spent amongst the Khadi workers. They are the harbingers of a true new life movement amongst the village people.

They are not merely producing Khadi, but are engaged in even more important work of moral and cultural regeneration of the people. They are running schools for the village Harijan children, hostels wherever possible, reading rooms and dispensaries. The difference their work made to the total life of the people was apparent. Besides being more prosperous than others we found them alert, responsive and quick of understanding. The Khadi Movement is undoubtedly a great and important part of the bigger movement of Indian Renaissance whose effects are not confined to economics alone. Blessed are the men and women who are engaged in this noble work.

At Sauganer, the old Capital of Jaipur, the industry of hand made paper has been revived. The town is of crumbling ruins reminiscent of the once upon a time grand buildings which must have sheltered the richest nobles and their dames. In the midst of these ruins dwell 25 families of Muslims of nearly 500 souls whose traditional occupation for generations has been that of paper making. Their trade was all gone as there was no demand for paper they produced. Many of them had to close their shops and take to other casual work. In that plight Shri Lakshmi Bhai of Ahmedabad came and revived the industry and when we visited men and women and children were all engaged in the various processes of paper production. Their houses had been repaired and new buildings were being erected for further development of the industry. Seventy-five thousand rupees worth of paper was annually exported to Ahmedabad mills for packing purposes. "All this prosperity has come to us since Dada has taken us in hand" said one of them. They called Lakshmi Bhai

"Dada" and there was an evident ring of devotion in their voice when they mentioned his name.

Not much nation-building welfare work is done by the State but the people are lucky to have in their midst centres of work manned by selfless workers doing rural reconstruction and educational work of great value.

3

The temple entry campaign carried on in Tamil Nad during the months of june and july, 1939 was a most stimulating piece of work I was ever engaged in. The world knows how pregnant it was with result. The success which met the humble efforts of the workers was beyond all expectations. That which seemed difficult of attainment only a little while ago was an accomplished fact even within one month of the starting of that campaign. The wonderful co-operation of the masses who gave their willing consent to the reform, of the workers and representatives of varied organizations with different objectives, of individuals belonging to all castes, not excluding Brahmins, was suggestive of the change that time had wrought on the minds of the people. It was evident that public opinion was already ripe for the change. All that was needed was a little mobilization of the already existing public opinion and some one to make a start. That need was supplied by the campaign and with the grace of God, the greatest reform of the present age was brought about. It looked like an easy achievement. But there was no strategy or diplomacy behind it. No underhand methods were adopted and everything was done openly in the full light of the day with the full consent of the temple worshippers. I can never forget the enthusiasm



displayed at the conferences and public meetings where Brahmins and non-Brahmins, Archakas and Trustees, old and young, vied with each other in giving their support to the cause. It almost looked superhuman and as I watched the men who took part in those great meetings, I could not help feeling that it was God's will which was silently working this revolution in the hearts of men.

Surely the great God could not allow the ancient Hindu Dharma to die. Once again its dormant spirit, the heritage of generations, which lay latent in the blood of its followers, was brought into action. The spirit came out to purge it of the sin of untouchability and all its demoralizing effects. In the long history of Hinduism such things had happened before. It had seen many ups and downs and each time in its adversity something had happened to give it a new lease of life. Every time it emerged out of its difficulties with a vitality all its own. In our age it would certainly have crashed against the bedrock of untouchability if the latter was allowed to live. At this critical juncture, under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi temple entry of the Harijans was destined to be achieved, which will certainly revivify Hinduism.

Out of this episode emerges two striking facts. One is the demonstration of the power of the combined will of the common people which is the only sanction behind all human concerns, and the other, the possibility of the Hindu ideals supplying to the world the secret of making democracy effective. The fact that an established custom of centuries broke in the twinkling of an eye without the pressure of law or police force, without untoward incident or bloodshed, is a proof of the fact that the co-operative will of the people can work

wonders. It has the power to bring about any change it desires. It can move mountains and do anything it likes. The power of the man in the street was fully demonstrated by this incident. For although many people, big and small, worked for the cause, it was the common man who achieved it. Mahatma Gandhi, Rajagopalacharya, Dr. Rajan, Vaidnath Iyer and others no doubt laboured hard but their labours would have been set at naught if they did not find favour with the people.

An objection was raised in certain quarters that democratic methods were pressed into service by the promoters of temple entry to bring about a change in religious practice which was outside the scope of democracy. I would make no attempt to controvert the suggestion made in the objection. On the contrary, I am proud of the fact that the great change was accomplished by democracy and not by the exercise of any authority.

The scope of democracy is much too wide to be restricted. Everything comes within its compass. It covers all aspects of human life. The relation between democracy and religion is very close. Its roots lie in the field of religion where its ultimate sanctions are to be found. It would have no *raison d'être* had it not been for the religious belief that all human beings are the manifestation of the one and the same God, that they all equally derive their sustenance from him and therefore are equals of one another. It is this belief which supplies the vital force of life to democracy. In my humble opinion it is not right to say that religion is beyond the scope of democracy.

The truth that all men, good, bad or indifferent have a portion of the same divine essence in them is very

forcibly brought out in our religion, the realization and recognition of which is enjoined in the Bhagwad Gita. This is the one and essential theme not only of the Bhagwad Gita but of the Upanishads and the Purans as well. I would therefore call our religion a democratic religion.

In spite of caste and untouchability the ugly customs which have somehow found their way into the framework of Hindu society it has an honoured place for democracy to which it gives great sanctity. This noble ideal of equality may not yet have found expression in political social democracy but no system of political democracy can be stable without a background of this religious ideal.

Human society cannot build its foundations on rights alone. The emphasis of western democracy is on rights. Political parties, trade unions, and workers' and peasants' organizations are all formed on the basis of rights. Their approach to questions is from the point of view of rights. The mentality which is fostered in this atmosphere is not amenable to smooth working. It, therefore, inevitably results in perpetual clashes. The present state of the western world is a proof in point. In spite of the unprecedented achievements in the world of science and organisation, we are witnessing today the destruction of its civilization which is crumbling down like a house of cards. It is being crushed under its own weight. Its wonderful discoveries, its great energy and activity, which if rightly used, ought to have made it impregnable have like a boomerang turned against itself and are instrumental in annihilating it. That democracy for which so many battles were fought and so much blood was shed, is to-day shamefacedly retiring in the background. Every child

knows that democracy in the western world has failed miserably. It is so because its basis is not secure. With us the approach to the problems of life is different. The very basis of our society rests on the ideal of Dharma or duty. Every child is taught to do its duty and not brother about anything else. The conception of the Varna Ashram Dharma, even the organization of caste, rested on this idea of one's own duty. It eliminated clash and competition. It nurtured a mutuality which knew how to give, how to serve and how to co-operate. It facilitated the smooth working of society. In such a society other people's rights are more sacred than one's own. People organise so that they see to it that they do not allow themselves to tread on other people's rights. When society is built on this sacred basis then alone can it be truly democratic and stable.

It is true that in spite of these noble ideals Hinduism has fallen on evil days. There are many practices allowed in Hindu society which are not consistent with its theories. Man is made to err. His weaknesses are born with him. It is hardly ever that he can perfectly follow the ideals he has placed before him. If, therefore, Hindu society has its faults it is only following the common fate of all humanity. But we may not forget that our civilization has stood the test of time much more than the western civilization. Comparatively the western civilization is a child of yesterday and it is already crumbling down to pieces. But our civilization with all the defects of old age, of hardness and rigidity is still alive. Its outer covers have become old and worn out, unfit for the use of the new age but its inner soul is as

young and bright as ever. That is immutable and everlasting.

It was this spirit which I saw coming out of its old and rotten shell, manifesting and asserting itself when masses of people came to put their weight on the side of temple entry. They assembled there to give their support to the rights of others which they themselves had wrongly taken away. Such enthusiasm on behalf of other people's rights could be displayed only by those in whom the ancient ideal of the all-pervading Dharma was still working, though perhaps unconsciously.

And so this reform of temple entry has great potentialities. It has set in motion a powerful wave of the purification of Hinduism. With its impurities purged Hinduism is yet capable of holding the torch of light to an aching world and succeed in dispelling the surrounding darkness. It can show the path of knowledge, of love and co-operation. It can lay the foundations of a sound and stable democracy in which the rights of one individual are as sacred as the rights of another and in which all are equal and there is no room for high or low. With a little adaptation of its hoary principles to new surroundings, the object can be achieved.

It is, however, sad to see that a few orthodox Brahmins are still opposing the reform. This opposition has grown with time. But fortunately it is limited to very small sections of the population. This is evidenced by the fact that although certain people are abstaining from going to temples, the number of temple worshippers is constantly increasing. With time this number is bound to increase still more. The entry of the temples must help in the purification

of the temples. Arrogance, separatism and selfishness must give place to humility, all-embracing love and co-operation. It cannot but bring conviction some time or the other even to hearts of those who are still clinging to their own interpretation of the Shastras. I beg to remind them with all humility that they have adopted a view of things which if followed will frustrate their own object, namely, the preservation of Hinduism. There is one thing, however, which the reformers cannot afford to forget and it is that the temple entry reform has placed a great responsibility on their shoulders. The duty of consolidating the reform is theirs. The entry of the Harijans into the temples is only the beginning of a series of reforms which are needed. Many corrupt practices have crept into the mode of temple worship. Many of the temples to-day lack that atmosphere of purity which should necessarily pervade a temple. In many places even physical cleanliness is wanting. We have to see to it that all these deficiencies are removed. The purificatory force which has been released by this reform can acquire momentum to the extent to which we can put work into it. Constant effort is needed on this behalf to bring to fruition the work that has been started.

We have also to see that the change is made much more far-reaching than the mere fact of the entry of the Harijans into the temples. If we leave it at that it will crystallize and lose its potentialities of bringing in vaster and deeper changes. We have to see that this reform ushers in a renewal of the whole life of the nation. It means a complete reversal in the attitude and life of both of the Harijans and the caste Hindus. To the Harijans it ought to mean, education, culture, self-respect, cleanliness and a disciplined life. To the caste Hindus

humility, love, devotion, co-operation and a better realization and practice of the tenets of their own religion. It should thus altogether raise the moral standards of the people. But these results cannot come by themselves. Conscious effort will have to be put in to enable the nation and humanity to reap the fruits of the seeds that have been sown. If proper cultivation is lacking the seed will not fructify. It will die out even before it sprouts into life.

I would, therefore, remind my co-workers particularly women that they cannot rest on their oars till they have seen to it that the reform is fully consolidated, that its lessons have been so burnt into the lives of the people that they may not be easily forgotten. It is to that end we have to devote our energies henceforth. May God give us the strength to rise to the occasion and do what is expected of us.

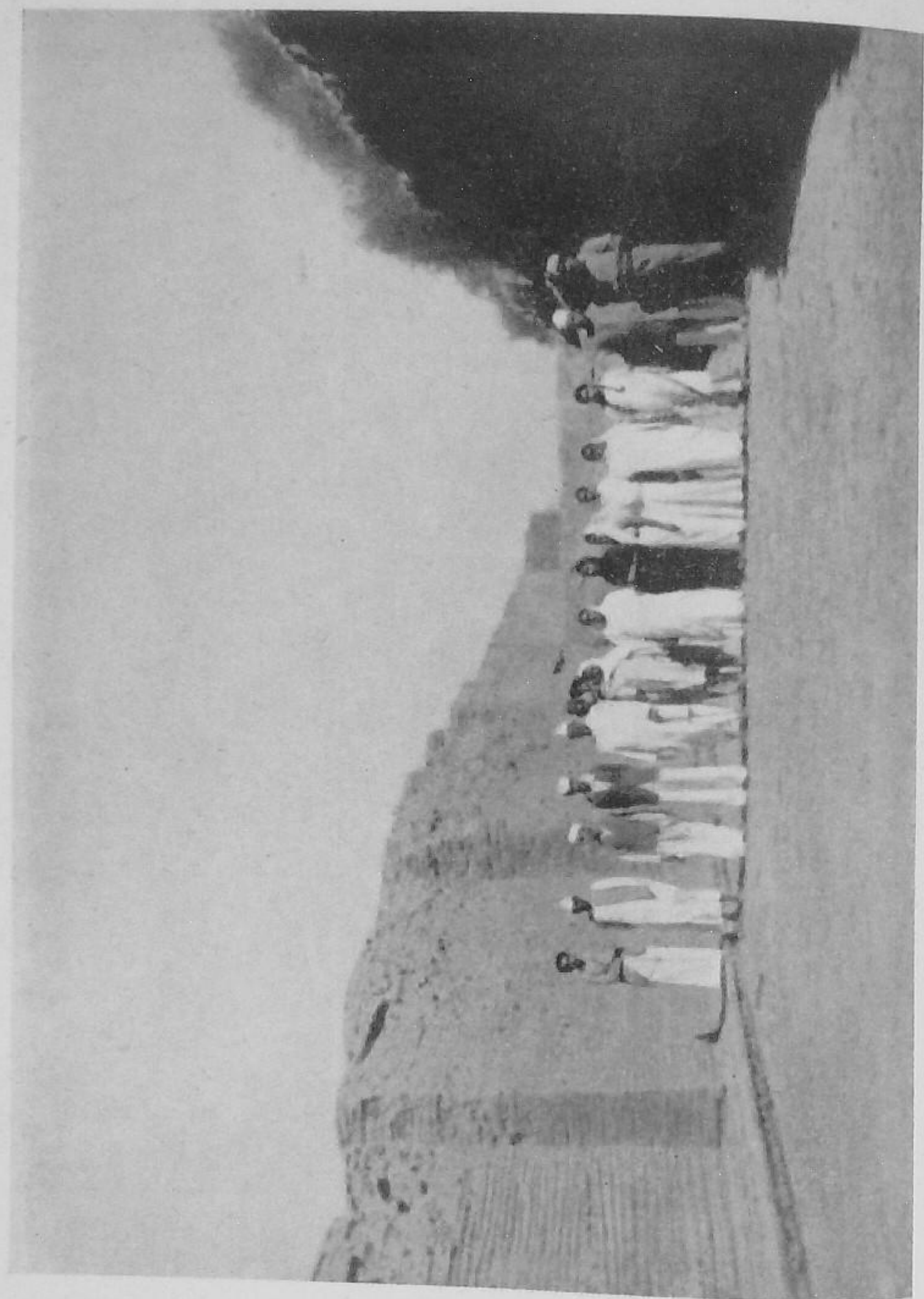
HARIJAN TOUR IN TAMIL NAD

It was a great experience to tour in Tamil Nad in the months of May and June 1939 for Temple Entry Campaign. If some one had suggested before the tour actually started, that the temples would open at the end of the tour, I would never have believed it. It seemed such a difficult task. Much spade work had yet to be done before such a consummation could be achieved, argued those of us who were engaged in this work. We did not know that the fateful hour had come and the temple doors were soon destined to open for the Harijans. I will never forget the first pleasant surprise I had when I witnessed the tremendous crowds listening intently to the speeches on temple entry which were being delivered inside the Town Hall on the 13th of May, on the day of the inauguration of the temple entry campaign in Madura. I had the honour of presiding over that conference. It was opened by the Hon'ble Shri Muni Swami Pillai and was attended and addressed by the Hon'ble Shri Rajgopalacharya, the Hon'ble Dr. Rajan and several other ministers and leaders of the province. They all pledged their word to work for the campaign and exhorted the people to make it a success. A spontaneous procession in the afternoon and a public meeting later in the evening were as great a success. I doubted my own eyes. I wondered whether all that was

happening in the same South where even the shadow of a Harijan contaminated a caste Hindu. It was the habit of the crowds to collect together to have the darshan of the leaders they loved and revered. And had not Shri Rajgopalacharya come there ! So disregarding the object of the meeting the crowds had come just to pay their homage to their beloved leader. Thus I argued in my own mind. I felt tempted to ask them if they were prepared to allow the Harijans to enter the Shri Meenakshi temple. My heart trembled as I put them this question. I was not sure what the answer was going to be. But as I waited with bated breath for an answer, I witnessed the pleasing spectacle of a forest of hands going up in support of the proposal. A thrill of joy went all over me. But I still doubted. It was so difficult to believe. They were the very men who a few years back had created a riot at a remote suggestion of allowing the Madars into the same Shri Meenakshi temple. How could this tremendous change have come over the people within such a short time ? But the spirit of the age was working imperceptibly and had already worked the miracle. All that was left to be done was only a matter of little mobilization and a little leadership. The ground was prepared. These scenes of enthusiams were repeated everywhere I went and there were hardly two or three districts which were left out of my tour itinerary. Evidently the whole of Tamil Nad from Madras right down to Rameshwaram was ready for the reform. If orthodox Madura led the way the rest were prepared to follow suit. And so Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Srirangam, Salem all vied with each other in their readiness to welcome their Harijan brethren into the temples. Often our meetings were held in the vicinity of ancient temples. Under the shadow of the

sacred rock temple at Trichinopoly, with the shining pure white light burning high up at the top, masses of men and women assembled in their thousands at the public meeting and gave their word of honour in support of the cause. I could not help remarking that the Goddess in the temple above must be rejoicing at that wonderful sight of so many of her worshippers coming together to help to restore the lost right of worship to her Harijan devotees.

The momentum of the campaign gathered as the tour proceeded. That great veteran reformer, the redoubtable Vaidnath Iyer, set himself to work in Madura. He made concentrated efforts. With the display of huge posters, the distribution of leaflets, the holding of many meetings a day, he forced the urgency of the attention of every individual in the city of old Madura. With the dexterity of an experienced leader he converted the majority of the worshippers of the Goddess Shri Meenakshi and led the first batch of the Harijans into the temple on the 8th of June, 1939. It was done in the small hours of the morning with hundreds of worshippers witnessing the happy spectacle. At last the closed gates of the sacred temple were opened and for the first time in history, the Harijans worshipped at the lotus feet of the Goddess. For weeks beforehand the atmosphere was tense, people were waiting in expectant suspense. The news of the great event spread like wild fire into the town. There were rejoicings. People were happy that at last this belated deed of redemption was accomplished. But a handful of orthodox opposed. They could not reconcile themselves to the reform. They started their own campaign. They fretted and fumed. They are still continuing their activities. They are harassing the



reformers and trying to prevent people from performing worship at the temple. But with the grace of God, right has triumphed and the worshippers are continuing in ever larger numbers. Madura was not the only town where temples were opened to the Harijans. The big temples at Tanjore with 80 others were opened. The news of the opening of temples in various parts came in as I proceeded along with the tour.

There was no opposition anywhere. All welcomed the movement with open arms. The first and only signs of opposition were exhibited at Chidambaram where our meeting was disturbed more than once and our speakers were not allowed to proceed. It was reserved for the sacred birth place of saint Nandanar whose great love forced God to bestow him "darshan" which was refused for him by the Brahmins. In spite of the whole area being reminiscent of that great event, the truth apparently had not yet gone home with the orthodox who still insisted on refusing the Harijans their birth right of worship at the temples. It seemed they were waiting still for another miracle to happen.

One small insignificant temple was opened right outside in a village, situated in the midst of a Brahmin Basti. For me it was the most significant indication of the change of the spirit. If unlettered villagers allowed their Harijan brethren to worship in their temple, the day was not far off when each and every temple would be opened and when there will not exist a single dissident. That will indeed be a day of triumph for the Hindu religion. With untouchability dead, it was destined to live.

I must say a word about what I saw of the immense joy with which the Harijans received this charter of their rights. Tears flowed down their cheeks. They hardly found words to express their feeling. They were

filled with the spirit of Nandanar the devotee and they worshipped their God with the same zeal. The unexpected had happened and they actually stood face to face with the object of their worship whose "darshan" they were denied for centuries. And the Brahmins and women rejoiced with them and worshipped along with them.

A great wrong of centuries was righted, Who can say that it was forced, uncalled for or untimely.

HELL IN AJMER HARIJAN BASTI

During our recent wanderings Thakkar Bapa and I had the opportunity of going round the Harijan bastis in Ajmer city. As expected by us we had almost to wade through pools of filth in the Mehtars' localities. The lanes seemed never to have even cultivated an acquaintance with the broom. Open drains fouled the whole atmosphere, and these were the habitations of the very people who kept the whole city clean !

But the most painful sight was the night-soil reservoir of the city, unmentionably dirty but situated close to many sweepers' and other houses. Six years ago I saw it, though in spite of my efforts, I could not stop there to watch its working. But its memory has stayed with me like a nightmare. I had tried then to get the public of Ajmer as well as others interested in it. The matter was also brought to the notice of the authorities of the municipality. But evidently to no effect,

Learning that this reservoir was still in the same old condition, Thakkar Bapa and I went to see it, though once again I found it impossible to stand there for long. Thakkar Bapa, of course, courageously and carefully went round the whole place and said with a simplicity, characteristic of him, that he could swear in a court of law that nowhere else in India did such a bad system of night-soil disposal existed. And Thakkar Bapa knows almost every Harijan basti in our country !

The reservoir consists of two rectangular tanks, about 100' x 20' x 10' each, which are used alternately. The night-soil mixed up with sewage water is shovelled into one of the tanks from a platform above, from a distance, thus exposing to view all the dirt. A Mehtar has to shovel the matter into the tank with something like a scraper attached to a long pole while his feet are immersed in the semiliquid filth. The tanks are open, and the foul smell from the night-soil of a whole city of one and a quarter lakh of population can better be imagined than described.

The most painful and inhuman part of the whole business is that about half a dozen Mehtars have every day to get right down into the tank in the midst of all the filth it contains, in order to see that the outlet in the tank is not choked with solid material. They have to wade through liquid filth, 1 to 2 ft. While doing so it is difficult for them to save their hands and other parts of the body from getting soiled. From the tank the liquid is taken out in an open channel, 2 miles long, and then utilised as manure. The whole thing is a revolting sight and a standing disgrace to civilised society.

2

I had often heard and even talked of India's poverty but had never known it from close quarters. My work among the Harijans during the last three years has brought me into touch with it and I can now understand what is meant by the term starving millions. It is not possible to forget them once a contact is made with them. Their lean and worn-out bodies and dejected faces, their hungry looks and hope-forsaken eyes, their bare and cheerless huts, their ill-clad and uncared-for children once seen haunt one's day and night. These are the people who form 90 percent of India's population. Their needs are India's needs. In any solution of India's problems it is they who have to be consulted first and foremost. Their hunger has got to be appeased, their bodies have got to be clothed, their habitations have got to be cleaned, their little children have got to be saved from disease and infantile death. In short, they have to be lifted from their conditions of dirt and filth and slavery and must be given the right to live human self-respecting lives. This ought to be and is, India's objective to-day and towards the achievement of this objective all its efforts should be directed.

3

The scarcity of pure drinking water to the Indian villages is a fact well-known to everybody. Water is a great need, even greater than food, yet the long suffering villager has patiently waited for generations for the proper fulfilment of this great need. Though lack of water is a common hardship shared by all sections of the people in the villages, it hits hardest the Harijans. Even where good drinking water is available, the Harijans cannot get it because of the prejudice of the caste Hindus which in many places is shared by the Muslims. On account of this prejudice the Harijans wherever they do not possess their own wells suffer inconvenience. In some places they have to wait hours before they succeed in getting water even for their urgent needs. In others they have to go long distances for it and often enough they have to satisfy themselves by using the dirty water of a stream or of a tank nearby.

4

(Over and above her work in the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh, Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru worked as Honorary Head of the Harijan Section, Government of India, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation from January 1948 to May 1949. In that capacity she did yeoman's service in rehabilitating Harijans who had migrated from Sind and West Punjab. She however, continued her solicitude for the Harijans who belonged to undivided India. In this article she has detailed the sufferings and grievances of Harijans of Rohtak District, East Punjab. These are the disabilities that Harijans still suffer in many parts of India. The article was published in the "Harijan" dated 17, 1949.)

In the last week of March, 1944 Harijans came all the way from Rohtak to Rajghat and undertook a fast for the removal of some of the grievances from which members of their community in Rohtak district were suffering. During the seven days that they kept the fast, I visited them three times to acquaint myself with their problems. On the 29th March, they broke the fast on certain assurances given by Shri Thakkar Bapa, myself and others on behalf of Sardar Patel to take up their cause and to do whatever was possible to help them.

During the course of the last few months, I have toured the East Punjab twice and know that most of the village Harijans of those areas are victims of all that there people were suffering from. I give below some of the grievances for the redress of which the fast was undertaken.

1. Social boycott of the Harijans by zamindar Jats.

2. Organised violent attacks by the said Jats, who came in a party to three villages and beat the Harijans to the extent of necessitating the removal of many of them to hospital for treatment. Since then one man is reported to have died.
3. Ejectment of the Harijans from their houses by unauthorised occupation of common lands by the Jats.
4. Prejudice against them shown by the non-election of the Harijans to the Panchayats with just a very few exceptions, in spite of the fact that they form a considerable part of the population.

(1) We all know what a terrible weapon of torture social boycott can be, which in this case also includes economic boycott. It is even worse than the weapons of violence. We are told that the poor Harijan victims of this boycott could not even purchase the necessities of life like food, kerosine oil, cloth and salt from any of the village shops. They either had to go to long distances to provide for their needs or had to go without them. Any bania who defied this boycott 'order' of the Panchayats had to pay Rs. 50 as fine.

The Harijans were not allowed to work in the fields and had to forego the scanty wages on which they were living. Non-compliance of this 'order' was also subject to a fine of Rs. 25 by the village Panchayat.

Their cattle were prohibited from entering the common grazing lands, as a result of which most of the Chamars had either to dispose off their cattle at low prices or had to send them to their relatives in distant villages.

Harijan tenants were not even allowed to reap their harvests.

2. "Organized attacks of violence." Some of the perpetrators were arrested by the police. The fear of

the Harijans, based on previous experience, was that due punishment would not be meted out to the culprits. They said it openly that they did not expect justice from the District Courts. According to them the police also showed great partiality. The result of these three organised attacks was that the whole Harijan population of the Rohtak District was in a state of panic and felt that their lives, property and woman were not safe.

3. In certain villages the lands which were in the occupation of the Harijans for generations were taken possession of by the Zamindars, and even their houses and house-yards were not spared, as a result of which a number of Harijans had become shelterless.

Their sufferings touched me deeply, and I approached Shri Thakkar Bapa and some others to take up their cause and get them relief. But I know that the Harijans must have done something as a reprisal for which these cruel measures were taken by the Jats. As expected I found that the Chamars of this area had resolved not to remove the dead cattle and not to work unless adequate market wages were given to them. All the misery heaped on these poor people was in the shape of reprisals against these two measures. I expressed sympathy with their sufferings, and told them that they were free men and no one could force them to do anything, but refusal on their part to handle dead cattle was a wrong decision.

I gave them the instance of Shri Dastaneji who, though Brahmin by birth, took up the work of carcass removal to set an example. I explained to them how much wealth each carcass meant, the proper handling of which would bring them ample money in return. By refusing to handle carcasses, they were damaging their own interests. In this age of scarcity of employment

and occupation they might find its replacement by another gainful occupation difficult. At that time they were adamant in their determination, but later on I was told that they agreed to follow this occupation of carcass removal only if some caste Hindus joined them in this work.

After the fast was broken Shri Thakkar Bapa appointed a Committee of 3 persons, namely Shri Viyogi Hari of Harijan Udyogshala, Shri Bal Krishen Chandiwala and Shri Krishna Nair of Karol Bagh to tour the district, investigate and report. The Committee toured the district and submitted its report, corroborating all that the Harijans had said.

We sought Sardar Patel's intervention. Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava, the then Premier and some of the other officers were approached, and they all assured us that they would look into the affair and would do everything to redress the wrongs done to the Harijans. The report has been referred to the East Punjab Government which, in the meantime, has changed its composition. This question will come before the new Cabinet members who have taken an oath to serve the people and to do justice by them. I appeal to them to examine this case minutely and to do their duty by these victims of orthodoxy and selfishness. The Harijan problem in the villages of the East Panjab is getting more and more acute every day, and unless the new Cabinet makes a Herculean effort to cleanse the Augean stables, it will be impossible to restore the province to normality and peace. It is a matter of great regret that at a time when every individual in the country should be feeling the fresh air of freedom such repression is resorted to.

THE SO-CALLED "CRIMINAL TRIBES"

(Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru has been the vice-president of the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh from 1935. Along with Shri A. V. Thakkar and other leaders, she has espoused the cause of the so-called criminal tribes. These are the "poor outcastes of humanity" for the removal of whose stigma she and her colleagues have launched a movement. In this article she pleads for their 'freedom' and uplift. It was published in the Harijan, dated June 12, 1949.)

My work amongst the Harijans and close association with Thakkar Bapa got me into contact with a section of our people called the "Criminal Tribes". They belong to the category of Harijans, but their sufferings and their problems are quite different. They are not free men and have been kept under the control of the Government for several years past.

I was, therefore, not able to come into as close a contact with them, as I did with the rest of the Harijans, but I was interested in them, and watched their plight and their difficulties from a distance. I visited their colonies which were run by Government in many places. But naturally I did so in the company of Government officials, and so could only see the side of the picture presented by them. But I was conscious all along of the fact that there was another side of the picture which required presentation before the public.

There is an old "basti" called the Sansi "Basti" which has been in existence in Delhi for some time, where some of these people live. An old and devoted worker Prabhu Dayal who has dedicated his life to the service of these unfortunate persons was deputed by the Harijan Sevak Sangh a few years ago to serve in this colony. He has served the inmates, watching their interests and solving their difficulties as best he could. He has succeeded in making many men and women literate, some of whom have become fairly educated. During the last year Sir Arthur Dean, the president of the Improvement Trust, also interested himself in this colony, and arranged educational facilities for the children. Recently I renewed my acquaintance with this "basti" and its affairs.

In Delhi there is another lot of Sanai refugees from the West Punjab who are at present living in batches of five, seven or more families in different parts of the city. In company with Shri Sevakram I went to see them as reports of their terrible sufferings were brought to me. I can never forget the miserable conditions and surroundings in which these poor outcasts of humanity were living. The picture of an old woman crushed with misfortune, with grey hair and a wrinkled face is indelibly printed on my memory. She said in pitiable despair, "No one helps us, even our God has forgotten us." There was no anger, no bitterness in her voice. Only helpless despair shone in her eyes.

These people along with those large numbers of displaced persons who poured into Delhi, found their way here. They got themselves fixed somehow in wretched hovels made of rags or old tins. But as soon as they were settled, the police pounced upon them and started harassing them as they belonged to the "Criminal

Tribes." Not that they had done anything criminal, but only because they were born amongst them. They were ousted from wherever they pitched their improvised tents and were hunted out from one place to another. They could stay only on payment of bribes to the police who were extracting money and even then harassing them. No help of any kind was given to them either by the Government or by the people. They lived in most neglected and filthy places which were unfit for human habitation. There were naturally no arrangements for water, sanitation or lighting. Their women and children had to go long distances to fetch a pail of water and even in these conditions they were not left to stay in peace. They were told to leave Delhi which they did not want to do, as they had already fitted themselves in the economic life of the city.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that most of them were occupied in gainful occupations. Some of them were even earning as much as Rs 100 and over. Many of them were educated. Even some of the women could read and write. They looked perfect specimens of healthy humanity, and yet were made to undergo terrible sufferings. They had lived in Government Criminal Tribes Settlements in the Punjab and the education and training they had received was the result of their residence in those settlements, where arrangements for their training and education existed.

Later on Thakkar Bapa also visited their haunts and took with him one highly placed officer of the Ministry of Rehabilitation to see their condition. Thakkar Bapa, Shri Sevakram and myself interviewed the Chief Commissioner, explained the whole situation to him and requested him to give a plot of land

adjoining the Sansi "Basti" for the permanent residence of these people. After great efforts and long negotiations he has agreed to do it, and it is now proposed that all these 60 families will be shifted to this plot of land and gradually houses will be built for them for their permanent residence. The whole of the 'basti' will be entrusted to the Harijan Sevak Sangh for social welfare work in co-operation with the Government. The work will soon be started, and I hope that this will result in the mitigation of the sufferings of these people. But, of course, the remedy lies in a more radical change.

SOCIAL SERVICE IN EDUCATION

It gives me great pleasure to come into the midst of India's youthful daughters who in ever-growing numbers are flocking to our schools and colleges to-day. In my early days a gathering of so many promising young ladies engaged in the pursuit of high education was a sight rarely to be seen. A few solitary women, coming from the most advanced sections of society, could, perhaps, be seen here and there, who in their homes or in schools were given a smattering of modern education and formed the only swallows of the coming spring. Who, in those days, could have thought that in comparatively so short a time the number of young ladies getting high education would grow to such large dimensions and that our Universities would turn out women graduates with such great speed. The sight, therefore, gladdens my heart.

But while women's education is growing fast in quantity, we must make sure and see that its quality also keeps pace with it. For, even more than quantity, it is quality that matters. We must be certain that every step that we take is in the right direction, and that our efforts are worth the energy, labour and time that we spend upon them.

Of late years our educational system in general has been the subject of great criticism. Experts in education and the leaders of the nation are not satisfied with its

results and products. Women's education is, of course, a part of the general whole. It follows the general pattern and is open therefore to the same criticisms. These criticisms at the present day are engaging the attention of the educational authorities all over the country and are threshed out in all their details in their meetings and conferences. I do not propose to deal with any of those criticisms today. My object in this address is simply to draw your attention to the high position occupied by social service in education.

To show the importance of social service in education it would have been better if I could have explained to you the purpose and object of education. But it is not easy to say, in a few words, what that object is. Education has so many facets and such varied aspects, its strands are so closely intertwined with those of life itself, that it is almost as difficult to give a true definition of the purpose of education as that of life. Leaving that aside, therefore, I shall deal with the various points of view from which I consider social service to be an essential part of a student's life.

Firstly, from the standpoint of intellect. To understand the significance of things, to realize their importance and to grasp them from all points of view, it is essential that a student should come into contact with real life as early as possible. The Montessori and Kindergarten methods of teaching are not necessary for small children only ; the necessity and importance of the basic principles of these systems subsists throughout life. The eyes are the most effective instruments wherewith to work upon the mind. As the shape of an island or a river or a lake or a gulf is more impressed on the mind of the child if it sees them in real life, than when it is given a mere verbal definition, so the affairs of human life

are understood much better if one comes into real contact with them. If it is necessary for a student of science to learn his subject with the aid of practical demonstration, it is equally necessary for a student of politics, economics, history, psychology, sociology, to see how the principles that are enunciated by him work out in everyday practice, how the pure theory that he studies is twisted and truncated and rendered almost unrecognisable through the myriad modifications that have to be made in it before it can be applied to the actual facts of life. However clever a teacher may be in explaining things, however interesting and exhaustive a book may be, they can never take the place of a little practical object lesson. Things never sink into the mind so well as through a visual demonstration. We may learn to say "No taxation without representation", or "Civic freedom is the birth-right of all human beings"; we may be able to argue on the theories of free-trade and protection; we may be able to repeat the facts of the Industrial Revolution; we may learn the dates and names of kings and wars. But all this learning will be something outside us. It will be a mere collection of facts and figures and we shall never imbibe it and make it a part of our being till we see its application in life. Why is it, that there should be no taxation without representation? Why do men want democratic government? How these things affect human life and happiness can only be understood when we have seen human life in its various aspects; and that can be done to a very large extent through social service. In ordinary daily life our normal activities bring us into contact only with men and women of our own class. Even in schools and colleges we associate mostly with the

same strata. As our society is constituted to day class divisions are becoming sharper than before. Along with progress of Western education classes are fast taking the place of castes in our country and the two classes of the educated and the un-educated are developing so as to divide the nation into two different sections, each with its distinct joys and sorrows, pleasures and pains, with different tastes and outlooks on life. That division has even now become so great that, because of lack of contact, our knowledge is confined more or less to our own class and we do not know, nor do we understand, the condition and circumstances of those who are unfortunately situated below us in the scale of society. Our knowledge is thus limited and unreal. Social service is a great cure for this defect. It gives us chances to come into contact with a wider circle of human beings and thus enables us to study humanity in its manifold variety. Our understanding becomes mature and our knowledge real, while the judgment gets sounder and more stable. For our intellectual development, therefore, social service is even more necessary than books.

Secondly, from the moral or spiritual point of view it is also necessary. We hear a great deal now-a-days about the necessity of moral training and character building. No amount of dogmas and formulae can help in the formation of character to the same extent as a little bit of social service. We may know the stories of our religious saints and rishis by heart, we may memorise their teachings and be able to sing hymns. But they can never be such powerful agents in converting our hearts to righteousness as a little contact with a fellow human being and little service rendered to him in his hour of need and suffering. A helping hand given to a sick person, a little advice and direction given to one in

darkness, sympathetic touch and a little kindly feeling of affection towards those we come across, go a longer way than any books or lectures on religion and morality. The more we come into contact with people, the more we understand them, the more we work for them, the more we begin to love them. Thus our hearts become larger and our sympathies wider.

The habit of serving others must be cultivated from early childhood. In former days in India, when households were big and work of all kinds was done at home and girls had nothing else to do except to help in the house, they got used to service from their very infancy. It became a habit with them which persisted throughout life. At the present time conditions of home life are rapidly changing and, as households are becoming smaller and a great deal of the house work is done by experts and servants, girls do not have the same scope for service in their homes. Besides, there is a general tendency in modern mothers to exempt their school and college going girls from household work, fearing that it might interfere with their education. Thus, under the modern system, if social service does not take the place of the household service rendered by girls in former days, there is every fear of the girls becoming narrowly self-centred. Indeed, in certain parts of India the fear has already materialised, and the greatest criticism levelled against the modern system of education is that it results in making girls selfish and incapable of rendering unselfish services. This is not an insignificant danger. If not countered it is apt to nullify all the good which otherwise education might do. We must take care to contend against this tendency as the easiest way of doing it is to get the girls into the habit of service from the early days of their student life.

Thirdly, I shall deal with this question from the utilitarian point of view. With the changed conditions of the world the ideals of education are rapidly changing. The education of women is no longer looked upon merely as an ornament, or as an accomplishment to adorn or to beautify, so that they may be able to shine in greater brilliance in the delicate settings of their drawing-rooms. That was an old fashioned idea, of Victorian age in England, and in India too it belonged to the last generation. The whole outlook on education has undergone a fundamental change. Even in men's colleges the objective is no longer merely to turn out learned scholars who can spin fine phrases, use big words and make eloquent speeches. The object is more to produce useful citizens capable of serving their country. That is why so much stress is being laid on vocational and manual training, and that is why Indian colleges have lately developed the teaching of such subjects as industrial chemistry.

Our aim must, therefore, not be only the acquisition of knowledge. Unless we can use it, knowledge serves no useful purpose. It is a locked treasure, the only key to which is practice. We should therefore make it as much our aim to acquire the key as the treasure, and social service is a very apt and handy means of acquiring that key.

Women must aim to be as good citizens as men. They must try to fit themselves in with the growing life of the country and take their due share in the movements of the world. They cannot successfully do this merely by study. While study will point to them the way, it can never supply them with the motive force for action. For that force is supplied only by the emotions, and emotions are brought into

play only by contact with life. However much your mind may be convinced of the truth of a certain theory, you cannot bring yourself to act for its promotion and adoption in life unless your heart is touched, and your heart can be touched only when you live and move and freely fraternize with the victims of the evil which your theory seeks to cure. Social service brings you those contacts, and therefore, will bring into play those forces of your being which, in course of time, will compel you to act, and will end in making you a good and useful citizen. From the viewpoint of utility, therefore, it is equally necessary that you should start social service as early as possible. It should, indeed, form a part of your curriculum, and must be given more importance than the study of books.

Now, young ladies, there are various ways in which you can undertake to do service to your fellow-beings. The abject poverty of India, its mass illiteracy, the disintegration and desolation of its villages, the insanitary conditions around you, the enormous infant mortality (much of which is due to the ignorance of mothers), all these call for your service and supply you with a wide field for your activities. With the help of your teacher's here you may not find it difficult to apply yourselves to any of those fields of work. If all of you undertake to teach reading and writing to five poor illiterate men and women or boys and girls every year, think of how many you will succeed in making literate. In the same way, if you form yourselves into groups and visit adjoining villages, say once a week, and spend a good long time with the villagers, fraternizing with them and cultivating their friendship, think of the number of dark and dirty homes into which you will bring light and the message of

cleanliness, sanitation, and better living. By thus moving with them, gaining their confidence and cultivating their friendship, you can help them in cleaning their streets, homes and persons and assist their women by teaching them a little sewing or reading. You can talk to them, tell them stories, and give them a little information about the affairs of the wider world into which they have no access. If you will do that a few times in the right way, you will feel yourselves how you will get a place in their lives and how as a consequence of that, you will enrich your own lives and make them fuller. There are several baby clinics in your town. You can go to them regularly and serve and make friends with the little babies who come there daily. Then there are many Harijan basties round about here, not far from you. If you go to them, you find how little children and women there need your help and care. Befriend those neglected women and children; look after their needs, give them a little of your love and bring the message of their tale of woe to the men and women of your own class.

You must always remember, my young friends, that the education you are receiving is paid for by the taxpayer. The very hall in which we are sitting to-day, your beautiful Maharani's college, your lecture-rooms, playing fields, your laboratories and yours libraries, you enjoy at the expense of the poor and neglected peasant and Harijan who pay for them with the sweat of their brow. You are, therefore, under a debt to them which you must pay, and because of the very education you are receiving, yours debt is greater than that of the ignorant. You cannot take from life and give nothing in return. The measure of your education is the measure of the debt you owe. See

that you are not a defaulter and that your debt is truly paid.

India expects her daughters to do their duty. Indian women have always been known for their loyalty and devotion to duty. See that you keep the torch burning and hold the standard high. The very fact that you are privileged to be educated makes greater the burden of the duty that you have to discharge. Social service, therefore, is not merely the most important part of your education, but it is also a debt and duty which you owe to your mother country. The sooner you set yourself to discharge that debt and duty the better for you and the country.

INDIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

(Presiding over the Women's Section of All India Educational Conference held at Srinagar in 1941, Mrs Rameshwari Nehru dealt at length with the unsuitability of Indian educational system. She appreciated the well-known national educational institutions in india which have been trying to remove the defects of this system. Due to her close contact with the masses of India, she could not but give her considred thoughts on the necessity of a planned mass literacy drive. Being a trusted lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi she knows the Wardha Scheme well and her estimate of it is interesting. She also threw light on the desirable kind of religious instruction and the means of achieving inter-communal harmony and women's economic independence.)

Education, however, has a close bearing on the general well-being of the country and as such I have watched with deep concern the effects of modern education on the development of the people. I do not propose, nor am I competent enough, to hold the balance as to whether we have lost or gained by the present system of education. Good and evil are mixed up in all human affairs and to a measure they both exist in the education which has been imposed on us. But that is no proof of the excellence of the system. Its unsuitability is recognized by most thinking people who themselves are its products. It has been often said that the cast of the present educational system was made to meet the early needs of the British rulers who wanted collaborators in the subordinate grades of their administrative cadre. That need

has now been more than fulfilled. There is an overflow of educated collaborators of the British Government in the country and the supply has far exceeded the demand. That in itself has created a big problem which requires very urgent attention. But that is not the least part of the many problems confronting the Indian educationist today. Our methods of examination, of teaching from the primary schools right on to the University, involving cramming of a soul-crushing nature, superficiality of the knowledge imparted and its non-absorption by the pupil, ignorance of life prevailing in the country, distaste for all manual activities and incapacity for practical work, these and many others are defects of modern education. But I will abstain from dwelling on these well-known defects which are admitted by all. Barren criticism is futile, if not harmful. We should, therefore, lay grater stress on plans of reform and reconstruction, trying to find ways and means of remodelling our educational machinery to a new pattern of our heart's desires.

Many efforts were made in the country at various times by distinguished men and women to build up educational institutions on national lines. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya's Hindu University of Benaras, Sir Syed Ahmad's Muslim University of Aligarh, Professor Karve's Women's University of Poona, the Usmania University of Hyderabad Deccan, the Anglo Vernacular schools and colleges of Arya Samaj are some of the successful instances of private enterprise on behalf of education. The late Mrs. Besant's scheme for national education, Swami Shraddhanand's Gurukuls, Dr. Tagore's Shanti Niketan, Mahatama Gandhi's Vidya Piths of Ahmedabad and other places are of a more independent type. On the side of reform in

specific women's education, the lady Irwin college for women for home science in New Delhi is an excellent example.

All these institutions are embodiments of national aspirations and living proofs of the wide-spread dissatisfaction with the Government educational machinery. Though popular in their own way, they serve only as models representing the ideas of their founders and promoters. They by no means do or can replace the Government machinery. In fact some of them perforce have to follow the Government model to maintain their existence by the aid of subsidies they receive from the Government. Recruitment of pupils also depends to a large extent on Government recognition without which the worldly career of the scholars is jeopardised.

This shows, and a survey of the history of modern education proves, that under the present conditions, educational organisations, depend for their existence on the Government of the day and are highly influenced by it. We, therefore, cannot hope to bring about radical changes in education without a simultaneous change in the nature of the Government. It is here that the politician and the educationist meet. But that does not mean that nothing can otherwise be done. Much can be achieved by way of reform and it is the task of this Conference to make practicable and feasible suggestions for such reforms. It is a matter of satisfaction that during the past two decades a great many successful efforts have been made to remove the defects of the present system and to improve it in all possible ways. And perhaps the credit of many of these improvements goes to this Conference.

During the course of the next few days various

sub-committees will meet to discuss various problems. While the other sub-committees have to deal with their own special subjects, our Committee is concerned with all of them. I do not think the problems relating to Women's education are in any way different from the men's except perhaps in a very limited way. Our discussion, therefore, is bound to be many-sided.

Looking at education in the perspective of the masses, the first question that strikes one is its utter absence in rural life. When we discuss educational problems in conferences like ours, we are apt to forget that they touch merely a fringe of the population. With all the universities, colleges and schools that exist in the country our literacy figures are deplorably low; namely 8% in the case of general population and 2% only in the case of women. With this background of hopeless ignorance, the first problem that confronts one is the question of the propagation of literacy. There has been a great drive for the spread of literacy during the last 3 or 4 years after the inauguration of the 1935 Constitution. But it has not made any appreciable difference.

It is noteworthy that now-a-days literacy has assumed greater importance than before. In former times, there existed social and religious institutions which served to raise the cultural level of the people. Temples and mosques, festivals and fairs, "Kathas" and "Satsangs" and places of pilgrimage were centres of culture where the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated freely moved and influenced each other. Class distinctions were not as acute as they are today as the modes of thought and living were similar to a great extent. The educated classes had not yet deserted the villages. The gulf created by the modern English education between the educated and the uneducated

did not exist. The disintegration of life which has come as a result of the foreign influences, destroyed the former organisation of society and with it have gone all those healthy educative influences. Literacy, therefore, as well as the cinema and the radio of doubtful utility are not the only means of imparting education to the masses.

Mahatma Gandhi's Wardha Scheme is as much a method for improvement of the content of education as a way of bringing education within the reach of the poor. If we allow matters to drift as they are, it will take us centuries to accomplish the task of educating the people. The expensiveness of the preset system is a great block in the way. If for nothing else, it is for this reason that the Wardha Scheme should be given a full trial. I am glad to see that under the guidance of Mr. Saiyidain, the Kashmir Government has adopted this Scheme for trial. But we cannot hope that the Wardha Scheme will succeed, nor can we hope to spread literacy, without the educated young men and young women coming forward willingly to undertake this task as a labour of love at personal sacrifice.

It is evident that such men and women are not forthcoming in sufficiently large numbers, and educational system is at last partly responsible for this lack. It has miserably failed in character building and formation of personality which ought to be the chief aim of education, and in my humble opinion this is due to the fact that all religious and ethical education has been eschewed in our educational institutions. Owing to the policy of religious neutrality of the government, also to the desire of keeping clear of sectional religiosity no attempt has been made to introduce religious and moral teaching in the schools and colleges. I am not in favour of giving sectional theological training in public

schools, but ethical teaching with a religious background, is quite different from theological instruction. It is being successfully tried in some private schools and colleges and there is no reason why their example cannot be followed by public institutions. There is a wealth of beautiful literature in all religions which it is difficult to excel. The life stories of saints and prophets of all denominations make more inspiring reading than the histories of wars and empires with which the brains of our young ones are stuffed. They should form the central themes of text books, which require complete overhauling. I recommend that a demand for the introduction of such teaching in the schools from the primary stages to matriculation and for the study of comparative religions in the university stage should go forth unanimously from the Women's Section of this Conference. It would be interesting to note here that as early as 1936, the All India Women's Conference passed the following resolution which has still not been implemented.

"Moral training, based on spiritual ideals, should be made compulsory for all schools and colleges".

The subject of intellectual and intercommunal understanding which is the central theme of this conference is closely allied to the subject of religious and moral teaching. During the last two decades the Hindus and Muslims, the two great communities of India have considerably fallen apart in their intellectual understanding of each other's lives. That spontaneous cooperation which was given by each community to the other on the occasions of festivals, the appreciation of mutual culture which was the natural outcome of familiarity with each others religion, literature, traditions, habits and practices are on the wane, particularly

amongst the higher classes. Misunderstandings started on the political plane have found their way into other fields of life and have resulted in the virtual estrangement of the two communities. Old women of the last generation, in spite of being un-educated in the modern sense were rich in the knowledge of each other's religious lore and tradition and, therefore, maintained a tolerant outlook. I am surprised to see the ignorance that prevails today. Women are greater culprits in this respect than men.

The language controversy is one of the off shoots of this spirit of estrangement. Hindu women have taken to devoting themselves exclusively to the study of Hindi and a Hindu Woman who knows Persian and Urdu is a rare sight now-a-days. As for the Muslims it is rarer still to find amongst them one who has even an elementary knowledge of Hindi and Sanskrit and all it contains. That bond of union provided by allegiance to the same masters of literature is broken and its disastrous effects are destroying the very vitals of our national life. It is very necessary that we should do something to counteract this tendency. I suggest that from our section the following recommendations be sent to the Conference unanimously.

(1) In areas where Hindustani is spoken knowledge both Hindi and Urdu scripts be made compulsory for all trained school teachers.

(2) In the same areas learning of the alternative script be made compulsory from the fifth class onwards in all schools.

(3) New text books should be written from the primary to matriculation classes in simple language, eliminating all difficult Sanskrit and Persian words, which should be the same in both scripts.

(4) Books emphasising common points in all religions should form part of the general courses in higher classes.

(5) Scholarship and prizes should be awarded for Hindus learning Persian and Arabic and Muslims learning Hindi and Sanskrit.

(6) Courses containing Hindu and Muslim achievements in all spheres should be compiled.

(7) Prizes should be awarded to Hindus and Muslims for writing essays on each others culture and achievements.

The question of women's economic independence has been especially referred to us for consideration. It is one of the most important questions on which opinions vary. A large section of people feel that women's economic independence will lead to the disruption of society. My opinion and that of a very large number of educated women is decidedly in its favour. Women cannot come to their own until their economic independence is achieved nor can the correct relationship between man and woman be established except on the foundation of pure selfless love without any sordid taint of monetary gain. That loyalty which is given only for the sake of bread and shelter is not only worthless but even debasing. We should, therefore, demand from our section of the Conference that a professional bias to the education of women should be given forthwith. House wifery, mother-craft and home science should of course be there as compulsory subjects but in addition each woman must have a profession of her own. Apart from the point of view of women's emancipation, the economic struggle of the middle classes has grown so stiff that the desired standards cannot be maintained unless both husband and wife

contribute to the income, of the family. That will lead to the stability and happiness of the family life.

In the end I beg to draw your attention to the task that awaits you as educationists. The hopes of the whole nation are hanging on the results of your efforts. No doubt your difficulties are tremendous. You are not free agents and have to work under great limitations. Yet the responsibility of guiding the youth of the country is yours. See then that you give them correct guidance so that they are able to make their contribution towards the ushering in of the new era by reconstructing a society which is founded on knowledge, justice and good-will.

DUTIES OF EDUCATED WOMEN

I felt happy at the sight of so many young women belonging to all communities gathered together to receive their certificates of graduation, particularly when I know that those whom I see before me are only a small part of a much larger number who pass through the Universities every year. On an occasion like this, I cannot help comparing the conditions of to-day with those of my young days when a woman graduate was a novelty and the education of women was still a controversial subject. Sending a young girl to school was considered to be a dangerous venture and an educated woman was supposed to be an insurgent animal whom it was difficult to fit into the surroundings of the home. Spectres of homes breaking up and of families disintegrating arose in the heated imaginations of those who were afraid to give education to girls. Serious discussions took place in homes where individuals discussed the subject thread-bare and debates took place in public, in the press and on the platform. To educate woman or not to educate her was the great question. The last two decades have brought about a complete transformation and the education of women is no longer a controversial subject, particularly among the urban higher and middle classes. In spite of the many defects of our educational system, the desire for women's education is so overwhelming that the tide of the

numbers of school and college going girls is constantly swelling.

It is admitted on all hands that the education provided for our women is not of the best type. Without any plan or fore-thought they have simply been thrown into the cast prepared for men and we all know how miserably that system has failed to satisfy the needs even of men. I will not tire you by enumerating the many defects with which this system is bristling. They are too well known to bear repetition here. I shall never the less make a few constructive criticisms with suggestions.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that practically all educationists and parents are dissatisfied with the present system and that educational reform is engaging the attention of most of them. As a result some improvements have been made, but a thorough overhauling of the system is needed before it can be expected to fulfil its purpose.

The purpose of education, as I conceive it to be, is two-fold, first, to equip the individual with the necessary training to get the best out of life and secondly, to fit him to be a useful member of society. I shall deal with the first object now.

It has been said that living is an art and needs learning before one is able to make the best use of the brief span of life granted to each one of us. For that purpose inherent latent qualities have to be drawn out and developed so that they lead to the perfect evolution of the individual. The inborn qualities of a child have to be unfolded to enable him to use his senses in order that he should see and hear, observe and think, and work properly. This cannot be done by reading books, passing examinations and memorizing facts and theories.

It can be achieved gradually by the constant exercise of the senses, by practice and experience. Learning, therefore, far from being divorced from life has, to be of real and of any practical use, be closely related to it. It has to be directed towards the attainment of the object in view, viz, as stated above, of teaching individual to live a full, useful and rich life. The present day education is sadly lacking in many of these essentials. Many highly educated people are misfits in life. Unemployment among graduates resulting in great unhappiness and discontent is also to a large extent due to this system of education. To avoid this maladjustment and subsequent worries every child should be thoroughly trained in the profession he has to adopt in his life. I am therefore of opinion that a vocational bias should be given to the education of each child early in life and even advanced college education should have a bearing on it. Subjects chosen pointlessly and haphazardly, merely with a view to get marks in examinations, are of no practical use to the individual in after life. The elements of study should be such as will serve as a preparation for the work to be undertaken later on.

It is as necessary for a woman to have a profession as it is for a man. Without that women's economic independence cannot be achieved. The present education qualifies young men for government jobs, both clerical and administrative. But the only occupation that general education opens out for women is teaching. That line of work is fast getting over-crowded. Moreover, those who enter it do so without adequate preparation. The generality of our women do not desire a profession. Some of them take to teaching merely to pass the intervening period between the finishing of their education and the time of their marriage.

This is neither fair to the organization under which they work nor to themselves. I feel that women should take to their work more seriously and must adopt some profession or another as their own for which they should get adequate training. To avoid inefficiency teachers in the college classes should have specialized knowledge of their subjects.

I know it is difficult for a woman to harmonise marriage with profession. But an adjustment is possible and, by the mutual co-operation of husband and wife, such an adjustment has successfully been made in many cases. Although I am strongly of opinion that every woman should be trained to a profession so that she may be able to earn her living if need arises. I do not hold that every married woman should necessarily take to work. Home making is no work of a mean order and those who choose to devote their full time to work in the home are as usefully employed as those working outside. Marriage is a vocation by itself and every woman in addition to her own profession should be specially equipped with a training to fulfil the obligations of married life. A new syllabus as comprehensive as life itself, will have to be formulated for that purpose. It is a matter for satisfaction that domestic science, physical training, sports and athletics, music, drawing, painting and mothercraft nowadays figure prominently in some of the women's educational institutions. But the number of such institutions, which lay special emphasis to these subjects, is very small. They deserve much more study and attention than is given to them at present. However, a beginning, though humble, has been made. But successful home-making requires knowledge of many more subjects than those mentioned above. Mere efficiency in house-keeping, though necessary, is not

sufficient by itself to make a home. Feed the brute man, if you want to keep him in order, is an oft repeated dictum. But man does not live by bread alone is another, which should also be remembered. The material surroundings of a house, the delicacy of its dishes, the quality of its furniture, the colour of its curtains, the cleanliness of its surroundings are of great importance but if the spirit of understanding and co-operation does not exist, the home is not a home but a dead picture, which is beautiful to look at but devoid of life. It is the women's business to infuse life into the home which is the creation of a spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation among the members of the household. It is this which fills the home with radiant joy. Love is a powerful factor in breeding that atmosphere, but that again is not all. An understanding of human nature and the motive force of human action, a knowledge of dealing with people, a habit of mutual give and take, are essential qualities for this purpose. And they can all be acquired by study and practice. I therefore suggest that a study of human psychology, of child psychology, of sex life, of how to deal with fellow beings should form a part of women's education as a preparation for marriage. This aspect of woman's education has received very little attention in India. The change in the conditions of life, and the growing freedom of women have prominently brought to the surface the need for such an education. Many a home breaks or is unhappy because of lack of knowledge of how to adjust mutual relationships. I would recommend to all educated women a study of psychology and more particularly of psychoanalysis.

In former days, with all the drawbacks, the joint family had the one great advantage that it taught

to women a great deal of give and take for the sake of adapting themselves to the ways of the family. It also formulated, early in life, habits of giving unselfish service to the family which were a great asset in later life. Good advice and guidance from the elders was also available in times of difficulty. Now that families have become smaller, girls have to depend on their own resources. Hence, the need for special training is much greater than before.

I would now like to make a few remarks about education of the individual with respect to the life of the group or the nation. No one in the world can or should live an isolated life. We have reached a stage in civilization when even national isolation is not possible. An individual bears to the nation the same relation that a protoplasmic cell bears to the physical body. The well-being of the smallest cell is necessary for the whole body. Each has its own life but the two lives of the part and the whole are so closely interwoven that they are one for all practical purposes. The cells while living their separate lives alone, combine to live a common life for the welfare of the body. Each cell subordinates itself to the common good of the whole, for the safety and protection of which it often sacrifices itself. Human organisations are built after the same pattern. Individuals have their personal family lives as well as common group or national lives. In a well organised society the consummation of the life of the one should be in the good of the other. In the absence of such an adjustment disorder creeps into the body politic and disorder is a fatal disease leading to death. From this point of view, group or national life is even more important than individual life and it is evident that all steps should be taken to build it up. There

should, necessarily, be provision in the educational system to train children for the common life. Unfortunately our current educational system fails us grievously in this respect. Our national life would have been much healthier if our schools and colleges had discharged their duties in this connection. Education which fails to produce good citizens fails in its primary objective. Our national life is expanding, self-government is developing, common responsibilities are growing. The need for good and responsible citizens is greater at this time than at any other time in Indian history. If at this time of our need, educational institutions continue to fail us, they do not deserve to live.

The question of language in my opinion is intimately connected with good citizenship. Without a knowledge of the mother language, one is incapable of imbibing the spirit and the nature of one's own culture and civilization. Identification with the masses becomes difficult and the power to serve diminishes. This lack of knowledge of the mother tongue creates a barrier between the educated classes and the ignorant masses which it is difficult to cross. I need hardly say that so far our universities have neglected the claims of the languages of the country. It is a sorry sight to see our young graduates refusing to speak or write in their own language, simply because they can not do it. I would suggest that Hindustani be given a high status in the syllabus with the ultimate object of making it the medium of all education. I am glad to see that some universities have now taken to teaching Indian languages.

I have often suggested, and I repeat the suggestion that social service should be started in all schools and

colleges. Some of the men's colleges have made a beginning. But in women's institutions it is conspicuous by its absence. Various activities like literacy work, making garments for poor children, visiting Harijan quarters, reading out news to illiterate people, giving them talks on various subjects, organising games or clubs for them can, with the guidance of their teachers, be easily taken up by girls. I go so far as to suggest that degree certificates should not be awarded to graduates till they have put in at least six months, whole time honorary social service in one department or another. The deplorable lack of public workers among women cannot be removed unless some such means are adopted. Social service is a great counterpoise for the numerous defects of the present educational system. It helps in the formation of character. It enlarges human sympathy, gives inner balance and understanding and above all inculcates a spirit of selfless devotion.

I would like to make special mention of one or two points which in my opinion are grave defects of modern education. The tastes of educated girls have become very expensive. Their standard of life has become higher than can be justified in a poor country like ours. The love of luxuries, the desire for comfort and a distaste for manual work have become common characteristics of educated girls. As a result, in spite of our having advanced on many fronts of knowledge, efficiency and self-confidence, we have gone back in one very important respect and that is the spirit of unselfishness. Modern educated women have decidedly become more self-centred and more selfish than their predecessors, which is a very serious loss. Everything should be done to counteract this growing evil. The

environments of our educational institutions should be such as to encourage and teach simple living. We must prepare ourselves to be able to manage with small incomes. In the near future the incomes of what are now the richer classes in India are going to decline and as long as the grinding poverty of the masses lasts, we should not be sorry for this change. We should, therefore, learn to live within limited incomes and habits conforming to these should be acquired during days of studenthood,

I now want to say to you, my young friends, that you are much more fortunate than the women of my generation. You have had better chances of receiving education. You have more freedom and less restrictions. Take care that you take full advantage of the opportunities offered you. With greater rights go greater responsibilities. Freedom will be yours more and more in the days to come. Remember it is a hard mistress. It is most exacting. You get it only if you rise up to it and you maintain it only if you work hard to deserve it. Learn to bind yourself so that you may be free. Create your own limitations so that you may rise to unlimited heights. Obey so that you may be able to command. Live a disciplined life. Do not allow yourself to be carried away by mere catch phrases and enthusiasm. Think before you act and when you do act see that you have the courage of your conviction and are prepared to stand by it.

One last word and I finish. It is a common practice in our country for men and women to plead for communal unity, to exhort the people to promote amity and goodwill among different communities. To me these exhortations and pleadings seem undignified and I feel humiliated when I hear such things said. I feel

hurt at the expression of these sentiments as I would if somebody asked me to live at peace with my own brother and my sister. I look upon the different communities living in India as members of the same family, children of the same motherland. Racially and culturally they are the same. Their interests are indetical. But unfortunate differences have arisen among some of them which cannot be removed by mere exhortations but by working for the removal of the causes thereof. I ask you to devote yourselves seriously to the removal of these causes. Achieve Hindu-Muslim unity not by talking on it.

You Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and Christian girls have all lived and studied together. You have made friends with each other. I dare say you love each other as you would your own sisters. See that you are loyal to each other's community as much as to each other individually. Study the question and devote yourself to the cause notwithstanding any difficulties that may come in your way. The work of preparing India for the new life is yours. Do all you can to make it a mighty united nation living a righteous life of amity and goodwill, at perfect peace with one another, an example of solidarity for others to follow,

A MESSAGE TO CHILDREN

Dear little children of Sind,

Meeting you was my greatest pleasure during my tour in your province and I am fortunate to be able to say that I met you in your thousands. I met you in your classes, in your school premises at drill, in gatherings of Balkan-di-wadi where you had collected in your hundreds to give welcome to two old workers, the humble servants of your country. I do not know what you felt like when you met us but I can tell you, I felt highly exhilarated. Each time. I met you, I felt I was torn away from you, before I came near enough to you, I wanted to linger among you a while longer but the moving hand of the clock was always there pointing to the next engagement which claimed us. But however scrappy the contact, it will always be cherished in my memory as its richest treasure.

Those of you who read these lines will perhaps remember me. What I want to tell you just now may be a little different from what you have been accustomed to hear from your elders. Perhaps you have heard them say that little children must not bother about matters which are not their concern. Perhaps you have had it impressed on your mind that your books, examinations and playground should claim your whole attention. But I feel it is a great injustice to children to limit their vision in that manner. I think they should

revolt at this differentiation. A child has as much individuality as a grown-up person and should have as much right to learn about and take interest in things which are happening around him. They affect him as they affect others. He should, therefore, not only be allowed but encouraged to take part in constructive movements which are building up his country. It is done in other lands and it can easily be done in our country also. Little children can take up various kinds of work. Removal of illiteracy can be one of them. Chinese children have done it and our little children can do the same. They can also add to the wealth of the land even by spinning and weaving. They can help the poor by weaving Khadi, they can support industries of the country by the exclusive use of village and Swadeshi articles. Last and not least they can remove untouchability and promote communal unity by fraternising with the Harijans and befriending boys and girls of all communities.

Where service is concerned, there should be no barriers between children and grown-ups. The children have as much right to serve as the grown-ups. They should, therefore, assert their right and start serving the country in a constructive way from as early an age as possible. All children should remember that their identity is not separate from that of their country. They rise and fall with it. Therefore they must throw in their lot with it, cultivate the desire to serve it and be in search of opportunities for doing so from the very early days.



WOMEN'S CONFERENCE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

I wish I could address you in Hindustani to-day. We have been advocating a common language for the country and our organisation has recognised the claims of Hindustani as the "lingua franca" for India. In a women's assembly of an All-India character, Hindustani is the only and the most suitable medium of expression. But, unfortunately, the time for its usage on an occasion like the present has not yet come. I still have to labour through a foreign language to make myself understood. I beseech your forgiveness for the flaws in my language and hope that before long, we shall be relieved of this handicap, and Hindustani will be generally understood and spoken even in the South.

The All-India Women's Conference to-day completes fourteen years of its life. Much cannot be expected during fourteen years as after all it is a very short time in the life of a people. But in these abnormal times when scientific inventions have so accelerated speed that it defies all human calculations, living organisms are keeping pace with the machine. And so the progress of Indian women during this period, even measured according to the present standards, is not disappointing. I remember those days of the late twenties. We had just started agitation on various social problems concerning women. Till then, the work of women's educational and social advancement was mainly carried

on either by men or under their direction. Women generally were unfamiliar with these problems and their conferences on an All-India basis were a novelty. Women's participation in public work was rare and, although there existed hundreds of women's societies in different parts of the country, there was no co-ordination or co-operation between them. The picture to-day is different. Among the well-to-do classes, the number of highly educated women has grown enormously. "Purdah" is fast disappearing, the age of marriage has been considerably raised, there is more freedom of movement and larger contacts all round. The number of women interested in public affairs is much larger. The women's movement is directed and guided solely by themselves. They are found working in many spheres of life. In the district boards, municipalities, education committees, legislatures, in the government cabinets, in the national movements, though still in small numbers, they are making their contributions creditably. I am not vain enough to attribute all this progress to the Women's Conference. Various forces have been at work. Religious and social reform agencies, political and constructive work of the Congress, contact with the outside world, the spread of education and, last but not least, the spirit of the times have all contributed towards this emancipation. And now we see a new life pulsating through women, who are thinking and planning and agitating for the removal of their wrongs. The desire for change, which was so far more or less confined to the educated sections of society has gone beyond them and is affecting the comparatively backward classes of women also. The success of the Marwari Women's anti-Purdah Conference, held in Calcutta the other day, initiated and organised by themselves, is an instance in

point. The spirit of defiance shown by the 'zanana' women who came out to organise their procession leading it on horseback, was something to be marvelled at. It is a sign of the times and shows how imperceptible the women's movement is penetrating into and transforming the various strata of society.

The special contribution of our Conference to the women's movement is the definite shape and colour that it has given to it. It has focussed public attention on women's problems. It has created a machinery for the formulation of authentic views on such questions. It has consolidated and presented women's demands to the public and the various authorities. It has decidedly succeeded in bringing under its banner a larger number of women than any other all India women's organisation. Its annual sessions bring into contact women workers from all parts of India. It has certainly established a spiritual family relationship between them which in itself is an invaluable gain. It has inculcated in women the habit of toleration of differences of opinion, of appreciating each other's good points, of working together. It has given them their first lessons in democracy which, from the success achieved, seems to me more suited to the feminine temperament than to the masculine. The annual conferences held in different branches and sub-branches, particularly in small towns, create a stir among women, draw them together, make them think and form opinions on different subjects. This has created a great awakening among women.

The expansion of the scope of the conference from merely women's problems to wider questions of human relationships has given it a new life. It is not possible for any organisation, even though it be of women, to

live only on making demands for feminine right. A living organization needs growth and no narrow limits for its self-expression are possible. It was, therefore, a natural evolution of the growing life of our organisation. I need not point out that our main field of work is social and educational and in our resolutions we have dealt with these questions exhaustively. It is evident that all the reforms advocated by us were not capable of being achieved in a short space of time by any agency, government or private. They are much too numerous to bear mention here. I shall mention only a few by way of example.

In the sphere of education, we have laid great emphasis on free and primary compulsory education both for boys and girls and we have advocated more expenditure on women's education. We have demanded better sanitary conditions, trained teachers and various other reforms for schools. Some of our suggestions have been taken up and acted upon. Fine arts, advanced domestic science, provincial languages are included as optional subjects for college courses by some of the Universities. Women's hostels have been started by others. These matters repeatedly formed the subject matter of our resolutions. Some of our own branches enthusiastically took up the work of the removal of illiteracy and achieved good results. Others are running Hindustani, English, Sewing, Music classes of which hundreds of women are taking advantage.

The Lady Irwin College of New Delhi stands as an outstanding example of our efforts for giving domestic science a respectable place in the curriculum of women's education.

In the social sphere, we have made a humble contribution towards the removal of evil customs

and the obliteration of unjust laws. Among the many reforms that we have urged are the removal of 'Purdah', early marriage, widow remarriage, abolition of the dowry system, equal moral standard for men and women and economic independence of women. Our methods of work have been propaganda by means of meetings and conferences, but some of us have urged the necessity of legal enactments for the removal of these practices. I personally feel that conversion is a surer and better method of reform than compulsion. Compulsion even with the best of motives leads to bad results. In the matter of reforms, the law can be used only as an aid, helping the reformers to press in their points where unnecessary obstinacy is displayed. Had the Child Marriage Restraint Act been backed by intensive and widespread propaganda, its success, in spite of all other drawbacks, would have been ensured.

We have advocated radical changes in the personal laws particularly of the Hindus, and have demanded that the law with regard to inheritance, marriage, guardianship of the children and other matters should deal equitably with the rights of women. We want that polygamy should be abolished by law and divorce on specific conditions should be introduced among the Hindus. Bills embodying these reforms have become a normal feature of our legislatures but few have been destined to bear the test of the anvil and become the law of the land. A more drastic method of dealing with these unjust laws is indicated. I agree with the suggestion made by some of our members that an equitable comprehensive law based on the equality of the sexes should be enacted even though its adoption by individuals in place of the present divergent laws of the community may be voluntary.

Acts for the suppression of immoral traffic, for the protection of children, for the abolition of the Devadasi system and for various other purposes of a similar nature have been demanded by us and are now on our statute books. We have tried to do some investigation and organization work among working women and have embodied their demands of better housing, antenatal and prenatal maternity benefits, creches, nursery schools etc., in our resolutions.

From what I have mentioned merely by way of the nature of our work it is evident the scope of our work has become as extensive as life itself. Necessarily, therefore, practical work was done only in a very few instances. Most of our work consisted of preliminary opinion investigations and consolidation and focussing on these subjects. This has exposed us to criticism from many quarters, which we must determine to live down by devoting ourselves afresh to the task before us.

Among the subjects chosen for discussion at the present session and for work during the coming year, I would like to offer a few remarks on untouchability and communal unity from the social group and cottage industries and housing from the economic group.

Removal of untouchability is my own subject and I can say from experience that work in that sphere is most purifying. It brings us nearer to the realization of "Ahimsa". It helps us to see ourselves in the true perspective as perpetrators of terrible injustices on a vast community for which each one of us is individually and collectively responsible. Harijan service, like the worship of God, lifts one morally to a higher plane. It is like the redemption of a crushing debt which relieves the soul of its heavy burden. A little

contribution made towards the removal of untouchability, a little effort made to bring light and cheer into the dismal life of these victims of our oppression will lift us as individuals and as a nation to a higher level. I invite all sister delegates present here and, for them, the women of the whole country to make the experiment and test the truth of my assertion. This is not the place for me to give practical suggestions for work. I have been making suggestions for decades. Not much direction is needed when the heart is given. It knows how to make its own way. I, therefore, make a general appeal for women to take up this work as their own. Some of our branches are doing a little in that direction, and I am grateful to them. But much greater effort is needed and I am sorry to observe that women's contribution to the work is not striking to be proud of. We may not forget that the achievement of our freedom is impossible till we have rectified this great wrong. The awakening among the Harijans is growing very fast with the education they are receiving, but the prejudices of the caste Hindus are not dying out with the same rapidity. This breeds a resentful attitude among the Harijans which weakens the growth of the whole nation. Even from the point of view of national freedom, untouchability must go.

Communal unity is another allied chosen subject of the year. Its achievement for our national advance is as fundamental as the removal of untouchability. The nature of this problem bears affinity to the problem of untouchability. Nothing perhaps is more acute and requires more delicate handling. It is a mixture of political, economic and religious elements made complex and difficult of

solution by the presence of a third and interested party. But we may not put the blame on the third party and seek absolution of responsibility for ourselves. The very fact that the third party succeeds in creating or augmenting schisms among us shows our weakness. For the removal of that weakness ways and means must be found. The Women's Conference has done a considerable amount to bring the women of all communities on a common platform. I can vouch for the fact that among us there are no distinctions of caste or creed. We do not even remember which religion or community we belong to. On the platform of the Conference we are just women serving the cause of women and the Motherland. But we have not yet been able to take this aimy and goodwill farther than the boundaries of our conference. We ought to make an effort to do this. One point which I would like to bring to the notice of the delegates is that the number of our Muslim members and delegates is very small. Great attention should be paid to increase their number and I request my Muslim sister delegates to make it their special concern for the next year. Without their earnest co-operation this work cannot be accomplished. The end of the year must show a large increase of Muslim members on our registers. That in itself will bring the two sister communities a step nearer.

From the economic group one of the subjects that I have chosen for comment is "Cottage Industries". We may not lose ourselves in academic discussions on the comparative merits and demerits of cottage versus large-scale industries. We may only remember that under the present conditions, cottage industries in India are a necessity. It is through them alone that the

starving millions can get their daily bread. Our time should, therefore, be spent in devising means for their promotion. The starting of training centres, of sales depots, propaganda and several other ways are open to us, but the most effective way is personal patronage. Khadi, of course, is the centre of all village industries. There are not many Khadi wearers among our members. I appeal for a respectable place for Khadi in their wardrobes. Khadi is an acquired taste and its beauties can be perceived by cultivation. Even its roughness has a charm. It is life-giving to the poor and peace-giving to the rich. An assembly of women, dressed in pure white Khadi is a feast to the eye. Khadi is a symbol of our love for suppressed humanity. It is an expression of our will to be free. Members of a nationalist organisation like ours should consider themselves morally bound to wear "Khadi". And closely connected with Khadi is spinning. Sacrificial spinning is as ennobling as Harijan work. Every turn of the wheel and every thread that is spun brings one nearer to the masses. It breeds a mentality which smarts under the injustices of the current social and economic system and strengthens the determination to change it by non-violent means. I, therefore, appeal to our members to take to daily sacrificial spinning which will automatically make them supporters of Khadi and of village industries.

Now I come to the last subject, housing. The paucity of houses in India is astonishing. In a country of nearly four hundred million inhabitants, the poor have hardly any houses to live in. Only those, who have travelled widely in the interior of the country, and have closely studied the question can have an adequate idea of the sufferings caused to men and women on account

of lack of houses. Over-crowding in cities is particularly deplorable. Hundreds of thousands of people spend their lives cramped up in hovels called houses by courtesy. It is not within our scope or power to make up for this deficiency. But we can do something in rousing social conscience against this evil. We can remind the governments and local authorities, the rich and the educated classes that it is their responsibility to take the dumb toiling millions out of this veritable hell. Lack of money should make no excuse. The need is so imminent that if no other means are available, money should be borrowed for building purposes by governments and local boards, co-operative housing societies should be promoted by the people themselves and the rich should be persuaded to invest their money in housing schemes. House rents should be regulated by law to prevent the worst type of exploitation. I have seen landlords taking enormous rents ranging from Rupees 4 to 8 for tiny dingy one-room tenements without any amenities. This sort of exploitation must be stopped forthwith. Owners of agricultural lands should be compelled by law to give decent houses to their tenants. The duty of our Conference is to bring these facts before the public and to persuade them to rectify this great wrong.

I must now say a few words about non-violence in which we have repeatedly declared our unflinching faith. An Indian women's organisation could do nothing less. Non-violence is inbred in an Indian woman. She carries its impress on her soul. The traditions in which she is brought up, the deprivations she has to go through in life, the 'sanskars' with which she is born or her inherited genius all make her a suitable medium

for the expression of non-violence. But that which has been so far latent has to be made patent. At present an Indian woman's non-violence savours of the nonviolence of the weak and the helpless. As such it is worthless. It requires a conscious training to turn it into the non-violence of the strong, without which it can not acquire the power to resist vice and violence. In the practice of non-violence in life Mahatma Gandhi, expects more from women than from men. Let us by constant effort at self-purification make ourselves worthy of this trust. The best training centres for non-violence are our own homes. But a searchlight has to be turned ever inwards and a constant watch kept on ourselves to make sure that from day to day the boundaries of our family are extending and the mother's heart is constantly getting bigger to bring within its compass the whole of humanity.

Our responsibility is great. We should never forget that lip service to a cause is worse than no service at all. It weakens us as well as the cause. Truth and honesty demand that we practice what we preach. I, therefore, commend it to our members to give serious thought to the ways and means of realizing non-violence in their individual lives. I would suggest a serious study of Gandhian literature. The extension of non-violence from the individual to the group, its application to national and international matters is a new experiment with a technique evolved by Gandhiji in the laboratory of his life in which all through he has experimented with truth. It is a glory and a privilege to be born in his time and be his contemporary. We must do all in our power to deserve that privilege.

One last word and I have done. To those of my brothers who do not agree with the policy of the

women's Conference, who see danger in our demand for freedom and sex equality, I say cast off these fears and have trust in us. We shall not fail you nor lose our balance. And even if we do momentarily, I say, to err in freedom is better than to keep straight in slavery. The spectres of disintegration, of disorder, of sex war that haunt some of you occasionally are phantoms of the imagination. There can be no war between the mother and son, between the father and daughter, brother and sister, husband and wife. And if there can be no war between them, there can be none between man and woman. We have no bitterness in our movement. None is likely to come in. All that we want is to establish equity and fairplay in the relations of man and woman as well as man and man. That is the only foundation on which a stable structure of civilized society can be built.

To my co-workers and sister delegates, I want to say this last word that more service is demanded of us, more dedication is called for. Work from where you stand, where destiny has placed you. Do your best to finish with the old world of tyranny and exploitation and lend your helping hand to bring in the new era of peace and goodwill.

CASTE IN HINDU SOCIETY

The work of breaking up the caste system is essential for galvanizing the Indian people into one harmonious Indian nation. It is of first class importance and has to be accomplished before our hopes of having a united Indian people can be realized.

I would like to make here few observations on the subject of caste and its effects on the social structure of the Hindus.

It is a general belief that castes in their origin were the trade guilds formed with much the same objects as the trade unions of the present day. That belief is confirmed by the professional names which up to present day most castes bear like Teli, Jolaha, Lonia etc. But with the passing of time the main object of the caste organisation was forgotten and although the professions of men within the caste changed, its indigenous nature developed. It got so crystallised that inter-dining and inter-marriage became strictly forbidden. Birth and not profession now became the determining factor of caste. The life of the individual merged into the caste which claimed his loyalties and restricted his horizon. No doubt a beautiful life of mutual help on the widest co-operative basis developed within the caste but it created so many self-contained groups which had no social connection with other groups outside their own. That limited the sphere of their sympathies. Even this

separate grouping would not have been so harmful, if ideas of high and low were not associated with it. It was the association of these ideas which vitiated the whole system. A very strong caste hierarchy developed which recognised the vicious principle of high and low birth. The whole gamut of those hundreds of castes, of which it is difficult to have a complete record had their own notions of high and low. Each had its own place and it was impossible for them to exchange positions. This gradation of position was not confined to the four broad Varnas. Each Varna again had its own gradations. There were Gaud Brahmins and Saraswats and Chitpavans and lyers and lyengars, one over the other. The same was the case with the other three Varnas all of which had their own strict codes of precedence. Last of all, but not the least came the Panchamas, the Harijans, who were not behind anybody else in fixing their own scale of respectability. It is amusing to see the pride of the Bhangee in his feeling of quasi-superiority over the Samsi and of the Mochi over the Chamar. The whole idea has been reduced to a science and it is impossible to find one who can authoritatively assign each caste to its proper place in this vast hierarchy.

The whole spirit of the caste system as it is practised to-day is unrighteous and undemocratic. It militates against the idea of equality which every religion including Hinduism, teaches, and which moreover is the governing idea of the present age. It was natural, therefore, for the leaders of thought, modern as well as ancient, to raise their voice against it. In its historical perspective a no-caste campaign can be traced in India from the historical times. It started with Bhagwan Buddha and was taken up by many saints

and Rishis later on at different periods of Indian history. All men of religion looked upon the pride of caste as sinful. Tukaram, Chaitanya, Eknath, Guru Nanak, Kabir and scores of other saints preached against it. All reformers of the Hindu Dharma, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati advocated its abolition. In this way the work of the Jatpat Torak Mandal is only a sequel to what has preceded before. It only follows lead of the greatest men of history. Unfortunately as every thing else in India, this social custom has assumed a religious garb and religion being most highly valued in our land it is this fact which has established the caste roots most firmly in the country. People mostly do not exert to think nor do they investigate. They blindly believe what has been taught them from child-hood. Pride of caste has been instilled into them from the day of their birth. So it has grown with them as part of life. But I have no doubt in my mind that not only it has nothing to do with religion but it is irreligious and unrighteous. It has given rise to such ugly practices as untouchability. It denies the very essence of religion which is the perception of the self in others, and the regulation of conduct in accordance with that perception and the cultivation of love and fellow feeling. And in the realm of love, there is no room for distinction of any kind based on birth or otherwise.

It is an admitted fact that caste has no justification on the basis of the Shastras but there is reference to the Varna Ashram Dharma in several of our ancient books. The Bhagawad Gita also contains such references. The difference of opinion arises in the interpretation of the term. A growing body of opinion recognises Varna Ashram not on the accident of birth but on 'Guna, Karma and Swabhav'—natural propensities, profession

and temperament. According to this view Varna is interchangeable. Without taking the accident of birth into account one can be a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra, according to one's temperament, profession and nature. It thus becomes only a recognition of an existing phenomenon or fact, a scientific classification of human society as observed by our ancient great men. But Varna Ashram as it is practised to-day is only a travesty of the ancient idea. 'Guna, Karma and Swabhava' or profession, temperament and natural propensities have nothing to do with it. The determination of Varna to-day lies solely on birth. That is why we see every day Brahmins working as cooks and menial servants and Shudras acting as professors and judges. Varna Ashram, as it is practised to-day, is most comic, had it not been also so tragic in its consequences. Our Shastras supply us with innumerable examples of fact that Varna Ashram in olden days was not based on birth. Instances of inter-marriages can be quoted by the score. But I shall leave all that for the learned Pandits to deal with. What concerns me is the fact that firstly caste and Varna as practised to-day have no Shastric sanctions behind them, secondly, that they are unrighteous and unjust, thirdly, that they hamper our growth as a nation and, last but not least, that they are unnatural.

I have already referred to the first two. The assertion that it is incompatible with the idea of one Indian Nation requires no proof. Instances are coming up every day when communal feelings are alleged to distort the minds and judgments of individuals in times of elections and even day-to-day administration. Such allegations may be exaggerated. But they are not entirely baseless.

One must never forget that humanity is one family and all artificial barriers that divide people on the basis of creed, colour and community or class are wrong. Life is one. It needs unrestricted flow. Like light, air and water from which it draws its substance it can brook no artificial barriers. All these divisions of caste and Varna are, therefore, unnatural. Every effort should be made to remove them.

LOOKING FORWARD

Friends, as chairman of the Women's Committee of the Commonwealth of India League under whose auspices we meet this afternoon, it is my pleasant duty to welcome you all. As an Indian I feel especially happy and honoured to occupy this post which gives me a chance to express on behalf of India her sincerest gratitude to those who stand by her in her time of need. To me the assemblage of such a large number of delegates representing various Women's organizations in this country, is a symbol of those great bonds of fellowship and love which transcend all racial or class interests. Above all, it is a sign of that deep-rooted love of justice and fairplay so abundantly found in the hearts of women. The very fact that such large numbers of women's organizations support the objects of this Conference is proof of their willingness to do unto India as they would like to be done by. Such auspicious omens make one rejoice and feel happy.

The resolutions bearing on the Indian situation, as drafted by the Women's Committee, are already in your hands. Able and illustrious women, whose names are already so well known to you, will present them for your deliberation and decision. The principles of liberty and equality, for the vindication of which they have dedicated their lives, are sufficient guarantees that the representation of the Indian case is safe in

their hands. I, therefore, do not propose to say anything on the resolutions but would say a few words on the situation in India as it stands to-day.

During the last few months, public interest has been much aroused, but it is not yet sufficiently keen to enable it to realize that never before in the history of the British connection with India, has the situation been so critical. We stand at the parting of the ways and the decisions of the next few months will make history. It is said that Lord Irwin and Gandhi have saved India for the Empire. They have certainly paved the way for it ; whether their efforts will finally be fruitful, time alone will show. At present the position is most intricate. There are certain outstanding ideas in connection with the deliberations of the Round Table Conference, such as the federated states of united India, full responsibility in the central government and safeguards. Only a rough skeleton outline has been drawn, so that all the details have still to be filled in. None of the conclusions are definite and no parties, not even the delegates to the Conference, have been committed to any views, except the further carrying on of the work of the Round Table Conference. To this, as we all know the Congress has also committed itself, as a result of the Irwin-Gandhi Pact. The real work, therefore, of finally drafting the Indian constitution will begin when the next Round Table Conference meets with Mahatma Gandhi as the sole delegate of the National Congress Party. He has been given discretion to adjust minor matters but he comes with a clear mandate from the nation itself, that nothing less than the substance of Independence will be acceptable to India. The federation must be a federation of free and self-governing units the transfer of responsibility to the centre must be thorough

and complete ; safeguards must be reduced to a minimum and definitely proved to be solely in the interests of India. It is here that true fight will begin.

Although there is now much interest in Indian affairs here in England, the change that has come over the Indian mentality has not yet been fully recognized by all sections of the British public. A spirit of haggling and bargaining is still found in many quarters. I was much struck by a phrase of Mr Churchill's in the House of Commons recently. He said very forcibly that the Nationalists (in India) were trying to squeeze out of the British Government as much as they possibly could and the British Government, in its weakness, is allowing itself to be thus squeezed. Such a remark shows that the real spirit of the Indian movement has not yet been understood. India is not out to bargain. She is determined to be mistress in her own house without further delay. Those who fight will do so to the bitter end. They have repeatedly said that having burned their boats, there is no going back for them. No sacrifice is too high for the goal they have set before them. Mahatma Gandhi has designated this the last battle of his life. He will either achieve freedom for India or die in the attempt. Last year's happenings are sufficient proof of the solemn determination of the Indian people. To believe that India will be satisfied with anything less than complete self-government is entirely false. All efforts, therefore, should be directed towards a peaceful solution of the Indian question and this can only be done by conceding to India the right of self-determination.

The general public is reluctant to take the Indian problem seriously. It has no time for it, and therefore, there is a tendency to leave the matter in the hands of

those who are supposed to understand the question. India is thus above party politics and is a national concern. No party can afford to take a strong stand on the Indian question nor can they allow a split amongst themselves on that ground. Necessarily, therefore, the machinery which deals with the Indian problem moves heavily and slowly. But slow movement and caution are incompatible with the present mood of India and may indeed prove disastrous, if steps are not taken to mend matters.

Who can supply the impetus for greater understanding and magnanimity more than the women's organizations? I have great faith and confidence in women. They are out to use their great faith in recently acquired civic powers, to change the whole scheme of life, re-moulding it nearer to the heart's desire. Let India merit their serious thought and support!

I shudder to think of what would happen if the next Round Table Conference does not find a peaceful solution. The fight on the part of India is bound to be renewed. What form it may take it is difficult to foretell, but it does not require a prophet to say that the greatest suffering, torture, blood-shed and dislocation of commerce and trade, are bound to follow. As the population of India is one-fifth of the human race, the reactions of such a movement must be felt by the whole world. England cannot remain unaffected. Providence has brought the two countries together. Let us make a united effort to bring into being a relationship on the basis of love and freedom which alone can endure.