

# HARIJAN

Editor: MAHADEV DESAI

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[ FIVE PICE

## AN IMPORTANT INTERVIEW

The heat here this year has been uncommonly oppressive, and even those who may be said to be inured to it have felt it. But Gandhiji would not listen to any suggestion of moving to a cooler place—so possessed he is of his new idea, so disinclined he is to go to any other place but the environment that has now become part of himself. And though this serious preoccupation leaves him little time to meet people, he has willingly met press correspondents and opened his heart out to them. They too in their turn have come in this sweltering heat, but that is a pressman's job—to defy wind and weather and wrest facts out of events. So one hot afternoon two American journalists came—Mr. Chaplin of the International News Service, America, and Mr. Belldon representing the *Life* and *Time*. The latter is fresh from China and Burma. Both had heard rumours in New Delhi that Gandhiji might soon be arrested, and they naturally did not want to be forestalled. So they came post-haste, without even waiting for a reply giving them an appointment.

It was no joke jogging along in a rickety tonga through the treeless road that runs between Wardha and Sevagram. Gandhiji immediately put them in a good humour. "You came in an air-conditioned coach?" "No," they said, "but we had armed ourselves with some ice." Mr. Chaplin said he was a great friend of the late Jim Mills and that revived our memories of that genial American who, Gandhiji said, after the manner of American journalists, often embellished truth to make it look nicer. Mr. Chaplin demurred to the generalisation, and said they were quite careful about truth. Gandhiji did not mean to suggest that they deliberately mixed untruth with truth; they loved to give truth an attractive, if imaginative, background, as, for instance, Jim Mills described Gandhiji sharing his goat's milk with a tame cat, when there was no cat in the picture. "The native genius" of Americans, John Buchan has said, "is for overstatement, a high-coloured, imaginative, paradoxical extravagance. The British gift is for understatement. Both are legitimate figures of speech. They serve the same purpose, for they call attention to a fact by startling the hearer, for manifestly they are not the plain truth." There, I think, is a just estimate of American journalists.

Gandhiji had just emerged from an intensive talk with another American when these friends came, and so he said greeting them, "one American has been vivisectioning me. I am now at your disposal."

## Why Non-violent Non-Cooperation?

They had read all kinds of things about Gandhiji's latest move—his own words wrenched from their context, and words written about him. "It is your worst side that is known in New Delhi, and not your best," another journalist had said to Gandhiji, and they were therefore anxious to straighten out wrong notions if they had any. Why non-violent non-cooperation, rather than honest straightforward resistance against the Japanese? Far from preventing the Japanese, non-violent non-cooperation, they feared, might prove an invitation to them, and would not that be flying from the frying pan into the fire?

Gandhiji put a counter question in reply:

"Supposing England retires from India for strategic purposes, and apart from my proposal,—as they had to do in Burma—what would happen? What would India do?"

"That is exactly what we have come to learn from you. We would certainly like to know that."

"Well, therein comes my non-violence. For we have no weapons. Mind you, we have assumed that the Commander-in-Chief of the united American and British Armies has decided that India is no good as a base, and that they should withdraw to some other base and concentrate the allied forces there. We can't help it. We have then to depend on what strength we have. We have no army, no military resources, no military skill either, worth the name, and non-violence is the only thing we can fall back upon. Now in theory I can prove to you that our non-violent resistance can be wholly successful. We need not kill a single Japanese, we simply give them no quarter."

"But that non-violence can't prevent an invasion?"

"In non-violent technique, of course, there can be nothing like preventing an invasion. They will land, but they will land on an inhospitable shore. They may be ruthless and wipe out all the 400 millions. That would be complete victory. I know you will laugh at it, saying 'all this is superhuman, if not absurd'. I would say you are right, we may not be able to stand that terror and we may have to go through a course of subjection worse than our present state. But we are discussing the theory."

"But if the British don't withdraw?"

"I do not want them to withdraw under Indian pressure, nor driven by force of circumstances. I want them to withdraw in their own interest, for their own good name."

"But what happens to your movement, if you are arrested, as we heard you might be? Or if Mr. Nehru is arrested? Would not the movement go to pieces?"

"No, not if we have worked among the people. Our arrests would work up the movement, they would stir every one in India to do his little bit."

"Supposing Britain decides to fight to the last man in India, would not your non-violent non-cooperation help the Japanese?" asked Mr. Chaplin reverting to the first question he had asked.

"If you mean non-cooperation with the British, you would be right. We have not come to that stage. I do not want to help the Japanese—not even for freeing India. India during the past fifty or more years of her struggle for freedom has learnt the lesson of patriotism and of not bowing to any foreign power. But when the British are offering violent battle, our non-violent battle—our non-violent activity—would be neutralised. Those who believe in armed resistance and in helping the British militarily are and will be helping them. Mr. Amery says he is getting all the men and money they need, and he is right. For the Congress—a poor organisation representing the millions of the poor of India—has not been able to collect in years what they have collected in a day by way of what I would say 'so-called' voluntary subscription. This Congress can only render non-violent assistance. But let me tell you, if you do not know it, that the British do not want it, they don't set any store by it. But whether they do it or not, violent and non-violent resistance cannot go together. So India's non-violence can at best take the form of silence—not obstructing the British forces, certainly not helping the Japanese."

"But not helping the British?"

"Don't you see non-violence cannot give any other aid?"

"But the railways, I hope, you won't stop; the services, too, will be, I hope, allowed to function."

"They will be allowed to function, as they are being allowed today."

"Aren't you then helping the British by leaving the services and the railways alone?" asked Mr. Belldon.

"We are indeed. That is our non-embarrassment policy."

#### A Bad Job

"But what about the presence of American troops here? Every American feels that we should help India to win her freedom."

"It's a bad job."

"Because it is said we are here really to help Britain and not India?"

"I say it is a bad job, because it is an imposition on India. It is not at India's request or with India's consent that they are here. It is enough irritation that we were not consulted before being dragged into this war—I am not sure that the Viceroy even consulted his Executive Council. That is our original complaint. To have brought the American forces is, in my opinion, to have made the stranglehold on us all the tighter."

"You do not know what is happening in India—it is naturally not your business to go into those things. But let me give you some facts. Thousands of villagers are being summarily asked to vacate their homes and go elsewhere, for the site of their homesteads is needed by the military. Now I ask, where are they to go? Thousands of poor labourers in a certain place, I have heard today, have been asked to evacuate. Paltry compensations are offered them, and they are not even given sufficient notice. This kind of thing will not happen in an independent country. The Sappers and Miners there would first build homes for these people, transport would be provided for them, they would be given at least six months' maintenance allowance before they would be uprooted from their surroundings. Are these things to happen, even before the Japanese have come here? There is no other way, but saying to them, 'you must go', and if British rule ends, that moral act will save America and Britain. If they choose to remain here, they should remain as friends, not as proprietors of India. The American and British soldiers may remain here, if at all, by virtue of a compact with Free India."

"Don't you think Indian people and leaders have some duty to help accelerate the process?"

"You mean by dotting India with rebellions everywhere? No, my invitation to the British to withdraw is not an idle one. It has to be made good by the sacrifice of the inviters. Public opinion has got to act, and it can act only non-violently."

"Is the possibility of strikes precluded?" wondered Mr. Belldon.

"No", said Gandhiji, "strikes can be and have been non-violent. If railways are worked only to strengthen the British hold on India, they need not be assisted. But before I decide to take any energetic measures I must endeavour to show the reasonableness of my demand. The moment it is complied with, India instead of being sullen becomes an ally. Remember I am more interested than the British in keeping the Japanese out. For Britain's defeat in Indian waters may mean *only the loss of India*, but if Japan wins India loses *everything*."

#### The Crucial Test

"If you regard the American troops as an imposition, would you regard the American Technical Mission also in the same light?" was the next question.

"A tree is judged by its fruit", said Gandhiji succinctly. "I have met Dr. Grady, we have had cordial talks. I have no prejudice against Americans. I have hundreds, if not thousands of friends, in America. The Technical Mission may have nothing but good will for India. But my point is that all the things that are happening are not happening at the invitation or wish of India. Therefore they are all suspect. We cannot look upon them with philosophic calmness, for the simple reason that we cannot close our eyes, as I have said, to the things that are daily happening in front of our eyes. Areas are being vacated and turned into military camps, people being thrown on their own resources. Hundreds, if not thousands, on their way from Burma

perished without food and drink, and the wretched discrimination stared even these miserable people in the face. One route for the whites, another for the blacks! Provision of food and shelter for the whites, none for the blacks! And discrimination even on their arrival in India! India is being ground down to dust and humiliated, even before the Japanese advent, not for India's defence—and no one knows for whose defence. And so one fine morning I came to the decision to make this honest demand: 'For Heaven's sake leave India alone. Let us breathe the air of freedom. It may choke us, suffocate us, as it did the slaves on their emancipation. But I want the present sham to end.'

"But it is the British troops you have in mind, not the American?"

"It does not make for me the slightest difference, the whole policy is one and indivisible."

"Is there any hope of Britain listening?"

"I will not die without that hope. And if there is a long lease of life for me, I may even see it fulfilled. For there is nothing unpractical in the proposal, no insuperable difficulties about it. Let me add that if Britain is not willing to do so wholeheartedly Britain does not deserve to win."

#### What Would Free India Do?

Gandhiji had over and over again said that an orderly withdrawal would result in a sullen India becoming a friend and ally. These American friends now explored the implications of that possible friendship: "Would a Free India declare war against Japan?"

"Free India need not do so. It simply becomes the ally of the Allied Powers, simply out of gratefulness for the payment of a debt, however overdue. Human nature thanks the debtor when he discharges the debt."

"How then would this alliance fit in with India's non-violence?"

"It is a good question. The *whole* of India is not non-violent. If the whole of India had been non-violent, there would have been no need for my appeal to Britain, nor would there be any fear of a Japanese invasion. But my non-violence is represented possibly by a hopeless minority, or perhaps by India's dumb millions who are temperamentally non-violent. But there too the question may be asked: 'What have they done?' They have done nothing, I agree; but they may act when the supreme test comes, and they may not. I have no non-violence of millions to present to Britain, and what we have has been discounted by the British as non-violence of the weak. And so all I have done is to make this appeal on the strength of bare inherent justice, so that it might find an echo in the British heart. It is made from a moral plane, and even as they do not hesitate to act desperately in the physical field and take grave risks, let them for once act desperately on the moral field and declare that India is independent today, irrespective of India's demand."

#### What about Muslims?

"But what does a free India mean, if, as Mr. Jinnah said, Muslims will not accept Hindu rule?"

"I have not asked the British to hand over India to the Congress or to the Hindus. Let them entrust India to God or in modern parlance to anarchy. Then all the parties will fight one another like dogs, or will, when real responsibility faces them, come to a reasonable agreement. I shall expect non-violence to arise out of that chaos."

"But *whom* are the British to say—'India is free'?" asked the friends with a certain degree of exasperation.

"To the world", said Gandhiji without a moment's hesitation. "Automatically the Indian army is disbanded from that moment, and they decide to pack up as soon as they can. Or they may declare they would pack up only after the war is over, but that they would expect no help from India, impose no taxes, raise no recruits—beyond what help India chooses to give voluntarily. British rule will cease from that moment, no matter what happens to India afterwards. Today it is all a hypocrisy, unreality. I want that to end. The new order will come only when that falsity ends."

"It is an unwarranted claim Britain and America are making", said Gandhiji concluding the talk, "the claim of saving democracy and freedom. It is a wrong thing to make that claim, when there is this terrible tragedy of holding a whole nation in bondage."

Q. What can America do to have your demand implemented?

A. If my demand is admitted to be just beyond cavil, America can insist on the implementing of the Indian demand as a condition of her financing Britain and supplying her with her matchless skill in making war machines. He who pays the piper has the right to call the tune. Since America has become the predominant partner in the allied cause she is partner also in Britain's guilt. The Allies have no right to call their cause to be morally superior to the Nazi cause so long as they hold in custody the fairest part and one of the most ancient nations of the earth.

Sevagram, 7-6-42

M. D.

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# HARIJAN

June 14

1942

## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A friend was discussing with me the implications of the new proposal. As the discussion was naturally desultory, I asked him to frame his questions which I would answer through *Harijan*. He agreed and gave me the following:

1. Q. You ask the British Government to withdraw immediately from India. Would Indians thereupon form a national Government, and what groups or parties would participate in such an Indian Government?

A. My proposal is one-sided, i. e. for the British Government to act upon, wholly irrespective of what Indians would do or would not do. I have even assumed temporary chaos on their withdrawal. But if the withdrawal takes place in an orderly manner, it is likely that on their withdrawal a provisional Government will be set up by and from among the present leaders. But another thing may also happen. All those who have no thought of the nation but only of themselves may make a bid for power and get together the turbulent forces with which they would seek to gain control somewhere and somehow. I should hope that with the complete, final and honest withdrawal of the British power, the wise leaders will realise their responsibility, forget their differences for the moment and set up a provisional Government out of the material left by the British power. As there would be no power regulating the admission or rejection of parties or persons to or from the council board, restraint alone will be the guide. If that happens probably the Congress, the League and the States representatives will be allowed to function and they will come to a loose understanding on the formation of a provisional national Government. All this is necessarily guesswork and nothing more.

2. Q. Would that Indian national Government permit the United Nations to use Indian territory as a base of military operations against Japan and other Axis powers?

A. Assuming that the national Government is formed and if it answers my expectations, its first act would be to enter into a treaty with the United Nations for defensive operations against aggressive powers, it being common cause that India will have nothing to do with any of the Fascist powers and India would be morally bound to help the United Nations.

3. Q. What further assistance would this Indian national Government be ready to render the United Nations in the course of the present war against the Fascist aggressors?

A. If I have any hand in guiding the imagined national Government, there would be no further assistance save the toleration of the United

Nations on the Indian soil under well-defined conditions. Naturally there will be no prohibition against any Indian giving his own personal help by way of being a recruit <sup>or</sup> <sub>and</sub> of giving financial aid. It should be understood that the Indian army has been disbanded with the withdrawal of British power. Again if I have any say in the councils of the national Government, all its power, prestige and resources would be used towards bringing about world peace. But of course after the formation of the national Government my voice may be a voice in the wilderness and nationalist India may go war-mad.

4. Q. Do you believe this collaboration between India and the Allied powers might or should be formulated in a treaty of alliance or an agreement for mutual aid?

A. I think the question is altogether premature and in any case it will not much matter whether the relations are regulated by treaty or agreement. I do not even see any difference.

Let me sum up my attitude. One thing and only one thing for me is solid and certain. This unnatural prostration of a great nation—it is neither 'nations' nor 'peoples'—must cease if the victory of the Allies is to be ensured. They lack the moral basis. I see no difference between the Fascist or Nazi powers and the Allies. All are exploiters, all resort to ruthlessness to the extent required to compass their end. America and Britain are very great nations, but their greatness will count as dust before the bar of dumb humanity, whether African or Asiatic. They and they alone have the power to undo the wrong. They have no right to talk of human liberty and all else unless they have washed their hands clean of the pollution. That necessary wash will be their surest insurance of success, for they will have the good wishes—unexpressed but no less certain—of millions of dumb Asiatics and Africans. Then, but not till then, will they be fighting for a new order. This is the reality. All else is speculation. I have allowed myself, however, to indulge in it as a test of my *bona fides* and for the sake of explaining in a concrete manner what I mean by my proposal.

### No Salvation without Sacrifice

Accounts pour in upon me from all quarters about the action of the authorities demanding evacuation without notice. Sometimes it is a zamindar who is to surrender his bungalow and sometimes it is a middle class man who has to surrender his house with fans and furniture for the use of the military. More often it is villagers or labourers who are called upon under promise of compensation to vacate their quarters. The condition of these people is piteous. They do not know where to go. To these I can only say, 'Do not move and take the consequence.' They cannot be forcibly ejected. Even if they are, their cry will be heard whereas newspaper articles will be of little avail.

Sevagram, 8-6-42

M. K. G.

## QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

## The Princes' Determination

Q. The Princes seem to be determined to maintain their privileges even after the departure of the British. Therefore there is need for a plain declaration that they would have no place in a Free India. My feeling is that you have so far shown them more consideration than they deserve.

A. If you are right in your judgment, the privileges themselves will destroy the Princes. Privileges that service of the people bestows will always persist. But most of the paraphernalia that 'pomp and circumstance' account for will most certainly go.

But I cannot make the declaration you will have me to make. It is contrary to the spirit of non-violence which seeks not to destroy but to purify. That which is beyond purification dies without any outside effort even as a body which has become wholly diseased dies.

If after the total withdrawal of the British power, there is found to be no awakening among the masses India will be split up into so many feudal strongholds each striving to swallow the small fry and some bidding for overlordship. What I am hoping and striving for is an irresistible mass urge on the part of the people and an intelligent response on the part of all privileged classes to the popular demand. But because I know that this picture is for the time being imaginary, I am quite prepared for the worst. Hence my statement that I would end the present state of things even at the risk of anarchy reigning supreme in the land.

Sevaagram, 5-6-42

## If They Come

Q. (1) If the Japs come, how are we to resist them non-violently?

(2) What are we to do if we fall into their hands?

A. (1) These questions come from Andhradesh where the people rightly or wrongly feel that the attack is imminent. My answer has already been given in these columns. Neither food nor shelter is to be given nor are any dealings to be established with them. They should be made to feel that they are not wanted. But of course things are not going to happen quite so smoothly as the question implies. It is a superstition to think that they will come as friendlies. No attacking party has ever done so. It spreads fire and brimstone among the populace. It forces things from people. If the people cannot resist fierce attack and are afraid of death, they should evacuate the infested place in order to deny compulsory service to the enemy.

(2) If unfortunately some people are captured or fall into the enemy's hands, they are likely to be shot if they do not obey orders, e. g. render forced labour. If the captives face death cheerfully, their task is done. They have saved their own and their country's honour. They could have done nothing more if they had offered violent

resistance, save perhaps taking a few Japanese lives and inviting terrible reprisals.

The thing becomes complicated when you are captured alive and subjected to unthinkable tortures to compel submission. You will neither submit to torture nor to the orders of the enemy. In the act of resistance you will probably die and escape humiliation. But it is said that death is prevented to let the victim go through the agony of tortures and to serve as an example to others. I however think that a person who would die rather than go through inhuman tortures would find honourable means of dying.

Sevaagram, 3-6-42

## CASUAL NOTES

## Falsehood in War-time

At the end of this war some one like Mr. Ponsoby will have to write the second volume of *Falsehood in War-time*. Many of the discoveries of the falsehoods will be *after* the termination of the war, but some can be found out even during the war—they are so painfully patent. Thus, for instance, the Governor of Burma who is now having a "well-earned" rest in Simla made a pompous statement on arrival in India. He declared that there was no "considerable disloyalty among Burmans", that "the Japanese are unable to get a single Burman of any weight to join their side", and that "there is not a single Burman Quisling and I am proud of it."

One wonders who then were the people described as "Burman traitors" in despatches from Burma. General Wavell did admit that there was a certain amount of Burman betrayal, and now General Alexander has given the lie direct to Sir Dorman-Smith. The Japanese, he said, were helped "by pro-Japanese Burmans", that though they were not more than ten per cent of the population, their number was the same as those who were pro-British, and they were better "organised and active agents" than the latter.

Regarding "Quislings" one would like to know from Sir Dorman-Smith the whereabouts and the present occupation of his Ministers—how many came with him from Burma, how many remained there and why, and whether any one has gone over to the enemy.

## Disastrous Admissions

But we are not so much concerned about proving the falsehood of the Burma Governor's statements as to draw pointed attention to some of the obvious admissions made by General Alexander. Having accounted for the 20 per cent of the active part of the Burmese people, General Alexander says: "The remaining 80 per cent loathed the idea of war and only wanted to be left alone." He does not tell us why, but the reason is not far to seek. It was the suicidal policy of the British Government not to arm the citizens and not to train them: That was the story in Malay and that is the story in India. And so far as fighting is concerned, the discovery is now being made that "the last thing you wanted in Burma was mechanization", and unfortunately that was the first and

only thing they took in Burma "The Japanese were specially trained to live and operate" in a foreign country, whereas those who claimed the country as their own were foreigners there, too lazy or too proud to learn the condition of things in the land of their occupation!

#### And Singapore

And now look at the story from Singapore. Cecil Brown, who was in Singapore a few hours before the fall, was banned from broadcasting through Singapore, because British authorities believed his stinging criticism of official complacency "too bad for morale". But when he went to Sydney, the Australian censors allowed him to broadcast from there. Here are some sentences from that broadcast: "The British were heavily outnumbered and unable to stop the Japanese infiltration attacks. The troops were not adequately trained for jungle fighting and could not adapt themselves in a few weeks." . . . "Every American and British correspondent affirmed that censorship in Singapore did everything possible to hide the situation from those civilians expected to fight the battle for Singapore. The tragic story of Singapore is not all one of Japanese numerical superiority, fanatical courage and brilliant military scheming. The Japanese are at Singapore also because of what the British *failed to foresee, prepare for, and meet.*" (Italics ours)

#### The Only Way

The *Time* in a long article tries to summarise the Indian case and the British case, and concludes: "Whatever the experts and officials" (men on the spot in India) "and vested interests were saying last week, the British people were calling for Indian self-government, calling for it in such words as these: 'We treat them like dirt and then expect them to fight.' Only time could fairly judge the complex Indian cases. But neither Japan nor the British people had time to waste. Unless every possible iota of Indian strength and spirit were called on, a day might soon come when Britain's Captains and Kings would depart from India, and the fire of Britain's power and glory would sink, perhaps for ever, from India's dunes and headlands."

"We treat them like dirt." How tragically true it is today!

The *Philadelphia Record* puts the matter in the most unequivocal manner:

"India is not ready for war. The cause is deeper than the lack of guns and tanks. The nationalist spirit is necessary for modern war, and the British have spent centuries trying to stamp out any movement toward nationalism in India.

"There are now moves to give India a measure of independence. The British Government is reported ready to send a Cabinet Minister out there to bolster morale.

"Such steps might be worse than none at all.

"Small doses of independence and recognition would not satisfy India and might give the Axis something to crow about.

"It is almost a certainty that the day it is freed, India will be willing and anxious to enter the British Commonwealth as a dominion and that it

would declare war on the Axis Powers. Under those conditions even a poorly equipped India might show the same amazing human resources that an ill-equipped China has shown.

"Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-Shek, who understands the military capabilities of India, 'hopes and expects' that Britain will grant India freedom as a war measure.

"Such a hope is shared by most of the people in the United Nations including Britain."

But the dose that the British Cabinet Minister brought was not only an inadequate dose of Independence, it was a dose which poisoned Independence, and which made India more than ever determined to have no patience with the Empire and the British Commonwealth. A "poorly equipped India" might indeed show "the same amazing resources that an ill-equipped China has shown," but that can happen only if she was free. The Government has not even the common-sense to consult one like Rajaji who is crying himself hoarse for unity and national Government and for resisting Japanese aggression. With them not only the masses whom they have never armed are suspect, Rajaji also is suspect.

#### The Only Alternative

And since the opportunity of calling on "every possible iota of Indian strength and spirit" is now gone — never to return — because of the obtuseness of the British, and since haphazard, unprepared and unforeseen warfare may be fraught with disaster, Gandhiji has placed an honourable alternative before them, viz., not to ask for American help (men and munitions), not to antagonise the populace by stupid methods of harassing evacuation, but to listen to the voice of justice, make an orderly withdrawal and leave India to fight her own battle.

Sevagram, 8-6-42

M. D.

### A RURAL ANTHOLOGY

#### III

The elevating influence of these handicrafts is thus dwelt upon by Miss Gertrude Jekyll in *Old West Surrey*:

"The sight of these simple pieces of mechanism — mechanism that supplemented but did not supplant hand labour — makes one think how much fuller and more interesting was the rural home life of the older days, when nearly everything for daily use and daily food was made and produced on the farm or in the immediate district: when people found their joy in life at home, instead of frittering away half their time in looking for it somewhere else; when they honoured their own state of life by making the best of it within its own good limits, instead of tormenting themselves with a restless striving to be, or at any rate to appear to be, something that they are not. Surely that older life was better and happier and more fruitful, and even, I venture to assume, much fuller of sane and wholesome daily interests. Surely it is more interesting, and the thing when made of a more vital value when it is made at home from the very beginning, than when it is bought at a shop." (The italics are mine.)

The same theme moves Mr. George Sturt to eloquence in his *The Wheelwright's Shop*:

"But no higher wage, no income, will buy for men the satisfaction which of old — until machinery made drudges of them — streamed into their muscles all day long from close contact with iron, timber, clay, wind and wave, horse-strength. It tingled up in the niceties of touch, sight, scent. The very ears unawares received it, as when the plane went singing over the wood, or the exact chisel went tapping in (under the mallet) to the hard ash with gentle sound. But these intimacies are over. Although they have so much more leisure, men can now taste little solace in life, of the sort that skilled handwork used to yield to them. Just as the seaman today has to face the stoke-hole rather than the gale and knows more of heat-waves than of sea waves, so throughout. In what was once the wheelwright's shop, where Englishmen grew friendly with the grain of timber and with sharp tool, nowadays untrained youths wait upon machines, hardly knowing oak from ash or caring for the qualities of either. And this is but one tiny item in the immensity of changes which have overtaken labour throughout the civilised world."

(To be continued)

V. G. D.

## DR. TARACHAND AND HINDUSTANI

(By M. K. Gandhi)

The following was sent for the question box by Shri Murlidhar Sivastava M. A.:

"When prejudices come in, one is led to distort history. Dr. Tarachand is an ardent advocate of Hindustani as you are. He has every right to hold his view as you or I have to hold my own, but in his zeal he has grossly misrepresented the history of Brajbhasha by declaring that no writing in Braj is known to have appeared before the 16th century, in an attempt to prove that Hindustani ('Khari Boli') has older literature than Brajbhasha. According to him Surdas was the first poet to write in Braj in the 16th century. As the learned Doctor has been quoted by you in the *Harijan* dated 29-3-42, which commands wide publicity and authority, the mistake must be pointed out. For literature prior to Surdas, you have only to read the poems of Kabir, not to speak of Amir Khusru, some of whose verses are also in Brajbhasha. Several small pieces of poems are attributed to several Santas and Bhaktas prior to Surdas and they can be looked into any standard history of Hindi literature."

I have removed the portion that had no bearing on the question at issue. I sent the letter to Kaka Saheb Kalelkar who made it over to Dr. Tarachand who has now sent the following reply which speaks for itself:

"My view that the literature of Brajbhasha is not older than the sixteenth century is based on the following considerations:

1. Brajbhasha is a modern language which belongs to the group named tertiary Prakrits or New Indo-Aryan. This group developed from the secondary Prakrits or Middle Indo-Aryan. Unfortunately the stages between the secondary and tertiary cannot be traced with absolute certainty. But most scholars are agreed that secondary Prakrit stage lasted from 600 B. C. to 1000 A. D.

2. The secondary Prakrits which were spoken dialects received the impetus towards literary development

from the religious movements inaugurated by Mahavira and Buddha. Of these Prakrits, Pali became the most important, as it was adopted as the medium of sacred texts of the Buddhists. Ardh-Magadhi, which served a similar purpose in regard to the Jainas, came next in importance. There were other Prakrits also in use, for instance, Maharashtri which was the medium of song and poetry, Saurseni which was employed in dramas as the language of the ladies etc.

3. By the sixth century A. D. the Prakrits had become fixed and dead languages. Literature continued to be produced in them, but their development had ceased. In this century the languages of common speech, from which literary Prakrits had diverged, began to be used for literary purposes. This phase of literary growths of the Prakrits is given the name Apabhramsha. It lasted from 600 to 1000 A. D. Among the Apabhramshas one acquired a position of eminence, namely, Nagara. The varieties of Nagara were used as vehicles of literary expression in the greater part of northern India. But besides Nagara and its varieties, there had developed Apabhramshas of the other Prakrits, like Saurseni, also.

4. The modern Indian languages or the tertiary Prakrits developed from these Apabhramshas. Nagara became the parent of Rajasthani and Gujarati languages, through a variety to which Tessitori gave the name old Western Rajasthani.

Saurseni Apabhramsha is represented in the Prakrit grammar of Hemchandra (d. 1172 A. D.). But it is difficult to determine the relationship of Saurseni Apabhramsha with Nagara. It seems that the Saurseni Apabhramsha underwent a further change, which has been variously called old Western Hindi, Avahattha, Kavyabhasha.

5. With the arrival upon the scene of this language the stage of secondary Prakrits comes to an end, and the stage of new Indo-Aryan speech begins. The old Western Hindi which is the earliest form of the new midland speech appears to have become established in the eleventh century. From the old Western Hindi branched out Hindustani ('Khari') of the North midland, Braj of the middle region and Bundeli of the southern parts. In the twelfth century they were all spoken dialects. In the course of the following centuries they assumed literary form.

6. From a study of the development of these languages I have arrived at the conclusion that Hindustani ('Khari') was the first to develop into a literary language. We have a continuous history of Hindustani (Deccani Urdu) from the last quarter of the 14th century onwards. On the other hand the history of Braj literature before the 16th century is very doubtful.

7. Let me consider the so-called Braj literature of the pre-16th century.

(a) The first poet who is supposed to have employed Braj (Pingala) is Chand Bardai, the author of *Prithviraj Raso*, who is said to have been the contemporary of Prithviraj (12th century). Regarding the *Raso* the weight of opinion is that it is a spurious poem. Buhler, Gaurishanker Hirachand Ojha, Grierson and other scholars doubt its genuineness. Its language is a curious mixture of the archaic and the modern, its subject matter contravenes history and its authorship is dubious.

On these grounds Pt. Ram Chandra Shukla came to the conclusion that 'the book is of no use either to the student of language or of history.'

(b) The next author who is claimed as a writer of Braj is Amir Khusru. He died in 1325 A. D. Of his verses, acrostics, double entendre poems in Hindi no authentic manuscript has ever been found. Professor Mahmud Sherani of Lahore has conclusively proved that Khaliq Bari — a dictionary of Hindi and Persian words in verse, attributed to him — cannot possibly be his. The language of his Hindi poems is so modern that even a tiro in philology ought not fail to notice that it cannot belong to the 13th or 14th century. Much of it is simply modern Hindustani or Khari, some bears an impress of Braj. Dr. Hidayat Husain compiled a list of genuine works of Khusru and has not found room for his Hindi poems in it. Some Hindi writers have read an extract from his poem Khizra Khan and Dewal Rani, in which occurs a praise of Hindi. They have concluded from this that Khusru was an admirer and poet of Hindi. But a perusal of the passage leaves no doubt on the mind that he was not referring to Braj or Hindustani. On the basis of such slender evidence to trace the history of Braj to Khusru is not at all scientific.

(c) Then, mention is made of the saints and Bhaktas as writers of Braj poetry, like Namdeva, Raidasa, Dhana, Pipa, Sen, Kabir etc. The Banis and Padas of these are given in the Guru Granth. How far they can be considered genuine is an unsolved problem. Namdev was a Maratha who lived in the 13th century, and whether he wrote in Hindi or not cannot be ascertained, for Guru Granth was compiled in the beginning of the 17th century, nor any authentic manuscripts of the works of others are forthcoming.

Among them Kabir who lived in the 15th century is best known. A large number of his verses are found in the Guru Granth. Their language has a very strong impress of Punjabi. The Nagari Pracharini Sabha has published, under the editorship of Rai Bahadur Shyam Sunder Das, the works of Kabir. They are said to be based on a manuscript of 1504 A. D., but grave doubts have been cast upon the genuineness of this date (vide Dr. P. D. Barathwal's Nirgun school of Hindi poetry). In any case even the language of this edition is like the language of the extracts in Guru Granth, highly Punjabiified. Now Kabir himself has stated that he used the Purbi tongue, and there are Kabir's works which show great Rajasthani influence on the language. In these circumstances it is difficult to be certain of the language of Kabir's works. Pandit Ram Chandra Shukla has attempted to solve the problem by saying that Kabir used Sadhukkari for the poems teaching his doctrine (Sikhis) and Kavyabhasha or Braj for his Ramainis and Sabads.

This solution is hardly satisfactory. It contradicts Kabir's own statement. Again in the absence of authentic documents it is not possible to prove it.

8. Thus the more one investigates these literary products the more strongly the conclusion is borne in upon one that the popularly held opinion regarding their language has little basis in fact. Other considerations support this conclusion. It is well known that

no dialect rises to the position and status of a literary language unless a strong social force supports it. This force may be political or religious. Pali and Ardhamagadhi rose into fame because they became the vehicles of Buddhist and Jaina reformations. Hindustani acquired its literary status as a result of the support of Muslim preachers and rulers. Rajasthani which was the literary language of a great part of northern India during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries owed its rise and popularity to the greatness of Sisodias of Mewar. When the Moghals overthrew the Ranas of Mewar, Rajasthani shrank into a local language.

Now if we consider Braj, we do not discover any political or religious movement at its back till the 16th century. Braj was not the political centre of any power. Till Vallabhacharya settled in Braj and began his sectarian movement of Krishna Bhakti, Braj had no importance as a religious centre. Vallabha's movement apparently gave the impetus which transformed the spoken dialect into a literary language. Surdas and the other disciples of Vallabha (the Ashtachhapa) established the supremacy of Braj in northern India, with the result that a form of Braj was adopted even in distant Bengal as the medium of expression of Krishna Bhakti.

9. The poems of Kabir and other Bhaktas, whatever their original language, were mainly handed down by word of mouth. When the flood of Braj began to flow they were easily affected and Brajified.

10. My view that Braj has no genuine literature which can be ascribed to centuries before the 16th is based upon considerations which I have summarised above. But I am not the only one who holds these views. Dr. Dharendra Varma, the head of the Hindi department of the Al'ahabad University, who is emphatically not biased in favour of Hindustani, has given expression to the same view in his history of Hindi language and the grammar of Brajbhasha, to which reference may be made."

Sevagram, 6-6-42

#### Rajaji

Although I retain the opinion I have expressed about my differences with Rajaji, and although I adhere to every word I have said and he has quoted, and although I reaffirm my opinion that my language taken in its context does not bear the interpretation Rajaji puts upon it, I do not propose henceforth to enter into any public controversy with him. I join him in hoping that some day I shall see the error of my views which he sees so clearly. But public controversy with close companions like Rajaji repels me. He has a new mission and he has need to speak.

Sevagram, 7-6-42

M. K. G.

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