

HARIJAN

12 Pages

Editor: PYARELAL

VOL. XI, No. 5

AHMEDABAD — SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 1947

TWO ANNAS

SOIL FOOD v. DRUG

In human nutrition people recognize the difference between staple food and drugs. Usually the staple food is eaten in large quantities and it contains all the elements necessary for the human body in the right proportions or nearly in the right proportions. Milk for instance will contain fat, proteins, calcium and vitamin A besides other similar ingredients. But if for any reason the body of a patient needs more vitamin A than is found in milk because of some diseased state of the body, then to meet this need vitamin A may be administered in the form of some liver products, such as shark liver oil or cod liver oil. We recognize, therefore, that an ordinary wholesome food differs from medicines. The medicines are administered in small doses according to the needs of the particular patient and his condition. An old man may take a different dose of medicine from that of a middle-aged one, the latter would need a different dose from that of a child.

Again, certain drugs are used as stimulants when individuals want to go beyond their energy provided by nature by indulging in dances at night clubs. Such individuals stimulate their bodies to meet the extra demand of energy by taking injections of morphia and such other drugs. For the moment they appear to be full of vitality and energy, but a time comes when they suffer from the reaction of the stimulants. Therefore all persons desiring to lead a normal life without overstraining the nervous or muscular system will content themselves with a healthy use of energy produced by the normal food.

Medicines are indicated in the case of the existence of pathological conditions, while stimulants are harmful to the body as they overtax the system. Thus the staple food, medicine and the drug, each has its own place and cannot be substituted one for the other. Food for the normal person, medicine for the sick person and the drug for the over-indulgent.

Similarly in plant life too we have these three stages. Plants like animals need food. They draw this food from the air and the soil through the medium of water. If the normal food that the plant requires is deficient in a particular aspect, that deficiency may be made good by a proper diagnosis and prescription. Also, plants can be stimulated like human beings with drugs too. But that is an unnatural situation. In nature much of the mineral substances needed by plant life is provided in some assimilable form by micro-organisms

in the soil. These micro-organisms take organic matter and present it in an assimilable form fit for the plants. In the normal way the animals feed on vegetation and after assimilating that which is needed for the energy and growth they pass out the rest back to the earth and these micro-organisms in the soil convert such material back into plant food, and so goes on the cycle in nature. Any interference in this by men can only be justified by the circumstances.

The natural staple food of all plants is farm yard manure and other organic matter. Such manures have in them certain elements termed auxins which help better assimilation of the food just as vitamins in human food help in the biochemical process. The auxins are indispensable for plant life just as vitamins are indispensable for human beings and farm yard manure and other organic matter are rich in these auxins.

Where the mineral contents of the soil may be deficient owing to flooding and washing away of certain mineral salts it may be necessary to supply that deficiency by introducing certain chemicals. But this is a process which is analogous to medicine to the human body. Just as medicines can only be administered by a qualified doctor after a careful diagnosis with a prescription suited to the particular conditions of the patient, similarly this method of adding chemical fertilizers to the soil should only be adopted after a careful analysis of the soil and the requirements of plant life to be raised on that soil. Without such proper prescriptions given by a soil chemist to freely use chemical fertilizers would be as foolish as a layman administering medicine to a patient, and it may be equally tragic in its results. Artificial fertilizers, therefore, are not plant food but they are medicines to the soil.

Just as the human system can be stimulated beyond its normal performance by drugs such as morphia, similarly plants also can be subjected to an unhealthy enhancement of their growth and production by the use of drugs. Chemical fertilizers can produce this effect; but it is an unhealthy, short-sighted and unnatural state of affairs.

If our agricultural food production is to supply the normal requirements of the human body, the plants from which we draw that food must also be healthy, normal and well-fed. Any artificial stimulant or artificial feeding will naturally affect our food as we depend upon, specially in our country, so largely on plant life as food. Hence it becomes imperative that we should watch the food given

to these, the medicines administered and the drugs supplied. If there is any undue dose at any stage it will ultimately tell on the health conditions of the human being.

New Zealand grows most of its food supply on soils manured by chemical fertilizers and it was found that the people of New Zealand were subject to catarrh, influenza, septic tonsils and dental caries. Therefore, Dr. Chapman of the Physical and Mental Welfare Society of New Zealand carried out some experiments in Mount Albert Grammar School Hostel and subjected over 60 boys, teachers and staff, to experimental feeding. The food was changed from the "chemically grown" fruits, salads and vegetables to articles produced on farm yard manure and he reports: "There is a marked physical growth and freedom from other common ailments, and their dental conditions have improved." It may be noted here that during the last war when young men were examined for recruiting, over 40% of the New Zealanders were found to be unfit because of defective teeth. This experiment gives the warning that if the health of the people of India is to be what it should be, we must beware of chemical fertilizers. This is purely from the point of view of our food.

Looking at it from the needs of the soil, chemical fertilizers increase the acidity of the soil. Parts of Bengal and Bihar have already suffered from this. To make the fertilizers effective, it is necessary to apply it at a suitable depth and not as a top-dressing. Application of manures at some depth involves deep ploughing and copious irrigation. In our country where the major portion of the land is subject to the vagaries of the monsoon it would be a pure gamble to plough deep and manure the land with expensive manures only to find at the end of the season that the rains have failed. Our farmers are not financially well off enough to take the risks of this type of land treatment.

As we have already indicated earlier, before artificial fertilizers can be used on any plot of ground a very careful analysis of the soil and its requirements have to be ascertained. This involves a wide spread, well trained expert staff of agricultural chemists who could function as 'soil doctors'. Before we have such a personnel available at every plot of cultivable land it will be sheer folly to put artificial fertilizers in the hands of the farmers. It will be like handing in poisons—drugs like opium, morphia, etc.—into the hands of ignorant patients without any control as to their use. Therefore, even if we wish to introduce fertilizers as medicine, the condition precedent to such a course will be the introduction of agricultural chemists in large numbers. In our country we have not got physicians even for human beings in sufficient numbers. Where are we to find soil physicians in greater numbers?

With these facts before us we regret to notice that our ill-advised Central Government is pushing on with the promotion and extension of artificial fertilizer factories. In Bihar at Sindhri, a scheme

for artificial fertilizer factories involving foreign machinery to the extent of Rs. 12 crores and other buildings and equipment running into a further 10 crores are being pushed forward. We hope better counsels will prevail and the suicidal schemes will yield place to carrying on researches on more healthy lines which will provide a considerable amount of the organic matter, that is going to waste today, as suitable manures to our fields. Only such a course will provide us with health-giving food and save us from the unscrupulous exploiters who, regardless of the harm they are causing the people, consider accumulation of wealth the one and only objective in life.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

INFECTION IN LEPROSY WORK

"There is a lot of false heroism connected with leprosy work. After all, leprosy is no worse than a lot of other diseases with which doctors are associating themselves constantly in general medical work."

Dr. Cochrane

In gratefully welcoming Shri Vinoba's appeal to doctors to take to leprosy work, I wish to state the more known facts about the incidence of infection by leprosy work. Perry Burgess, the President of the American Leprosy Foundation, sums up the facts in the following words:

"Despite the facts that among the many leprosaria, scattered throughout the world, thousands of well people, doctors, nurses and lay workers, have been in daily association with patients, the incidence of infection is very small. Reasonable precautions are taken as with any infectious disease."

The most publicized case is Father Damien, but contributing exceptional factors are not known to the public. To quote the late Dr. O. E. Denny of the U. S. Public Health Service:

"The good Father never took any precautions against infection but lived surrounded by his sick parishioners, under un-hygienic conditions, his food prepared by leprosy patients, his clothes washed by them and even his pipe smoked by them."

Brother Joseph Dutton, Father Damien's successor whose work was largely medical and who spent 48 years at Kalaupapa, Molokai did not acquire the disease. Nor did the two nurses Mother Marianne and Sister Leopoldina, who served with Father Damien, acquire the disease. The biographer of Mother Marianne Dr. T. Wood Clark says:

"The experience of Mother Marianne and her associates and followers has taught the medical profession a lesson of great value. They have proved beyond question that if sanitary precautions are properly carried out, one can spend his life among leprosy patients with impunity. They have, by their example, demonstrated the important truth that leprosy, while infectious, is not contagious."

In the 78 year old history of Kalaupapa there has been only one other case besides Father Damien's of infection by leprosy work. It was that of Father Peter hailed as "Father Damien's prototype". But he had only a small, dark, elevated spot high up on the forehead. He was operated and the spot

removed. He has continued ever after to be clinically and bacteriologically negative. Today at 73 he is an active worker at Kalaupapa.

Culion in the Philippines, founded in 1907, is the largest leprosarium in the world with many hundreds of employees, nurses and physicians. Only two cases of institutional infection have been so far reported—a priest and a labourer. The labourer developed the disease one year after arrival and as he had a brother as a patient in the colony it was easily established that the infection had happened before his coming to the colony. According to medical reports the diagnosis of the priest was doubtful.

The evidence of Dr. M. Carreon regarding the San Lazaro Hospital, Manila is very interesting:

"From the time the present San Lazaro Hospital was founded 264 years ago up to these days, no physician, nurse or attendant has ever been known to have developed leprosy."

Medical and missionary literature frequently refer to the instances of Father Boglioli of New Orleans, Father Daniel of Brazil and Mary Reed in India. Father Boglioli, the Italian Chaplain of Charity Hospital, New Orleans, sometimes called "the Father Damien of Louisiana", is the only person known to have contracted the disease in the long history of the hospital. In 1879 there was a ward of 15 leprosy patients, attended daily by physicians and nurses. It is interesting that while none of the physicians and nurses contracted leprosy, Father Boglioli who administered religious rites to two patients in the ward and visited the ward from time to time should have acquired the disease. Father Daniel is said to have contracted leprosy in a similar manner. Eminent authorities have stated that both these cases are scientifically questionable. Dr. Christobal Manalang believes that the nature of their contact as priests administering religious rites to patients lodged in a hospital does not warrant belief in institutional infection. He believes that they could have harboured infection prior to their institutional contact.

Mary Reed worked for 7 years as a missionary in India but *not* in a leprosarium. Then she returned to the United States and discovered that she had leprosy. She returned to India and worked in leprosaria. She recovered from the disease without treatment and lived a life of active service till 86. Dr. R. G. Cochrane thinks that her leprosy was so slight and benign that while her devotion to the cause deserved wider fame her leprosy was certainly not worth at all the publicity it has had.

In the history of Carville (Louisiana), which is completing its 52nd year, no member of the medical or nursing staff has contracted the disease. One non-medical employee, not having much direct contact with the patients, is reported to have had the infection. Perhaps he did, and that would be only a very small incidence—one case in 52 years. But as the worker came from a highly endemic district there is reasonable doubt as to whether he had not been infected in his earlier years before coming to work in Carville.

In reviewing the cases of institutional infection in leprosy one is struck by the fact that few or no cases concern physicians and nurses. Their contact is far greater and more intimate than that of the clergy. As a rule, however, they have observed nothing more than the usual sanitary precautions taken in any general hospital. Dr. William Brady can well assert:

"Hansen's disease (leprosy) is feebly, if at all, communicable through ordinary human contacts and that the place where one is least likely to contract the disease is in a properly conducted Sanatorium."

The doctor who takes to leprosy work today does not need to fear infection. Nor need he intoxicate himself with the belief that he is on the road to martyrdom. Let us in all humility learn the lessons of Father Damien's example, but let us not play upon the theme for dramatic effect. When six Franciscan Missionaries left the United States to work in a leprosarium in Australia, the New York Sunday Mirror (October 8, 1944) broke out with lurid head-lines: "N. Y. Nuns in living suicide by contact with leprosy: The same inevitable tomorrow awaits those heroic missionaries of mercy as Father Damien who came under the insidious touch of the disease." This is sensational but unscientific. Leprosy is difficult to acquire except in childhood and in an endemic environment. Inoculation with heavily bacillated tissues have failed to produce leprosy in those experimented upon. Father Damien is only the exception that proves the rule and there are sufficient reasons explaining the exceptional occurrence. It now needs far less heroism or none to take to leprosy work if one weighed the facts and shed the fear. But if the fear and the glory are gone, the opportunity of service still remains.

Madras, 8-2-'47

T. N. JAGADISAN

NOTICE

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HARIJAN

March 2

1947

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

[On the 9th of February Gandhiji dealt with some questions that were sent to him during the day. It being his day of silence he wrote out the answers which were read out to the prayer meeting. The answers deserve careful study by all earnest workers. —Ed.]

Q. It has been our experience that a worker becomes power-loving after some time. How are the rest of his co-workers to keep him in check? In other words, how are we to preserve the democratic character of the organization? We have found that non-cooperation with the party in question does not help. The work of the organization itself suffers.

A. This is not your experience alone but it is almost universal. Love of power is usual in man and it often only dies with his death. Therefore, it is difficult for co-workers to keep him in check, if only because they are more likely than not to have the same human frailty; and so long as we do not know a single completely non-violent organization in the world, we cannot claim to know the utterly democratic character of an organization because, as can be definitely proved, no perfect democracy is possible without perfect non-violence at the back of it. The question would be proper if non-cooperation was violent as it often, if not invariably, is. Claiming to know somewhat from experience the non-violent character of non-cooperation, I suggest that given a good cause, non-violent non-cooperation must succeed and no organization can suffer through offering non-violent non-cooperation. The questioner labours under the difficulty of having experience of non-cooperation, at best partially non-violent, at its worst bare-faced violence sailing under the name of non-violence. The pages of the *Harijan* and *Young India* are filled with instances of abortive non-cooperation, because of these two vital defects, non-violence being partial or totally absent. During my long experience, I also noticed that those who complain of others being ambitious of holding power are no less ambitious themselves, and when it is a question of distinguishing between half a dozen and six, it becomes a thankless task.

Q. In almost all villages there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to by-pass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local cooperation?

A. Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages as they are to be found in our cities. And when power politics enter our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of the villagers rather than a help. I would say that whatever be the consequence, we must make use as much as possible of local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that the English-educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India which are the backbone of the country. The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We fail to find him when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villages. Of course, we are to steer clear of local politics and this we shall learn to do when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to by-pass villagers. As I knew this very difficulty, I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of one village, one worker, except that where he or she does not know Bengali, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experience. I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusions. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation as is implied in the sentence that 'work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in a single village, trying to work through local workers, should not be regarded as conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker: 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it. Work singly, courageously, intelligently with all the local help you can get and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.'

Q. I we are to start *khadi*-work in the devastated areas in Noakhali, should we begin with financial and technical aid from outside or slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money alone?

A. I will say in your own words: 'Slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money', taking care to make yourself sure that you know the whole art of spinning in the widest sense I have given to the term. What that sense is you should learn from my writings in the *Harijan* which you will do if you have the requisite eagerness.

Q. The cultivators and land-owners who used to have their land tilled by Muslim labour have lost two crops namely *mircha* (long pepper),

til seeds and mustard seeds owing to the loot of agricultural implements and bullocks and want of labour from Muslims. The time for ploughing fields for the next *boro* and *aus* crop is impending and unless the cultivators get these within fifteen days, they will almost lose that crop also.

A. This is most unfortunate if it is true. I have no doubt that all such land should be put under cultivation not only for the sake of the owners but also for the State, which is or should be more concerned with the cultivation of food-crops even than the owners. Therefore, the owners should ask the authorities for this assistance and the State should see to it that all such land is beneficially cultivated. It is the duty of the State to ask and encourage Muslim labour to render this essential service whether the owner be a Muslim or a Hindu. The State should certainly see that all labour is adequately paid by fixing the wages.

GANDHIJI'S WALKING TOUR DIARY

5-2-'47

It was a big audience that Gandhiji had addressed on the fifth. The gathering was perfectly still. There was no noise when he came to the meeting. He began his remarks by asking the volunteers to refrain from providing decorations and a kind of ornamental shade where he sat. He was averse to all these things. It was a waste of labour and money. All that was needed was a raised seat with something clean and soft to rest his fatless and muscleless bones. He wanted to deal that evening with a question that arose out of the meeting of the third instant but he could not deal on the fourth as he had to deal with the statement read to him by the Muslim friends. The question was as follows:

You have asked those Provinces which have the necessary courage to frame their own constitution and then ask the British army to quit their territory as proof of the attainment of independence. What, in your opinion, should be the basis of the franchise in those free provinces of India? Should communal electorates be replaced by functional ones in the Assemblies? Should there be functional instead of communal representation? Should there be joint electorates with reservation of seats for communal minorities or functional groups? Should there be favoured representation of any group for the time being? If so, of what group? Should we have joint electorate, and full adult franchise?

Answer: Gandhiji's answer was unequivocal. Even one province could frame its own constitution and enforce it, provided that it was backed not by a majority of one but by an overwhelming majority. Gandhiji held that no power on earth could resist the lovers of liberty who were ready not to kill opponents but be killed by them. This was the view that he had enunciated at one time. But today they had made considerable progress. He put a favourable interpretation on the Cabinet Mission's State Paper. So far as he could see they could not resist the declared wish of a single province. If that was true of one province, say Bengal, how much more it was for a number of

provinces which the Constituent Assembly undoubtedly represented? But he was indifferent to what the British Government said so far as India's independence was concerned. That rested with the people and no outside power. Nor was there any question as to what India would do if the State Paper was withdrawn. India has been accustomed to life in the wilderness. When Pandit Nehru and his friends accepted office he had said that it was not a bed of roses but a bed of thorns. Their goal was liberty and liberty they would take no matter what happened.

Naturally he could speak with confidence when the people had only non-violence in view as a steadfast simple policy without reservation. If on the other hand, they thought they could drive away the English by the sword they were vastly mistaken. They did not know the determination and courage of the English. They would not yield to the power of the sword. But they could not withstand the courage of non-violence which disdained to deal death against death. He knew no other power higher than non-violence. And if they were still without real independence, it was, he was sure, because the people had not developed sufficient non-violence. Anyway the State Paper in his opinion was in answer to the non-violent strength that India had so far developed.

If they contemplated the last war, they would plainly see that whilst the enemy powers so-called were crushed, the allied powers had won but an empty victory. Apart from the wanton destruction of human heads they had between the allies and the enemies succeeded in draining the world of its food materials and cloth. And the former seemed to be so dehumanized that they entertained the vain hope of reducing the enemies to helotry. It was a question whom to pity more—the allies or the enemies. Therefore he asked the people bravely to face the consequence whatever it was, feeling secure in the confidence born of non-violence, be it as an honest policy.

As to the franchise he swore by the franchise of all adults, males and females, above the age of twentyone or even eighteen. He would bar old men like himself. They were of no use as voters. India and the rest of the world did not belong to those who were on the point of dying. To them belonged death, life to the young. Thus he would have a bar against persons beyond a certain age, say fifty, as he would against youngsters below eighteen. Of course, he would debar lunatics and loafers. Of course, in India free, he could not contemplate communal franchise. It must be joint electorate, perhaps with reservation of seats. Nor could he contemplate favouritism for anyone, say Muslims, Sikhs or Parsis for example. If there was to be favouritism he would single out physical lepers. They were an answer to the crimes of society. If moral lepers would ban themselves, the physical lepers would soon be extinct. And they, poor men, were so frightened of modern society that they put forth no claims. Educate them truly and they

would make ideal citizens. Anyway, side by side with adult franchise or even before that he pleaded for universal education, not necessarily literary except as perhaps an aid. English education, he was convinced, had starved our minds, enervated them and never prepared them for brave citizenship. He would give them all sufficient knowledge in the rich languages of which any country would be proud. Education in the understanding of the rights of citizenship was a short term affair if they were honest and earnest.

6-2-'47

Gandhiji referred to a letter he had received from the medical superintendent of the Marwari Relief Society. The doctor said that he treated both the Hindus and the Musalmans without any distinction. Muslim men and women gladly accepted his services. He noticed that in this part of the world the Muslims were poor. There was dirt and insanitation, wherever he went. Would he (Gandhiji) say something about it? He (Gandhiji) would gladly do so. For he had been a lover of cleanliness and sanitation for over fifty years. He had to speak much in disparagement of the West. It was therefore a pleasure for him to be able to say that he had learnt the laws of cleanliness from Englishmen. He was pained to see the same tanks in Noakhali used for drinking and cleaning purposes. It was wrong. The people thoughtlessly dirtied the streets, lanes and footpaths by spitting everywhere and clearing their noses. This was the cause of many diseases in India. No doubt, their chronic poverty was responsible for the diseases. But their chronic breach of the laws of sanitation was no less responsible. It was surprising that India lived at all. But it was worst in point of high death rate. America was probably the first in the list. And then those that lived were specimens of living death. The sooner therefore the inhabitants of Noakhali attended to the laws of sanitation the better for them. Poverty was no bar to perfect sanitation.

Then there was invasion of pressmen from far and near. The expression, Press Camp, was an attractive expression. But this Press Camp was in keeping with the village surroundings and that too with his. His surrounding was inconsistent with pomp. The Pressmen who accompanied him were living under difficult conditions. They had to live in such huts as the villagers were able to provide. They had no unlimited accommodation. He would advise them not to venture out but be satisfied with the news that the five or six were able to provide. His barefoot walk need not provide sensation. It ought not to excite people. It was no difficulty for him. The earth of Noakhali was like velvet and the green grass was a magnificent carpet to walk on. It reminded him of the soft English grass he had noticed in England. It was wholly unnecessary to wear sandals to be able to walk on the Noakhali earth and grass. He could not probably have done it in Gujarat, and then he inherited the traditions of his country. Pilgrimage was always performed barefoot. For him this tour was a pilgrimage pure

and simple. But that should be no attraction to Pressmen and others. He considered it as no strain on him. And if God willed it, He would allow him to pull through it. Let the Pressmen save the time and money which latter they could contribute to the Noakhali Relief Fund or the never-to-end Harijan Fund.

He then came to the questions put to him.

Q. Supposing one or the other of the provinces wishes to declare its independence, what kind of constitution would you advise them to prepare? In 1925, you declared that in the Free India of your dreams only those would have voting rights who had contributed by manual labour to the service of the State. Do you adhere to that advice today with regard to the above provinces?

A. Independence could be the same as for the whole of India. He adhered to what he had said in 1925 viz. that all adults above a certain age, male or female, who would contribute some body labour to the State would be entitled to the vote. Thus a simple labourer would easily be a voter whereas a millionaire or a lawyer or a merchant and the like would find it hard if they did not do some body labour for the State.

Q. If contiguous provinces in India do not declare such independence but scattered ones do so, would not the presence of the non-federating units create difficulties for the rest in the matter of common action?

A. He saw no difficulty if the society was of his conception, that is based on non-violence. Thus supposing populous Bengal with its gifted Tagores and Suhrawardys framed a constitution based on independence and Assam with its opium habit dreamed away life, Orissa with its skeletons had no wish and Bihar was occupied in family slaughter, they would all three be affected and covered by Bengal. Such infectiousness was inherent in his scheme of independence which was friends to all and enemy to none. It might well be that his was a voice in the wilderness. If so, it was India's misfortune.

Q. Do you expect the constitution of the free provinces to be made so attractive that others would voluntarily be drawn into it?

A. Attractiveness was inherent in everything that was inherently good.

Q. Supposing the whole of Group A forms a common constitution, do you think provinces which are now under Group B or C will be able to join A if they so desire?

A. It went without saying that if the Group A succeeded in framing a good constitution not only would it be open to B and C to join, they would be irresistibly be drawn to it.

Q. What about the States? Who will decide whether a State should join the Union or not: the present rulers or the people? If it is to be the latter then what changes would you expect to be first made in the constitutions of the present States?

A. He was a mere humble ryot but he belonged to the many crores. The *Rajahs* were nominally 640, in reality they were probably less than 100. Whatever the number was, they were so few that in an awakened India, they could only exist as servants of the ryots not in name but in actual practice. He did not share the fear underlying the

question that the British would be so dishonest as to play the *Rajahs* against the ryots. That was not the note of the Cabinet Mission Paper. But why should India depend upon the British Cabinet? When India was ready, neither the British nor the *Rajahs*, nor any combination of the Powers could keep India from her destined goal, her birthright, as the Lokamanya would have said.

7-2-'47

Gandhiji in the course of his prayer speech set himself to answering the questions put to him.

You have always been against charity and have preached the doctrine that no man is free from the obligation of bread-labour. What is your advice for people who are engaged in sedentary occupations but lost their all in the last riots? Should they migrate and try to find a place where they can go back to their old, accustomed habits of life or should they try to remodel their life in conformity with your ideal of bread-labour for everybody? What use shall their special talents be in that case?

In reply Gandhiji said that it was true that for years he had been against charity as it was understood and that he had for years preached the duty of bread-labour. In this connection he mentioned the visit he had received from the District Magistrate and Zaman Saheb along with a police officer. They wanted his opinion about giving doles to the refugees. They had already decided to put before them the work of the removal of the water hyacinth, the repair of roads, village reconstruction or straightening out their own plots of land or building on their lands. Those who did any one of these things had a perfect right to rations. He said that he liked the idea. But as a practical idealist he would not take the refugees by storm. A variety of work should be put before the people and they should have one month's notice that if they made no choice of the occupations suggested nor did they suggest some other acceptable occupation but declined to do any work though their bodies were fit, they would be reluctantly obliged to tell the refugees that they would not be able to give them doles after the expiry of the notice. He advised the refugees and their friends to render full cooperation to the government in such a scheme of work. It was wrong for any citizen to expect rations without doing some physical work.

He could never advise people to leave their homes. He would like even one solitary Hindu to feel safe under any circumstance and would expect the Muslims to make him perfectly safe in their midst. He should welcome them to worship God in the way they knew.

He certainly did not consider money got through speculation as rightly gained. Nor did he consider it impossible for man to shed bad or evil habits at any time. If everybody lived by the sweat of his brow, the earth would become a paradise. The question of the use of special talents hardly needed separate consideration. If everyone laboured physically for his bread, it followed that poets, doctors, lawyers etc. would regard it their duty to use those talents gratis for the service of humanity. Their output will be all the better and richer for their selfless devotion to duty.

8-2-'47

Gandhiji addressed a large meeting which had almost as many Muslims as Hindus barring the women who were present. He addressed himself to

answering the following four questions which were sent to him by a visiting friend.

Q. The Musalmans are boycotting the Hindus. Those Hindus who possess more land than they can till themselves are in a serious difficulty. What is your advice to them? What will they do about the surplus land which they hold but cannot till themselves, even if they take up the plough themselves?

A. In answer he said that he had heard of the boycott and had made some remarks at previous meetings. He hoped, indeed he knew, that the boycott was not universal in Noakhali. It was probably confined to a few. Whatever the extent, he had no doubt that it was wrong and would do no good to the boycotters as it could not to those against whom it was directed. That opinion was held by him for a large number of years, say sixty. But there was a condition when he would conceive it possible, i. e. if the Muslims regarded the Hindus as their enemies and wished to avoid their presence in Noakhali. That would amount to a declaration of war from which every Indian would recoil with horror. In isolated cases, his opinion was emphatic. The Hindu under the boycott would allow his land to lie fallow like the Australians or he would sell the surplus land. What was best was that nobody should possess more than he could himself use. That was the ideal the society should strive to reach.

Q. You have been working here for the last three months. Has there been any appreciable change in the mentality of the Hindus?

A. The question could best be answered by the Hindus concerned. He flattered himself with the belief that the Hindus have, at least for the time being, shed their cowardice to an extent.

Q. There is certainly a peace-loving section among the Musalmans. After your presence in their midst, have they been influenced to such an extent that they are able to assert themselves against the worst element in their own community?

A. As to this third question he felt glad that the questioner admitted that there was a peace-loving section among the Muslims of Noakhali. It would be monstrous if there was not. Whether they had developed courage to oppose the bad and mischievous element in Muslim society, he would give the same answer that he gave to the second question. The Muslim friends could reply with certainty. But he was vain enough to believe that several Muslim friends had been so affected. As for instance, the Muslim witness in Bhatialpur declared that the destroyed *mandir* he had opened they would defend against destruction in future with their lives. There were other consoling instances he had met with during his tour.

Q. Several workers are engaged in village work according to your direction. What has been the result of their work on the local Hindu or Muslim population? If you had not been here, would their influence have been equal to what it is at present? Will the present influence of your workers be of a lasting character?

A. As to this fourth question Gandhiji said that if he was pure and meant what he said, his work was bound to survive his death. He believed that there must be perfect correspondence between private and public conduct. Similarly, if his associates were actuated purely by the spirit of service and

were pure within and without and were not dominated by the glamour that surrounded him, they would work on with unabated zeal and that their joint work would flourish with time. He had never subscribed to the superstition that any good work died with the worker's death. On the contrary, all true and solid work made the worker immortal by the survival of his work after his death.

BASIC EDUCATION

2

• ECONOMIC ASPECT OF THE EXPERIMENT

Another important point of discussion is the economic aspect of the experiment. It has been the most controversial aspect in the development of basic education. In the recommendations of the educational scheme of the Central Advisory Board of Education, commonly known as the Sargent Scheme, a note has been added to distinguish basic education as envisaged in the report of C. A. B. E. from what the report calls the Wardha Scheme of Education.

"Basic (Primary and Middle education) as envisaged by the Central Advisory Board, embodies many of the educational ideas contained in the original Wardha Scheme, though it differs from it in certain important particulars. The main principle of "Learning Through Activity" has been endorsed by educationalists all over the world. At the lower stages, the activity will take many forms leading gradually up to a basic craft or crafts suited to local conditions. So far as possible the whole of the curriculum will be harmonized with this general conception. The three R's by themselves can no longer be regarded as an adequate equipment for efficient citizenship. The Board, however, are unable to endorse the view that education at any stage and particularly in the lowest stage can or should be expected to pay for itself through the sales of articles produced by the pupils. The most which can be expected in this respect is that sales should cover the cost of the additional materials and equipment required for practical work."

While this scheme had adopted some features of Basic National Education, it was felt that it had ignored the central fact, i. e., that basic national education through and based on craft must be self-supporting. In the light of the experience of the last eight years the Sangh feels re-assured that this can largely be so. It holds the view that in order fully to utilize the educational possibilities of craft work, the test of useful production is an acid test. Craft work in order to be educationally effective should grow into thorough, purposeful work. Casual, careless work is not only bad work, it is also bad education and worse. Thorough craft work should be reasonably expected to produce useable articles whose value can be expressed in money. The use, in this connection, has reference not to a distant market but to use at the place of production.

The Sangh is anxious to see that craft as a medium of education is not allowed to deteriorate into careless and purposeless activity. It is, therefore, of opinion that wherever basic education is introduced the emphasis on this aspect of craftwork is a *sine qua non* of success.

In his opening address to the National Educational Conference of 1945, Gandhiji said:

"My *Nai Talim* is not dependent on money. The running expenses of this education should come from the educational process itself. Whatever the criticisms may be, I know that the only education is that which is 'self-supporting'."

An earnest attempt is being made in the basic schools at Sevagram, the basic schools in Orissa and Bengal and the basic schools in the village Majhowlia in Bihar to work out the self-sufficiency aspect of the scheme.

In the basic school at Sevagram during the year 1945-46, with an average attendance of 85, and 200 working days with an average of 2 hours of craft work per day, the total production was 2,818 hanks of yarn out of which 555 yards were woven by the pupils themselves in the higher grades. 2,818 hanks of yarn represents 704½ yards of cloth. The total production of vegetables on a field of only half an acre by Grade 5 was 4,042 seers. The net income from the work of the children in spinning (Rs. 729-5-9), weaving and gardening (Rs. 546-14-9) in terms of money-value was Rs. 1,276-4-6, for the school. Reckoning one teacher for 30 pupils three teachers will be required. The average pay of each teacher being Rs. 35, the pay of the teachers can be met from the school income.

This is as regards achievements. We must also take stock of the serious gaps in the programme of basic education. In the first place the technique of education through work is yet in a preliminary stage. The literature of basic education has yet to be produced. The number of trained workers is yet very small and even smaller is the number of workers who can assume responsibility. Yet we must be alive to the fact that basic education has found itself. By whatever name we may call it, this new education is going to be the programme of national education for the children of India. We are not completely ready for this great educational revolution. Our resources are inadequate. Yet if we are convinced that this is the only sound system of education, the way must be found. Perhaps, India which is one of the most backward countries in the world today in education may point the way towards a new social order through a new education.

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