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Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

FISHERY AS A BASIC CRAFT

[Shri Manjrekar is a teacher devoted to the cause of National Education. He is deeply interested in Basic Education. Here is a suggestion from him which is worthy of consideration by schools in the coastal regions. Fishery cannot be called a handicraft but the same objection can be raised against agriculture. Both agriculture and fishery are basic crafts indispensable to human existence, rich in possibilities of correlation with almost all the subjects included in the Basic Curriculum.

The writer has expressed a doubt whether catching fish would be consistent with Gandhiji's doctrine of *ahimsa*.

Ahimsa, doubtless, does mean reverence for all life and a votary of *ahimsa* would set no limit to this spirit of reverence for and oneness with life in all its forms. But we cannot grow beyond ourselves in a trice. Mankind, as a whole, has not accepted vegetarianism as a code of conduct. Millions would have to starve if they have to eschew fish or flesh from their diet.

The doctrine of non-violence, as it is placed before the world today, seeks to eschew all violence in human relations. Anger, hatred, greed, heartless exploitation that leads ultimately to strife, bitterness and war have got to be controlled and subjugated. Mankind will have made the greatest stride in its history if we succeed in eschewing violence in relations between man and man. Once this is achieved, it is an easy step — kindness to animals and reverence for all sentient life. Let us not try to run before we can walk. The spirit of non-violence, once established, is sure to grow. It is wrong to suppose that people who eat fish or flesh are wedded to violence. — K. K.]

The Zakir Husain Committee has recommended spinning and weaving, carpentry, agriculture and leather work as basic crafts for imparting basic education to children. With the exception perhaps of leather work, the other three crafts are being tried in various parts of India. The Committee while recommending these crafts has clearly opined that any other craft for which local and geographical conditions are favourable may be selected, provided it satisfies two essential conditions: educational and economic. Here I would make bold to place before the Wardha Educationists for their favourable consideration and acceptance. Fishing as a basic craft.

Fishing is a premier industry which can supply nourishing food to our underfed millions. Those of us who live by the seaside and have observed the fisherman at work with his various implements will not fail to see its educative value. A basic craft to be chosen as a medium of education must fulfil

one of the fundamental human necessities. Fishing supplies one of the primary needs of man viz. food to the people living near the sea, as much as agriculture does. It has its own place in the scheme of national economy.

The syllabus as outlined in the Zakir Husain Committee's report can be covered through the medium of and in correlation with fishing which is a productive activity. The *takli* whose educative possibilities have now been widely recognized, is used universally for spinning yarn from hemp for purposes of net making by fishermen even today. Growing of hemp, spinning yarn from it, *takli* and net manufacture may be carried on in the first five grades. Even fishing with such nets as the pupil can handle may be taken up. Making nets of various kinds for catching fish of different varieties will call for a knowledge of measurements and geometry so that the course under mathematics may be easily covered in correlation with this craft. In no craft — not even in spinning and weaving — will be found so many natural points of correlation with such subjects as Geography (which is included under social studies) and General Science as in fishing. Fishery would also inspire the method of teaching other subjects like the Mother Tongue, Drawing and Music. Actual fishing with projects like boat making, scientific methods of fish curing, fish preservation, and manufacture of fish products, fish culture and fish technology may be taken up in the last two grades.

Coming now to the self-supporting aspect of the fishing craft, I may say, without fear of being contradicted, that it is economically as much sound as, nay even sounder than, spinning and weaving. Hemp yarn, nets of various kinds, fish-fresh, smoked, canned, pickled and salted, fish products like fish guano, fish meal, fish oil and collection of biological specimens for sale to colleges and schools will command a ready market and will cover the running expenses of the school if conducted on right lines.

In short, fishery as a basic craft will (a) be a sound vehicle of education, (b) serve the pupil as a means of livelihood after going through a seven years' course of basic education, (c) contribute towards the current expenditure of the school, (d) train the pupil in the habit of disciplined cooperative activity, (e) give fishing a social status and (f) bring about the general uplift of the fishing communities which are backward educationally and economically.

The only doubt I have is as to how far this craft would fit in with Gandhiji's basis of non-violence for the *Nai Talim*.

