

## HARIJAN

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Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

## WHO SHOULD DO IT ?

A medical man deplores the rapidity with which smoking is spreading among modern youth of both the sexes. Newspapers carry more cigarette advertisements now than they did a decade back, displaying pictures of girl-smokers, thus indicating the clientele sought to be particularly appealed to. The habit has grown to the extent of chain-smoking in some people. Medical opinion is unanimous, the correspondent says, in declaring tobacco as greatly responsible for diseases like the cancer of the tongue, some lung and heart troubles, neurosis etc., and regrets that Gandhiji has not done anything to check this evil.

The same post has brought a letter from a young lady who complains that Gandhiji and the present Congress Government do not pay sufficient attention to the cinema evil. How she wishes both Gandhiji and Jawaharlalji had frequented modern talkies and seen for themselves the moral ruin wrought in the lives of our young and adolescent boys and girls by these picture shows ! They, she says, make appeal to the sex, as if it were, in a practical manner and instil into young impressionable minds lascivious thoughts, low ideals of sexual morality, and of decent behaviour. "The evil effects of cinemas", she says, "are no less harmful than those of drink and if it is right to prohibit the latter, it is equally necessary to restrain the former. Our popular Governments should lose no time in putting their foot on this evil."

The two correspondents represent a section of public opinion and there is much truth in what they say. Let popular Governments take note of them. But it is necessary for moral reformers also to understand the limitations of Mahatmas and popular Governments. In the ultimate analysis, no evil is eradicated from a nation unless the nation itself wills to do it resolutely.

A Mahatma does not seek coercive power. He can only teach the nation what is good and wholesome for it, and what is bad, and set an example through his own conduct. On the other hand, the only method known to modern Governments is punitive legislation. Neither of these, nor both combined can succeed unless and until they are effectively reinforced by strong popular will. Even if a practice or act is acknowledged on all hands as a manifest evil, both will fail to remove it, if people do not co-operate with the reformer or the

law against an influential section resisting its removal. Governments can partially check an evil if it is confined to, at the most, say, 5 or 7 per cent who are selfish, anti-social or ignorant. Reform-legislation succeeds only when a great majority of the people have already adopted the reform, but a small intransigent section tries to obstruct it.

If we look into the facts of the two specific evils complained of, it will be observed that the public in general is not quite averse to any of them, though several of them after they have taken a full measure of it may agree with a physician or a moralist that these are really bad and degenerating entertainments. And after having agreed with him they will again indulge in them. Professors and students, a father and his grown up children, and even religious *mahants* and their disciples smoke together, or visit together films of a lascivious type. Even a person who does not smoke has often to provide cigarettes for his friends, or at least to tolerate smoking in his presence, and the head of a family, who himself does not like cinemas, allows money to younger members of the family to indulge in them. It is not so with drink. In a matter in which public opinion is at this stage, one should not expect restraining laws to be very successful even if passed.

A popular democratic Government or legislature should be distinguished from an association of reformers or pure-life-preachers. The former represents not the ideal but the average man, and the passions and prejudices, outlooks and tastes of average people, who return their representatives not necessarily for their high moral ardour or character, but for their capacity to understand and give sympathetic and forcible expression to the thoughts, passions, (even prejudices and vices) and worldly aspirations and happiness of the average man. The pioneer work of bringing about a reform in the life and habits of the people has to be done by preachers, publicists, good journals and enlightened writers.

Even if a popular Government represented all parties in a nation, people will enjoy freedom and happiness only to the extent they give up the habit of looking to the government to do everything for them. An elephant may be employed to remove boulders blocking a way, not to clear pebbles or cleanse dust-bins at street corners. This must be done by the men themselves.

Sabarmati, 27-12-'46

K. G. MASHRUWALA



## "UNEQUAL MARRIAGES"

Shrimati Lilavati Munshi has already succeeded in getting non-muslim bigamous marriages declared void in the province of Bombay. Now she has brought a Bill for the prevention of "Unequal marriages", i. e. marriage of a woman of less than 18 years with a man of more than 45. The Bill seeks to punish principal participants of such a marriage. It does not declare the marriage void or voidable as in the case of the Anti-Bigamy Act.

There is a good deal of complication in regard to the law of minority in our country. Normally a person attains majority on the completion of 18 years. But if he happens to lose the protection of his natural guardian before that time and it becomes necessary for a court to appoint a guardian over him, his capacity to manage his own affairs is not recognized until he completes twentyone years. But for the purpose of marriage a girl is deemed to have come to age at 14, while guardians might bind a person in marital ties even if he or she is a mere infant. Even the Sarda Act, which seeks to prevent child-marriages, does not make the marriage itself illegal. It simply imposes a penalty upon some people in the form of a fine or imprisonment. But whether the penalty is exacted or not, the marriage itself is binding upon the bride and the bridegroom. It is not void.

Shrimati Munshi's "Unequal Marriages Bill" is of the same types. If the marital rites are performed before the law is able to intervene, the only consolation the minor girl or her friends can have is to get some people punished.

It seems to me that this is not sufficient. A conviction under such an Act must be accompanied with some such remedy as the following: The order of conviction should operate as a preliminary decree of dissolution of marriage. The girl should be entrusted to the care of a proper guardian or institution until she attains majority. A date, not later than three months after she attains majority, should be fixed for appearance for final orders. On that date, the girl's wishes should be ascertained. If she wants the marriage to be dissolved, the final decree should declare it so; if on the other hand, she wants to abide by the marriage, the preliminary decree should be cancelled. It goes without saying that during the interval neither of the parties can contract another marriage.

If legislation seeks to protect the woman, it should give effective protection. It can bring no happiness to a wife who has to live with a husband, who is punished on her account. Indeed, it does not matter if the affair is treated as falling within the civil jurisdiction of courts rather than the criminal one, provided the protection given to the woman is complete.

Then, as the Bill stands, a girl of say 14 could be successfully married to a man of 44, while one of 17 could not be married to a man aged 45. I think it would be simpler to apply the legislation to all cases in which a minor girl is sought to be married

to a man more than, say, two times and a half years senior to her in age on the date of marriage.

Sabarmati, 27-12-'46

K. G. MASHRUWALA

## GANDHIJ'S PRESENT ROUTINE

Following has been taken from the Associated Press:

Seventy seven-year-old Gandhiji experimenting with his *ahimsa* in the far off East Bengal village of Shrirampur, is working at the rate of 18 to 20 hours every day.

Gandhiji rises with the lark at 4 o'clock in the morning and conducts a small prayer. Drinking eight ounces of warm water mixed in one ounce of honey, Gandhiji starts work which is reading, writing or interviewing.

Two hours later, he takes eight ounces of fruit juice, either of orange or *mosambi*, whichever is available.

At 7-30. a. m., accompanied by some of his close associates, he strolls on for about 90 minutes along the narrow, dew-soaked village footpaths. This is the time when invariably news hawks hover around him. He is now increasing his walking hours and the speed of walk, obviously preparing himself for his contemplated walking tour.

He returns back at about 9 o'clock and has massage for about two hours, followed by a hot water bath.

His first full meal at 11 a. m. consists of eight ounces of goat's milk, boiled vegetables, about three tolas of paper-thin *chapatis* and some fruits. Sometimes he takes vegetables boiled with rice as an alternative to *chapatis*.

### His Visitors

While at meals, he conducts interviews. His visitors vary from learned scholars of both the communities to widows and orphans soliciting his advice and help.

Often he sleeps for about half an hour in the afternoon and wakes up with clocklike precision. He takes about 12 ounces of tender cocoanut water along with the kernel if it is tender too.

He puts a mud pack on his stomach for about half an hour, part of his nature cure. He spins after a while, talking to his visitors and cracking jokes with children that throng around him.

After his evening prayer at 5 p. m., Gandhiji goes out for his second walk in the course of the day.

Immediately on return he plunges into work again and his second heavy meal does not vary from the first taken in the forenoon.

It is a wild conjecture as to when he would retire. It may be any time between 10 p. m. to 1 or 2 a. m.

One day in the lean hours of the morning at 2-30 a. m. the A. P. A. correspondent saw light burning in Gandhiji's cottage and there was sign of life too. Peeping in, he found Gandhiji at work. His day had begun.



## RETURN TO PRIMITIVE CIVILIZATION !

When during the last world war cities were being devastated by bombs dropped from the air, men had to take shelter for safety in chambers dug underground. A writer had remarked at the time that man was returning to the cave-age civilization !

The following description of life in an Indian city sent by a correspondent shows that we in India, at any rate, have made considerable advance over that stage and are now somewhere near the civilization which prevailed a few centuries before Christ amongst the primitive tribes of Africa and Western Asia

"There is no mutual trust. But if something new does not happen to start trouble afresh, we might get accustomed to our present mode of life.

"In business quarters police is stationed at fixed places. Hindus gather on one side and Muslims on the other to transact business. For hours they do business, standing all the time. They buy and sell goods worth lacs of rupees. Coolies of one community deliver the goods to those of the other near a fixed boundary. In the evening after completing the day's work, the Hindus retire to their *Hindustan* and the Muslims to their *Pakistan* ! Thus business is transacted without people of one community entering the region of the other.

"Of course, business suffers. Free movement in the bazaar and amongst customers is not possible, and it is also difficult to get sufficient working hands...."

So civilization has now to proceed further from this stage of neutral zones to a higher one, when men of one community might move freely into the region of another on bazaar days at least; or, as it used to be in the pre-Islamic Arabia, reserve some periods in the year when by common consent all hostilities should cease ! It would be a great progress, indeed, over the present situation if this could be done. The next step thereafter would be the organization of some such guard as the one known as *Hil Ful Fuzul* which the Prophet Mahammad is said to have organized in Mecca, for the protection of the life and property of foreigners (in our case, people of another community) happening to enter their zones on non-reserved days !

What a tragic pass we have come to ! If this disgraceful condition is to be ended, it is clear that some people on both sides have to take the risk of trusting one another. Businessmen know that all business ultimately rests on trust, and they know the risk involved in so trusting. Yet they transact business worth thousands of rupees and part with valuable property on mere verbal contracts. There the risk consists in possible loss of money and some times of credit also. They must go a stage further and also begin to take the risk of a possible harm to life.

Vapi, 17-12-'46

K. G. MASHRUWALA

(Abridged from the original in Gujarati)

## NATIONALIZATION

Since some little power has passed into the hands of popular ministries there has been a great deal of talk of "nationalizing" various industries and services. The discussions that have taken place reveal the fact that many are not clear in their minds as to the true objective of nationalization. Here it is proposed to set out a few principles that should govern "nationalization".

"Nationalization" presupposes that real power rests with the people, i. e., with the masses. There should be in the first place, a wide foundation of experience in the management of our affairs. This has to be obtained by the villagers looking after their common needs through well organized *panchayats*. From such experienced men the districts will draw their administrators and these will also supply the requirements of the province in regard to public men and legislation. Such well-based and properly conducted provincial administration will be able to keep under control the Central Government and make it function in the interests of the villagers.

When the Government of the land is in the hands of such tried patriots who will be trusted to hold the interests of the millions as their first care, then alone can we claim to have a National Government and "Nationalization" will then ensure that the interests of the masses will be taken care of.

In the absence of such a village-based and -controlled Central Government "Nationalization" may lead to the greater exploitation of the "have-nots" by the "haves".

For instance, there has been a lot of talk recently about "Nationalizing" the airways. These airways at present, are not within the reach of the villagers. They do not need them, nor are they likely to use them. As it is, at the present time, the "haves" own them and use them. So Government control now will mean that the Government will spend its money and thought in making "the airways" easily available to the "haves" while other "haves" will provide the service. Aerodromes may have to be constructed and various roads, etc. provided. For this, these private bodies would like to exploit the Government resources and obtain their assistance under the plea of Government control or "Nationalization". The funds available to the Government should be earmarked for the provision of facilities for the masses and hence we can not divert them for the betterment of airways. Let private enterprise go on as they have done. Some "haves" will exploit other "haves", and later on when village-based National Government comes into existence, we shall have time enough to consider "Nationalization" of such services.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

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# HARIJAN

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1947

## A LETTER FROM GANDHIJI

In the course of a letter to Shri Narandas Gandhi of Rajkot, Gandhiji writes:

"I have reverted to my usual diet and so there is no cause for worry. As a matter of fact, when a man leads a thoughtful life, there is no room for worry. My present mission is the most complicated and difficult one of my life. I can sing with cent per cent truth:

'The night is dark and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on.'

"I never experienced such darkness in my life before. The night seems to be pretty long. The only consolation is that I feel neither baffled, nor disappointed. I am prepared for any eventuality. 'Do or Die' has to be put to test here. 'Do' here means Hindus and Mussalmans should learn to live together in peace and amity. Otherwise, I should die in the attempt. It is really a difficult task. God's will be done.

"All the companions have merged themselves into this sacred work quite willingly. If any one of them feels defeated, he or she is free to leave. Each one has chosen his or her own village. Each has with him a Bengali interpreter. Kanu (son of Narandas) also is posted in a village, different from that of Abha, (Kanu's wife). I am here in a remote and unhappy village. Parasuram could not be left alone on account of the difficulty of language. So he accompanies me. He is a silent worker and a very clever stenographer. My other companion is a Bengali professor. Both attend to my personal needs also. Most of the other companions are at a distance of ten miles from me. They can see me, when necessary. Pyarelal, Sushila Nayyar and Sushila Pai are in different villages. Kanu is quite happy and is carrying on *Ramadhun*. He has very regular habits, and is endowed by God with a good physique. Abha is with Thakkar Bapa. She is sixteen miles away. Bapa is taking keen interest in her. He is pleased with her spirit of service. She is preparing Gujarati *chapatis* for him. Being a Bengali, she is able to do good work amongst Bengali women. She was extremely sorry to leave me. But duty lay that way. So I have kept her away from me. I must own that I was getting accustomed to her service almost as a matter of habit. But a habit of taking service from a particular individual is inconsistent with hard austerity. You will see thus, that whatever I do, I do from a sense of pure duty. You all should rejoice at this. Now, I have written long enough. You must all engross yourselves in your respective tasks.

With blessings,

5-12-'46

BAPU".

(Translated from the original in Gujarati)

## ASSAM

Assam, the Cinderella province of India, has got a bright future before it, unless misfortune makes it succumb to cruel experiments which British diplomacy often makes on human beings. In spite of the greatest variety of races and languages, Assam is a homogeneous province. In the words of Sir Andrew Clow, the Governor of Assam, "nowhere else in India has there been such a mixture of races as in the Assam valley; and nowhere have the peoples lived in more harmony."

This harmony, does not seem to suit imperialist politics. The two Surma Valley districts of Sylhet and Cachar have been tacked on to Assam. The population in these two districts speaks Bengali. These districts therefore properly belong to Bengal. Owing to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills there is not much communication between the Surma valley and the Assam Valley. One could understand a suggestion to restore the Surma Valley districts to Bengal. But that of presenting the whole of Assam to Bengal is without the least shadow of justice. The inference is irresistible that it is a part of the game for keeping the British hold firmly on India. With the fullest knowledge that the people of Assam are opposed to it, their province is grouped with Bengal. After compelling Assam to sit in a section, which it does not wish to sit in, it is being told that later on, it will have the freedom to opt out. Who can say how many complications will arise, making it extremely difficult for it to opt out? The Muslim League, with a definite policy of division of India, and a solid majority in Bengal, might be able to manipulate a tight constitutional stranglehold on Assam. What a cruel experiment on human beings it is!

Similarly, in the Western zone, the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Pathans of the Frontier are forced into a group with the Punjab and Sind! And, in the face of all this, the British Prime Minister has the temerity to declare that the British do not wish to force any constitution on a large body of people against its will!

There is yet another sinister movement afoot. Some British officers are working in the direction of making a separate province of the Naga people and other hill tribes. The British officers know only too well the result of such a policy. Some Naga leaders may feel elated at the prospect but the soberer among them, having a better understanding of the situation, have met and passed a resolution known as the Vokha resolution in which they say:

"1. This Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all the Naga tribes including those of the unadministered areas;

"2. This Council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal;

"3. The Naga Hills should be constitutionally included in an autonomous Assam in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas.

"4. The Naga Tribes should have a separate electorate."



Let it not be supposed that these hill people are novices in the art of self-government.

Even under the British rule, they govern themselves in the villages. It is only on the rarest occasions that cases other than those of murder or such heinous crimes go to the British courts. The method they follow is this :

In respect of disputes within a particular *Khel*, the *Gaonbura* of the *Khel* settles the disputes. If the dispute involves people of more than one *Khel*, the *Gaonburas* representing those *Khels* come together and settle the dispute. If the disputes are of considerable importance, all the headmen come to the *Panchayat* hall and settle them together. Normally all disputes are settled in this manner, and it is only in an extremely small number of cases that reference is made to the British courts.

Most of these *Gaonburas* are elected and even where they are hereditary (as they are in certain cases) they are subjected to a kind of referendum.

The Ao Nagas have a kind of Government by the people. The people are divided into three groups according to their age limit. The elders act as counsellors, the middle-aged group do sturdier social service and the younger ones perform minor and less important social duties — one set of persons in age limit superseding the other with the afflux age.

Each of the hill tribes has a language of its own. They have been taught to use English as a language of common intercourse, which very few of them understand. They are prepared to replace English by Assamese which is, naturally, much better understood in those parts.

If it be true that the British have decided to quit India, one fails to understand why they should still create situations which would foster disunity in this country. They know that the destiny of the hill people is indissolubly linked up with that of India as a whole. They know that if the Tribes people are left to themselves they will lack a foreign policy and also sufficient internal cohesion. What they need is an assurance of complete autonomy. The hill Tribes, with the help of sympathetic officers, can easily forge, their own unity and solidarity.

Every effort must be made by the more advanced sections of Assam to give the tribes a life-building education. They must be taught improved methods of agriculture. Their communications must be improved. The mischievous distinction of excluded and included areas must be abandoned. Protection against outside exploitation should be secured through appropriate legislation, if necessary. Cottage industries should be developed and marketing facilities afforded through co-operative societies. Non-political and non-proselytizing social service agencies may be encouraged to function in these areas to help these people towards a planned development.

Assam must assert itself and refuse to be yoked to Bengal. Assam can voluntarily and freely co-operate with both Bengal and Bihar as it has been doing all these years. Assam must remain an autonomous unit within an undivided and free India.

Wardha, 12-12-'46

KAKA KALELKAR

## SHRIRAMPUR DIARY

*Shrirampur, 20-11-'46*

Speaking after the prayer at Shrirampur to an audience of about a thousand persons, Gandhiji said that he had never imagined he would be able to come and settle down in a devastated village in Noakhali so soon. This had become possible through Satish Babu's efforts. He had come here alone, with two companions only. One was to act as his interpreter and teach him Bengali, while the other Shri Parasuram, who was from Malabar, had been brought along because the latter knew no Bengali and also Hindustani roughly and so could not be set up in a village alone. For all practical purposes he had thus come here alone. His companions had been left behind at Kazirkhil, and each of them was likewise to choose one village for himself. His idea was that every Hindu worker thus sent should be accompanied by a single Mussalman worker, and both of them together would mix with the local people and gradually create the atmosphere when the refugees from here shed their fear and would be able to come back and live in peace and friendship once more. For a Mussalman worker he depended on Saheed Saheb and Shamsuddin Saheb. But he could not afford to wait until such a worker was available. He had therefore come here as soon as he found the opportunity. It was good that some Mussalmans were present in the meeting and two local Mussalman friends had already invited him to visit their homes. They had assured him that they also wanted the Hindus back in the village; but the Hindus were not yet in the proper frame of mind to do so.

Fear is a thing which he disliked; why should one man be afraid of another man? Men should stand in fear of God alone, and then he can shed all other fears. Pyarelal had come to the meeting a short while ago. On his way, he met about 150 refugees who were going away from the village with their belongings. On enquiry the refugees had told him that they were afraid, when the military and police would leave, there would be fresh trouble. Whilst, therefore, the roads were safe, they took the opportunity of moving away to some place of safety. But the man who is possessed by fear will not find safety anywhere. What help can the military or the police give to such a man? To depend on military and police aid is to add to one's helplessness. He would therefore like these refugees to develop personal courage so that they would consider it beneath their dignity to fly from fancied danger merely for fear of losing one's life. Therefore, the better course for intending refugees would be to derive personal courage from men like him who went to the affected villages, assuming of course that these had the requisite courage.

But whether such courage he could personally infuse in another man or not, he did not know. So long he had lived amidst a number of companions. But now he had begun to say to himself, "Now is the time. If you want to know yourself, go forth alone." It was therefore that he had come practically



alone like this to the present village. With unquenchable faith in God he proposed to persevere so as to succeed in disarming all opposition and inspiring confidence.

He would live here amidst the Muslim villagers, form intimate acquaintance with each family, know their mind, and help them also to know his mind. When they thus knew one another intimately, then would perhaps come the time when the atmosphere would change and sweetness prevail in the relation between Hindus and Mussalmans, where sourness was prevailing today.

*Shrirampur, 24-11-'46*

Gandhiji in the course of his prayer discourse said, "I am sorry I had to start the weekly silence earlier than usual. Such was Shamsuddin Saheb's order. But wherever I may happen to be, my heart is here. I can have no peace until the Muslim brothers and sisters of this village do not call back the Hindus who used to live here, and they return to their homes. They should treat this as a duty and try to fulfil it."

*Shrirampur, 27-11-'46*

Yesterday's (26th) prayer meeting took place in the small village of Shrirampur where Gandhiji has taken up his abode. He said that even if a solitary refugee had to return to his village populated by Muslims, he would unhesitatingly advise his return. Whether it was men or women, if they were to become brave people, this courage was indispensable. Numerous letters had been coming to him in which people had questioned the wisdom of thus tempting faith, but he held that this was necessary if they were to become a self-respecting nation. He made no distinction between men and women. The latter should feel just as independent as men. Bravery was not man's monopoly. The art of self-defence excluded all outside help. What he saw and heard showed him that people were apt to forget self-respect in order to save themselves. There was no *Swadesh* and *Swaraj* for persons who would not sacrifice themselves or their belongings for their honour. As his hearers knew, the Ministers and the Parliamentary Secretaries, who had come to Noakhali, had been proclaiming that for the sake of their honour and the influence of Islam they were anxious that the refugees should return to their villages and feel perfectly safe and serene in the midst of the majority of Muslims living there. The speaker had no hesitation in trusting their pledged word and asking the people to do likewise. Those who trusted were never the losers, deceivers ever were. There was no room for *goondaism* in any religion worth the name, be it Islam, Hinduism or any other. He was trying to become a Bengali in order that if God gave him strength, he might try to live the life in the midst of the people of East Bengal and induce them to do likewise.

*Shrirampur, 28-11-'46*

At today's prayer meeting, Gandhiji related the story of how the Ashram prayer had taken its present shape. When he came to India in 1915 Gurudev invited him through the late Deena-

bandhu Andrews to stay at Santiniketan along with the inmates of the Phoenix Settlement. Kaka-saheb and Harihar Sharma were there and so were the late Deenabandhu Andrews and Pearson. These friends had created a sort of South African group at the place. The prayer which was observed at that early time by the small group practically continues to this day so far as the Sanskrit part is concerned.

While on his Harijan tour in Travancore, the speaker added the first verse of the *Ishopanishad* to it, as, in his opinion, it contained the cream of Hindu spiritual thought. Later on, Raihana Tyabjee, daughter of the late Abbas Tyabjee, who is noted for her musical talents, proposed the incorporation of a passage from the Quran Shareef, and this was done. Lastly, on Kasturba's death at the Aga Khan Palace, Dr. Gilder had recited a passage from the Zoroastrian scripture. Since then that prayer has been a part of the Ashram prayer. In addition there was a *bhajan* in an Indian language or an English hymn and *Ramadhun*.

The prayer which has thus taken shape can, on no account, be considered as belonging to any single community or religion. It is of universal appeal; and no one, whatever his denomination may be, should have hesitation in sharing it.

*Shrirampur, 30-11-'46*

At the prayer meeting this evening Gandhiji explained the meaning of the first *mantra* recited in the Ashram prayer: *Namyo Horenge Kyo*. Its purport is, "Salutation to the Enlightened Ones".

A Japanese Buddhist monk who had happened to stay in Sevagram for two or three years was responsible for its introduction. He had come to India with the object of mastering the secrets of the religion which had its origin in India. The monk had a sweet nature and had endeared himself to every member of the Sevagram Ashram by unostentatiousness, affableness and silence. Every morning he used to walk round the Ashram grounds for full one hour, while beating upon a drum and reciting the above *mantra* in a deep musical voice which sent a thrill into all those who heard him. He used to recite it at the prayer meeting. The recitation continued even after he was removed by the Government after hostilities with Japan began.

*Shrirampur, 2-12-'46*

Speaking after prayer, Gandhiji chose as his theme the story referred to in the *bhajan* which had just been sung. The chief of the elephants had gone for a drink to the river when he was caught hold of by an alligator. A furious struggle ensued, but in spite of his strength, the elephant was dragged into deeper waters. When he was on the point of being drowned, the elephant realized that his huge strength was of no avail, and he prayed to God for succour. God, the help of the helpless, came to his rescue and saved him from the jaws of death.

The moral was obvious, continued Gandhiji. The strength of the strong without God's help had been often found to be useless. Therefore, he advised dependence not on outside sources but upon



the inner strength which came to all who sincerely sought it from God. This was the lesson which the people in Noakhali sorely needed to learn.

*Shrirampur, 3-12-'46*

Two American friends who had come for relief work in Noakhali on behalf of the Friend's Service Unit met Gandhiji just before prayer; and they remained over to pray with us. One of them, Prof. Stuart Nelson shared in it by reading out some verses from Isaac Watts's famous hymn "Our God, our help in ages past". Gandhiji had originally intended to proceed further with explanation of the verses used in the Ashram prayer; but after Prof. Nelson's recitation he preferred to explain the English hymn in Hindustani.

By way of introduction Gandhiji said that he felt very happy that Prof. Nelson had thus shared in the prayer. While in detention at the Aga Khan Palace, Mirabehn used to sing this hymn to him in her rich sonorous voice. He then paraphrased the meaning of the first three verses and said that the sentiment expressed in it was the same as found in the *Gajendra moksha bhajan* sung last evening. There was the same reliance upon God, who was the source of all strength when every other earthly aid failed us. All human power is transient, and real safety can lie only when we place our reliance wholly on God.

Beneath the shadow of Thy throne  
Thy saints have dwelt serene;  
Sufficient is Thine arm alone  
And our defence is sure.

This is a lesson which all of us in Noakhali sorely needed to learn.

*Shrirampur, 4-12-'46*

Shortly before prayer, a group of people from the neighbouring villages arrived, singing the *nama-sankirtan* to the accompaniment of the *khol* (drum) and the *karatala* (cymbals). When the *Ramadhun* was being sung, they kept time by means of the *khol*. It was a delightful experience and, as Gandhiji began his daily discourse, he paid unstinted praise to the musicians. Indeed, he said that he had never heard the Bengal *mridanga* (drum) played so well as was done at the meeting. When played well it had a sweetness all its own.

He had also appreciated the *namasankirtan*; but he hoped it did not come merely from the throat but from their heart. For a parrot also can repeat what it learns from its master. There is hardly any virtue when we take the name of God when we live in safety. It becomes real only when in danger.

Continuing he said that he would never mind if a Hindu recited the *kalma* willingly and with a full heart. But if he did so out of fear of losing his life or possessions, then he took the name of God in vain, for it was the voice of Satan which then spoke through him. As he understood Islam, it had never prospered nor could prosper by means of force. Any man who pretended to serve Islam in that manner only did a disservice to the noble religion.

Every religion today had become tainted by unwanted accretions. In Hinduism we treated a large

part of our brethren as untouchables, and Gandhiji said he had no doubt that we were paying sorrowfully for that sin.

The first verse of the *Ishopanishad*, in the opinion of the speaker, contained the essence of Hindu spiritual experience. The purport of the verse was that all that existed in the universe was pervaded by and had its being in God. Therefore, no man could claim anything as his own. He should dedicate his body, mind and all that he possessed to that Universal Being and use only what he received through his grace. The moral of it was that we should deprive no man of his wealth, whether it be in the shape of life, honour or religion. Gandhiji continued that a believer in this truth, living up to it, shed all fear and lived in perfect peace.

The verses of the *Shrimad Bhagawad Gita* (II 54-72) were then referred to, as they form the next item in the Ashram's evening prayer. They described the characteristics of one who had attained knowledge and brought his senses under full control. The lesson of the *Bhagawad Gita*, said Gandhiji, was meant not for those who had forsaken the world, but for every householder, irrespective of his birth and state. Everybody's duty should be to attain the state described therein, and this could only be done if life was built on the rock of fearlessness.

*Shrirampur, 6-12-'46*

Gandhiji began his after-prayer speech by saying that true prayer never went unanswered. It did not mean that every little thing we asked for from God was readily given to us. It was only when we shed our selfishness with a conscious effort and approached God in true humility that our prayers found a response.

In the Ashram prayer nothing is asked. The prayer was for God to make them better men and women. If the prayer came truly from the heart, God's grace would surely descend upon them. There was not a blade of grass which moved without his will, not one single true thought which did not leave a mark on character. It was good, therefore, to develop the daily habit of prayer.

*Shrirampur, 7-12-'46*

Gandhiji referred in his few words after yesterday's prayer to a writing by a Mussalman. In it the writer had rightly contended that a man of God was never afraid to die or to lose his possessions for the sake of his self-respect or religion. God had given us life and could take it away. That teaching was universal and applied to all, Hindu as well as Mussalman. Those who had in God their sole refuge cast out all fear. Then there could be lasting friendship between the two. He had been trying all these days to din this lesson into the ears of his listeners. There was a time when Mussalmans also listened to him; but now things seemed to have changed and even among Hindus there were not many who would follow his advice. But he felt sure, lasting peace could come only when men of whatever community refused to surrender to any fear save the holy fear of God.



## A NOTE ON HINDUSTANI

### *The Status of Hindustani*

It is self-evident that English will cease to be the State language as soon as India becomes independent. We shall then carry on our administration in the provinces in their respective provincial languages and that at the centre in Hindustani. All Inter-provincial work, as also the work of institutions of an all India character will be carried on in the national language. When India becomes independent, Hindustani will have an official status at the U. N. O. just as the Chinese language has. No doubt Indian representatives at the U. N. O. will have, for some years at least, to speak in English for the convenience of the other members.

### *The Nature of Hindustani*

Hindustani is the language of Northern India, out of which arose the present day Urdu and Hindi literatures. With the ever increasing urge for national unity, Hindi and Urdu will have to come together and again melt into a common language — Hindustani — written in both the Nagari and the Persian scripts. Like all other languages Hindustani, too, will tend to become more and more simple as the spirit of democracy permeates the people of India.

### *The Policy regarding Hindustani*

For the Unity of India it is necessary that all Government officials, public workers and the majority of the people should not only know the national language, but also be able to use it with ease.

Both scripts should be equally acceptable all over India.

### *The working out of the Policy*

Except for the first four years, when only the mother tongue or the language of the province will be taught, arrangements will be made for the teaching of Hindustani in both the scripts throughout the period of schooling. (For the four years no second language either classical or modern will form a part of the curriculum.)

Hindustani and its literature will form a distinct subject in the compulsory course of the middle schools and colleges. The administration will see to it that no grown up person will go without a fair knowledge both of his mother tongue and of Hindustani.

Hindustani, in both the scripts, will be taught as a compulsory subject in all Teachers' Training Institutes.

Not only in the Department, of Education but in all Government services the employee's knowledge of Hindustani — in both scripts — will be noted and will be duly taken into account at the time of confirmation or promotion.

Every encouragement will be given to those who wish to learn Hindustani in both the scripts.

Special arrangements should be made for the publication of new standard literature in Hindustani.

Wherever possible, easy Hindustani paraphrases of good Hindi and Urdu books should be made and published in both the scripts.

### *The Immediate Step*

The present policy is to make Hindustani compulsory in schools and leave the choice of the script to the students or their parents.

Nowhere is the knowledge of both the scripts made compulsory, nor is it even encouraged anywhere.

The better policy would be to recognize that the knowledge of both the scripts is essential to Hindustani, and make the study of Hindustani optional until public opinion is ripe enough to welcome its compulsion.

Whether the two scripts should be taught simultaneously or consecutively, should be left to the discretion of the school.

Hindustani may be taught through the provincial script, in the elementary stages, provided that the pronunciation does not suffer in any manner thereby.

KAKA KALELKAR

[The above note was submitted to Mahatmaji for his consideration. He approved of it in a general way and added that popular Governments should content themselves for the present with making the following rule :

'It will be open to institutions to teach and for student to learn only Hindi and Urdu if they so choose. But certificates for Hindustani will only be issued to students knowing both the scripts. Prizes, promotions and appointments will naturally go to those holding certificates in Hindustani. K. K.]

### PLEASE NOTE

Though we have repeatedly drawn the attention of the subscribers to not sending their subscriptions by cheques, it seems it suits some of them better. We, therefore, have to draw their attention to two things: one, to avoid sending cheques as far as possible and two, if they prefer sending cheques to remit an additional amount of annas eight to cover the discount charged by banks which varies with different banks. When this additional expense is not remitted the subscription amount becomes a fraction which is not amenable to adjustments in calculations of the subscription amount.

MANAGER.

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