

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## AGAINST COLLECTIVE FARMING

V. G. D. writes :

"What a pity you have fallen a victim to the prevailing rage for collective farming! You will perhaps change your views if you read *Farmer's Progress* by George Henderson published by Faber about which a reviewer in the *Spectator* says as follows:

'In these days of the frenzied search for the efficient farming unit, which, it is fiercely advocated by agricultural economists, can only be broad acres farmed in the manner of the prairie and the ranch, it is a joy to find someone who is ready to quote his own practice and experience in support of the small mixed farm, worked by the family labour of the owner, as by far the most productive of all kinds of farms. (He holds that) four families of farm livestock, fed almost entirely on home-grown fodder and grazed in the traditional order, must be kept on every farm!'

Man's mode of life and work have to change and adapt themselves to the conditions surrounding him. The traditional desire to possess one's own land and cattle and work for personal gain is strong in man everywhere, and we are no exception to it. The so-called zamindar or capitalist is not the only zamindar and capitalist; the landless peasant and the clerk and workman of the capitalist are also the same in embryo. We have come to believe that there can be no incentive to work hard except through private ownership and gain. But then arises the question, how much land and wealth may a man possess? When the answer is that there need be set no limit to it, the system is capitalism, *zamindari*, absolute monarchy, imperialism etc. It can be managed only through slaves and servants. If it is urged that a man may possess no more land and no more capital and means of production than he can personally labour on, it is not a practical economic proposition. In thickly populated countries like India, China etc. the land is not enough for individual holding and economically working upon. The same is true of other forms of wealth and means of production. If the prevailing capitalist and *zamindari* order have led to sub-human conditions of life for a large majority of men, the other order of extreme division would lead to sub-human conditions for a still greater number. It would break down under its own hardships giving rise again to a new system of *zamindari* and capitalism. The reason is that the funda-

mental faith underlying it, namely, sense of personal ownership as an incentive to work, is kept intact, and this principle is spiritually defective in itself and has become morally defective because of the conditions of life, namely, insufficiency of land and wealth for making economically sound individual units.

Both spiritually and morally it is incumbent upon us to learn to look at work from a higher plane than personal profit and craving for ownership in specific plots. The Hindu joint-family system and the clan system created a broader outlook within a particular sphere of blood-relationship. The principle must be extended to institutions based on relations other than the one of blood.

The method of farming suggested by me is not what is generally known as collective farming. I have called it *samaashraya* farming. It might be called extended joint-family farming with individual sharing to a certain degree. It does not insist on too large farms; not even on making the whole village a single farm. The extent of the area would depend upon the nature of the soil. But it should be sufficient generally to provide work to 20 to 25 families.

Gandhiji came to the conclusion, and I, for one, entirely agree, that the occupation of agriculture alone is never good for man. Agriculture, cattle farming, and small industries should all be worked together in every unit; and for the all-round development of the peasant, it is necessary that he should practise also a handicraft. This *samaashraya* form is not advocated for the purpose of mechanizing processes, but for taking the best advantage of the human and animal agencies.

As in agriculture, so in cattle-keeping, most people advocate that there should be a cow or a buffalo in every house. Some have even urged that every cultivator must be compelled to keep a cow or a buffalo. The question was once discussed before Gandhiji. Contrary to the expectations of many of his listeners, Gandhiji gave the opinion that he did not favour segregated rearing of cattle in every cottage or farm. Even if there was an individual owner of every cow, all the cows in a village should be housed together and managed in common. He definitely



favoured the dairy system, cattle-rearing in *samaashraya*. The same considerations apply to *samaashraya* in farming. Only then may we reach the ideal of सबै भूँद गोपालकी — All land belongs to God.

Wardha, 27-2-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

#### A SCHEME FOR INCREASING FOOD PRODUCTION

The problem of food shortage in India is getting increasingly complicated. Instead of becoming self-sufficient in foodgrains by the end of this year, the Indian people have to put up with a reduction of rations by 25 per cent and stretch the begging bowl to foreign countries. Unfortunately, correct figures as to the actual percentage of food shortage in the country are not available, so much so that some economists are inclined to believe that there is no food shortage at all and that the present difficulties are chiefly due to artificial scarcity created by anti-social elements. Even those who do not accept this view generally concede that the real deficit is not more than about 10 per cent. This shortage is, surely, not so extraordinary and should not cause so much headache to the Government and the people. With better storage techniques, irrigation facilities, reclamation of waste lands, prevention of wastage of food, and tapping of edible but inferior and generally neglected foods, it should have been possible by now to meet the annual food deficit. Failure to achieve this objective is, indeed, a sad commentary on the basic policy that is being pursued by the Government of India despite public opposition.

I earnestly feel that the existing system of procurement and levy is fundamentally erroneous. In most of the States in India, the farmer has to part with a substantial portion of his produce under a system of compulsory procurement at Government rates which are considerably lower than the 'open-market' or 'black-market' rates. He, naturally, resents such procurement and does not feel enthusiastic enough to step up the production of foodgrains to the maximum. He tries to divert his land from food-crops to money-crops which yield higher income because of better prices. Moreover, he begins to learn the art of dodging Government procurement and selling his foodgrains to the black-marketeers. In Madhya Pradesh, the Government procures foodgrains indirectly through merchants. But the net result is ultimately almost similar. The level of production shows the tendency to go down because the producers, both agricultural and industrial, do not feel the glow of economic incentives in a system hedged with controls on all sides. This has happened even in an enlightened and progressive country like Britain. In a poor country like India, therefore, the uneducated agriculturist is not expected to respond only to patriotism

and appeals for sacrifice. Adequate economic incentives ought to be regarded as pre-requisites for making the "Grow More Food Campaign" a practicable proposition and a success.

How could this be achieved? I have a very definite and concrete suggestion to make. The Government should abandon the existing policy of procurement and introduce a system of open markets and limited sale of rations at controlled rates. The State should undertake to provide cheap rations only to those who cannot really afford to pay the 'open-market' prices. For instance, persons earning less than Rs 200 per month might be regarded as falling within this category. This figure will, of course, vary from region to region. The Government could also publish scheduled rates of foodgrains available in the ration shops from month to month; the rates could vary with the different levels of income and the quantities purchased. Moreover, only coarse, though clean, foodgrains (i.e. second or third quality, but not rotten or mixed with grit, earth etc.) may be made available in these Government shops. In order to discharge this responsibility, the Government, instead of procuring foodgrains at lower rates, should purchase them from the free or open market and sell them at cheaper prices in the ration shops. The loss incurred by the State in the process would be in the nature of a subsidy. Even at present, such subsidies are being paid by the Government on foodgrains imported from foreign countries. The money goes out of the country and the poor Indian farmer is not able to derive any benefit out of this additional expenditure from the public exchequer. Instead, the Government ought to subsidize foodgrains purchased from our own agriculturists and allow the tillers of the soil to feel that they can reap the full fruits of their hard work on the land. The State will be obliged to make suitable arrangements for cheap ration shops in the cities, specially in the deficit areas; in the rural regions only the landless labour will be allowed to enjoy such facilities. The rest of the people in cities and villages will be free to make their purchases of foodgrains in the open market. Such a scheme will have several distinct advantages. First, the ignominy of the "black market" and the consequent chain of moral degradation would automatically disappear. Secondly, the State will be able to recover a substantial portion of money spent on subsidy through a suitable system of sales-tax and graded income-tax realized from merchants who will be entitled to conduct their business in the open or free market. Thirdly, the farmers will be really encouraged to increase their food production in response to better prices in the market. Fourthly, the poorer sections of the population will continue to receive rations at controlled rates and the well-to-do people will get the satisfaction of making their purchases in the "white" market in place of the existing "black market".



In suggesting this scheme, I do not claim any originality. During my European tour last year, I found such a scheme working successfully in Czechoslovakia. The existence of a free market side by side with some cheap and subsidized ration shops for the poor people had eliminated black-marketing from the country and the State was able to augment its public exchequer in substantial measure through sales-tax and income-tax on the business transactions in the open market. I see no reason why a similar experiment could not be tried in India as well.

The first objection that may be advanced against this scheme is that higher prices of foodgrains would again set the inflationary spiral in motion. There need be no fears on this account because the Government will be able to arrest the inflationary tendencies by selling foodgrains to the poorer sections of the community and any rise in the level of wages would be quite unnecessary. Moreover, high prices of foodgrains prevail even today. The significant difference that the new scheme would bring into effect is that in place of the black-market prices we will have open-market business transactions yielding additional taxable income. The Government can check any probable inflation by two other methods as well. First, the farmers need not be paid the whole value of their produce in cash; the State could offer an additional incentive to the villagers by giving them gold and silver also in making payments. The farmers even now convert their money into ornaments but the middlemen exact high profits by exploiting the needs of the villager. The poor tiller of the soil will, surely, be grateful to the Government if he is able to procure gold and silver at comparatively cheap rates. Secondly, the State, instead of paying the full value of foodgrains to the farmers in cash or precious metals, could divert part of the money due to them into collective welfare schemes like better housing, co-operative farming and marketing. Shares of such co-operative societies could be supplied to the agriculturists, of course, with their consent. This will also, incidentally, meet the objection that the additional purchasing power placed in the hands of the villagers might be mis-spent on intoxicants and wasteful socio-religious ceremonies.

Another argument advanced against this scheme by some economists is that the uneducated farmer is not yet trained in economic incentives. If he is able to earn higher income on his agricultural produce he may not care even to cultivate the whole of his land. The insinuation is that such a scheme of paying higher prices to the agriculturist, instead of encouraging him to produce more may ultimately result in actuating him to produce less. To my mind, such an insinuation is fantastic and betrays gross ignorance of the present psychology of the masses. The average villager today is an intelli-

gent person who easily responds to the economic incentives that exist in modern society.

There is one more point. In place of procurement, the Government could also think of realizing rent and land revenue in kind, i.e. in the form of foodgrains at controlled rates. But the present level of storage efficiency and honesty among State officials may not be conducive to the success of such a system. This may be resorted to only in times of national emergency when stock-piling of foodgrains for ration shops may become imperative.

Lastly, I do not mean to suggest that only by changing the existing system of levy and procurement the food problem in India would be automatically solved and the deficit made good by additional productive effort on the part of the farmers. All other schemes of supplying better seeds, irrigational facilities, manure, cattle and implements will still be necessary. But I have no manner of doubt that by abolishing the present system of procurement a very great hurdle in the way of greater food production would surely be removed.

I place the scheme before the Union and State Governments and the National Planning Commission for their serious consideration. I hope they will find it well worth a fair trial.

Wardha, 20-2-51

S. N. AGARWAL

#### Produce Tree-Cotton in Schools

The article, "Self-Sufficiency in Cotton" published in the *Harijan* of 23rd September, 1950, describes how useful the tree-cotton is for those who want to spin for their own wear. Spinning has now been introduced in a number of primary schools in some States, especially in the Bombay State. At many places where the schools are located cotton is not available locally. It has got to be imported from outside. Many a time, it is not available in time or it is not of the requisite quality. A *khadi*-lover suggests that tree cotton should be grown in the compounds of every school where spinning has been introduced. It is a suggestion worth being given effect to. Care should, however, be taken to select the right type of seed, having regard to the local weather and soil conditions. The rates of cotton have gone very high. Growing of cotton in school compounds will be very helpful in reducing the expenses on the craft.

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# HARIJAN

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## CO-ORDINATION OF HANDICRAFTS AND MECHANIZED INDUSTRIES

### I

#### "Harris Tweed" and Khadi

A British correspondent has forwarded to me a sample of "Harris Tweed" (a coarse woollen fabric similar to the *pattu* of Kashmir, except for the colour and design), and presented the following problem for my consideration:

"I wonder whether the enclosed would be of interest to anyone you know? I enclose it in case it may be. It is a pattern of Harris Tweed from the outer Hebrides — islands off the N.W. of Scotland. It was hand-spun past winter by a woman of Scarp, a small, remote island in the Atlantic, from local wool and woven on the main island of Harris on the usual Treadle Loom. The dye used is now a chemical dye except for the natural colour. The only industry on these islands is fishing and the weaving of their own local wool. Only a very few of the older women will now hand-spin the wool, the usual practice now is to send the wool to local mills to be carded and spun. It is then returned to the villages to be woven on Treadle Looms by the men in their own homes. All attempts to persuade the women to continue the practice of hand-spinning seem doomed to failure, as it is uneconomic. Although it must have meant a useful and welcome occupation for the long hours of darkness during their extensive winter which has a very depressing effect and leads to a high rate of melancholia.

"The space you give in *Harijan* to hand-spinning problems, I usually find of interest in connection with these islands that I know; and your answer to the fact that hand-spinning is uneconomic would apply to these islands too if suitably altered to meet the different mode of thought. How I wish the right person could interpret the situation before the tradition quite dies out!"

The problem of the islanders of Hebrides is similar to the problem of the spinners and handloom weavers of India. The former is on a miniature scale, that of India on a mass and country-wide scale, and extends to several industries and occupations.

We know that cotton-spinning is now almost entirely done in yarn mills. At the time Gandhiji started the spinning movement, hand-spinning had entirely died out in a large part of India, so much so that even a man of Gandhiji's age in Bombay did not know what a spinning wheel had been like. After considerable hunting Gandhiji was able to discover from Gujarat one or two models, and some old women, who had plied the *charkha* during their younger days.

Not so handloom weaving. It is still a going trade, though not so flourishing. The difficulty of getting sufficient yarn for the looms has been always present, and the number of looms operating has diminished every year.

Gandhiji came to the definite conclusion that if hand-spinning was abandoned, hand-weaving was bound to die out in course of time; for the same economic arguments about cheapness etc. applied both to spinning and weaving. As long as mill-owners found it more profitable to weave the yarn in their own mills, and the consumers looked only to cheapness, handloom weavers would not be able to get yarn in sufficient quantity and they could not compete with mill-fabrics in price. So if the hand-looms were to be maintained, hand-spinning must be revived.

Moreover, spinning in city mills and weaving on village looms is a topsy-turvy process. Cotton produced in villages has to be ginned, pressed and transported to cities; there the bales have to be burst once again, the pressed cotton has to be 'opened' (made loose), carded, slivered and spun. And the yarn has again to be bound into bales and sent to villages for distribution among weavers. After the hand-looms have woven it, a great part of the cloth is again taken to towns and cities for sale. All this is a wasteful process, which can go on only as long as there are not sufficient weaving mills. Hand-weaving can go only with hand-spinning; if the latter dies, the former cannot survive long; and even both of them together cannot be made to live, if they are put to the necessity of competing in the market with similar mill-fabrics.

The competition can be avoided only in one of the following ways:

(a) hand-spinning and hand-weaving is confined to only such artistic fabrics and designs, as cannot be produced in mills, and are demanded by patrons of art. This presupposes the perpetuation of a social and economic order of gross inequalities. Moreover, this can give employment only to 'a handful of artisans. Hand-spinning cannot become a domestic occupation of every village home, it cannot solve the problems of village unemployment and depletion, and the congestion of towns and cities;

(b) it is patronized by the people on sentimental considerations, and produced by people on philosophical, spiritual and self-sufficiency considerations irrespective of cost, and maintained by Government for the purpose of and to the extent necessary for fighting unemployment and gaining a measure of popularity, whether they themselves believe in its usefulness or not;

(c) the Government regard hand-spinning, hand-weaving and similar village industries and modes of non-mechanized production, transport etc. as second and alternative lines of preservation of the nation.

I consider this last as the only effective way of solving the problems of competition between different modes of production, transport, large-scale unemployment, created by rapid mechanization



and rationalization of industries, as also by mass immigrations etc., and the revitalization and prosperity of village life and agriculture. In India these are life and death problems for the whole nation; but incidentally the principles might be of use to other countries as well in solving small puzzles, similar to the one of "Harris Tweed". Hence I shall discuss it at length in a separate article.

Wardha, 1-3-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

#### "EXCISE REVENUE (PROMOTION) COMMITTEE" ?

The Central and State Governments of India are ill prepared to forgo the income from the sale of spirituous liquors and narcotics. Under the prevailing financial stringency they find this large revenue quite handy, to be easily had by treading on the beaten track. Crores of rupees can, no doubt, be had by such a course, and one might therefore look at it with a watering mouth. It would save the Government from the disrepute consequent upon the imposition of fresh taxes, particularly when the so-called intelligentsia are ready to ally themselves with the Government in this measure.

This mental inertia which is not willing to leave the beaten path is very dangerous for building up our newly-won Swaraj. A noteworthy instance of the forms this inertia sometimes takes is given below :

Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, Director of the Delhi School of Economics speaking on "Republican India's Second Budget" said :

Several State Governments have rigidly followed a policy of Prohibition thereby losing crores of rupees from their revenue. (Did they have a deficit? Have they not made it good by new sources of income? — M.) This loss of revenue is a matter for concern not only to the State Governments but also to the Centre in view of the large loans and grants that the Centre is making to the States.

Dr Rao goes on to suggest :

The Centre should immediately undertake an inquiry into the whole question of the economics of Prohibition in India in the context of economic development. The Centre alone can undertake such an enquiry. I am confident that if such an enquiry is undertaken and conclusions arrived at on an *objective* and *rational* basis, there would follow a revision of the policy of Prohibition which in turn would ease the financial strain....." (italics ours).

(The Times of India, 5-3-'51)

With some such idea and purpose the Madhya Pradesh Government has appointed a Committee, which has already been the subject of discussion in this paper a few days back. Dr Rao now goes further and says that an enquiry by the Centre instead of by the provinces should be undertaken. This passes comprehension. The subject of Prohibition comes within the scope of the provinces; all the revenue derived from liquor belongs to them. Disregardful of this plain fact Dr Rao puts forward the lame argument that if the revenues of the provinces

are depleted they would affect adversely the Central Government also and thus he connects the issue of the excise revenue with the Centre. May it not be that he does so in order to placate the Central Government and Pandit Jawaharlal, who do not consider prohibition as of supreme importance? Otherwise the Centre should have nothing to do with this question. The directive of the Constitution in this regard has to be complied with by it also. It is, therefore, bound to help those provinces who make an honest effort to introduce prohibition. Instead of doing any such thing, Dr Rao here advocates the appointment of a Central Committee to find out how the excise revenue can be restored. The Constitution precludes the Central as well as the Provincial Governments from appointing any such Committee.

There is another point also to be considered here. Dr Rao seems to be speaking as an economic expert. Such experts generally do the common mistake of treading into fields not their own; and Dr Rao has committed such a mistake here. Prohibition is a definite policy of the Indian Government; it is a duty enjoined upon it by the Constitution. That policy no more depends on the so-called *objective* or *rational* basis of any economic expert. It is a fundamental principle of the basic policy of the Government of this country. Therefore none should look at the unholy excise revenue with a covetous eye. The economist as an expert of a particular branch of knowledge can and should proceed with his work on this presumption; and if he knows his art well he should show the Government new ways and means of how they can properly find the necessary funds to make good the deficit caused by the loss of the excise revenue. Thus far two such sources have been found out and have yielded good results: the Income tax and the Sales tax. It is upto the economist to show us some other effective and harmless way. Mere light-hearted proposals would not do. Maybe, he may not be able to show any other way. If he has none to show he should humbly say so and it will be no discredit to his learning. But instead of this if he talks in a way so as to disregard the definite policy of the State it won't be economics worth the name. But if he does so in spite of this it would be tampering with the deliberate policy of the State. It is not proper for experts to do so in the name of their special branch of knowledge. The logic behind prohibition is quite objective and rational. As a matter of fact, the logic of the excise revenue is shaky and misleading. It is a sad thing if experts like Dr. Rao do not understand this. If such views and opinions are set afloat to placate the Central Government to suit their trend they are likely to be vitiated by an opportunist irresponsibility. The ship of State cannot be allowed to be wrecked thus.

(Translated from Gujarati)

M. P. DESAI



### NON-VIOLENCE OF THE BRAVE

In the course of a village tour we happened to pass by the outskirts of a certain village. Sighting us from a distance the village people ran towards us. After a brief conversation with them we continued our journey. Some of them accompanied us to a little distance. We came by a *kachcha* well which had been heavily damaged on account of a land-slide. Among the company, I noticed a villager with fingers cut off. Gathering from my looks that I was curious to know how he had lost them, he narrated his story. By itself, it is not of great importance; but in its present context it conveys a lesson of great value and meaning. It illustrates the superiority of the maxim "Die that others may live" to the ordinary one, "Live and let live".

In the international field we witness countries pinning their faith to atom bombs and still deadlier weapons, at the same time speaking in high platitudes about democracy and humanity. They deride India taking the side of justice and maintaining impartial neutrality. Thus in the surrounding gloom and dark despair, this small incident in a secluded corner of the country is really wonderful and fills one with hope.

This in short is the story: A hunter loaded his gun and aimed at a charming peacock. As he was about to fire at it, a pathetic cry was heard: "Stop! Stop! Why do you kill that innocent creature for your fun and pleasure?" The hunter was taken aback for a while. But the shock did not stay long. He again held the gun fast in his hands and aimed. By this time the man who had shouted reached him and said: "So long as there is breath in me I will not allow it to be killed." These words came from a simple and unassuming villager of the "backward class" of Thakardas. He was not a member of the *mahajan* (council of elders) nor was he on the register of any non-violent organization. But his soul was disturbed at seeing an innocent peacock on the point of being killed. On the other hand the hunter was not an ordinary man. He was a man of position. His ego was hurt. He felt his self-respect being injured at the hands of a simple villager. In a stern voice, therefore, he threw out a challenge: "Get away, you fool! or you will be killed." The climax was reached, when the brave villager came forward and stood facing the gun and protecting the peacock, said: "Fire your shot."

The peacock was saved and the man was shot. The hunter was nonplussed. He was unnerved. A feeling of repentance overcame him. But what could be done now? The shot had been already fired. Had he been a coward he would have shown his heels to save himself. But

he too was a brave man. In a repentant mood, he sat down, by the side of his victim and began to treat his wounds and comfort him. The village people rushed to the spot. They were excited against the assailant. But the wounded villager pleaded with them and softened them. Why should not the heart of a hunter melt before such heroism? How greatly the brave villager must have risen in his esteem! The wounded hero bade him good-bye and the hunter departed. But before going he urged him to accept money for his treatment and left an amount there.

The valiant hero, though heavily wounded, was saved. But there were marks left on his fingers and hands as the visible symbol of his non-violent bravery.

It made me reflect: How mysterious are the ways of Nature! Had such an incident taken place in a city, it would have hit the head lines in the dailies and eloquent tributes might have been paid to the hero. But nothing of the sort happened in this case. How many gems like him must be lying hidden in the dust of far away villages!

SANTBAL

(Translated from the Gujarati *Vishwavatsalya*)

### A FANTASTIC SCHEME

The papers have advertized a scheme of building in Delhi a large mansion, about 110 ft. in height and 12,000 sq. ft. in area, and equipped with all modern conveniences. The outside of the mansion will look, as nearly as such huge constructions in stone and cement can be made to, like Gandhiji with his *charkha*. To justify this disshaping of Gandhiji into a building, or the building into Gandhiji, it is suggested that the mansion should be dedicated as a memorial to Gandhiji and become a repository of his relics, records and literature. It is estimated to cost Rs 40 to 50 lakhs. If the reports are to be believed, the authorities have approved the plans and selected a site for it.

I regret I am unable to appreciate this idea. It is out of tune with what Gandhiji stood for. It is a wasteful expenditure; and particularly at a period like this must not be made from any public fund whatever, far less from a fund contributed in memory of Gandhiji. The Gandhi Fund can be usefully spent for several constructive activities which are in great need of moneys, and they can be exhausted without resorting to fantastic and expensive schemes.

This does not mean that it is suggested that no building is needed for preserving Gandhiji's records etc., and for a good Gandhi Library and Research Institute. But a Gandhi Memorial Building should be an example of the beauty of simple perfection and usefulness and not of fantastic art and expensiveness. I hope the idea will be abandoned.

Wardha, 6-3-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA



### EARTHQUAKE-RUINED ADIVASIS

The following information is based on a letter and report dated 15-12-'50 to the late Thakkar Bapa by Shri Dahyabhai J. Naik of Bhil Seva Mandal, Dohad, who was deputed by Bapa to do relief work in the earthquake-affected areas of Assam.

The earthquake affected areas visited by Shri D. J. Naik are the Sadiya plains, and Abor Hills District. 80 per cent of the victims of earthquake are tribals belonging to the Miri tribe (a tribe on the plains) and the Abors and the Mishmis (hill tribes). Not only men, but also nature has been unkind to them and they have suffered very heavily.

The Abor Hills District with its headquarters at Pasighat has an area of about 9,000 square miles and a population of nearly three lakhs, consisting mainly of Abors. The Abors are found in the hills, and the Miris on the plains. Shri Naik says that the people of Abor Hills District were completely cut off from the rest of the world for a period of about 3 months. Wireless was the only means of contact with the outside world. Rice, salt and tea, the most essential articles of food, were supplied by air-dropping till 10th December 1950, when the dakota used till then was called back by the Central Government. The huge landslides in the Hills (one of them was said to be seven miles long) completely destroyed the narrow bridle-paths in the mountains formerly used by the Abors to go to Pasighat to purchase rice, salt, yarn etc. The tracks were repaired by the Abors, but still at certain points where they were narrow and steep they had to go on all fours. The landslides buried several Abor and Mishmi villages leaving no signs of former existence. The toll of human life due to earthquake may be presumed to be two to three thousand. The floods too had their share in causing devastation in these areas.

Describing the Abors, Shri Dahyabhai Naik says, "The Abors are nice people. No doubt some of them are addicted to opium, but it is a legacy of the former rule. But they are much less addicted to it than the Mishmis. They seemed to be more intelligent and conscious than the Mishmis. I saw among them a keen desire for education. . . . There are about 25 schools in the hills run by the Education Department. Some of them have a strength of more than 100 students. The Abor woman is very industrious; she never sits idle. Even sitting in the bazar of Pasighat with some roots and oranges for sale or treading her way to the village, which may be at a distance of three to seven days' journey, i.e. 30 to 70 miles, she will be spinning cotton on a bamboo *takli* and weaving articles of very beautiful and artistic tapestry. When we see an Abor woman weaving articles of variegated colours selected most artistically, who can dare say that she is uncivilized? . . . Their expression is impressive, due to the training they receive in their Tribal Councils which settle disputes among themselves and wherein everybody is expected to express his opinion."

Writing of education among the tribal people Shri Naik says, "The Miris of the plains are being assimilated into the social life of the people. Some of the Miri young boys are in Government service and some are receiving college education. Education is spreading among them, and they will come in line with others in a decade or so. But Herculean efforts are necessary to educate the Abors, the Mishmis and the Nagas."

The Assam Government have received upto 31-12-'50, a sum of nearly 51 lakhs as donations for the relief work. They have made a budget of Rs 51,40,000 for (1) general work for rehabilitation, of 5,000 destitute families in North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh-Sadiya Frontier Tract plains portion, Abor Hills plains portion and in other places—Rs 39,73,000; and (2) work in the Hill areas, in Lohit Valley and Dhang Valley areas, Abor Hills District hills portion, Slade Sub-Agency and Subansiri Agency—Rs 10,67,000. The general work consists of supplying corrugated iron sheets, cloth, blankets, utensils, yarn,

cocoons and *charkhas*, help in clearance of forests, supplying bamboos and agricultural implements, aid to students and educational institutions, reconstruction of wells etc., aid to fishermen and opening of three orphanages at Pathalipam, Sadiya and Pasighat. The hill area work consists of gratuitous relief by supplying rice, salt and tea, aid to 70 schools which have been destroyed by earthquake and to 4 or 5 central schools.

*Sakti Ashram, Goalpara District:* The Hon'ble Shri B. R. Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, paid a surprise visit to the Ashram on 23-12-'50, and inspected the various activities of the Ashram. Having found that for want of an extractor for extracting honey from the bee-boxes honey could not be gathered, he allotted out of his discretionary funds a sum of Rs 100 for purchasing an extractor. He issued orders that the Inspector of Schools and the Special Officer for Basic Education should visit the institution and see if it could be developed into a Basic Education Centre for the training of the students in the area which is predominantly inhabited by tribal people. He further recommended that the Government grant for the institution may be increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,500 or Rs 3,000. He very much commended the work of the Ashram and hoped that it would become self-sufficient in the near future.

D. RANGAIYA

Working Secretary,

Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh

(From the Sangh's monthly letter for Jan'y. 1951)

### COCO-COLA INVADES INDIA

The American drink, Coco-Cola, is gradually being introduced in India. A couple of months ago, a factory was started in Delhi; very soon another factory will begin operations in Bombay; Calcutta is next on the list; then Madras. From the larger cities the manufacturers will probably try to infiltrate into the areas immediately contiguous.

### France Bans the Drink

The experience of countries like Canada, Austria, Italy, and France, where the drink has already been introduced, should be a warning to the people of India. Though the drink has not been welcome in any of these countries, France alone has successfully fought the influential vested interests behind the Coco-Cola enterprise.

In France, the Higher Council for Public Hygiene and the National Academy of Medicine, both of these gave opinions casting grave suspicions on the harmlessness of Coco-Cola. On the strength of this and other evidence a Bill was introduced in the National Assembly to ban the drink. It was referred to a Commission of Inquiry on July 22, 1950.

The Commission submitted a report unanimously recommending that the drink should be banned and it was banned.

As in India, it was not American companies that were set up in France and other countries for the sale of Coco-Cola. Indigenous companies did its sale, distribution etc., but the concentrate used in the manufacture of the product was imported.

Another sinister aspect of the manufacture of the drink, particularly dangerous to India, is that a very advanced form of machinery is used,



so that the number of workers employed is very small. Thus Coco-Cola in Belgium employs only 350 workers in all to manufacture and distribute the product throughout the country.

#### Evil Effects on Health

It is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the effects that a drink like Coco-Cola might have on the consumer. Its composition is roughly water, sugar, caramel, phosphoric acid, vanilla, caffeine and extract of Coco leaves and Cola nuts. A six ounce bottle of Coco-Cola is said to provide some 54 mgms. of caffeine.

Some amount of caffeine has a stimulating effect, but excessive consumption has a depressing action and produces other bad effects upon the system. Various authorities have stressed the harmful effects of an excessive amount of caffeine. Several cases are on record to show that excessive use of caffeinated beverages caused cardiac depression and affected the central circulatory system. Night tremor, insomnia, nervousness, excitability, indigestion, distressed brain and weakness of the muscles are other effects of caffeine consumption.

Dr H. H. Rusby, Dean of the College of New York, Columbia University, stated: "It is nevertheless true that caffeine is a genuine poison, both acute and chronic. Taken in the form of a beverage, it tends to the formation of a drug habit, quite as characteristic, though not so effective, as narcotics. While not cumulative in substance, it is so in effects, permanent disorders of the cardiac function and of cerebral circulation resulting from its continued use. When the caffeine is taken in more concentrated and seductive forms, as in confections and the like... the danger of habit formation becomes correspondingly greater." According to Dr W. N. Leszynsky of New York, caffeine is particularly poisonous to children, over-excites the brain and produces functional disturbances. He attributes arrest of physical development to the excessive use of caffeine.

During the debate on the Bill for banning Coco-Cola in the French Assembly a deputy said: "But I draw the attention of the Assembly to a major point—a danger, as you all know it well, menaces public health...." Another deputy said: "You tell us that you cannot forbid a drink which is consumed by millions of people all over the world. Is this an argument? For centuries hundreds of millions of Chinese have smoked opium. Is that a reason why you should not be very strict in regulating the consumption of opium in our country?"

In the next article we shall examine its effects on Indian Industry.

(Abridged)

OCTOPUS

#### VINOBA'S PILGRIMAGE

Vinoba will start from Paunar tomorrow morning (8th March) on foot so as to reach Shivarampalli, near Hyderabad, Deccan, before the commencement of the Sarvodaya Conference scheduled to meet there during the National Week. This decision was taken yesterday at a meeting of the Sarva Seva Sangh, where it was pressed upon him that if the Conference was not to become a mere exhibition of speeches and unnecessary expenditure, it was essential that he should guide its deliberations. He realized the force of this argument, and since he wished to avoid the use of a vehicle, he decided to go on foot. This decision was welcomed, as it would enable hundreds of villagers to receive the *Sarvodaya* message directly from his mouth. He will have to travel about 300 miles and cross several districts of Madhya Pradesh and the Hyderabad State.

I cannot say what exactly will evolve out of the deliberations of the Conference. But there is one message, which Vinobaji is very keen on propagating and which has met the approval of constructive workers at Wardha. It is that every one who believes in the *Sarvodaya* ideal should contribute a hank of self-spun yarn on the occasion of the annual *Sarvodaya melas*, which take place in every part of the country on 12th February. One person (irrespective of age or sex), one hank—will be the mode of registering, what may be called, the vote for the *Sarvodaya* ideal. This is one of the tasks to which all who aspire or work for *Sarvodaya* should apply themselves during the year. The message must reach every hamlet and every home in every village, town or city, and workers should try to see it acted upon.

We shall all hopefully await the details of his itinerary and pray to God to guide and brighten his path.

Wardha, 7-3-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

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