

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor : K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## QUESTION BOX

### STUDY OF SANSKRIT

Q. Even if the knowledge of Sanskrit may not be quite necessary for attainment of Truth or efficacy of prayer, the retention of Sanskrit in prayers, rituals, ceremonies, etc. even without understanding it, has saved it from total extinction even under extremely adverse circumstances. Now that we have gained our own, shall we not encourage the language of our ancients, who have given us the Vedas — the stores of knowledge? To say that the Vedic hymns and other compositions in Sanskrit should be recited in their translations into modern languages is to rob the soul of our country.

A. There can be no intention of neglecting or not encouraging the study of Sanskrit. It is to a very great extent the raw material of Indian languages, and a good study of it will always be needed. But it should form part of our literary activities, and get a place of honour in the study of languages. I do hope it will be studied by a greater number of people than now. But, having regard to the very great number of subjects which form part of studies in modern education, the number of those who can attain even moderate scholarship in Sanskrit, will, I am afraid, be not very large even with greater spread of education. Millions of people will go without knowing even the correct pronunciation of Sanskrit words. If religious prayers have to be effective — i. e. provide real spiritual food to the praying individual, and if religious scriptures are meant to enlighten those who read or recite them, they should cease to be unintelligent semi-superstitious practices. Prayers and scriptures whether original or translated, must reach the people in a language which they understand and can master—not through study of grammars and books so much as through their use in ordinary life.

The respective needs of literary attainments and religious growth should not be confused. There need be no fear of the soul of the country being robbed or lost if the character, intelligence, and knowledge of the people is enhanced, even though they do not understand a word of Sanskrit. What the questioner regards the soul of the country, is really its conservatism.

Vile Parle, 4-6-'48

K. G. MASHRUWALA

## SHRI VINOBA AT AJMER—I

[Shri Vinoba was at Ajmer from the 9th to the 15th May and had to address meetings at several places during those days. Some of his speeches are summarized below from D. D.'s notes.]

(1)

9-5-'48: At a gathering for distribution of prizes to the students of the Mahatma Gandhi High School, Shri Vinoba asked the students to remember that India's special contribution to knowledge was the knowledge of the soul (*Atmavidya*). It was the highest knowledge, all other knowledge being subsidiary to it. *Brahmacharyashram*, i. e. to say the period of life meant for absolute devotion to study with self-control and discipline, was particularly enjoined for the acquisition of this knowledge. It was the knowledge of the spirit which made other sciences fulfil their purpose in life in the right manner. Without it, these sciences became worthless, and even harmful. Shri Vinoba also advised the students not to make such distinctions as Sindhi culture, Hindi culture, Gujarati culture, etc., or to lay too much stress upon the knowledge of the languages of their original provinces. It was possible that Ajmer might not be able to provide the best teaching of the Sindhi language. But, in his opinion, the students would not lose anything, if in its stead they mastered Hindustani. The difference between Hindustani and Sindhi was not very great after all. If the poems of Shah Latif were published in *Devnagari* characters, those who spoke Hindustani would be able to understand them well. The speaker had made some study of the Sindhi language and he could say from his own experience that all the languages in Northern India, such as Marwadi, Punjabi, Sindhi, etc., were in a way but dialects of Hindustani. Both Sindhi and Hindustani had grown from Sanskrit. If the difference of script did not put an obstacle, a Sindhi could study Hindi in a week. There were hundreds of words, including root-verbs, which were common to both the languages. Consequently, if Sindhi students learned Hindustani, they would not find much difference between the two. If the Sindhi language led them to the *Sindhu* (Indus), the Hindi language would lead them to the *Hindi Mahasagar* (Indian Ocean). The knowledge of Hindustani would introduce them to the wider literature of India, and make them more fitted for the service of their country. They should learn Hindustani well and with its help merge into the life of India, as sugar does into milk.



Sindhis were known to be an adventurous people. They travelled distant countries, quickly acquired knowledge of the local languages and made successful trade. The boys should show these qualities in Ajmer also. They should remember the old proverb, "When you go to Rome, do as the Romans do." They might find that the customs in Rajasthan differed from those of Sindh. They should not insist on retaining their own customs. If they wanted to serve India, they should become full Indians. They must love their Sindh, but not be vainglorious about it. There was a difference between love and pride. If they wanted to be proud, they must be proud of being Indians, and there too, their nationalism should not reach the point of vanity, because over and above everything they were all human beings, and they must not forget that great fact.

He was given to understand, Shri Vinoba said, that their schools were to close from the next day for the summer vacation. The summer vacation was an innovation of the British rulers. The English professors not being able to bear the tropical heat of India, needed to go out and therefore closed the institutions during that period. But there should be no vacation for knowledge, just as there could be none for eating. Man needed knowledge even more than food. During summer the English professors invariably went to a cool place, but most of the Indian teachers and students had no place to go to. Since they had to stay at home, they should know that the temperature of the school building would generally be lower than that in their homes, and that the attention to study made one forget the discomfort of heat. Shri Vinoba was of opinion that there was no need for summer vacations in India, and requested educational institutions to consider this subject. In India, a vacation was needed, if at all, not in the summer, when generally they had no work at home, but in the monsoon, during the period when weeding was done in the fields. Students should, therefore, urge that their time should not be wasted by making them sit compulsorily idle during the summer. But in case summer holidays were inevitable, he would advise them not to waste their time but to learn during that period something which was new, and not taught to them in the schools.

(2)

On the same day, Shri Vinoba addressing a public meeting on the open ground of the Moinia Usmania High School, said that the occasion for his visit to Ajmer was the *urs* of Khwaja Pir. Gandhiji had promised to attend the festival, but was unable to fulfil that promise. He therefore thought it was his duty to perform this pilgrimage.

Such religious festivals ought to be an occasion for joy and satisfaction to all people, but it was unfortunate that an atmosphere had prevailed in India which made one afraid of celebrating even such religious functions. The country was passing through such evil days that the occasions of *Dasrah* or *Id*, instead of becoming a matter of universal merriment, raised apprehensions of communal disturbance and breach of peace. As a matter of fact, the feeling of hatred had nothing to do with religions. Men with political ambitions mislead the masses in the name of religion. Men with true

faith in religion must guard themselves against such evil advisers.

Ajmer was inhabited by people of all religious denominations. It was a centre of various religious movements. There was the celebrated *dargah* of Khwaja Pir; it was also a place of pilgrimage for Hindus, a great centre of the Arya Samaj, and its Jains were also well-known. The result should have been that as people of every religion lived there, there should be greater joy in the life of Ajmer, because every religion gave a message of mutual love.

The *Gita* clearly laid down that everyone should perform his own dharma, and allow others to perform theirs. Every one must worship in accordance with his faith.

The *Quran* said the same thing. It said that God sent His prophets to every nation and all the prophets of the world belonged to the same fellowship. Saints of all the religions were one at heart. The apparent religious differences were the work of people other than saints.

The Jains held that words could not express Truth fully. Each religion or sect disclosed only one aspect of Truth, and one could not see the whole Truth by looking at only one of the aspects. Truth must be examined in every one of its aspects, but even so, the different aspects were not opposed to one another.

Arya Samaj placed great faith in the *Vedas*. It is said in the *Vedas*, "वेदं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति" (Truth is one but its votaries gave it different names). The different religions were but different ways of paying homage to that Truth. Islam had one way of worshipping, Christianity another. Amongst the Hindus it took a variety of forms. All the same Truth was one, and also, according to the *Vedas*, there should be no conflict in the various forms of worship.

The New Testament said the same thing. Jesus had said to his disciples that they should not think that they alone were his disciples, and that he lived only in their house; he had many houses to live in. Thus, Jesus taught his disciples *sarvadharmā samabhava* (equal regard for all religions).

There was no conflict amongst different religions. If there was, it was between religion and irreligion. All religions should unite in combating irreligion, which was spreading in the world. If the various religions fought amongst themselves, disbelief in God and religion were bound to spread.

In Ajmer, one could see all the different forms of worship which prevailed in India. He would rather wish that the members of each religion joined with others in their worship and gave room to every form of worship in their hearts. They would thereby make India stronger and a guide to the world.

(3)

The third speech was delivered at Hatundi, on the same day. Hatundi is a village at a short distance from Ajmer. Shri Haribhau Upadhyaya and his colleagues had founded an *ashram* at Hatundi some years ago. At present, a women's institution is being conducted there under Shri Haribhau's guidance. Addressing the inmates of the *ashram* and the villagers of Hatundi, Shri Vinoba said that though he knew the



ashram and its organizers for several years, he had not been able to visit it before. He said that apart from other reasons, his inability to visit that ashram was due also to the fact that Gandhiji who was their common father, took care of all these institutions, and there was no occasion for him to feel any anxiety for ashrams going on at various places. He now came in their midst in the spirit of brothers meeting together after father's death, in order to get and give mutual consolation and strength. Bapu had left a large estate for them. Usually some fought for obtaining a share in the estate, but the kind of estate which Bapu had left was such that few sons had the courage to claim a right in it. His estate required of the claimant a duty to qualify himself for possessing it. They—Bapu's children—could not now afford to lead a life of ease and light-heartedness, as perhaps, they could while he was alive. Bapu's life had been played out before their eyes. His estate consisted of his ideas. Everybody could take them, but taking them meant working out those ideas in one's own life. The saying that "the son was an alias of the father" meant that the son had to be like his father. Bapu had told them that in order to serve the people it was necessary to discipline oneself with some vows and rules. Such vows and rules were like a master. If observed assiduously, they helped one's development.

Turning to the residents of Hatundi Shri Vinoba advised them to make the fullest use of Haribhauji who lived among them. The sun grew in the east and travelled over the sky on its ordained path and cast light over the world, till it set in the west, but it was for the people to make use of that light. One who wanted it to enter his home, would have to open his doors in order to allow it inside; if one wanted to read by sunlight, he would have to open his book; if he wanted to benefit by its rays, he would have to sit in the sun. The sun itself would not compel anyone to make use of its gifts. The same thing was true of a river. Those who wanted to make use of it should go to the river and make its fullest use. If, instead of people going to it, the river itself were to go to the people's houses, the people would get afraid and tell the river, "Please do not visit us, we will go to you when we need you." In the same way, people should make use of Haribhauji as they thought proper. If they were happy even without him, he himself would be quite content and be at ease. If he could do something to make them better, he would be happier still. It was for the people to decide what benefit they should take of Haribhauji's presence.

That was also the meaning of Swaraj. Swaraj meant that the people now had the freedom to be what they liked. So long as they were slaves, they had to be what the rulers wanted them to be. Now there was none to obstruct them in their self-development. They themselves constituted the Government. There was time when India was ruled by Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and other rulers. But that did not make any difference in the life of the people, because in the villages, there was the rule of the villagers themselves, through their own *Gram Panchayats* (village councils). They were not concerned with the

changes in government, which took place at Delhi. Just as in the home a child looked only to its parents, and did not care who ruled at Delhi, in the same way, the seven lakh villages were like seven lakh children living in different homes. If their parents were to live in Delhi, how could they look to their welfare? It was not possible for a parent to look to the welfare of seven lakhs of children. What Shri Vinoba meant to convey was that they should seek their parents in their own *panchayats*. Education, sanitation, food, housing and their daily necessities should all be conducted and organized by the people themselves in their own villages. When people dug their own wells, removed their own dirt, wove their own cloth and guarded their own villages, there would be Swaraj in every village. That was, in short, the way to bring Swaraj at home. Haribhauji could give them more details and help them in this work, but it was for them to work for it. Haribhauji could not do it for them. God had blessed every one with eyes, ears, hands, legs, etc. Every one must make use of these. If intellectual ability was deficient, they could take mutual aid, but the responsibility of doing so lay on them. They should establish Swaraj at Hatundi by doing all these things. If they did that, they would be able to see the Kingdom of Heaven established in this world.

9-5-'48

D. D.

(Summarized from the original in Hindustani)

### "Gandhian Plan Reaffirmed"

This new book by Principal S. N. Agarwal (published by the Padma Publications Limited, Bombay) is, as the name suggests and as Dr. Rajendraprasad says in his Foreword to it, "a continuation of and supplement to the *Gandhian Plan* which was published by him in 1944." Gandhiji wrote a foreword to the book, saying, "I commend the treatise to the careful attention of every student of the present deplorable condition of the country." In this book, the author, as Rajendrababu observes, "takes note of the criticisms that were offered to the first publication and tries to meet them, and deals with the subject in all its aspects and draws his conclusions and suggests his own solutions to the problems that arise." To quote him again, "the volume is a very valuable contribution to the literature on a subject which is of such practical absorbing interest today. While we have a plethora of books written in the right orthodox modern style, we do not come across much that gives in a short compass the *Gandhian Plan of Life*. The volume is therefore doubly welcome." I whole-heartedly endorse this remark. The book deserves to be studied by all constructive workers, nation's leaders and representatives and students of economics, politics and social service.

Bombay, 23-5-'48

K. G. M.

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# HARIJAN

June 13

1948

## LINGUISTIC PARTITIONS

"From the way the Andhras and the Tamils are behaving, the unity of India even to the extent it is manifested now is bound to be broken; and it is not impossible that before long all are at each others' throats. It is nauseating to be told of the distinctive culture of this or that language and language group of different regions of India, while really our culture is an integral one coming as it does from the Vedic times. Even in Shri Rama's time, the story of which is our earliest record of the State of India, even Ceylon was culturally the same, as Ravana was said to be a great scholar and master of the Vedas.

"Nothing will be more ruinous to our unity and destructive of our culture than the present fissiparous tendencies among the various people of the different provinces, whose only basis of differences is the language that is spoken. Under the leadership of the Indian National Congress, its well-meant approval of dividing the country on a linguistic basis has produced inter-communal and inter-provincial jealousies to a degree not known even during regimes which existed on the 'divide-and-rule' policy. People talk of Dravidian supremacy or Andhra supremacy and so on. Unless the present tendencies are nipped in the bud, things will go wrong.

"In this connection, the existence of provinces of an autonomous nature is bound to prove a great evil. There should be no Governors' provinces. After all there is an all India body which legislates for the whole country, and the function of provincial and local bodies may well be limited to putting into effect the laws of the whole land. It is unworthy of an Indian to entertain the idea that provinces, linguistic or otherwise, have separate interests running counter to the centre. By a simple process, while every language may be allowed to keep its identity, it can be made to keep in the background its identity in the larger sphere, i. e. India, and give up feelings of provincialism.

"Everyone in India should feel and act as an Indian and not as a Madrasi, or a Bengali, or a Punjabi. When we move about in India, we do not feel and should not in future be made to feel that we are getting into an alien country, termed State. But if the temper of the people goes on as it is, it will not be far when provinces will become hot beds of intrigues designing to enlarge their borders. There may still be people longing for the Chola Empire, or Vizianagar or a Pandya Kingdom.

"To sum up, we should (a) scrape provinces, (b) make districts administrative units, and electoral districts for an all India Legislature, (c) allow all principal languages to grow and prosper through suitable educational and literary institutions, and

(d) have *Hindi* or *Hindustani* as India's language, with English as a compulsory second language for particular purposes.

"We have a tradition of the unity of Bharat-varsha and its culture handed down to us from generation to generation. It has stood the test of time and various internal and external stresses, inspite of a multitude of languages. Why should we forget that glorious heritage, and talk in terms of separatism on a linguistic basis? Unity is strength and Truth and *Ahimsa* demand it"

The above is from one contributor.

Another from Bellary also supports the same thesis. Strongly protesting against further partitions of provinces on the ground of linguistic differences, he quotes with approval the following remarks of Dr. K. N. Katju:

"The gravest misfortune of India is its division, and the demand for formation of provinces based on religious and linguistic considerations. Every man, at least every Congressman, should be engaged in building up a democratic State where the problem of minorities and majorities should be based on political and economic considerations. To suggest an approach to this great problem of minorities and majorities on linguistic considerations is a very dangerous proposition. Unity is the demand of the day and we should not think in terms of provincial favouritism."

Then, after discussing at length the past history of the movement for linguistic partitions, he says,

"In a weak moment the Congress conceded the principle of separate electorates in 1916. It similarly conceded the linguistic division in a fit of absent-mindedness. Having paid for it dearly, it has gone back on separate electorates. It is time it undoes the mischief of the other. Major cause of trouble and friction in provinces today is the creation of linguistic provinces not co-terminus with the political unit. The Congress must take the full blame for this and retrace its steps."

He proceeds to illustrate how languagism is as ruinously heading towards fratricide as communalism:

"People who lived together in harmony are divided into two warring camps. In my own areas minority though nearly as large as the majority and economically more powerful cannot address a public meeting in their own language, though everyone knows and understands it. . . . Congress pamphlets published in the language of the minority on Gandhi Jayanti Day by one Congress Secretary are burnt by another Secretary publicly and there is no relief. . . . These were put up with, during the freedom struggle in the interests of Congress unity. Open clashes may now be expected now that freedom is won. Already the crusading zeal of each linguistic group is manifesting itself in the fight for boundaries. Can there be any satisfactory boundary? How many large minorities who lived in peace and amity with their neighbours will suddenly find they are in the enemy's camp threatened with extinction of all that they hold dear? Can there be any worse manifestation of the disease that has been spread



in the name of linguistic division than that the best exponents of "Karnatic Music", the Tamils, among whom Thyagaraja lived and sang in Telugu, should now declare war against Telugu songs, some of the best in that school of music?

"One can realize that Pakistan and Linguistan (or 'Bolistan': division on ground of languages) are allied diseases in the body politic, by noting that while the former was advocated on the *two nation* theory, . . . the latter (has been so done) on the ground that each linguistic group was a *sub-nation*. Not to see the kinship between Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah and the Linguistic Advocates at this critical juncture is to fall into a grave error. They are all architects of disruption."

He suggests:

"The only solution of the linguistic problem of the country in terms of the Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights . . . is while working for a national language as an inevitable necessity of our new nationhood to establish universities under Central direction for each separate linguistic area where the language of the area will be given an equally honoured place with the national language. This is the utmost to which respect for regional languages can go without disintegrating the State or creating vexed problems of majorities and minorities."

"In a personal discussion with late C. Vijayraghavachariar in 1935, the great constitutional scholar expressed his abhorrence of Linguistic Provinces from a different angle. . . . Mr. Vijayraghavachariar complained that Linguistic Provinces would make our unity still more thin and take us back to a loose "confederation" and make us an easy prey to the first designing aggressor. This should certainly be avoided at a time when unity is the supreme need."

"*The Language of the Legislatures*: It is one of the cheap dictums of demagogic clap-trap in defence of their 'one language-one State' doctrine that it is an essential pre-requisite of democracy that the discussions in the Legislature must be in the language of the people. . . . The gentlemen are obviously unaware of the existence of bi-lingual Legislatures in Canada, South Africa, Australia and other countries. They do not see the *reductio ad absurdum* of their theory for there can be no Central Government at Delhi which is truly democratic in their sense, as there is no one single language fit to be the language of the Central Legislature. It is a case of the 'invention plaguing the inventors'. It is good for them to remember that political Government in modern days is a highly specialized art and will require a class of well-equipped professional politicians who should certainly be masters of at least 2 or 3 languages. There can be no doubt that the language of the Government—the Legislatures and of Courts—in the whole of India must essentially be the National Language side by side with the regional language if unity has to be preserved."

I do feel that the basic idea in the above contributions deserves to be considered, if not all their specific suggestions. Though the work of Constitution framing has proceeded to such an extent and on ideas carefully nourished for a long time, it must not be regarded too late to revise our ideas and review the whole matter. The first contributor's suggestion to scrap the provinces, and make districts administrative units may not be considered practical. It will be inconsistent with the policy adopted towards the Indian States, where smaller States have been induced to amalgamate into larger units of the same status as a province. But it should not be impossible to have multilingual provinces, with all the necessary facilities for the development of its several principal languages. The solution suggested by the Bellary correspondent is worthy of consideration. We must avoid both the extremes: having too many languages in a legislature, whether Central or Provincial, as also of insisting upon having only one. Difference of language like that of religion must not become a disruptive factor.

Khar, 31-5-'48

K. G. MASHRUWALA

### No Compulsion

Sometime ago I received a complaint from C. P. and Berar that some enthusiastic heads of Government offices and firms had deducted ten days' salaries from the monthly paybill of the members of their staff, as their contribution to the Gandhi Memorial Fund without regard to their convenience or wishes, as if it were an obligatory tax. I have received a similar complaint again from Karnatak. They irritatingly enquire if such compulsion is in order and justifiable particularly in connection with a memorial to Gandhiji.

There can be no doubt about the answer. Though an appeal has been made to every citizen to pay at least his ten days' income to this fund, none can be compelled to do so. Everyone is free to pay any amount he wishes, or even decline to pay, if he has no urge. Though it is desirable that the fund should be collected as quickly as possible, still if anyone wishes to defer his payment or to pay in instalments suitable to him, he is at liberty to do so. One who does not earn or cannot save cash can pay in the form of self-spun yarn representing 80 hours' labour, say, about 30 hanks. Only, I would advise all who wish to pay that they do so as rapidly as possible,—not for the convenience of collecting the fund, but because *यस्य त्वरिता गतिः*, good deeds must be executed quickly,—before the occasion or urge is gone. I communicated the complaint to Dr. Rajendraprasad as soon as it was first received. He assured me that it was never intended that heads of public offices or firms would coerce or compel any of their subordinates to pay anything against his wish. He regretted that anyone should have done so.

Vile Parle, 3-6-'48

K. G. M.



## LEST WE FORGET

### VI

#### HOW WE CELEBRATED THE WEEK IN 1926

[Gandhiji left India in 1893 at the age of 23, and in the 46th year of his age he landed at Apollo Bandar on Friday, January 8, 1915 (Samvat 1971 Paush vadi 7). I had the good fortune to be one of those who were there to welcome him home and who ran after his car for some distance. I had the privilege of living in the Satyagraha Ashram at Koehrab in the first year of its existence. Gandhiji had not yet discovered the spinning-wheel. We therefore did not spin, but toil we did. For instance I ground corn with Gandhiji on October 2, 1915 as the entry in my diary shows. We also fetched water from the well on the opposite side of the road along with Gandhiji. I was also in the Ashram at Sabarmati in 1926 and was a humble participant in the celebrations the description of which by Shri Mahadev Desai is summarized below. V. G. D.]

..... Five groups decided in their respective quarters to work the spinning-wheel day and night from 4 a. m. on the 6th to 7 p. m. on the 13th, the rest working their own wheels and also working a loom day and night from the morning of the 6th to the evening of the 13th.

..... The wheels and the loom worked away day and night, without for a moment going wrong or stopping, and without any one who attended to them at night ever falling ill. Especial enthusiasm was evoked on the day when a youngster of 16 one day worked at his wheel for 14 hours and registered his yarn score at the evening prayer. It was 4444 rounds or 5925 yards. That spurred others to emulating his exploit with the result that five more champions entered the lists, the most successful of them scoring as many as 9119 rounds or over 12,160 yards of 17 counts, having been at his wheel for 22 hours and 30 minutes at a stretch, spinning at a sustained speed of 540 yards an hour.

But the pioneer was not to be balked of the fruits of his first unique achievement. He did on the last day 7000 rounds, thus topping the list in the whole week's individual outturn, his score being 17,244 rounds or 22,992 yards, i. e. nearly 3,000 yards per day.

..... All the time that the boys did not spin they gave to cleaning, ginning, carding and slivering the cotton that they and their elders turned into yarn during the day .....

The result of the last day's spurt [was as follows]:

	Total rounds	Average per head	Day's total	Rounds
Men	44,493	840	Average per head	1,43,898
Women	27,488	887		1,170
School Children	65,485	2339	[The same on ordinary days 271]	
Infants	6,432	585		

The result of the day and night working of one loom, 5 men and women sitting at it in turns, was as below :

Total hours of work	180
Total persons	40
Total outturn	190 yards of 21" width

.... The oldest members of the Ashram, viz. Gandhiji and Kasturba Gandhi scored a total of 3,829 and 4,226 rounds respectively, and the youngest—a grand-daughter of the oldest—scored 4,323 rounds. ....

### HARIJAN SEVAKS MEET

A meeting of the members of the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi, met at Kengeri, near Bangalore at the invitation of Swami Vishwanand, Secretary of the Mysore State Branch of the Sangh on 12th, 13th and 14th May, 1948. Among the thirteen members of the Board who attended the meeting from various provinces were included Shri V. Bhashyam Iyengar, Smt. Lilavati Munshi, Shri B. S. Murthy, Shri A. K. Menon, Shri A. V. Thakkar and others. Shri V. Bhashyam Iyengar presided over the meeting. This was the first six-monthly meeting of the Central Board, as up to now they used to meet only annually.

The members representing the various provinces gave reports of their work and narrated their experiences. In addition to the routine work in all the provinces, the following features were brought to the notice of the meeting :

(a) Most of the provincial Governments had passed legislation for temple-entry and removal of civil disabilities of Harijans and the other Governments shortly propose to do so;

(b) all the Governments have allotted increased funds for education of Harijan boys and girls and for other amenities to Harijans;

(c) the Orissa Government has taken upon itself the entire financial responsibility of running hostels for the education of Harijan boys and girls through the Harijan Sevak Sangh and has introduced the principle that all Government hostels should be composite hostels open to Harijan and caste Hindu boys and girls alike;

(d) the Mysore Government has undertaken provision of house-sites and building materials on a large scale, costing them Rs. 13 lakhs in the year 1947-48.

Thereafter various propositions brought by members were taken up for discussion.

The special feature of the meeting was that the members that gathered from various provinces discussed questions of policy to be followed or revised all over the country in the matter of the Harijan welfare and the abolition of various types of untouchability still obtaining in rural parts. Now that the various administrations of provinces as well as States and State Unions have passed or are shortly passing legislation for the admission of Harijans in Hindu temples and for the removal of all social disabilities, there remains little to be done by the legislatures. At the same time much larger sums of money are being spent by the provincial and State Governments for providing educational facilities and for economic betterment of Harijans. Also, the Draft Constitution for India provides that, unless continued, all electoral privileges for Harijans should endure only for the next ten years. The Sevaks assembled therefore discussed how to bring



about the fusion of the two sections of Hindus—Harijans and non-Harijans—and to consolidate them into one whole and thus to bring them much closer together. Of course, the system of caste, which is up to now the fundamental rule of Hinduism, should go, if all social inequalities created by the caste differences are to disappear fully. With this end in view it was proposed that the various Government provisions relating to temple-entry, removal of social disabilities should be implemented by active work and propaganda amongst caste-Hindus and Harijans and that this work should be undertaken by a band of specially trained missionary workers. The proposal for the training of such missionary workers was passed and the details of the same were left to be worked out by a special sub-committee and a scheme prepared by the management of the Thakkar Bapa Vidyalyaya in this behalf was referred to this sub-committee.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh conducts a very large number of students' free hostels all over the country subsidized by Governments. A proposal was brought forward to admit 25% of non-Harijan Hindus on the same terms and conditions as Harijans in these hostels and to request the Governments to do the same in their own hostels, and this was hotly discussed. All the pros and cons were brought forward by the sympathizers and the opponents of the proposal. The gist of the arguments of the opponents was that they did not wish their privileged position of certain sums allotted for their welfare being thus attacked by non-Harijan Hindus who were not suffering from the disabilities which the Harijans suffered from. They further argued that when in or about 1940, Section 93 Government (Madras) of that day admitted Christian Harijans along with Hindu Harijans for the educational benefits given by the Madras Government, it was the Harijan Sevak Sangh that protested against the Madras Government's proposal. How is it that now in 1948, the Harijan Sevak Sangh should itself propose that a percentage of non-Harijan Hindu students should be admitted to the same benefits which were conferred on the Harijans on account of their specially unenviable position to those who were not suffering in that way? Ultimately, the matter was postponed for consideration at the next meeting of the Board, to be held six months hence.

A resolution to the effect that Harijan Sevak Sangh and its provincial branches should undertake the running of more industrial schools was also passed.

The party had an excursion on the morning of the 14th. They were taken to the technical and vocational school conducted by the Government of India for the disabled ex-soldiers at Jalahalli, eight miles from Bangalore where about 375 ex-soldiers are being taught various trades and industries. The party also saw the Mysore Government factory for manufacturing insulators on a large scale from China clay, selspar and quartz, and where porcelain crockery is also manufactured on a small scale.

Bangalore, 14-5-'48

A. V. THAKKAR

## PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

There is a reference in the *Harijanbandhu* dated 18-4-'48 to the high rates charged by cultivators for grains supplied to their agricultural labourers. The cultivators have been appealed to charge moderate rates and to pay a living wage to their labourers. While there is everything to be said in favour of this appeal I am afraid the problem has to be examined in its wider aspects. Not only the labourers but the cultivators also should get a living wage. Let us take the analogy of a textile millowner and the mill labourers. Mill labour, being organized, is able to exact increasing wages from the employers. But ultimately these wages are passed on to the consumers and the employers have hardly to suffer on this account. Is that the position of the cultivators in relation to their labourers? Do the prices of agricultural produce as obtain today bear any relation to the living wage of the labourers and the cultivators or even to the cost price? Has there been any scientific basis for fixing up prices of agricultural produce so far? This is the crux of the whole problem.

Even when Government have fixed prices during this period of rationing and control, they have been guided by the price index of different articles, taking 1939 as the base year. Now, although the price index may reveal a greater rise in the prices of food grains than in those of other commodities, the comparison is misleading. It is based on the assumption that the prices of food grains as obtained in 1939 were ideal from the agriculturists' point of view. We know it was not so. These prices neither made agriculture a paying business nor provided a living wage to the agriculturists. In fact there has been no basis at all, scientific or unscientific, for fixing the prices of agricultural produce. That has not been the case in regard to prices of industrial products. The industrialists maintain records and show the cost price of their product based on the cost of the raw material, labour charges, depreciation of machinery, interest on capital, insurance and other running expenses. To this they add their margin of profit which will enable them to lead not only a decent but a high standard of living and yet leave a bank balance for them. This principle has been accepted by Government while fixing prices of such articles.

Is this not a good enough criterion to be adopted in the case of agricultural produce? Should not the agriculturists aim at a decent standard of living, let alone a high standard of living? It is encouraging to note that this principle and something more have been recommended by the Krishnamachari Committee appointed by the Government of India on this very question. In effect, it lays down (1) that the prices of agricultural produce must bear relation to its cost, and (2) that there should be parity of incomes from industry and agriculture.

It further emphasizes that agriculture which is the mainstay of the nation suffers from all the disadvantages at present and is the least protected industry of all. The holdings are uneconomic, crops



are visited by frost, pests and diseases, irrigation facilities are negligible, all these resulting in a very low average production per acre. And last but not the least, the prices paid for this produce are anything but fair.

This question has to be examined from yet another angle. Commercial crops like tobacco bring more remuneration to the agriculturists than food crops. This has been regarded as going against the interests of the nation. If the agriculturists are to be dissuaded from growing of crops like tobacco, the remedy lies not in issuing pious appeals to them but in adjusting the price mechanism which will take away all temptations for taking to such crops.

This is a question which should engage the pointed attention of the social worker interested in bringing about a balanced economy between our villages and towns. The scientific basis for fixing of prices of agricultural produce has to be evolved. At present the Government relies on the indifferent data supplied by the *patwaris*. Let our social workers take the initiative in the matter and get a few typical cultivators in selected areas to maintain proper records from this point of view. Incidentally, this will provide a revolutionary point to the agriculturists for the programme of bringing about economic equality which is the demand of the age.

Nagpur, 10-5-'48

JHAVERBHAI PATEL

### THE REAL SOLUTION

Speaking at the Food Conference Premier Reddiar of Madras stated that the Government will have to take the responsibility of making grain available to about 25 to 30 million people in his province alone. Why is India in this predicament four years after the war? Is there nobody to hang for this?

At the same Conference Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"The solution of many of our problems depends upon increased food production. For some reason or other enough attention and energy has not been paid in the past towards the realization of this end which has never been in dispute."

In an agricultural country the Agricultural Department should stand between the people and starvation. The money spent on this department is like an insurance premium guaranteeing against food shortage. If in spite of spending enormous amounts of the tax-payers' money, the citizen periodically faces starvation, there is something wrong somewhere and the guilty party has to be liquidated forthwith.

As it is we think of palliatives to meet exigencies and not of a satisfactory solution; we are asked to import more food and to export other articles to get food.

In an old country like ours the pressure on land is already great. Priority should always be given to food production. The Indian Delegation to the seventh session of the International Cotton Advisory Committee recommends that in view of the short supply position of long staple varieties of cotton (mill raw materials) the existing acreage should be expanded. In other words cultivation of other

crops are to give place to long staple cotton. Such is the position in regard to Virginia tobacco also. Then where are we to grow more food?

What explanation has the Agricultural Department? Has an enquiry been called for? As far as we are aware this department is more or less absorbed in producing raw materials for mills leaving the food producer to fend for himself. In New South Wales, in the Murrumbidge Irrigation Area, they obtain an overall rice yield of 1.75 tons per acre and it is reported that even 4 tons to the acre have been obtained under ideal conditions. In Victoria they obtain about 430 cases of tomatoes per acre. What has our Agricultural Department to show against these achievements?

A time has come when the Agricultural Department should be reorganized. The work connected with raw materials for mills and commercial crops should be detailed out to another "Land Exploitation Department". This Department should be maintained solely from contributions and taxes laid on beneficiaries and not from general taxes. The section concerned only with the growing of food for the people should be entrusted to the Agricultural Department which should not be allowed to dabble in any other problem.

The Department should be presided over by a food grower and not by an I. C. S. officer. Such a head of the Department should be given not a money remuneration but a plot of ground to live on.

Only then we shall know where we stand in this vital matter and the Agricultural Department can truly watch the interests of the agriculturist and the citizen.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

[Shri Kumarappa always writes strongly whenever he feels keenly. When the style becomes a habit it is likely to lose its effectiveness, and there is fear of his criticism being ignored, particularly if it is not followed up with some effective action. I hope those to whom the above article is particularly addressed will not ignore his criticism. Agricultural economists are agreed on the absolute necessity of reorganizing the Agricultural Department. Sir Manilal Nanavati, for instance, deeply regrets that we have not yet realized that Agricultural Economics is a science distinct from Industrial Economics and affects the welfare of a far greater part of Indian population, than the latter. But as industrial labour is urban, more organized and vociferous and suitable for party politics, it has not only predominated our policies, but as Shri Kumarappa says, even made agriculture subservient to industries.

— K. G. M.]

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