

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

VOL. XVI. No. 3

AHMEDABAD — SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 1952

TWO ANNAS

THE PRACTICAL IDEALIST

(By Pyarelal)

II—The Secret of Gandhiji's Leadership

Pandit Nehru has recently described with his usual brilliance how Gandhiji gathered round him not only the homage of the multitude but also the devotion of 'a curious assemblage of human beings. "We were an odd assortment," he writes, "very different from each other, different in our background, ways of life and ways of thinking, but from our different view-points we all looked up differently to him as a great and magnificent personality."

Let us take a few of them. His intimate circle included shrewd capitalists and businessmen like G. D. Birla and Seth Jammalal Bajaj, sceptics like Acharya Kripalani and intellectuals and revolutionaries like Pandit Nehru, statesmen and astute politicians like Pandit Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel, men of faith and renunciation like Vinoba Bhave, subtle-minded lawyers like Rajaji, humanitarians like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, profound scholars and divines like the Maulana Azad, brilliant medicees—geniuses in their own line—like the late Dr. Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb, colourful personalities like the irreverent, motherly Nightingale of India—Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, blue-blooded society ladies like Mira Behn, and last but not least our Man of Iron, the granite pillar of free India—alas, now fallen—Sardar Patel. The list is only illustrative.

What was the secret of this amazing hold over the minds and loyalties of men? What made this illustrious company of heroes in their own rights, look up to this man as the best of them and the best part of each one of them? It was his intense and many-sided realism that drew them all to him. He held them together by his tact, deep sympathy—which is the key to right understanding—and by his delicacy and personal charm, which are the hall-mark of true *ahimsa*.

For instance, G. D. Birla and Seth Jammalaji were drawn to him by his shrewdness in practical affairs, sincerity and courage; Acharya Kripalani became his bondsman when he found in him the rebel and revolutionary that he himself aspired to be; Pandit Nehru—refined and intellectual—was captured by his dynamism

and perfect artistry in life. I remember how, on one occasion in the course of a heated discussion, Panditji impatiently broke out: "I want revolution, this is reformism", to which Gandhiji rejoined: "I have made revolutions while others have talked about them. When your exuberance has subsided and your lungs are exhausted, you will come to me, if you are really serious about making a revolution!" There was no more argument after that. Pandit Motilalji with his patrician pride and aristocratic temperament found in him a political astuteness and statesmanship which he envied. Once I was asked by Gandhiji to escort the old Pandit back to his residence after a visit to Gandhiji. Gandhiji was at that time at Juhu convalescing from his operation for appendicitis. We were proceeding silently together on the Juhu sands when suddenly pointing to a tall palm tree the old Pandit broke out: "That is the Mahatma among the trees—head and shoulders above the rest." He then proceeded to reminisce: "I have told Mahatmaji, I do not believe in your spirituality and am not going to believe in God at least in this life. I am an atheist. Our difficulty is that in politics you beat us at our own game." "And what did he say in reply?" I asked. Pandit Motilalji replied: "He only laughed. And then becoming serious added—'People admire the rebel in me who has dared to challenge the might of the British Empire. They little realize that the power of my assault springs from my capacity and ceaseless striving for complete self-surrender'!" The Maulana Saheb found in him a divine to match and a religious catholicity in action which he had himself tried to derive from his voluminous studies of the Koran. To Vinoba Bhave his *Satya-sadhana* (relentless search after Truth), *Bhagwad-bhakti* and *tapascharya* were reminiscent of the Vedic *rishtis* of old. Rajaji found in him a clarity of thinking and perspicacity, a marvellous, quick grasp of the opponent's case and a legal acumen which put to shame the forensic acrobatics of the conventional legal celebrities. Dr. Rajendra Prasad found in him a personification of the passion for the service of the poor for which his own heart had always yearned. Dr. Ansari—like many of his contemporary medical celebrities, whom I need not name, found in him a fellow savant with a scientific outlook and approach to the question of

health and disease. The strict objectivity of Gandhiji's experiments in nature-cure, his quackery, as he delighted to describe it, often confounded and set at naught their academic medical theories and the "laws of science" which they had been taught. Mrs. Naidu with her poetic insight discovered in him a 'poet in action', the deliverer from bondage of an ancient, proud people and a heart as tender and womanly as her own. To Mira Behn he brought that deep spirituality which the starved soul of the Mammon-worshipping West hungered for. The bridge-playing, chain-smoking barrister Patel, sardonically scanning the Indian political scene from the seclusion of his *Bhaja* club at Ahmedabad, found that in Gandhiji at last there was a political leader who was no talker, but a man of action who made things happen and who never failed to deliver goods once he had undertaken to do so.

And so they all became his bondslaves and found it difficult — nay almost impossible — to tear themselves away from him in later years when their varying temperaments and the diverse settings in which they had to function made it more and more difficult for them to adhere to his ideologies in action.

The power and universality of his appeal was due to the fact that he never exploited his instruments. A military dictator uses his soldiers as cannon fodder to win glory. Gandhiji never put anybody to a use which was not in the best interests of the person concerned. He so used his instruments as to draw out and develop the best in them so that they grew in strength and stature from day to day.

He never expected others to make sacrifices which he was not prepared himself to make. He was as tolerant of the weaknesses of others as he was intolerant of his own. Remembrance of the hard way by which he had himself achieved the mastery over self made him tolerant of other people's faults. In fact he often used to say that one must view one's own shortcomings by a convex glass, those of others by a concave one. He called it the "duty of exaggeration". He strove consciously to be partial to his opponents, to those who differed from him, in order to be fair, knowing how prone human nature is to be biased in one's own favour. In argument he never tried to overbear or overwhelm the opponent by intellectual bludgeoning. He made the opponent a fellow seeker after truth and helped him to discover the flaw in his (the opponent's) reasoning and in the process sometimes discovered gaps in his own. The aim always was to convert, never to coerce or suppress. The opponent never smarted under the humiliation of defeat but shared in full the thrill and joy of the discovery of truth which he was made to feel was as much his as Gandhiji's. This made the mind of the opponent receptive, instead of being resistant.

This technique of spiritual identification with the opponent gave him the power to utter the bluntest truths without causing hurt, to perform the most drastic spiritual surgery with the full and joyful co-operation of the patient. I have advisedly used the word 'patient' here, as Gandhiji regarded all kinds of delinquency and deviation from normal behaviour as a species of mental and spiritual sickness. This was particularly illustrated during his 'Do or Die' mission in Noakhali, where day after day he had to address and parley with audiences of people, who had taken part in the disturbances. He told them the bluntest truths, spared nobody, suppressed nothing, glozed over nothing, held back nothing. Yet it did not hurt. Everybody in the audience felt as if he were hearing the voice of his own better self speak. The anguished voice of love they heard excluded nobody, not even the oppressors. It felt and suffered equally for all. What came from the heart went straight to the heart.

(To be continued)

NOTES

Goseva Training Course

The Krishi Goseva Vibhag of the All India Sarva Seva Sangh will commence an eleven months course in Goseva Training from June 1, 1952 at its Pipri centre, 3 miles away from Wardha. The course will consist of a theoretical and practical training in Cow-keeping and Veterinary science, along with other allied subjects as the growing and tending of fodder-grass, the organization of Goras Bhandar (milk depot), improvement in cattle-breeding, book-keeping, tanning etc. A longer period will be required for advanced training in these subjects. The medium of instruction will be Hindi. The student therefore must have a good working knowledge of Hindi; and should also understand English of the Matriculation standard. Only such students will be selected as wear *khadi* and intend and plan to pursue this work. For the present only twenty students will be selected. Capable and deserving students may be granted scholarships up to Rs 25/- per month. Applications should reach the undersigned by May 10.

20-2-52

RADHAKRISHNA BAJAJ,
Secretary, Krishi Goseva Vibhag,
Gopuri, Wardha

Correction

In 'Soya-milk and Curds — II' by Krishna Chandra (*Harijan*, February 13, 1952), the sentence, "Such milk lacks vitamins B and C" (which occurs just above the second para from the end of the article) should read: "Such milk lacks vitamin C".

K. G. M.

DRINK, DRUGS & GAMBLING

By Mahatma Gandhi

Pages, xi+175 Price Rs. 2-8 Postage etc. As.10
NAVJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Post Box 105, AHMEDABAD

COST OF LIVING IN NEW CHINA

(By Suresh Ramabhai)

The article, "Salaries in New China", published in these columns in the issue dated January 5, 1952, has naturally given rise to the question of the cost of living in New China.

At the outset it may be stated that millet, wheat and rice are three main staple cereal foods of the people in different parts of China. Meat is taken almost all over the country. The vast dimensions and the variegated life therein render it difficult to give an exact estimate of the average expenditure of an adult on the bare necessities of food, clothing etc. Attempt is here, however, made to give a rough, though incomplete idea of the same.

The general rates of some essential commodities in New China are as follows:

1. Very fine rice, $1\frac{1}{2}$ Indian seers per Indian rupee.
2. Ordinary rice, 3 Indian seers per Indian rupee.
3. Wheat, millet and other cereals, 3 to 5 seers per Indian rupee.
4. Milk, $1\frac{1}{2}$ Indian seers per Indian rupee.

Meat, vegetables and fruits are generally slightly cheaper than in India.

Below is the average food expenditure incurred by a normal adult:

1. Cereals	12 chhataks	Rs 0-4-0
2. " "	8 " "	" 0-2-0
3. Vegetable	8 " "	" 0-2-0
4. Salt and spices	" "	" 0-0-6
5. Firewood	" "	" 0-0-6
6. Oils etc.	" "	" 0-1-0

Total Rs 0-10-0

This comes to about Rupees 20/- per mensem, equivalent to about 100 catties of grain per month. The average rate of foodgrains in China is calculated to be slightly over three Indian seers for an Indian rupee.

As regards clothing, a piece of white *khadi* (hand-spun and hand-woven), 10 yds. by 21 ins., cost 53,000 yens (4,770 yens are equivalent to an Indian Rupee), blue *khadi* piece, 11 yds. by 21 ins., 73,000 yens and ordinary jute cloth, 18 yds. by 19 ins., about 83,000 yens, which comes to about Re 1-1-0, 1-4-0 and as. 14 respectively. It may be stated that the per capita consumption of cloth in China is not much. On account of cold climate an average Chinese changes his dress not too often. The average cloth consumption may be taken as about 20 yds. per capita, which means an expenditure of Rs 20/- to Rs 25/- per year, coming to about two rupees a month.

As regards lodging the charges in a good hotel at Canton are 20,000 yens per day, i.e., about four rupees, while about a fourth as much or even less in an ordinary hotel or lodge. House accommodation is easily available all over China, and at very reasonable rates. Thus a man can

support himself, even in the capital city of Peking, with 125 catties of grain per month, or about Rs 30/- only.

Thus the cost of living in New China is slightly less than in our own country. The purchasing power of the people is much higher, having risen from 50 to 70 per cent since October, 1949. Moreover all commodities can be had in plenty.

It may also be noted that salaries in New China are all calculated in terms of commodities, mainly foodgrains. The actual payment in currency, month by month, varies according to the rates of commodities in the market prevailing at the time. No employee, therefore, has aught to fear from the rise in prices. In fact, prices have been steadily, though slowly, coming down for the last two years in New China.

HYDERABAD LAND PROGRAMME

At Shrivasti, U.P., (2nd March, 1952) Vinobaji was informed of the reported decision of the Hyderabad Government to give priority to the programme of resolving the land problem of that State. Vinoba congratulated the Government on their decision. He also sounded a note of warning. He did not know, Vinoba said, what the form of distribution was to be and how the Government was going to acquire land from landlords; nor did he know how much land they were going to leave with the zamindars. He, however, hoped that the Government decision would not be with the view of giving only a nominal relief to the people but would be inspired with a wider outlook and courage.

During his Telangana tour he had already drawn the attention of both the Congress and the Government towards this problem. It would have been better if the time lost had been saved. But, possibly they were waiting for a new government to come into being.

Referring to the proposed legislation, Vinobaji said that it would reflect the mind of the Congress. He hoped that whatever the Government did they would do promptly, liberally, and with foresight. No one should run away with the idea that the problem would be solved by providing some meagre relief. It could be solved only when every landless labourer capable and desirous of tilling land for his bread got his share of land.

He had realized during his tour of Hyderabad, Vinobaji continued, that unless the problem of land was solved the trouble there would not end. It was only with that idea that he started the mission of asking for land. When land was so dear and man was so much attached to it, it was no doubt a bold attempt to ask for land. Vinobaji, however, made the attempt, and he was glad that the people had responded. He hoped that the Government would realize the gravity and the implications of the problem and leave no stone unturned to resolve the problem.

Balarampur, 3-3-52

D. M.

HARIJAN

March 15

1952

DEMOCRATIC OFFICE-HOLDING

The last annual meeting (Jan. 20th to 22nd) of the Trustees of the All India Spinners' Association (Charkha Sangh) was marked by fresh elections and appointments to the principal offices of the Sangh. Explaining the policy and approach of the trustees on this matter, Shri D. V. Lele, Assistant Secretary of the Sangh writes in an article in the Hindi *Sarvodaya* (Feb. '52):

"For several years, there was no time-limit in regard to the tenure of Branch Secretaries of provinces. It was decided in 1945 that no Branch Secretary should hold office for more than five years. This meant that the same incumbent was not to be re-appointed.

"Under the Constitution of the Sangh the office of the General Secretary is tenable for three years, but the same incumbent is eligible for re-election for any number of times. When Shri Shrikishnadas Jaju became the General Secretary he suggested that the five-year limit should be applied to the holder of that office also, and submitted his resignation upon the expiry of his five years. As he was firm, his resignation had to be accepted, and Shri Krishnadas Gandhi was elected to succeed him. Shri Krishnadas Gandhi also holds the same view as Shri Jajuji, and hence, submitted his resignation on the eve of the completion of his five year term and Shri A. V. (alias Anusahab) Sahasrabudhe has been elected in his place. Shri Sahasrabudhe is one of the senior-most workers of the Charkha Sangh and has held several responsible positions in the Sangh as well as in the constructive organizations of the Bombay State, particularly in Maharashtra. (Last year he visited Japan to study the village and small-scale industries there, and has returned with rich experience).

"The responsible leaders of the Charkha Sangh lay more importance upon service than upon the designation of their office. The Branch Secretary who retires after his five year term does not thereafter sever his connection with the Sangh. He may not hold any office or may hold an office of even a lower designation than before, but he does not cease to serve the Sangh.

"When Shri Jajuji resigned, he offered to work as an Assistant Secretary under Shri Gandhi, but having regard to his age and health, the trustees did not accept his suggestion and he has been ever since rendering his assistance without holding any office. Similarly Shri Krishnadas Gandhi has taken up the position of the Accountant under Shriyuts Sahasrabudhe and Lele, the new Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively of the Sangh."

Under ordinary conventions, this would look as though Shri Krishnadas Gandhi had been degraded. No one who knows his capacity and experience and the successful manner in which he has held responsibilities of various types throughout his career as also his strong character could ever think of this possibility. But such an impression is possible because the Charkha Sangh conventions are different from the ordinary ones. In the first place, there is no salary attached to a particular office. For instance, an

assistant cashier does not draw a higher salary simply because of his promotion to a higher post. An assistant might be drawing even a higher salary than his superiors in office. Secondly, designations merely indicate particular functions in the organization. Although within that framework one worker would have to take orders from another for the time being, all are co-workers with equal status. Their standard of living is common. Every one who shows the capacity to discharge a particular function may at any time be asked to take that office, whether he is a junior or a senior in point of time and salary. This gives scope and opportunity to make use of, test and try the capacity of every promising worker.

If democracy means equal status for every citizen, this system provides an example in action. It also enables a person to give the best of his physical and mental capacities to the institution, whatever that best may be for the time being. Physical and intellectual capacities might change with age and health. When they are growing in a person, it is necessary that he should have onerous but secondary positions, requiring both physical and mental strain, and a limited opportunity to use his judgment and originality. When he is at his best he should have onerous duties, free scope and full employment of his energies. When he is aging, his experience and intellect might be very valuable, but it may not be possible for him to undergo the physical and mental strain accompanying an office of strenuous duties. Should the conventional hierarchy of office gradations stand in the way? Should he either absolutely retire or be promoted to respectable, but practical sinecure posts? The present conventional order is so made that the higher the office the less the amount of work and real responsibility, but the greater the salary and respectability. The result is that if say, a Deputy Commissioner is found to be inefficient in that position, but happens to be senior-most among people eligible for that place he cannot be asked to work under one of them. To avoid facing the truth, he is actually promoted (or, as they say, kicked up) to the Commissionership, or even a sinecure office is created for him. This is not democracy but hierarchy—the maintenance of high and low grades, not for discharge of duties, but for the glorification of individuals.

The convention adopted by the A.I.S.A. enables every one to share such responsibility as the occasion might need without creating a complex of inferiority or superiority in any. Moreover, when an incumbent knows that he has to lay down his office definitely at the end of his term, both he and his colleagues and the managing body are on the look-out for the next successor. If he is elected again and again, in course of time a feeling grows that he is indispensable and none can replace him. The experience of the Charkha Sangh is that since the adoption of the rule, it has been always

possible to find a suitable successor and none need be regarded as indispensable. Shri Krishnadas Gandhi in following the convention laid down by Jajaji even while his capacities are still unimpaired has set an example of a better type of democracy.

Wardha, 26-2-52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

MANILAL GANDHI FASTS AGAIN

From the 7th of March, Shri Manilal Gandhi has again imposed upon himself a twenty-one day fast for self-purification and in search of light in the thick darkness that prevails in the South African situation. To all appearances the Malan Government has attained a position comparable to that of Hitler's during the thirties. It feels that it has enough strength at present to carry out its own will even if the whole world condemned its steps unequivocally. It feels so, because it has reason to believe that the nations of the world that count in terms of military strength are not going to wage a war against it on the issues involved in its policy of apartheid and aggrandizement. Hence, it takes the condemnation of its policies by the U.N. or the Commonwealth lightly and it can safely disregard India and Pakistan, the two Governments most directly interested in the matter.

That the United Nations, the Commonwealth and India and Pakistan do not wish to resort to violence is good, so far as it goes. But it is a zero attitude. It is a case of renouncement of violence without the development of alternative strength. The latter has to be developed. The U.N.O. is unable to develop it, because in the final analysis it too puts its faith in violent sanctions for enforcing its will. Moreover, it has itself become a weak organization, because two of its mightiest members—the U.S. and Russia—are also the most inimical towards each other. They will rather destroy each other than agree to coerce South Africa. The two most fitted for developing non-violent strength—India and Pakistan—too, are not better disposed towards each other. They themselves are so suspicious of each other that each feels that it must maintain sufficient military strength to prevent the other from taking an aggressive attitude. Their children overseas take their cue from the mother countries and maintain the same communal factions in their adopted countries as at home. The result is that non-violent strength finds no opportunity to grow. Under the circumstances the spirit of non-violence has to work through a few individuals to manifest itself. Since it is a force based on entirely different foundations from those of violence, the ways of its development are different from those commonly known for resistance of evil. Austere practices in one form or another have universally played an important role in that development. Long fasts are one of the forms of these austerities. Those who do not feel a call for them or cannot understand them must not speak lightly of them, but watch them with goodwill and

respect, so long as they agree with the cause espoused by them and see no hypocrisy in it.

For the peace and welfare of man, it is imperative that a force should develop which is strong enough to destroy the evil of racialism and communalism from the human family. Violent force might defeat a particular race or community, but can never remove the feeling of hatred. Hence, the force has to be non-violent. It cannot be discovered or developed by those who do not destroy their violent weapons even when they are strong enough to wield them. Since Governments, in spite of all their mighty powers of organization do not evince the courage to do so, the force has to be nourished by a few dauntless individuals like Michael Scott and Manilal Gandhi. At present both of them are fighting a lonely battle in accordance with their respective traditions. Michael Scott is fighting in accordance with the ways familiar to the Western world, Manilal Gandhi, in accordance with the traditions of the East. They are entitled to receive our support. Let us give it unflinchingly.

Wardha, 8-3-52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

PROHIBITION, EXCISE AND REVENUE

(By P. Kodanda Rao)

Prohibition has been criticized on the ground among others, that the Excise revenue was lost, and new taxes like the Sales-tax have been imposed. Most critics of Prohibition have demanded that Prohibition should be repealed and Excise restored, primarily for revenue considerations.

It is generally admitted that the great bulk of Excise revenue on intoxicants is paid by a very small minority of the population in India, and that the great majority of this minority is economically the poorest and politically the most helpless. Years ago Mr Hall Cain, M.P. had said :

All these point to the melancholy conclusion that the customers of liquor and drug shops of the Indian Government are mostly drawn from the very poorest strata of Indian society.

This is true to this day.

The incidence of the Excise tax is perhaps the highest. For instance, in Madhya Pradesh, where nearly half the population is under Excise, the cost price to Government for a gallon of liquor in 1950 was Rs 2, and the selling price to the customers ranged from Rs 13-2-0 to Rs 52-3-0. The cost price to Government of opium was Rs 40 per seer ; the selling price to the customer was Rs 450 to Rs 1,280. The cost price of *ganja* was Rs 3 per seer and the selling price was from Rs 240 to Rs 400. The cost price of *bhang* was Rs 2 per seer and the selling price was Rs 90 to Rs 160. The difference between the cost price to Government and the selling price to the customer was shared by the Government and the Abkari contractors. Considering the economic status of the consumers, the incidence of taxation is unconscionably high. Dr. B. Das Gupta, now

Finance Secretary to the West Bengal Government, in his book, *Provincial Taxation under Autonomy*, (Oxford University Press, 1948) said :

Leaving aside all questions of morality, the taxes of this group, therefore, involve the utmost injustice. It is, in fact, taxation of extreme poverty at excessively high rates. (p. 170).

The bulk of the Excise revenue is collected when the consumers are inebriate, and not sober. Intoxicants are sold to consumers by contractors who bought the right to sell them at annual public auctions at competitive bids, and have an incentive to stimulate consumption and inebriation and often resort to questionable practices to make maximum profits in minimum time. The bulk of the Excise revenue is spent for the benefit of those who contributed least to it. Above all, it is a tax on the consumption of intoxicants, of which both the consumers and the Government are apologetic.

The profits of the Excise business, which is perhaps the first instance of State Socialism in India, are so large that the worst profiteer might well envy. Such high incidence of taxation is very unusual with taxes on consumption, levied for revenue purposes. It can be defended only on the ground that it was meant to discourage consumption rather than encourage revenue. Excise tax is more like Protective Duties designed to reduce imports, and unlike Customs Duties designed to encourage revenue. In its resolution of 1905, the then British Government of India formulated the policy of raising prices of intoxicants by taxation solely for the purpose of reducing consumption, and enjoined that to this end all considerations of revenue should be absolutely subordinated. In practice, however, revenue considerations prevailed over reduction in consumption.

The Majority of the Madhya Pradesh Prohibition Enquiry Committee, which came to the finding that Prohibition in the Dry half of the State was a dismal failure, found that Excise in the Wet half was also heading for a collapse! They said that the present policy of Excise taxation was not calculated to minimize consumption, and that revenue considerations had predominated. They also observed that the vicious element of speculation, which underlay the Excise auctions, was a prolific source of a variety of scandalous malpractices, and had largely been responsible for corrupting the Excise administration in the Wet districts.

They unhesitatingly declared that revenue considerations should not govern Excise policy, and recommended that Excise taxation should be levied solely for the purpose of controlling liquor and drug traffic, and not for producing revenue, and advocated that the auction system should be abolished forthwith in the Wet districts, and that the prices of licit intoxicants should be scaled down to scotch illicit consumption. It is obvious

that the reduction in consumption, the reduction in taxation and the abolition of the auction system would reduce revenue very considerably.

With these findings and recommendations concerning Excise the Minority was in full agreement, though in the appraisal of the Prohibition in the Dry half of the State there was disagreement. It may thus be stated that the whole Committee was unanimous in condemning Excise taxation for revenue purposes.

Compared with the Excise tax and revenue, the Sales tax and revenue are more equitable and satisfying and even honourable. In Madhya Pradesh the Sales tax is paid by a majority of the community of all economic levels, and not by a small minority of the poorest. Its incidence is graded like Income tax, with some reference to the economic status of the tax-payers concerned. Articles like food and coarse cloth, consumed by the poor, are exempt from the Sales tax, while luxury articles are taxed at the rate of one anna in the rupee, while intermediate articles are taxed midway between. Unlike the Excise tax, which taxes the poorest at the highest rate of incidence, the Sales tax taxes the rich and exempts the poor, as it were. There is no speculative auctioning in the Sales tax as there is in the Excise tax. It is not collected when the tax-payers are inebriate. The increase in the Sales tax revenue is a better and more satisfying index of the rising standard of living of the people than the rise in Excise revenue. Neither the consumers nor the Government are apologetic about increases in Sales tax revenue, as they are in the case of Excise revenue. Sales tax is not degrading as the Excise tax is. Opinion of witnesses was unanimous that the Sales tax was more equitable than the Excise tax.

There can be little doubt that the Excise tax is inequitable, inequitable and anti-social, while the Sales tax is the opposite. It is to the infinite credit of Prohibition that it abolished this inequitable Excise tax for revenue purposes, and replaced it by other taxes like the Sales tax, which yield the same revenue and are capable of yielding more, as production and prosperity increase. There is no need to revert to the Excise tax for the sake of revenue. It would be highly reactionary and anti-social, as it would amount to taxing the poorest at the highest rate when inebriate for the benefit of the rich, and farming out the revenue collection to speculators at annual public auctions.

If more revenue is needed than the Sales tax and other taxes still open to Governments can furnish, it is better to reimpose the Salt tax and the inheritance tax, for instance, and share the proceeds along with Income-tax revenue. Even a poll-tax would be better than Excise tax as at present levied, for it would be definite and not speculative; it would be collected from the tax-payers when they are sober and not inebriate;

it would be collected by Government tax-Collectors and not by speculators; and it will be paid by the whole community and not the poorest only.

It is somewhat surprising that anybody, and above all those who espouse the cause of the economically poor and politically weak, should ask for the restoration of Excise taxation for the sake of revenue, particularly when other and better taxes are available and in operation. It would be even more surprising that any Government in India, run by the Congress Party, which takes the name of Mahatma Gandhi, should continue the Excise system where it still exists, or revive it where it has already been abolished. It may be noted that the Madhya Pradesh Prohibition Enquiry Committee had, notwithstanding differences on other matters, unanimously condemned Excise taxation for revenue purposes.

Correct Text

Sir,

I beg to invite your attention to a mistake in the last issue of *Harijan* at page 439.

Vinobaji in the course of his discussion with the Darvesh is reported to have cited the Quran. The Quran says, *खातिमिन् नबीविन्* (Khaatimin Nabeyyin) In fact, the actual words are *खातमन् नबीविन्* (Khaataman Nabeyyin) *खातिमिन्* (Khaatim) means the 'last' whereas *खातम* (Khaatam) means 'Seal'. Now if the words were *खातिमिन् नबीविन्* (Khaatimin Nabeyyin) it would definitely support the belief held by the Muslims that Muhammad was the 'last' prophet and no other prophet need come now. But the word used being *खातम* (Khaatam), the meaning of the actual expression will be 'The Seal of the Prophets'; and the 'Seal of the Prophets' can be interpreted to mean one who put his seal of approval to and thereby confirmed whatever the prophets have said so far.

It will be thus obvious that Vinobaji's interpretation fits in with the word *खातम* (Khaatam) and not with *खातिमिन्* (Khaatim).

Yours faithfully,
MUMTAZ ALI

Some Important Publications

By Mahatma Gandhi

TO THE STUDENTS

Pages xix + 324 Price Rs. 3-8-0 Postage etc. As. 13

SELF-RESTRAINT v. SELF-INDULGENCE

Pages viii + 232 Price Rs. 2 Postage etc. As. 10

By Pyarelal

A PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE

Gandhi & Frontier Gandhi among N.W.F. Pathans

Pages xvii + 216 21 Illustrations and 2 Maps

Price Rs. 5 Postage etc. As. 12

NAVJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Post Box 105, AHMEDABAD

"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL"

(R. R. Keithahn)

I remember what a shock I received when I came to India, over twenty years ago, thinking I was rendering a great service and then reading in *Young India* the words of Gandhiji which ran somewhat as follows: "If you have two chairs in your home, your neighbour is without any, and you do not need these chairs, you are a robber." I was in a bungalow having all conveniences. Most of the families of India would not even have had a satisfactory house in which to live. Naturally Gandhiji's words troubled my conscience. I believe that the conscience of those who read this article should also be troubled.

Most of Us

Where most of us receive two rupees or more in wages the ordinary villager producing the necessary food and clothing for India receives only his two annas or less. Is that not stealing? Many of us are busy adding house unto house and field unto field until there is no place in all the land for God's people! Although this problem was felt by the sensitive prophet 2500 years ago, yet the problem of landless agricultural labour in India is perhaps our greatest problem. And it is not primarily a political problem. It is a human problem. But none of us do anything about it. Are we not robbing the lives of these millions?

Religious Leaders

I was at a recent retreat of religious leaders. At the first meal at which I was present I found several people leaving some food on the leaf. Is it not a custom of exploiters and a false culture? A little later I saw a scavenger family scraping these leaves and eating the food. I felt so ashamed that at the next meal I asked my friends not to leave anything on the leaf and to give the hungry scavenger family good food from the kitchen itself. We were robbing this family not only of food but even worse, of their very self-respect. We must become much more sensitive in these matters.

...and Students

Is not the average student robbing India? Much money is spent on his education by society and his parents. Lakhs of rupees are spent on expensive buildings. Most of the people of India have to do without education. Is not the student a robber?—if he does not study well and thoughtfully, if he does not share his blessings and serve; if he does not go to the villages to serve, whence most of the taxes come and where our greatest needs are to be found; if he is not determined to build a new society of justice; if he spends his money and time needlessly on cinemas, athletics, clothes, and so forth. Each student and each citizen should be more thoughtful in these matters.

These are critical days—days of consolidation of our national freedom. The contribution of every citizen is needed. Should we not remind ourselves that there is a moral law "thou shalt not steal"?

(From the *Guardian*, 21-2-52)

APPOINTMENT OF HEALTH MINISTERS

To

The Editor, *Harijan*.

The appointment of new Ministers of Health will now come under the consideration of the Central and various State Governments of India.

For the public good I respectfully and humbly protest against the appointment of a medical man to the post of the Health Minister. As Mr Bernard Shaw, the famous playwright, truly said, "The interests of doctors are directly and vitally opposed to those of the public. Doctors starve when we are well and make money when we are ill. Doctors are interested in making us ill and keeping us ill."

To be healthy, people should be wholesomely fed, decently housed and properly clothed. That is all.

The task of Government is, therefore, to provide clean and sanitary surroundings and good nourishing food.

To achieve this, it is not necessary to have a doctor as Health Minister. In England a doctor is not appointed Health Minister and for very good reasons. A doctor Health Minister, under the pretence of improving the public health, would by legislation compel people against their better judgment to be vaccinated and inoculated against various diseases and shut his eyes to sanitary reforms, thereby actually spreading illness among the people for the pecuniary profit of doctors and vaccine-manufacturers.

Medical officials should be *subordinate* to a lay Health Minister, to advise him on medical matters, and this advice he would accept or reject according to whether, in his view, it would be or would not be for the public good.

The people of India following Mahatma Gandhi's counsel in his excellent book entitled *A Key to Health** should be advised to reject vaccination and inoculation as useless and dangerous, which together with the almost equally dangerous drug-therapy, make up the European system of medicine.

I, therefore, respectfully suggest that a competent and disinterested gentleman who is not a doctor be appointed as Health Minister in the Government so that he can take action to get rid of the insanitary conditions that cause such diseases as small-pox, plague, typhoid fever, cholera, tuberculosis and diphtheria resulting from filth, dirt, bad environment and mal-nutrition.

SORABJI MISTRY

Note : I think that the suggestion is worth consideration. Of course, the holder of the portfolio must himself be healthy and that without the aid of drugs, allopathic or other, and should have studied rules of healthy life. And he must

* Published by Navajivan Karyalaya, Price As. 12 with postage.

be clean, and have a keen sense for cleanliness, sanitation, and wholesome food. It would be dangerous, if the Health Minister is a person like me.

Wardha, 27-2-52

K. G. M.

NOTES

An Ill Omen for Madhya Pradesh

This is just to draw the attention of the reader to the article of Shri P. Kodanda Rao, appearing in this issue. As the reader probably knows, Shri Kodanda Rao is an old and eminent member of the Servants of India Society and was a member of the Madhya Pradesh Prohibition Inquiry Committee. It appears that this Committee, by majority, has now reported to the M. P. Government in favour of casting covetous eyes over the poor man's hard-earned money and against prohibition. This is an alarming state of things to come in Madhya Pradesh. The province be warned betimes against this ill omen. Shri P. Kodanda Rao is a minority member of that Committee. I congratulate him for his dissent, which has rendered a distinct service to the people of M. P. and the sacred cause of prohibition in our country. I have not still seen the Report of the M. P. Prohibition Inquiry Committee. I hope to write about it after going through it.

11-3-52

M. P. DESAI

Hindi-Hindustani Tisri Examination — April 1952

Some difficulty is experienced by the candidates of 'Hindi Tisri Examination' in getting *Kamkaji Hindi* and *Jawaharlal Nehru—Jivaniki Ek Jhalak*. There would be an option in questions drawn from these two books, and the candidates will in no way suffer in the examination if they are not able to get these books.

Gujarat Vidyalpith,
Ahmedabad-9,
10-3-52

GIRIRAJ KISHORE,
Pariksha Mantri

CONTENTS	Page
THE PRACTICAL IDEALIST .. Pyarelal	17
COST OF LIVING IN NEW CHINA .. Suresh Ramabhai	19
HYDERABAD LAND PROGRAMME .. D. M.	19
DEMOCRATIC OFFICE-HOLDING .. K. G. Mashruwala	20
MANILAL GANDHI FASTS AGAIN .. K. G. Mashruwala	21
PROHIBITION, EXCISE AND REVENUE .. P. Kodanda Rao	21
"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL" .. R. R. Keithahn	23
APPOINTMENT OF HEALTH MINISTERS .. Sorabji Mistry	24
NOTES:	
GOSEVA TRAINING COURSE .. Radhakrishna Bajaj	18
CORRECTION .. K. G. M.	18
CORRECT TEXT .. Mumtaz Ali	23
AN ILL OMEN FOR MADHYA PRADESH .. M. P. Desai	24
HINDI-HINDUSTANI TISRI EXAMINATION — APRIL 1952 .. Giriraj Kishore	24