

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO, ANNAS

THAT WAS MAHADEV !

It is well known how deeply attached Mahadev Desai was to Mahatma Gandhi. He had completely obliterated his own self and personality and made himself a willing and devoted instrument in his hands for getting a great deal of writing work done. Everyone who had the opportunity of coming in contact either with Mahatma or with Mahadev Desai knows this relationship. I desire to mention one out of innumerable incidents in Mahadev Desai's life just to show his complete surrender. Mahatma Gandhi was a very hard task-master and he was hardest on those who were nearest and dearest to him. Naturally Mahadev Desai had more than his share of the hard life. After the Satyagraha movement of 1930 had subsided, Mahatma Gandhi shifted his head-quarters from Sabarmati to Wardha and stayed for some time in what is known as Maganwadi, which originally was an orange orchard of Seth Jammalal Bajaj. When he was there, the village Segaon, which has subsequently become world-famous as Sevagram, was selected for Mahatma Gandhi's rural uplift experiment and for the establishment of his Ashram there. When that place was selected, there was hardly any building which could accommodate Mahatmaji; work was started in a small hut, and subsequently a small house was built, and gradually in course of time we have now got a large number of houses belonging to the Ashram and various other constructive organizations like the Talimi Sangh, Charkha Sangh, Go Seva Sangh, etc. Mahatmaji decided to leave Wardha and go and settle down in that village. But there was no accommodation for his companions, and so they were left behind at Wardha. Mahadev Desai was required to go to Sevagram every day from Wardha. There was of course no conveyance to be provided and he was required to walk every day 5 miles to go from Wardha to Sevagram and 5 miles back. This he did in burning sun or even when it was raining. The road from Wardha to Sevagram hardly existed then. There was only a sort of foot-path which too was not in good condition. Any conveyance therefore

was out of the question. But Mahadev Desai went through it from day to day not only without a murmur but with evident pleasure. This was also a part of the *sadhana* which Mahatmaji imposed upon him, and this continued for months. It was only after some more huts had been erected and accommodation became available that Mahadev Desai went and settled down there in one of the huts. Mahatmaji attached very great value to time and would not waste a single minute; but he looked upon the time taken and the exertion involved in this trip of 10 miles every day, not as a waste of time and energy, but as a part of the training which every good servant of the nation required. The work which Mahadev Desai used to put through even without this extra burden was heavy enough and I do not think any item of it was cut down to give time for this journey, with the result that he must have had to cut down a portion of his sleep or other necessary personal needs like bath, food, etc. His devotion to duty was marvellous and it is literally true that he actually killed himself by work. Latterly he had developed some heart trouble, but that did not induce him to take life a little more easily. He went on working and working until he actually and literally dropped dead. No wonder that even Mahatmaji who had risen above personal joys and sorrows, was deeply affected by his death.

Mahadev Desai has left a rich legacy of good deeds done and noble thoughts uttered, and those of us who have had the privilege of being his associates and co-workers have to strive to deserve the love which he showered upon us by carrying on the work which he left unfinished.

3-8-'52

RAJENDRA PRASAD

SINGLE-POINT vs. MULTI-POINT

Much discussion has taken place over the Bombay Government's decision to change from single-point to multi-point system of collecting the Sales-tax. I have carefully read the very able speech of the Finance Minister at the time of the passage of the first reading of the Bill. I have also read the representations of some of the Chambers of Commerce, and the correspondence with me of merchants who have all opposed the measure. I have had also the benefit of a letter from the President of the Punjab Beopar Mandal,

Ludhiana. This letter supports the Bombay Government's new decision, and regards it as beneficial both to the small trader and the consumer and expresses surprise that I should have opposed it in the name of the consumer. He says that the Punjab retail traders have been agitating for the adoption of the multi-point system, and the agitation against it is manoeuvred by large-scale traders in their own interest. I must own that this letter came as a surprise, and set me a-thinking over again. The letter will be published in the Hindi and Gujarati editions.

Let me state the broad conclusions which I have reached after all these studies.

My view is strengthened that the Sales-tax, in whatever manner it is collected, is on the whole an undesirable form of taxation. Whether it is collected at the first stage, or the last stage, or at a middle stage, or at several stages, it causes the injustice of inequitable distribution to some section or another of the poor class of people.

2. It also creates a complicated system of administration full of legal technicalities and intricacies and leads to annoyance and corruption. It demoralizes even children, and tends to drive away honest people from the trade. The Government is never able to recover its full due.

3. It is a device invented by the State Governments to get over their inability under the Constitution to impose additional income-tax, which is a central subject.

4. The straight and simple course would be for the Central Government to add a surcharge to the income-tax and distribute the proceeds among the States. The surcharge may even vary for every State according to their necessities.

5. Alternatively, if the Sales-tax method is to be retained, the simpler way I imagine, would be, (a) with regard to essential necessities to levy a general tax on purchases made by consumers (as distinguished from dealers) at a single transaction, or within a prescribed period in excess of a prescribed value or quantity — institutions like hostels and similar institutions being discriminated; (b) with regard to essential commodities, other than necessities, (for instance, parts of machines, electric bulbs, plugs, carbon paper, ink ribbons etc.) a special tax on purchases exceeding a particular value; (c) with regard to luxury goods and goods excluded from (a) and (b) an ad valorem higher special tax. At this stage, I need not go into the details of this system. They can be worked out if the principle is accepted.

6. But I quite realize that for immediate purpose it is rather late to suggest radical changes when the only issue is whether it should be single-point or multi-point. In this connection, all that I would say is that though I am not convinced that the multi-point system is more satisfactory to the poor-classes of dealers and consumers, I must confess that the subject admits of honest differences of opinion, and I feel satisfied that the Bombay Government have taken the

step after a careful consideration of the merits and demerits of the two systems, and their probable effects on the various classes of the people and upon their own revenue and have honestly come to the conclusion that the change over to the multi-point system will benefit all these three parties. My Gujarati & Hindi co-editor, Shri Maganbhai Desai, is also of the same opinion; and I see that opinions are sharply divided on this point among my other co-workers also, and even among traders and consumers. So I must refrain from dogmatically asserting my views.

7. I would like, however, to make two suggestions. The list of exempted articles must not be smaller than what the Central Government will prescribe in the Essential Goods Act, which is under discussion at present in the Parliament. Secondly, the exempted limit of a turnover of Rs 1,000 per annum for dealers in Special Tax articles is too low. It is too difficult for a trader to deal in General Tax articles only. And it is quite conceivable that a trader might have a total turnover of less than Rs 30,000 and yet a greater turnover than Rs 1,000 of Special-tax articles. An annual turnover of Rs 1,000 means hardly sales of Rs 3 per day, and it is not inconceivable that the smallest street hawker dealing in toys, bangles and chinaware, and eking out Rs 2 or 3 per day would have a turnover of more than Rs 3 per day. He would be expected to maintain account-books and give cash memos, which he might be quite incapable of doing. I suggest for consideration whether it is not possible to distribute the imposition of the tax between the importer or manufacturer of such articles and the retail dealer with a turnover of Rs 30,000 or more, the former being taxed at the higher special class rate, and the latter at the general-tax rate. This might simplify accounting, maintenance of stock-books, and inspection and scrutiny by officers. Sub-clause 4 of cl. 11 appears to be very unfair and hard.

Wardha, 4-8-52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

Sterling Assets Converted into Chewing Gum

A boy of my acquaintance purchased a little bit of confectionery for two annas and six pies. I was curious to know what it was. I therefore obtained from him the label which reads as follows :

MADE BY

HALIFAX

ENGLAND,

(Here is a shield showing a lion rampant)

CHEWING GUM

PEPPERMINT FLAVOUR

MADE IN ENGLAND

Who is the prodigal son responsible for this criminal extravagance ?

— V. G. D.

OBSERVANCE OF AUGUST 15

In his after-prayer speech on the 26th July at Banaras Shri Vinoba spoke about the *bhoo*dan day to be observed throughout the Uttar Pradesh on the 1st of August, and exhorted the workers to pledge themselves to the *Bhoo*dan-Yajna and work for it unremittingly until the target was achieved. He said :

"August 1, the Tilak anniversary day, is observed throughout the country. The U.P. workers have resolved to celebrate it as a *bhoo*dan day and continue their efforts for securing land-gifts for a month or more from that date. They had resolved to collect five lakh acres as a first step. It is now about nine months since the resolve was first made. Meanwhile, I have toured a number of districts of the province. The efforts have borne appreciable fruit. We have collected more than 3 lakh acres, and what is of infinitely greater importance, created a suitable atmosphere of goodwill and love. I hope the workers will speed up their efforts and collect the remaining two lakh acres, before long. And yet it will not do to forget that five lakh acres are merely a beginning of our ultimate aim which is nothing less than the common ownership of the entire land by the people of the village."

All Land Belongs to God

"The workers must not rest content until they had reached that ideal. All land belongs to God and we should try to give effect to this principle in our efforts for social reconstruction. I will have the satisfaction of fulfilment only when the entire village land will be owned by the village community jointly. All land belongs to God and from Him it has been conferred on the village community. Therefore it belongs to all equally. None can own it individually. But every one can work on it and have the fruit of his work. This is the instinct and faith I aim at creating among the people. And the arrow which has been shot shall not return until it has achieved its purpose.

"But this ideal is the ultimate one. In the interval, we must ascend one after another the steps which lead to it. The first step in the long sequence is to provide and rehabilitate at least one landless family in every village with 5 acres of land. It is on this basis that we have demanded 5 lakh acres from U.P. and 25 lakh acres from the whole of Bharat. Because U.P. has one lakh villages and there are altogether 5 lakh villages in our country.

"But the land we have received does not conform to this even rate of collection. If we had received five acres from every village, it could have been said that we had approached sixty thousand villages. But this has not happened. From some villages we have received more than a thousand acres. And we accepted it, for, the more the better it was. But our efforts must be not only intensive but also extensive. We must take the Sarvodaya ideal to every village and every home. For that it is necessary that every village should participate in this work and habili-

tate at least one family with land as a symbol of its participation. This family will stand for the rise of the Sarvodaya thought in that village.

"To that end, I make a suggestion that on the 15th August when the villages celebrate the Independence Day, they should unitedly, through the Panchayat and the village-meeting, resolve to fulfil this task of settling one landless family and give concrete expression to their festival. There is still time. If the idea is accepted it can spread all round. In fact this should have been done the day the Zamindari abolition came into force. That would have transformed the whole atmosphere and touched off a great revolution. But it did not happen then. May be that there was not sufficient time, but now 15th of August is sufficiently distant, and now there can be no excuse for our failure.

"It was only constructive workers — and I know they are many — who first believed in the great and lasting potential capacities of *Bhoo*dan-Yajna. But our work of the last fifteen months have now brought this conviction home even to the people. The poor, in particular, have been much influenced by it. For, wherever I go they know me by the name of "Bhoomivala Baba" (land-giving ascetic), I receive daily many gifts through post. But the number of those who demand land is even greater. Therefore, I cannot satisfy their demand equally rapidly. But it is the design of the Divine that when a righteous demand is made — and what can be a more righteous demand than the one for land for the landless? — people are also inspired by Him to satisfy it. I have read the people's mind of U.P. and can say that if workers went to any village in the province and told the villagers that it was the desire of *Baba* to settle a family in their village, they would unhesitatingly do so. There is such a sympathetic atmosphere in U.P. It is now up to workers to go from village to village and spread my message to villagers and fulfil the work. A simple knowledge of arithmetic will tell us how a lakh families can thus easily be rehabilitated in a lakh villages in one day. But this is the work of an organized force of workers.

"But I have seen that we greatly lack in the capacity of making united effort. One says he will go on tour in May, another postpones it to June; and still another to October after the rains are over. It is our common experience that isolated efforts go in vain. It is only concentrated united efforts that bring fruit."

Concluding his speech Vinoba said, "I trust workers all over the province will endeavour their best to fulfil the programme I have suggested for August 15."

(From Hindi *Hindustan*, 29th July '52) D. M.

THE GOSPEL OF SELFLESS ACTION
OR

THE GITA ACCORDING TO GANDHI

By Mahadev Desai

Third Impression

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1952

UNITED EFFORT

Apart from my comment regarding the use of Gandhiji's name, I entirely agree with Mirabehn's main appeal, namely, that we all make a supreme effort to work together for one clear-cut and comprehensive programme. Indeed, I go a step further and ask not only the so-called Gandhian group to come together, but every sincere person desirous of serving the masses of India to do so, whether he belongs to the Gandhian group, or to some other group, or to no group whatever. Amidst all differences of ideologies or opinions, there should be some matters, on which the whole nation should have a common mind and will to work.

And I plead further. Let us also shed this fear of Americanism or Communism invading us. We must make a united effort not because if we do not do so, either or both of these will overwhelm us, but because we owe it to ourselves and our country to unite and make a strenuous and determined effort to raise ourselves and our people from its present miserable condition. Both Americanism and Communism are with us already. So also are our own Communalism and other isms. All have their strong protagonists among our own countrymen. All have something in them which cannot be ignored and something which is harmful. It will not help us either to be afraid of any, or to succumb to any of them helplessly. If our love and non-violence has any efficacy, we must neutralize the poison and seek the truth and the wholesome element in each of them.

In order to make a strong national effort, we must all unite; in order to unite, we must develop non-violence; we can develop non-violence, if we love. Whether we think of all types of groups, or a particular group, if we fail in developing strong effort in spite of our miseries, it must be due to lack of unity; which means lack of non-violence in the groups or the group in question; this, in turn, means lack of love and friendliness among the various members of the group or groups.

It is not impossible to draw up a common comprehensive programme on which intellectually all agree. But a common programme by itself will not create a strong effort, if there is lack of love and friendliness among the members of a group. If we go deep enough we would see that India, or any of her ineffective public groups (in which even government may be included), does not suffer from want of talents, but from

want of friendliness and love among its members. We have been blessed with abundant intelligence, but it is indigested and has made us over-conscious of it. It prevents us from being humble and non-egoistic enough to feel that warmth for others, which is necessary for the development of co-operation. And lack of co-operation makes all effort abortive and all expenditure a huge waste.

But let not even these remarks be taken as indicating a feeling of despondency in my heart. I mention them as facts prevailing hitherto. But I see already in Vinoba's movement signs of a new atmosphere growing in the country. It indicates a change for the better. Let us, therefore, all, whether of the 'Gandhian' group or any other party or group, unite together to carry the *Bhoodan-Yajna* to its final end.

That one programme, if carried out successfully will not only pave the way for the Gandhian conception of Swaraj, but will also unite and knit us together in bonds of love. Let us all concentrate on that programme.

Akola, 15-7-'52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

SATYAGRAHA AND A SATYAGRAHI

To me Mahadev was more than a colleague — he was like a brother as indeed he was to so many, who had identified themselves with Gandhiji and his cause. Loyalty to Gandhiji was the tap-root from which sprang and to which he made subservient all his loyalties, including his loyalty to his wife, his only son — on whom he doted — his family, and, of course, his friends.

Gandhiji was an expert fisherman — not of fish, but of men — with this difference, however, that he never went after the fish with a net, the fish came to him and stayed of their own accord. The net if any was invisible. One of the biggest — if not the biggest — fish in that invisible net was Mahadev. He brought other fry to it in shoals, and his affable personality, winsome manners, never-failing sympathy and sweetness — not to mention his intellectual glamour — helped to keep them there.

It was in 1920 that I first came into contact with him. I had just gone to Sabarmati Ashram after non-co-operating from college. I was introduced to him by a common friend. In a few words I told him what my heart's desire was viz. to be of some use to Gandhiji as part of his entourage. It did not take him two winks to answer: "Certainly. We are full up just now and tonight we set out on our tour. But next time... Who knows you may even be of greater use to him than myself!" It was so characteristic of him — he always put the interest of the Master first, himself last. The memory of that spontaneous affability has always abided with me since.

His enthusiasms, however, sometimes proved a bit premature and short-lived. Such was his

eagerness to collect gold nuggets for the cause that he sometimes fell a victim to the 'will to believe' and allowed himself to go into ecstasies over what afterwards proved to be not quite gold. Once he met a gentleman and afterwards seriously told us that he had struck upon a very gold-reef! His new find however proved to be a very sticky customer and stuck to him like a wet stamp, driving him almost to desparation in the midst of his heavy pre-occupation. The next day when one of us passed by them sitting together, Mahadev was overheard saying to his new friend wearily: "Now, don't talk rot!" Afterwards, whenever he reported to us a new 'discovery' of his, we were on the look out for what came to be known amongst us as 'D.T.R.' (Don't talk rot) stage! The word got even into Gandhiji's vocabulary. Years afterwards once he surprised us by asking with loud laughter if what one of us had reported to him represented a D.T.R. phenomenon!

Once he told a lie. It must be admitted, it was not a black lie nor even a grey one but the whitest of the white lies. The circumstances were as follows. During his days of nonage when he used to be butler, shoe-black, cook, coolie, son and scribe—all rolled into one to Gandhiji, he cooked *khichri* for the Master in Delhi and served it to him with red tomatoes. The Master relished the dish as he had seldom relished any good thing of the earth for a long time and asked him to serve the same everyday. There was only one hitch—the high cost of tomatoes (annas eight per seer) during that season. Gandhiji had the embarrassing habit of inquiring about the price of every item served in his menu. He might any time turn round in the middle of a weighty discussion or at the end of the day, as Mahadev bent over his tired limbs to give him a shampoo, and ask: "Mahadev, what did the tomatoes you served me today cost?" The trouncing he might get would not matter much but Bapu might order off his menu the tomatoes—his only table luxury—if he discovered it was costing the exchequer of Daridranarayan that much. Not many days after, lo and behold, he found himself confronted by the dread query. Without turning a hair the cook-disciple replied: "Bapu, only annas four a seer," taking advantage of the fact that in Gujarat a seer means a pound! And so the Mahatma's menu was saved. Years afterwards, I think, it was in 1940, he told Gandhiji how he had equivocated to him twenty-two years ago and Gandhiji had a hearty laugh over it—the only occasion, I know of, when he laughed over an untruth!

II

Mahadev's duties were such as to involve him in an almost perpetual joust on the Master's behalf. But there were occasions, very few indeed, when he felt called upon to break a lance in the Master's cause with the Master himself!

One such occasion came in 1940. Gandhiji had launched individual civil disobedience on behalf of the Congress on the issue of no participation in war and the freedom of speech. His plan was to send all his best men to prison but not to court arrest himself as it would embarrass the authorities. *Harijan* had suspended publication soon after the Satyagraha of Vinoba Bhawe, when a notice was served upon the editor "not to publish accounts of incidents leading up to Satyagraha by Vinoba Bhawe or any report of his speeches etc." without reference to the Chief Press Advisor, Delhi. Over-work and accumulating worry had impaired Mahadev's sleep. It was the beginning of the end which claimed him nearly two years later.

One day Gandhiji woke me up in the middle of the night and told me that I was to offer civil disobedience next. I was delighted. But my delight was turned into dismay when he added that Mahadev was to go next. I tried to expostulate with him but in vain. Before going forth for civil disobedience, I got Mahadev to make a solemn promise that he would not leave Gandhiji's side, even if he had to make Satyagraha against him. That was the view of all other friends too. The rest of the story is told in two letters exchanged between the Master and the disciple. They are reproduced below in an abridgement:

"Most revered Bapuji,

As a rule I wake up at 2 a.m. these days. But yesterday, I could get no sleep after midnight. What you told me the day before yesterday in the course of our discussion has been heavily weighing upon my mind. Your words were: 'If you tell me that you are not going to join the civil disobedience campaign at all I shall abide by your decision.' For me to say so would be the height of impertinence. Had you told me: 'Mahadev, if you feel that it is your clear duty to keep out of the struggle, I won't send you into it against your will,' I would have straight away replied: 'I do not feel it to be my duty to court imprisonment, leaving you. But if you feel that your duty requires you to send me away from you, my own scruple is rendered of no account and I shall welcome your decision with "स्वीयं वस्तु गोविन्द, स्वयंवाहं समर्पये"' (I offer to Thee what after all is Thine own gift).

But you have taught us to think independently...and encouraged us to strive with you till the last unless we feel convinced. That is why I do not feel inclined to give in even now.

You have argued that you want to rely upon God rather than upon man. That

argument would have been valid if you had contented yourself with sending Vinoba and Jawaharlalji to prison and stopped at that—as you had at first thought. But when you modified that plan the premises on which it was based also went by the board. If you really want to test the principle of sole dependence upon God you should cease to think in terms of action and rely solely on the 'power of thought' for the prosecution of the struggle. My difficulty is this. If I concede that you can be left to carry on the struggle by ruling out all human aid then I must invest you with the attribute of infallibility. But I have known you as a perpetual seeker after truth—a fallible, erring human being.... You yourself have admitted errors of judgment and in thought more than once before. I must therefore plead with you not to divest yourself of the help of your few tried associates who are still with you.

You said to me the other day: 'If *Harijan* had not been suspended, I would not have thought of sending you to jail.' Similarly you offered to send me to Devadas (to conduct the *Hindustan Times* for him after your heart). He declined your offer but if he had consented, I would have gone to Delhi and then there would have been no jail-going for me. If jail-going be an absolute duty, how can the continuance of *Harijan* or its suspension make any difference in that respect? It seems to me that at that time you were thinking in terms of a fight, now you are thinking in terms of self-sacrifice. There is some discrepancy between the two stands."

After setting forth how he was being pressed by all friends to stick to his post with Gandhiji and not to leave him alone, he proceeded:

"You adduced the parallel of Abraham's sacrifice (of his son Isaac on the altar of the Lord). It is the acme of your affection for me. After that to address you a long letter like this is really to prove my utter unworthiness of your love or, to use a metaphor, it is like a person going off for his toilet when Lakshmi—the goddess of fortune—comes to crown him with the crown of good luck. In all humility I venture to suggest to you that the beauty and grace of your noble sacrifice in this particular case is likely to be utterly wasted upon the Government, who neither expect nor have the capacity to understand such things. And in any case, I am no Nachiketa to tell you: 'You have given away your all, why do you not give me away too'."

* * *

"There is a lot more I could say. But I must not take any more of your time. You

will perhaps feel that I am trying to measure you with my own pygmy yard-stick. (But that would be hardly correct). My feeling in the matter is like that of a Hindu wife, who has the fullest faith in her husband's prowess, but still feels that her own place is by his side."

The Master made short work of the disciple's argument but left him in possession of the field. His reply ran:

"Courting imprisonment never can be your duty independently. It will accrue to you when I feel it to be my duty to ask you to go to jail. Since I am anxious to carry your reason with me I have not only left you free but have encouraged you to think independently. If your reason does not support my proposition it is no use my proceeding with it; it won't bear fruit.

The call of self-sacrifice is not different from that of the struggle. The former is conceived only as a part and parcel of the latter.

To send you or any one else to prison cannot be a duty in the absolute sense. Duty is always relative to an individual or a situation. Thus, if *Harijan* had continued, or if Devadas had asked for your services and you had gone to Delhi, I would not have suggested to you to court imprisonment. But since neither of those duties is there to hold you back, it becomes my duty and consequently yours to offer you as sacrifice.

You have cited in support of your argument the opinion of others. Take it from me, their concern is rooted in sheer ignorance and delusion.

I am quite capable of committing mistakes. That is why I have said I won't ask you to go to jail if your reason is opposed to it. But so long as I cannot see my error, I must proceed according to my light, especially while I feel that I am being prompted by God.... But so far as you are concerned, you must ultimately do as you feel prompted."

And so Mahadev stayed. I do not know if it jeopardized in any way the purity of Gandhiji's conception of his struggle. But it certainly enabled many a civil resister like myself to plunge into the fray with a light and care-free mind.

New Delhi, 4-8-52

PYARELAL

To Be Out on 15th August A NATION BUILDER AT WORK

By Pyarelal

This is a collection of Gandhi Memorial Lectures delivered by the author in 1951 under the auspices of the University of Agra.

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NEW USES FOR OLD CITIES

(By Swami Sitaram)

[In his intense anxiety and effort for bringing about the materialization of the Andhra State, Swami Sitaram has offered a solution which, if there is the will, would be regarded as a practical one.

In March 1946, I had published a pamphlet *Some Particular Suggestions for the Constitution of Free India*,* in which, among other things, I had suggested that all cities with a population of not less than 10 lakhs should be constituted separate units under the direct administration of the Central Government (or, in the current phraseology, States like Delhi, Ajmer etc.). This suggestion was further explained and discussed in 1949 in three issues of *Harijan*. In the atmosphere then prevailing, my suggestions did not attract much attention. Humbly, I see no other way of solving the problems of linguistic States and also for facilitating the development and growth of rural India. I am glad to find that Swami Sitaram accepts my view and reinforces it with further arguments and suggestions. The suggestions should be taken as tentative, liable to modification on further examination. — K. G. M.]

All over India have grown up several cities during the course of the British administration for over a period of one hundred and fifty years. Some were ancient cities which were further developed during this period. Some cities grew up from humble beginnings.

All of them have political importance as head-quarters of provincial administration. Some have military importance. Others are harbours and ports which are centres of trade. Latterly grew up some cities as centres of industry, arts, science, culture etc.

All these cities are distributed over the whole country. Under this category may be placed all big towns with a population of ten lakhs and over, which are roughly about 25 in number.

All these cities were never self-supporting. They were being given either grants or loans out of the general current revenues of the country which should have been beneficially spent on the smaller towns and villages, but which were diverted out of political considerations to these big cities so as to provide amenities for the governments as civil and military paraphernalia. These cities are thus indebted to the general taxpayer and there is no prospect of repaying those debts and the longer these cities are continued in their present condition or are improved to keep pace with modern requirements, their indebtedness is bound to increase.

In India, where, sooner or later, decentralization of administration is bound to be introduced, the problem of these cities is sure to come up for consideration and determination. When the question of linguistic redistribution of provinces in the Indian Union arises for final settlement, these cities present conundrums for politicians to solve.

Shri Kishorlalji dealt with the problem of the cities in his article in *Harijan* (13th March and 15th and 22nd May 1949). But, they do not seem to have attracted attention they deserved.

As the problem of these cities has to be decided once for all in the near or distant future, it is sometimes useful to discuss these problems from a detached standpoint.

The Indian Union has succeeded to all the properties, rights and obligations of the old fallen government. In that view, all the Government properties whether of the State or the Central Governments vest in the Central Government as trustees of the general tax-payer, who made towards interest or capital for the liquidation of the debts incurred from time to time. Provincial Governments cannot claim any share in the lands, buildings etc., which are occupied by them even today.

Therefore, it stands to reason that all these cities where the Central Government has immense properties should be Centrally administered. From the point of view of the defence of the country they must surely be the exclusive concern of the Indian Union. From the industrial and cultural standpoints also, such central administration is advantageous for the country as a whole. Some of these places would be places where multi-lingual institutions may be developed to foster common All-India ties of citizenship and brotherhood.

When the new States are formed, the buildings in the old cities may be let out to them on fixed rents. Such State Governments would be obliged to utilize these buildings until such time that they are able to build suitable head-quarters elsewhere out of annual savings earmarked for that purpose or through specially raised provincial loans. As decentralization of authority extends, embellished capitals with gorgeous buildings in centralized places will be out of fashion, and moderate buildings in many places in convenient parts of the State can then be raised to meet the requirements of those days. Even then, old buildings in old cities may be utilized by these State Governments along with the new head-quarters for the different departments in different seasons of the year or they may, if so advised, give up the old buildings which may be used by the Union Government for its own purposes or they may fall into disuse and disrepair.

There are many advantages if this course of action is followed :

- (i) No compensation need be paid by any one State to any other.
- (ii) New capitals need not be built immediately or in the near future.
- (iii) No capital amounts on a huge scale may be spent on brick or mortar which is ordinarily difficult but is specially so now in view of the economic depression rapidly overtaking us.
- (iv) Ornamental Heads of Governments need not be multiplied and one Governor may perform the constitutional functions on behalf of two or three State Governments also.
- (v) The present position of these cities will not be appreciably altered. They will appear like

* Published by Hamara Hindustan Publications, Hamam Street, Bombay 1, price, 4 as.

the houses of some intelligent joint families in the country which keep up the formalities of joint-family life while enjoying the benefits of real division in status and functions.

(vi) The difficulties of disposal of such cities in the division of assets and liabilities will disappear.

(vii) A uniform policy for the whole country will be evolved and linguistic redistribution of States will become easy without hurdles which are now becoming a headache both to the States and Central Government.

(viii) The available buildings may be proportionately assigned to the States that are newly formed.

These proposals are tentatively put forward by me for consideration by the public in general and the popular institutions in the country. The Governments may take up the question for thorough investigation and report.

WHAT ABOUT ILLICIT DISTILLATION ?

The other day Shri Rajaji was called upon to address a meeting in Madras held under the auspices of the Madras Textile Workers' Union. Among various points that he talked about, prohibition was the main one. He referred to the opposition to the measure and said that 'he had agreed with them that the Act had not been rigorously enforced and that it did not succeed to the extent he wished. It was also true that some persons illegally distilled liquor and made profit by selling it to addicts'.* But this does not prove nor warrant us to conclude, as some falsely do, that prohibition should go. As Rajaji told the workers, "Drink is the enemy of your brain and the foe of your family. Even for driving away ennui, do not go near it." The State policy must be based on this principle and it should be so framed as to see that drink is not made available by the State itself, so that people are not lured to legally take to it. Vice cannot be legalized. Prohibition comes in here. And the Act having done it has fulfilled itself, so far as it can go. It by itself can do no more than that. But, on the other hand, nothing less than that should be done by the State.

The aftermath of such a measure is unfortunately found to be illicit distillation and the bootlegger's trade in drink. This is mainly an urban vice. Rajaji in his address to the workers touched this question and gave them a sound piece of advice which is true for all that care to see that women and children and all of us prosper and that prohibition should come to stay in our land. He said,

"When an Act was administered, it was usual to blame the police. He would only recall

* This is from the report of the speech that appeared in *Hindu*, 29-7-52.

to them that many years ago when he wanted to introduce prohibition in Salem, many friends asked him to begin, instead, with Madras City as the families of many labourers here were being ruined because of drink. Then he told them how it was difficult to begin with the city where there would be illicit distillation and that rather they should begin with Salem because the rural people would cheerfully obey and make the Act a success. Many things had happened since then and all these had now passed into history.

"Today the Act has come into force everywhere in the State including the city. I shall ask of you only this: I have given an undertaking in the Assembly that I will see that the Act is enforced properly. (And have we not given a solemn undertaking—a pledge to the Father of the Nation that we shall achieve Prohibition the day we have Swaraj?—M. P.) I asked for time to fulfil my pledge. This is all I ask. Do not bother if another man drinks illicit liquor. See that you yourself do not drink. You earn your money by the sweat of your brow. Do not spend all that hard-earned money at one stroke by drinking. By drinking you ruin your family."

And further, "he expected the people to be helpful and if any unscrupulous person distilled secretly, they should not buy the drink from him and thus make him lose on his investment. If they refrained successfully from drinking for 10 or 15 years, then Prohibition would become a success."

1-8-'52

M. P. DESAI

Krishi-Goseva Department, Gopuri, Wardha

The office of the Krishi-Goseva Department, Gopuri, Wardha will be shifted to Goshala, Pipri on and from 1st August 1952, the Tilak Anniversary Day. Pipri is at a distance of three miles from Wardha on the Wardha-Arvi Road. All correspondence, in future, should be made at the following address:

Krishi-Goseva Department,
Pipri, P. O. Wardha (M. P.)

Since there is no telegraphic office at Pipri, telegrams will continue to be sent at Goseva, Gopuri, Wardha.

26-7-52

RADHA KRISHNA BAJAJ,
Secretary

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