

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## NO CONSECRATION BUT DESECRATION

At the time of the immersion of Gandhiji's ashes, the question was raised whether the immersion should be total or whether a portion of the ashes should be set apart for distribution to individuals and institutions. After long debate the former course was adopted as it would be contrary to the known wishes and the spirit of Gandhiji's teachings to let his remains become the centre of unthinking idol worship and possibly give rise to unseemly wrangles, quarrels and disputes, such as have disfigured history from time to time in the case of prophets, great men and saints in the past. Above all there was the danger of vested interests being erected on the remains of one who was an avowed opponent of vested interests of all kind and form. But a concession was made in the case of close intimates or those whose devotion and dedication to his ideals entitled them to special consideration, and token pinchfuls of ashes were allowed to be retained by them as souvenirs for personal use, as an aid to inspiration and further dedication to what he stood for in life. There were some who questioned the wisdom of making any exception but ultimately they decided to face the risk. It seems their fear was justified. A friend writes from Calcutta to Shri Devadas Gandhi:

"During my recent visit to refugee camps I noticed that some refugees of Regent Park Camp, Tollygunge (Bengal) had forcibly occupied some fallow lands at Tollygunge and constructed huts there without the knowledge and permission either of the Government or the owners of the lands, and that they had styled this unlawful colony as 'Gandhi Nagar'. Not only that, they announced that they had collected and entombed some ashes of Bapuji and are now collecting money for enshrining these ashes. I don't know how these people could get Bapu's ashes. I shall be grateful if you could enlighten me on this. Besides, I feel that nobody should be allowed to make such capital out of Bapu's ashes, or to make it a commodity of personal interest."

The facts, if true as reported, are disgraceful. The "ashes" in question, it is clear, are either faked or have been illegally or surreptitiously obtained, and are now being put to unauthorized and improper use. No permission, formal or otherwise, has been obtained from the next of kin or from the Gandhi National Memorial Trust, or

any other responsible person so far as one knows, for what is reported to be done.

Let us hope that those who have been misled into taking this action will realize their mistake and retrace their steps. It is up to the public to protect Gandhiji's memory from this violence. They should refuse to visit the "shrine" or subscribe to the fund that is said to be raised, and thus become party to the humiliation of one whom they revered. It will equally be the duty of the local authority to get the shrine removed and rectify the illegal trespass. To do so would be no insult to the ashes, but implementation of Gandhiji's wishes and right education to the people. What is reported to be taking place is no consecration but desecration.

Delhi, 20-3-'49

PYARELAL

## MANURES AND FOOD

Few people realize that the quality of the health, growth and reproduction of plants, animals and human beings depend a great deal on the quality of manures that are fed to the soil. When we put manure into the soil, we are feeding the soil and to the extent the soils are fed, the produce of the soil will also be nutritive, and the products of the soil are usually the basis of the requirements of animals and men. The cycle is not complete here. If the soil produces good food for animals and men, that food when digested and returned back to the soil again, is also a better soil food, thus the circle of goodness goes round and round rising in a spiral for the benefit of plants, animals and human beings. There is an old saying, "Who feeds well manures well." We may put in a complement of this, "Who manures well feeds well," thus completing the whole process.

With the deterioration of our soil technique, the farmers also have deteriorated in their health and with the deterioration of their health, they have not the energy nor the staying power to cultivate well. They have not been for decades as manure-conscious or selected-seed-conscious as they should be with the result that our whole agricultural produce has gone down in quality and quantity. We have to resuscitate our agriculture. Many have thought it fit to solve this problem by the introduction of mineral or chemical fertilizers.

### A STIMULANT

Mineral fertilizers do not feed the land. They merely excite it to a certain extent like a stimulant and thereby it apparently increases production

without a proportionate increase in the nutritive values, with the result that mineral fertilizers progressively deteriorate the health of animals and men as the food produced on fertilizers are not products of a soil that has been fed but one that has been merely stimulated. This effect has been brought out by many experiments which have led to the following conclusions:

1. Animals fed with wheat grown on land fertilized by farmyard manures were notably stronger though their weight may be less than of those nourished with grains grown on lands fertilized by chemical manures.

2. Hens brought upon feeds grown on farmyard manures laid more eggs than those brought upon feeds from minerally fertilized lands; though the latter were heavier, yet the larger number of the former more than made up in quantity as well. The birds brought up in the former way stayed out of their pen longer than the birds brought up on the latter feed, thus bearing witness to their greater vitality. Even the vitality of the eggs of the hens fed on grains from farmyard manure was greater in that the larger percentage of such eggs were hatched and few of them were spoiled by keeping.

3. The manure produced from the refuse of poultry fed from grains raised on farmyard manure also was very effective compared with the manure of birds fed on grains raised on fertilizer lands, showing that the quality of the manure itself is influenced and improves new growth in the form of seed and feed. In this way the farmyard manure promotes a cycle which leads to a constant improvement from generation to generation.

Apart from these experiments it was also noticed that when animals are given a chance of choosing between feed that is grown on artificial fertilizers and the feed grown on farmyard manure, they instinctively prefer the latter.

#### A DANGER

In our country scientific fertilizing of our land by mineral fertilizers is an impossibility as we have not got sufficient soil chemists who can analyse samples of soils sufficiently extensively to be able to feed the soil accurately even if artificial manure is to be resorted to. Any excess feeding of the soil with such minerals creates diseases of all kinds. Many experiments have been carried out which show the danger of an extensive mineral content in the soil. The data obtained by Prof. Rost of Mannheim demonstrates that an excess of potassium in the land is likely to lead to diseases such as thrombosis (coagulation or curdling of the blood) as well as to gangrenes. He observes, "In connection with the potassium nitrate fed animals, they showed a tendency, a pronounced inclination in successive generations, towards thrombosis." He also states that in recent years thrombosis has increased in human beings to about four times its earlier prevalence.

#### DISEASE RESISTANCE

The many experiments that have been carried out show that the seeds and better still the leaves of plants fertilized with stable-manure increase the capacity for disease resistance when fed to animals as compared with seeds and leaves of minerally fertilized plants, thus showing that the manures not only improve the soil structure but the consequence of manuring projects itself far into the animal kingdom reaching out to man himself. Therefore, it behoves everyone of us to take care that such food as we eat is grown on land fertilized with farmyard manure and not with chemical fertilizers, especially where there is a danger in our land of unscientific application of fertilizers for lack of soil analysis. It is not only the farmer who is interested in the manure, but perhaps to a larger extent, the consumer should be made conscious of this as it is he who is likely to suffer by food raised on artificial fertilizers.

#### MEDICAL USE

Taking advantage of this effect, dietetists are now treating their patients on food which is grown on farmyard manures which are generally called "Biodynamic products". Such feeds are said to affect the functioning of the stomach and intestines favourably. A German dietetist writes, "I have recommended these products to patients with main stomach trouble and sluggish intestinal activity and they have been fortunate enough to get over these ailments without medical treatment." "My wide experience, as a dietitian with many patients, has convinced me that especially with raw-food diet the biodynamically treated products are preferable in every way to those which have been manured with chemical fertilizers."

Gheimrat Abderhalden, the famous physiologist, states, "In connection with various illnesses of man and animal it has frequently been desirable to trace them back to the method used in fertilizing food plants." "Though we may not be able to say anything very definitely yet in regard to these matters, it is clear that soil bacteria do play an important part in relation to our health. We have, therefore, to consider whether it is worthwhile to disturb the interplay of soil organisms by bringing in nitrogen in the form of potassium nitrate and by using lime and phosphoric acid, as these disturb and hinder the working of the soil bacteria."

The Government of India is spending over 20 crores of rupees in a fertilizer factory in Bihar and in Travancore also a large fertilizer factory has been established. It is time that the Food Department takes up the case on behalf of the consumer. Already our people are emaciated by diseases of malnutrition. Need we worsen the health of our people by introducing chemical fertilizers? This is a grave responsibility. We hope the Health Department also will combine with the Food Department and set things right in the Agricultural Department.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

## FROM VINOBA'S SPEECHES AT THE SARVODAYA CONFERENCE — II

### HARIJAN PROBLEMS

Our treatment of Harijans continues still to be disgraceful and distressing. I did scavenging work for two years continuously with the regularity and sentiment of a praying devotee. God willing, I would have been at it still. But it was village scavenging. It is much easier than scavenging in a town. The latter is too unfit to be a human occupation. At one of the meetings of scavengers in New Delhi, Shri Jagjivanram, the Labour Minister, definitely advised the scavengers to give up this occupation as too unfit for a human being. One of the arguments which he adduced was that though every other occupation was overcrowded on account of keen competition, so much so that even brahmans took to the occupations of hide-tanning and shoe-making (once regarded as untouchable occupations), the scavenger had no rival. The reason was that no self-respecting person considered it as worthy of man. Shri Jagjivanram asked my opinion on the matter and I could not but assent.

You all know Shri Appasaheb Patwardhan. He had offered Satyagraha in the jail in order to be allowed to take part in scavenging work. After his release he took to this work in a town. But he told me that the work was too difficult and he had to accept defeat in a few days. Indeed it is a work which we can make a human being to do by only degrading him in society and then compelling him to do it to the exclusion of everything else. The scavenger must be emancipated from this compulsory service. It can be done only if we all take part in this work and improve it, so that it can be performed by every one.

### ANTYODAYA

With this end Shri Appasaheb suggested that the proper rendering of *Unto this Last* would be *Antyodaya* (Uplift of the Last) rather than *Sarvodaya*. Of course the last one's uplift is included in the uplift of all; but in emphasizing upon the last, the object is that work should begin from that end. I agree that the *bhangi* should be our first concern. But the word *Sarvodaya* should stand; for it is not that all others have been uplifted and only the *bhangi* remains. In this unfortunate world of ours, we are all fallen and every one needs to rise. The rich is fallen long since, and the poor has not arisen at all. The result is that both need uplift. In one of his hymns Tulsidas says, "Lord, Thou alone knowest the right method of Grace. Thou takest away the smallness of the small and the greatness of the great."

### NON-POSSESSION

I had referred to *aparigraha* (non-possession) last year. Possessiveness has to be removed in the same way as scavenging. The condition of our country demands it. Conflict cannot be prevented otherwise. At Ajmer I saw ill feeling growing between Marwadis and Sindhis. It is declining now, because Sindhis have been seeking other places of business. "But 'as I' said there, as long as the present miserable condition of the country continues, namely, insufficient production of food, ill feeling will grow between various sections of the people under some pretext or another. It might

take the form of a Hindu-Muslim disturbance now, Marwadi-Sindhi rivalry tomorrow, Brahman-Non-Brahman controversy the day after; but violence and hatred will not end.

If we want this to end for good, we must understand the necessity of the twin laws of right life, namely, physical labour (*sharir-shrama*) and non-possession (*aparigraha*). Every one must take part in physical labour and put a limit to his possessions.

Possession takes various forms. Some hoard money; some hoard books. Some do not hoard for themselves, but allow themselves to do so for their institutions. It is like a man who will not kill for himself, but will do it in the name of a cause or for his country. In my opinion both possessions are equally bad and lead to inconsistency. For instance, the Charkha Sangh has got balances which it deposits in banks. This is done in order to get interest. Obviously it has more funds than it is able to utilize for the cause of the charkha. But how are banks enabled to pay the interest? They employ the loans in various profitable industries. Now look at the self-contradiction. Being earmarked for charkha activity the Charkha Sangh cannot invest its funds in *Go-Seva*, although it is one of the items of the constructive programme accepted by it. But they can be and are invested through the medium of banks in industries! This contradiction arises on account of our greed for possessing money even though it may be in the name of our institutions. The same is the story of the Kasturba Fund, and it will be the same with the Gandhi Memorial Fund. Why do we need to collect so much money? If that amount is really necessary, it should be possible to spend it in one or two years. But this does not take place and no one sees the wrong involved in getting income by investing these funds in banks. The reason is that we have been brought up in a society in which not to earn interest is regarded as folly. The *Gita* asks us to give up *all* possessions (त्यक्त सर्वपरिग्रहः). This includes possessions of charitable institutions also. For, if we go in for possessions in any form we have to commit all those wrongs which are accompanied with possession for private ends.

### CONTROLS

One more subject I shall touch before closing. The non-availability of goods has been troubling us. It troubled us when controls were lifted, and continues in spite of their reimposition. It is causing hardship both ways. I have been thinking of it for a long time, as I got plenty of opportunity of studying the subject in my travels. I once stated at Rajghat and also suggested to the Working Committee of the Congress that the hardship could be removed to a certain extent by collecting revenue in kind. The difficulty of cloth can be reduced only through *khadi*. This suggestion should be examined by you and if found good you should express your opinion upon it. If otherwise, it should be abandoned.

(Translated from the original in Hindustani)

BAPU — MY MOTHER

By

Manubehn Gandhi

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# HARIJAN

April 10

1949

## SCAVENGERS' DILEMMA

Several baffling problems are being sent to me by workers and correspondents seeking their solution. The scavengers' dilemma is one of them. They render a very delicate and indispensable service to society. The conditions under which scavenging has to be done in our towns and cities are so very repelling that none but those who have been used to them by congenital habits would be willing to accept that service even for three times their present emoluments. And yet, except in large cities like Bombay, Ahmedabad, etc., it continues to be a very low paid service, though in other fields of labour wages have gone high.

What should they do? In 1946, the sweepers of Bombay organized a great strike. Referring to it Gandhiji wrote in the *Harijan*, dated 21st April, 1946:

"There are certain matters in which strikes would be wrong. Sweepers' grievances came to this category."

He also advised townspeople, "to learn the art of cleaning their own and the city's drains, so that if a similar occasion arises, (that is, sweepers go on strike) they are not nonplussed and can render the necessary temporary service. They may not be coerced. I go so far as to say that the military who know this work should be used for such emergency."

Simultaneously with the above advice, he also told the townspeople that

"it is the duty of every one to stretch out the hand of fellowship to the *bhangis*, educate them, see that they are properly housed, permit them like any one else, to live wherever they choose, look in the matter of an equitable wage for them and see that justice is meted out to them without their having to demand it".

Referring to the last part, he wrote again on 12th May, 1946:

"I have often said that every kind of injustice is meted out to *bhangis*. I have no doubt that citizens do not fulfil their obligations to them. Thus it is their duty to see that the Harijan dwellings are built properly, the means employed for cleaning are decent, they have a special working uniform given to them, and that they and their children have facilities for education etc. These and other problems should be solved without loss of time.

"The *bhangis* may not go on strike for lack of these amenities, but it is up to all citizens to raise their voice on behalf of them."

The first part of Gandhiji's judgement, namely, that it is wrong for members of a service like that of sweepers to strike, is whole-heartedly welcomed

by townspeople. It was as if it were a "Daniel come to judgement". The second advice, namely, not to submit to coercion, but take to scavenging work themselves, has also gone home to a certain extent, and young men and women have prepared themselves for resisting a sweepers' strike if need arose. There have already been instances in which strikes have been successfully broken in some towns.

But who is to look to the third part of the advice? Gandhiji had asked "every one" to see that justice was meted out to *bhangis*. But it is a counsel of perfection, and the rule "every one's business is no one's business" is generally applied to that part. The townspeople perhaps believe that they have elected a municipal committee to discharge that part of the advice, and there is no need for them to bother about it.

And the poor municipal bodies! Their budgets are scanty, their needs are many. Scavenging is no doubt the most essential service of a town. But municipalities cannot be run without a chief officer, supervisors, office-staff etc., and without a decent building and a meeting hall. And these have to be paid and built in accordance with modern standards. So, after providing for them, there is not much balance left for being divided among scavengers. Their number is so great that per capita their increment cannot be much. So all talk about educating them and properly housing them and giving them an equitable wage etc., must be regarded at best as distant goals!

In face of Gandhiji's ruling that members of an essential service like that of scavenging may never go on strike, what should the poor sweeper do if his conditions of service are not improved? Some one asked Gandhiji, "Is the *bhangi* to continue his service on starvation wages, living in dirt and squalor?" He gave the following reply to this question in the *Harijan* dated 23rd June, '46:

"The question is appropriate. I claim that in such cases the proper remedy is not a strike but a notice to the public in general and the employing corporation in particular that the *bhangis* must give up the sweeping service which consigns those, reserved for that service, to a life of starvation and all it means. There is a wide distinction between strike and an entire discontinuation (not suspension) of service. A strike is a temporary measure in expectation of relief. Discontinuance is giving up of a particular job because there is no expectation of relief. Proper discontinuance presupposes fair notice on the one hand and prospect of better wages and freedom from squalor and dirt on the other. This will wake up society from its disgraceful slumber resulting in a proper scavenging of the overgrowth that has smothered public conscience. At a stroke the *bhangis* will raise scavenging to a fine act and give it the status it should have had long ago."

"But", says the son of Valmiki, "in this Gandhiji gives us an advice, which we do not know how to

act upon. He has drawn for us a picture where either latrines, drains and streets will look like libraries, streams and garden paths or else we shall be free from that job and doing something else. The Hon'ble Shri Jagjivan Ram, supported by Shri Vinoba, perhaps not feeling hopeful of the former conditions coming into existence in the near future, have talked only of the latter, and advised us to give up this wretched occupation altogether and take to some other work. But this too, though full of kind sympathy for us leads us nowhere. What shall we do instead? Who is going to employ us? What profession will allow us to work with them? One or two of you might take a fancy for a bright boy of ours and give him a lift. But most of us are what we are—difficult to say men or half-men? We are supposed to be somehow related to the great Valmiki. It is said that he could not speak *Rama Rama*, and so repeated the name as *mara mara* (die, die). It often seems to us that our caste will die away in course of time before it is redeemed. And so as we do not see any bright future, is it to be wondered at that morals and other good practices about which you say so much, do not appeal to us, and we are rather tempted to go in for vice and for strikes, sabotage and mischief of that type? Have you anything to offer, which we can take up immediately?"

I have put the case in my own language; because it is this aspect which has troubled me for some months—not only in respect of the *bhangis'* problem, but also of other similar problems, like that of primary teachers, landless peasants, farm labourers, a part of refugees and others. Until they see hope through an effective non-violent method, it would be difficult for them to resist the call to violence by the communist and the communalist workers. What can be offered to those people either to redeem them or to organize them non-violently? And one day I read somewhere in Bapu's utterances the Gujarati proverb, "The father's kingdom might fail to give one support, but the mother's *charkha* will never". And it came to me that Bapu had already indicated the solution.

I shall explain this more fully in my next.

Wardha, 24-3-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

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## REPRESENTATIVE MUSLIMS ON HINDUSTANI AND URDU

[It is unfortunate that the following appeal from 61 responsible Muslim signatories from all over the Indian Union, did not receive the wide publicity it deserved. It will be evident from this appeal that they do not press the claim of Urdu under the name of Hindustani. They have readily accepted *Nagari* as the principal script of Hindustani and say that every Indian, whatever his mother language, must know it. Their plea for the recognition of the Urdu script also deserves sympathetic consideration. —KAKA KALELKAR.]

The Committee appointed by the Hindustani Prachar Sabha to press the claims of Hindustani has published a representation made to the members of the Constituent Assembly urging the adoption of Hindustani as the national language and of Devanagari as its principal and Urdu as its second script. We heartily endorse the arguments as well as the conclusions set forth in this representation, and earnestly hope that the members of the Constituent Assembly will consider it objectively and impartially, in view of the significance their decision will have in the development of our national life.

For centuries past it has been the privilege of a relatively small number to acquire education and to use their language as a means of literary expression. The democratic ideal of the Indian Union requires that the national language should possess the widest currency, not only as a hypothesis but in fact, and should derive its vocabulary and idioms from the living speech of the people. Literary Urdu leans too heavily on Persian and Arabic, and Hindi too much on Sanskrit. Thus both Urdu and Hindi draw their sustenance and inspiration from languages that are not commonly spoken in India, and they are too standardized to borrow freely from other Indian languages or from each other. But Hindustani, which is their basic and popular form, has both character and flexibility; it is inclusive, like all progressive languages, having taken words freely from Sanskrit, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, modern European and Indian languages, and it has an individuality which stamps itself on all that it borrows. It was because of its representative character and its elastic, liberal nature that Mahatma Gandhi advocated its adoption as the national language. We sincerely believe that Hindustani will be among the most potent means for promoting harmony and ensuring cultural co-operation. It is Hindustani alone that can create organic unity out of the diversity of Indian languages and cultures.

As regards the script, we readily agree that Devanagari should be declared the principal and Urdu the second script for this national language. Devanagari represents the largest common element of Indian scripts, and every Indian, whatever his mother-tongue, must know it. Urdu has been an alternative script for Hindustani, wherever Hindustani has been current. It deserves recognition for historical and social reasons, and at the present

time there are several million people all over the country who know and use only this script. We would, therefore, urge that Urdu should be recognized as the second script; laws, decrees, notices, orders, etc., and publications of the Central Government should be published in both scripts, and permission should be given to citizens to submit applications, representations, documents, etc., in the Urdu script also. The use of two scripts or even languages has precedents in the practice of democratic countries, and is a symbol of the State's anxiety for cultural harmony. Mahatma Gandhi, with that large-heartedness and wisdom which is the mark of true statesmanship, insisted on the use of both scripts for Hindustani. Hindustani would lose its catholic character if proper recognition were not given to the Urdu script. We hope that the members of the Constituent Assembly will affirm, in this context, the value which tolerance and goodwill must have in the future of free India.

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## HARIJANS IN THE DWARAKA TEMPLE

I am glad to read the news in the February monthly letter issued by the Harijan Sevak Sangh from its head office, Delhi, that the famous Dwarakaji Temple in West Saurashtra was opened to the Harijans on the 31st January, 1949. I was sorry to note that it could not be opened by persuasion and legislative compulsion had to be used and even the help of the police had to be requisitioned. All efforts to persuade the *purohīts* and the conservative section of society by the old and tried workers in the Harijan cause, including Shri Ravishankar Maharaj and Shri Chhaganlal Joshi, proved futile. The priests even went to the extent of making their womenfolk lie down across the gateway to prevent into the temple the entry of the Harijans and their supporters. At last on the third day, the Suba, i. e. the Collector of the place, had to requisition police for securing safe ingress of the Harijans into the temple. I was not surprised to read all this, for it reminded me of my own experience in 1937 when I had undertaken a Harijan tour in company with Shri Thakkarbapa in the Kathiawad States for the purposes of advancing the cause of the Harijans and for acquiring temple entry rights for them. Though I toured in all the important States in Kathiawad, it was reserved for the people of Dwarakaji alone to oppose us. I remember very well the flutter that our going into the town had created. There was great opposition in the public meeting in which Shri Thakkarbapa and I spoke in favour of abolition of untouchability and temple entry rights of the Harijans. Black flags were shown to us at the railway station and at the public meetings. People came in deputations to our residence asking us to go back and not to disturb the equanimity of the town by trying to bring in new ideas. They even threatened violence, if we did not listen to their friendly warnings and stopped our activities.

When finally we started from our residence for the Dwarakaji temple, we were met with rowdy demonstrations on the way. Our path was blocked, and we were not allowed even to go up to the scared tank adjoining the temple. I remember so well this hostile demonstration by the priests and the orthodox people of the town. They would not let any of us speak, and I felt helpless. But at last I was able to make myself heard, and for about 15 or 20 minutes I pleaded with the people present for the rights of the Harijans. For these few minutes they heard me in silence, but I failed to bring conviction to them. We had to go back disappointed from the place but I was happy that at least I was heard by them.

Eleven long years have passed by since then, and much water has flown down the holy river Ganga. It is a different world in which we are living today to what it was then. People's ideas and minds have undergone a tremendous change. Conditions are different, but it seems that time has had no effect on the worthy priests. The temple of orthodoxy even today seems to be as strong as it was then.

The temple is opened to the Harijans no doubt, but the way in which it was opened robs it of all

grace. It would have been so much better if it were done as it was in other parts of the country—in Travancore, Madura, Trichinopoly and Tirampur Hill—by the free will of the people. It is rather sad that time should leave a certain portion of our people so unaffected, but I hope that after all that has happened, the people concerned will realize their mistake and will even now welcome the Harijans as their equals, particularly so in the Temple—the House of God.

However, it is heartening to know that groups of Harijans from all over Kathiawad (now Saurashtra) have been visiting the temple daily in good numbers for a month past with the cry of *Dwarakadhishki jai*, led by their own leaders. It is hoped that after a little more time these *purohits* will welcome the Harijan worshippers with open arms. All is well that ends well.

New Delhi,

RAMESHWARI NEHRU

### LET US BEWARE!

Let us beware that although we have landed on the shores of liberty, we are not yet on the royal road to national welfare or prosperity. In fact the Congress is just on its trial for its intrinsic worth and constructive ability. It is one thing to arouse a people temporarily in a national crisis; it is quite another to maintain hold over masses during normal times. The latter can only be achieved by nation-building activities of far-reaching consequences, so that the man in the street would appreciate the difference between the British rule on the one hand and the Congress Raj on the other.

For this we must build our noble edifice of national regeneration on the broad basis of equality for all, where there is no room for any narrow cult or sectarian spirit. The recent outburst of communal frenzy in the country was neither without a cause nor without a lesson. It has only too well revealed to us, as indeed nothing else could have, how deeply the national psychology had been poisoned by the foreign rule. It had shown the patient politic in its true diagnosis. But let us hope and believe that much of the stored poison is already vomitted out and that the internal organs are already in the process of healing. Should therefore the orgy of communalism be allowed to raise its ugly head again, we shall only be repeating history at our own cost. The only chance of an unbroken era of national freedom lies in destroying communalism root and branch, in any form whatever, and building new India on the bed-rock of national unity. Once this is achieved, we are as formidable as the Himalayas themselves.

And this can be achieved only by right education, through the school, the press, the platform, the pulpit and the radio, given earnestly and energetically. It should resound throughout the length and breadth of the subcontinent. If the history of the Congress rule in India is not to be nightmare, this is the greatest work lying before it.

And it is not in the field of religion only that disintegrating forces work. They are active in other forms also. How, for example, have the Indian provinces and States behaved towards the few lakhs of refugee population in our midst? How many men and women have opened up their doors of hospitality to these orphaned children of the Mother, their destitute brethren in blood? Are not

the sufferings of these unlucky people pitiable enough to stir their hearts? On the contrary, wherever we cast a glance we witness abhorrence of these people. While formerly it was religious communalism that was gnawing at the vitals of Indian nationalism, it is now provincialism, nowise less dangerous an enemy. It hardly augurs well for the nation that even the leading spokesmen of the Congress at this most critical hour in the history of the nation, should strike the discordant note of linguistic division of the country. Let it be remembered that when the Congress announced the principle of linguistic provinces and universities, there were no refugees from various provinces. The necessity of properly assimilating them requires a reconsideration of the principle. Will it help Government in its already too hard a task of refugee rehabilitation? Will it bring out that greater cohesion and solidarity among the masses that we need today? Will it knit every Indian closer? Evidently not. The step is assuredly retrogressive.

Unless, therefore, we overcome provincialism and nip the evil in bud, it will undo all government efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the country. Linguism will help provincialism in its evil growth, and once it spreads over the country and gets hold of the people's fancy, the resulting consequences will be as terrible to imagine as those of religious frenzy itself. Should that happen, the fruits of liberty so hard-earned, will slip away through the fingers and the nation shall find itself as empty-handed as ever before.

But the time is not gone yet; given forbearance on all sides we can achieve most in the shortest span of time. Only let us beware!

HEMANDAS N. MANCHANDIA

### OUR SMALLER FRIENDS IN AGRICULTURE

[Note:—Shrimati Mirabeehn specially obtained the following article by Dr. Gilbert Fowler, the veteran scientist and biochemist of repute and a co-worker of the late Sir Albert Howard. He is also an authority on Economics. Though now over 80 years old his enthusiasm and industry are as great as ever. If I remember aright, the regular readers of the *Harijan* might have seen some of his contributions in these columns during Shri Mahadev Desai's editorship. The article is published this week in view of the All-India Food Conference at Pohri on the 12th and 13th instant. —K. G. M.]

Many years ago when I was in charge of the sewage treatment works of the great city of Manchester, England, I had occasion to learn a good deal about the habits and needs of our smaller friends. In the first place I was concerned with those so small that I could only see them after careful separation and examination under high magnifying power. These were known as *bacteria* and looked only like tiny lines and spots under the microscope. Millions might be present however in a cubic inch of what was known as a *bacteria bed*, the kind of structure into which the sewage was led for its purification. These were actually concrete tanks filled with broken fragments of granite or fused ashes known as "clinkers". The sewage was run on to these "beds", allowed to stay there for an hour

or two and then run out. In course of time the necessary bacteria developed in sufficient quantity to purify the sewage, much of the impurity remaining in the bed while a clear and purified "effluent" ran out. In due time other and larger useful friends found a home in the bed and helped to consume or transform the accumulated deposit. The most important of these friends were those known to every observant farmer, viz. the humble earthworm. One need was common both to them and to the microscopic bacteria, viz. air. Unless the bed was carefully controlled, or if the amount of sewage to be treated was more than the bed was strictly designed for, it tended to become "clogged" with the accumulation of impurities or "sludge", so that sufficient air was not present to meet the needs for the purifying activities of the friends mentioned. The occurrence of such a state of things became manifest when hundred or thousand of such worms suddenly appeared on the surface of the broken stones. This was a very striking example of what is going on under the surface of any area of fertile soil.

The bacteria which are present there as in the artificial bacteria bed tend to purify the matters in solution, while the worms keep boring their way throughout the whole mass of the soil and actually pass the finer portions together with the attached impurities through their bodies with the production of well-digested humus, the foundation of excellent fertile soil. In fact after a period the bacteria beds were "washed up", and the humus after drying became a useful manure for which we actually had enquiries from the dust blown prairies of Canada. Thus we may understand the praise bestowed upon these lowly friends by their famous observer Charles Darwin in his charming book *Vegetable Mould and Earthworms*:

"The plough is one of the most ancient and most valuable of man's inventions; but long before he existed, the land was in fact regularly ploughed and still continues to be thus ploughed by earthworms. It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world as have these lowly organized creatures."

It may well therefore be considered in what way are we encouraging the helpful activities, in the present days of agricultural dearth and difficulty, of these lowly friends, whom a modern writer has termed the "ploughs of God". In the U. S. A. there are stated to be some ten or fifteen big commercial earthworm farms from which large consignments of worms are sent out to perform their services where needed, e. g. to help recover the lands in Holland's Zuider Zee flooded and destroyed during the German invasion.

Here in India it would seem that crores and crores of rupees are being spent in the construction of works to produce a mineral "fertilizer" ammonium sulphate, the essential element of which,

that is nitrogen, can be produced in the form of ammonia or nitrate by our microscopic friends the bacteria. On the other hand the ammonium sulphate tends to make the soil acidic and thus is itself destructive to the activities of our humus producers, the earthworms. It may well be considered whether if the enormous expenditure of money and energy called for by the Sindri Fertilizer Factory had been expended in the recovery and utilization of all the available and useful waste materials, capable of furnishing not only nitrogen, but also the many additional constituents of a complete plant food, results of a much more immediate and permanent value would not have been achieved.

It must be remembered that the Chinese farmer, of whose competence there can be no question, has managed to farm successfully for forty centuries without an ounce of factory-made sulphate of ammonia.

Actually, in fact, important though nitrogen is as an essential element of plant food, many other elements are necessary if a crop is to be raised with real success both in quantity and quality. Apart from the other two well-known elements, phosphorus and potash, modern research has shown that if the crop is to be wholly nutritious and the soil is to remain fertile, many other elements must be present if only in minute quantities or traces. This requirement can only be fulfilled with reasonable simplicity if the "law of return" is strictly followed, i. e. that everything taken from the soil must be returned thereto. The Chinese farmer has consistently obeyed this law. All excreta both of men and animals are returned either directly or after composting with the residues of crops, fallen leaves and prunings of trees and all other natural wastes.

Here in India such a movement has been energetically set in motion with the warm support of Gandhiji while he was still with us. It would be a sad pity if a movement so universal in its interrelations and at the same time based on fundamental scientific research, should be in any way hindered through expenditure of available money and energy on one factor only of the general situation, concerning which, moreover, there are many doubtful features.

Bangalore, 23-3-49

GILBERT J. FOWLER

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