

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

THE BOMBAY BIRTH-CONTROL CONFERENCE

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

An International Conference was held at Bombay on 24-11-52 to consider the problem of birth-control. Men and women who are alarmed at the rate at which population is increasing and who therefore believe that means to prevent births should be adopted, came together at the Conference.

If these men and women had gone out into the villages of India and there began talking about contraceptives, they would not have been understood. All talk of controlling births, and that too merely to prevent conception, would sound strange to the ears of people who are born and bred in a civilization teaching them eagerly to await the birth of a son and enjoining on them the very ancient tradition: 'Thou shalt not attempt to break the thread of progeny'. But prophets of civilization are cropping up, and that even outside of India, seeking to spread their newly found knowledge all over the world.

Actually, however, control of births is not a brand-new discovery. Our ancient books bear ample testimony to the fact that it was seriously considered and became an integral part of the life of the ancients. Witness only the four-fold plan of life for the individual worked out and practised by them, the four *ashramas*. In those days no one did and why, even today no one in India does strut out as a bridegroom to take a wife at the patriarchal age of eighty. Although the state of retirement from the householder's state, is not generally practised today, the idea that one must give up certain practices of the householder's way of life persists as a commonly accepted idea in our society. This is because continence is considered essential not only for the spiritual life but also for all the four stages of an individual's life. Continence in a definite manner was specially laid down as the duty of the householder. The *Smritis* lay down all sorts of injunctions as to what a householder shall and shall not do in this behalf. All this goes to show that the ancient Indians were not indifferent to the idea of planned parenthood.

● But they did not think of control only in regard to births. On the other hand, they believed that discriminating self-control was essential in

all fields of human activity. This characteristic way of viewing life and living it as one whole is an element of our ancient civilization well worth preserving. Man's life is not to be viewed and considered separately, in watertight compartments but treated as a whole and comprehensively.

If there is one essential difference between the civilization of India and of the West it is to be seen in this attitude towards life. Our forefathers regarded life as one comprehensive whole, its essence being one and indivisible. All knowledge and science, all art and skill that was cultivated and developed in India was therefore pursued for and in the service of this 'One and Only' and taking it as its basis. Because of this supreme faith, our ancestors did not live life piecemeal believing in the gospel of eat, drink and be merry. There were some exceptions of course, but their ideas did not long survive. In Europe and America, on the other hand, the tendency seems to be to regard raising the standard of living anyhow and at any cost as the only end. From the beginning India did not fall a prey to this mistaken trend. That the one and only, the absolute unrelated Truth does exist, that life is given to us to reach it and realize it, and that life has to be organized and planned and has to be subordinated solely to the achievement of this all pervading single aim became the fundamental slogan of the civilization that has flowered here in our land and has retained its power to influence men's minds till this day. It was believed that if this were not so, a great catastrophe would descend on man and all life would be but one long drawn out misery. Therefore, though our ancestors did perceive the significance of controlling births they did not regard it as an unrelated absolute ideal. In fact it never can be one. But it is claimed that the sun of civilization has now risen in the West and some people have heard the call to fetch its light to the East.

What does this light descending upon us from the West tell us? It says in effect, "children are very much on the increase; the way of continence is surely a way to check it; but how can every one take to it? It is very difficult; nay, impossible for almost all men and women; what then shall we do? Science shows the way. We have discovered the means. Our

science has found out medicines and various types of rubber and other pessaries as remedies for this evil. We will show them to you and you will be happy to be rid of births and children and we will then be able to check this evil of the uncontrollably increasing human population."* The Bombay Conference met to carry this light to our land.

The Conference was declared open by Shri Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. He is well known to the English reading world as a philosopher from the East; he is especially famed all over the world, as one deeply learned in the lore and religions of India and he enjoys the reputation of being an expert physician able to diagnose the ill-health besetting the various trends in civilization. One therefore expected an original contribution from him on this subject of controlling births.

Driven by anxiety for the welfare and the progress of his people Gandhiji had also studied this question of birth-control by mechanical and artificial means. He came to the conclusion that if we were bamboozled into adopting artificial contraceptives we as a people would be set on the downward road to moral and spiritual perdition; the true remedy, according to him, was self-control and making our lives cleaner, better and more decent by cultivating wholesome social customs; begetting children may be a social duty, but sexual indulgence could never, never be man's or woman's duty. He gave his views in a book — *Self-Restraint v. Self-Indulgence*.†

It was but natural to hope that as at one time Shri Radhakrishnan had explained to the Western World the Hindu View of Life in his beautiful style and enchanting English, he would on this occasion give us something to think about in the light of the ancient Hindu view of life on this problem which touches the very core of the religion and life of man. For after all this question of controlling births is not an insignificant matter. Of the four incentives which urge humanity to purposeful action and living it touches the two most universal, namely sexual and economic activities which concern all men and women. It is also concerned with the most significant social activity of men and women, viz. procreation which deeply affects humanity and its future. An issue which is so vital to the human race should not be considered or discussed merely from a paltry view of life like indulgence and satisfaction of the senses, or a physically healthy and merry life which makes a ready appeal to the brute in us; it deserves to be considered and discussed from a point of view which is based on and appeals to the religious instinct of man and conduces to his salvation. Shri Radhakrishnan did nothing of the

kind; on the contrary, one is compelled to have to say regretfully, he talked in easy generalizations which were but meaningless platitudes; he seemed to want to placate both parties to the dispute. From all that he said on the occasion one falls even to perceive whether he welcomes birth-control by artificial means or condemns it!

Shri Radhakrishnan discussed Gandhiji's opinion on the question also, but it was merely to ask (I am saying this depending on the report of his speech that has appeared in the newspapers) whether the method of self-control advocated by Gandhiji was also not an interference with the ways of nature! And going ahead with an air of propounding a universal truth he asked if civilization itself was not an interference with nature.* Granted that it was; what of it? The real question is how man should interfere with nature as befits him and helps his development. Shri Radhakrishnan's treatment of the subject leaves the ordinary man perplexed and confused.

A supreme rule or principle of a truthful life is that both the end as well as the means must be good; a good and true end can never be achieved by any and every means whatever; the means for a truthful end must be truthful. In fact it is ultimately the means which shape and determine the end. If birth-control is accepted as an end it is surely not the ultimate end humanity wants to achieve. Even birth-control is a means conceived for the good and welfare of mankind. But keeping it in view as a limited aim to be immediately and for the time being achieved, the means conceived to serve it should be clean, consistent with the ultimate aim of mankind, conducive to the welfare of man, of his life and of his progeny. The inevitable law of the identity of ends and means applies here also. Shri Radhakrishnan is however reported to have said, "If the end is served there is nothing ethically or spiritually harmful in the particular method adopted or means employed." On reading these words one is left wondering whether Shri Radhakrishnan has unconsciously borrowed his doctrine regarding ends and means from the Communists in whose land he recently stayed for some time. Birth-control is not mere mechanical means. It arises from and touches the innermost being and the deepest nature of the human individual. It is also a matter which has living concern with the welfare of society as a whole. It should therefore be considered and discussed keeping the depth of human nature and the whole of human society in view. For no reason should we be hurried into hasty action.

This idea of controlling births started as a remedy for the supposed evil of inordinately increasing population. But thinkers of Europe and

* If India saw the light and took to this craze the contraceptive manufacturers of Europe and America would incidentally have a roaring trade.

† Price Rs 2, postage etc. As. 10, Navajyian Karyalaya, Ahmedabad-9.

* In terms of philosophy any change in or interference with nature is impossible. What we can do is but to understand nature and use our knowledge derived from such understanding. So the question before man is one of a proper use of that knowledge.

of the West have now begun to realize that the scare raised is false. It is obvious that if population increased workers too will increase. And nature with its unlimited resources has not lost its capacity to yield food. No one believes or says that it has. But these advocates of artificial means for birth-control obstinately persist in saying that the one serious calamity which threatens mankind is one of over-population; take measures to remedy it or we are doomed. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his message to the Conference has indicated that our troubles of the moment certainly do not arise from over-population alone. Scientists like Joshue de Castro definitely assert * that over-population is not the cause of humanity's present troubles; the root of all these troubles is that we men do not justly distribute the wealth of the world for use, that nations and people make war upon one another in their selfish narrow interests and in their arrogance, and that the strong seek to overpower the weak.

If we were to consider this question as it applies to India alone our problem is something quite different and much more serious. Our upper classes in India have been importing from the West, and particularly from America, a new view of life and its fulfilment. This view is entering and influencing our ways regarding food and entertainment, our art of life, our habits and customs and relations between the sexes. Those very countries themselves have not yet clearly understood or realized the full implications of this view of life. But it happens to possess the cheap merit of easily appealing to immature intelligence and of titillating the senses. This view of life goes ahead in its pride of rationalism born of the knowledge of physical science; in the West it seeks to prevail on the strength of its claim to have succeeded.

But has it succeeded? The failure or success of a civilization cannot be judged from a short duration of four or five centuries. And the White civilization of the modern age is hardly three centuries old. We witness even at the end of such a short period that its structure is giving way and doubt and anxiety are being expressed regarding its foundation.

We have to judge this civilization comprehensively and in all its bearings. When we try to see it in that manner we find that war, aggression, exploitation and seeking foreign markets for goods produced in one's own factories are inseparable factors in the make-up of this civilization. The West, on the strength of its newly found instrument — the machine, has lorded over Asia and Africa for a few centuries. But the tide now seems to have turned. Not only have bitter rivalries cropped up amongst the Westerners themselves, but also the East which was till now considered backward and Africa

have stirred themselves, have begun to understand what is happening and to revolt. A new chapter in the life of Western civilization has begun. Contraception or birth-control by artificial means is a thing discovered and spread by the West. The philosophy and view of life which form its background are different from those of ours. The question before us is: Is this philosophy and view of life acceptable to us? Even the West itself is divided in its opinion on the question of contraceptives. So if birth-control is to be adopted by us, it should be done only after all these implications are fully considered.

During the long course of man's history all sorts of ideas good and bad have come and gone. What remains for man on the whole is what he deserves. We cannot afford to accept this new-fangled idea of birth-control without question. We in India especially cannot ignore the warning held out by Gandhiji and many others. This Conference on the whole seems to be an attempt to screen or make people forget that warning. This movement for the spread of the knowledge and use of contraceptives which has been sneakily finding acceptance in the cities of India is now desperately seeking respectability; with the support of such respectability it wants to enter the villages of India in the name of health and economic prosperity. Such respectability this movement cannot secure. We must remember that the Father of the Nation, the embodied spirit of India, was opposed to it. We would prove ourselves prudent and would safeguard ourselves against untold evils if we wisely heeded him.

26-11-'52

(From the original in Gujarati)

An Opportunity to Young Persons

Service-minded young persons determined to dedicate themselves to the cause of the villages of India are cordially invited by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, to serve as its workers in villages. Suitable arrangements for their training and maintenance after training will be made by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. The honorarium offered is Rs 75 to Rs 150 per month. Those desirous of taking advantage of this opportunity should get into touch with the Secretary, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 5, Mansing Road, New Delhi-2.

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* See articles: *Food and Population* (Harijan, June 7, 1952); *The Neo-Malthusian Myth* (Harijan, June 21, 1952); *Hunger and Politics* (Harijan, July 5, 1952).

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Dec. 20

1952

CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME AND POWER POLITICS

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

We learn from papers that things in the Bihar Congress have worsened so much that the Congress President had to take resort to an unusually drastic step of cancelling the Congress elections. Similarly bad news about something vitally wrong in the affairs of the Congress comes from various other parts of the country also. To every lover of the land this news is very much distressing indeed.

Gandhiji built up the strength and vitality of the Congress through his Constructive Programme and Satyagraha. Non-violence was its sheet-anchor. There were some at that time who did not have faith in it; they believed in violence. Now with the advent of Swaraj, except the Communist I think no group or party has that faith. But a new danger has arisen in the shape of *Sattagraha*—a craze for capturing political power. We have political power in our hands now, therefore persons and parties or groups are on a mad and unscrupulous run for capturing it in their own interests. There is all fear that such rivalry will mean the death-knell not only of the Congress but also of democratic Swaraj as well. It is really unfortunate that this should be so at the very time when we as a people have to take to various nation-building activities for our progress.

Under these circumstances, some among us feel that it would be better that we might turn off and keep away from power politics. We might say, the constructive workers as a group are of this mind. This is surely good so far as it goes: it means a healthy influence in the situation and less stampeade for power. Surely, power politics or what has been called parliamentary work—this alone is not the whole work before the country. However, it must be noted that it has also to be attended to, because we have Swaraj now. We cannot allow ourselves to consider that work as any way untouchable or inferior. We are now called upon to see as to who rules our land and how; we as a people have now the well-earned good fortune of choosing our own rulers; and it is one of our most consequential and important constructive activities. Therefore, although some persons or parties may well decide such salutary self-restraint for themselves, however obviously such a course cannot be adopted by us as a whole. Rather, as Gandhiji had said in another situation once, we have to take it that parliamentary activity has come to stay in the land, and therefore we have to find proper people

for undertaking and discharging it in due manner, and our people must be trained for it.

But surely, undertaking that new responsibility does not mean *Sattagraha*—rivalry for power for power's sake. The new task also is to be fulfilled in the same old manner of Satyagraha which is the best way. That is to organize ourselves through constructive work and run the governments on the strength acquired that way. People have still to work for themselves even though there is a popular Government. Rather, as we go further in our work, even governments feel that their work even does not progress without public co-operation and the popular sanction of constructive activities; that whatsoever goes on without them is almost lifeless and unenthusing.

The proof of this is the need of forming an institution like the Bharat Sevak Samaj. People of all parties and Government servants even can join it. Hence naturally there is a question among Congressmen whether such a new institution was necessary. Is it proper to enrol Government servants in it? Is not the Congress for the service of the people through constructive activities? Why should we allow ourselves to lose the advantage of and not work further with the prestige and position acquired by that body through national service of so many years' standing? Because of such considerations some feel that while on one hand, the Congress will perhaps forget the mission of popular service, on the other the new body will have to take time to gather enough steam to go ahead, and hence it is not surprising that some do not feel its need even.

What is the way out of such a situation? If the Congress becomes a mere political party only, there is all danger that it will not only spell its own ruin but also of ordered Government even in the country today. It must be remembered that political parties even have their basis in what constructive activities they carry on among the people. That was how the Congress had built its prestige. But it cannot carry on long on that capital only. Other parties also are not free from the rivalry of power politics. Hence there is a question for us, what should we do then? The answer is as simple as it is true: people should free themselves from the ghost of power-mongering and return to their old and well-tried way of constructive programme. That is they should apply themselves to it on lines of truth and non-violence as before. The Congress must mobilize enough strength to clearly tell the people as well as the Government what we should do at present. The way to such mobilization of strength, is also as we know by experience, to work among the people. It may be that governments might not be agreeable to our doing certain constructive activities. Hence we find among constructive workers a feeling of anger or frustration or a sort of aversion or indifference to the Congress and its Governments. We are also witnessing that some of them begin to look to other countries and their policies and programmes. When the Congress gave bold and clear lead to its workers naturally such a phenomenon had no place. Today

when that strength of bold lead is abating there is a sort of confusion in the ranks. Therefore it behoves us that we immediately leave off the scramble for power and return to the way of Satyagraha. Otherwise there is ample warning to us that our public life will worsen almost irretrievably.

12-12-'52

(From the original in Gujarati)

THE CULTURE WE AIM AT

(By Gandhiji)

The Indian culture of our times is in the making. Many of us are striving to produce a blend of all the cultures which seem today to be in clash with one another. No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive. There is no such thing as pure Aryan culture in existence today in India. Whether the Aryans were indigenous to India or were unwelcome intruders, does not interest me much. What does interest me is the fact that my remote ancestors blended with one another with the utmost freedom and we of the present generation are a result of that blend.

Harijan, 9-5-'36

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I would have our young men and women with literary tastes to learn as much of English and other world languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world like a Bose, a Roy or the Poet himself. But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house.

Young India, 1-6-'21

Nothing can be farther from my thought than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own. It is my firm opinion that no culture has treasures so rich as ours has. We have not known it, we have been made even to deprecate its study and deprecate its value. We have almost ceased to live it. An academic grasp without practice behind it is like an embalmed corpse, perhaps lovely to look at but nothing to inspire or ennoble. My religion forbids me to belittle or disregard other cultures, as it insists under pain of civil suicide upon imbibing and living my own.

Young India, 1-9-'21

It stands for synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life, and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil. This synthesis will naturally be of the Swadeshi type, where each culture is assured its legitimate place, and not of the American pattern, where one dominant culture absorbs the rest, and where the aim is not towards harmony, but towards an artificial and forced unity.

Young India, 17-11-'20

ENGLISH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

The Director of Education (D.E.), Bombay State, has circularized secondary schools in the State asking their opinion on a few very important questions of our secondary educational reconstruction. One of them is regarding the place of English in national education. Another is in regard to the place of secondary education and its control in the total scheme of our educational set-up in general and *vis-a-vis* higher or collegiate education in particular. I leave off the latter for the present and note the former here as it is immediate and more important.

The question of the place of English in secondary education is not new for the State, as its Government has by now already had its own policy decided on the matter. It has laid down that the study of English shall formally begin from the eighth year of a child's schooling and not earlier, i.e. it will begin at the truly secondary stage, the first seven years being entirely meant for the primary or basic stage. This bold policy of reorganization of secondary education in the State was revised last year to allow that the study of English in schools might be earlier by one year only i.e. at the seventh year and that on a purely voluntary basis. Now it is abundantly clear that this step on the part of the Government was a tactical mistake if not worse and was a bad sort of appeasement of vested interests who were planning to pick a hole if they could, in the truly national principle and policy noted above. In the wake of that appeasement, the reaction in favour of going back upon that policy is gathering ground in some places and it seems they have succeeded in putting up their move on the official map of reorganization suggested in the D. E.'s circular. For it suggests whether English might be further allowed to be begun from standard sixth if not earlier as before from standard fifth. That this is very bad from various points of view has been discussed in these columns in various connections. It is enough to note here that this suggestion is wholly reactionary and must be negated by all who care to see that a new system of national education in India is born and brought about on a firm democratic basis and in the true interests of our people as a whole, and not in the vested interests of a few classes as it is today. Basic Education requires that the first seven or eight years of a child's schooling are free of the burden of a foreign language like English which can never be for all. This principle was accepted by us in the first All-India Basic Education Conference that met at Poona in 1938-39 under the auspices of the Government of Bombay. The Government of Bombay deserves congratulations of the country that it was the first State to implement it after mature deliberations of fairly a decade. The said reform has been fairly on its way to being a vital part of the system of the State, and we hope it will not succumb to the counter-revolutionary move from the vested interests that have unfortunately been gathering together round English today.

12-12-'52

A CIVILIZATION IN DECAY

(By Wilfred Wellock)

[This is the 2nd instalment from the author's paper, "The Supreme Crisis of Our Civilization". The first, viz., "Industrial Revolution in Reverse", appeared in the issue dated 13-12-'52.]

Civilizations count time in eras, which blossom and decay. Life is illimitable, and thus progressive and expansive. It bursts into brilliance in periods of vision, contracts and fades, and even perishes when vision fails; and vision does sometimes fail. It is a fact of some significance that all Western civilizations have been short-lived. Only Eastern civilizations, like the Chinese and the Indian, have survived three millenniums. No outstanding vision has inspired Western civilization for several centuries and such as there have been are now exhausted. A new creative era lies within our reach, but there is no certainty that it will come to birth. Our genius has run to quantitative production and consumption, and to power in order to ensure these. Our lordship is over death and destruction, not over life. We have inaugurated the era of world economics and world wars, and devised the means of world destruction. But we lack the power to save us from that fate, which may be nearer than we dream. Is vision, then, to fail? That is the only question that now matters.

A Change in Men and Society

As a result of the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution on the nature of man and of society, the transference, by the compulsion of starvation, of craft workers from well-integrated villages to bleak soul-less towns, to tend power-driven machines in gaunt new factories, was transference from a life which yielded numerous social and spiritual values and thus had meaning, to one which had neither meaning nor a vestige of social or spiritual significance; from a status which embraced personal responsibility, creative opportunity, vocational and social value, independence and local standing, to a condition of abject dependence upon the will of a rich and powerful employer whose primary aim was professedly to make money.

In due course, as competition for world markets grew, it became the practice to cheapen production by means of increased specialization. This ultimately led to the techniques of the assembling line, and the chain of repetitive machines, when the percentage of repetitive labour in some industries reached as high as 95 per cent.

This Spiritual Atrocity

This condition is the negation of everything which has to do with human dignity and the culture of the spirit: it is in fact the negation of spiritual man, man the creator made in the image of God. In this set-up intelligence is a disability, a hindrance to production, as it stimulates a sense of frustration, destroys all interest in one's work and thus lowers production, whence all manner of diversions have to be introduced in order to condition people to function at the sub-human level. Increasingly scientists are being introduced for this very purpose: to such degradation has modern science sunk.

Neither religion nor culture has protested against this spiritual atrocity. Owing to the dexterity by which the new materialism was clothed with the sanctity of religion, a fatal blind-spot has developed in regard to it which even today obscures some of its worst consequences. The glorification of riches, of social status and national power has resulted in a condition of social and spiritual impoverishment, irresponsibility and weakening moral and social sensitivity which is visibly undermining the fabric of our civilization. The transforming of once responsible, well-integrated persons, craftsmen with social obligations and recompenses, into mechanized robots has caused work for the great majority to have no other significance than that of earning money. We thus arrive at a cash-based, materialistic civilization—a society of fragmented persons who live largely on mass-excitements and spectacles and expect to satisfy all their needs by means of money. In

this spiritually barren existence religion has no meaning and the church only a perfunctory mission.

Need we wonder that pilfering among the workers, and conscienceless charging of high prices in the upper reaches of society are rampant, and are growing? The course of this evil is the loss of connection between a man's work and his soul. Lack of responsibility in work ends in lack of responsibility in morals. Indeed we are rapidly producing an amoral civilization. Its end will be near unless we reverse many of its processes.

Neo-Materialism of Our Age

To sum up, the root problem of our age is spiritual, and arises from the rapidly increasing emphasis that has been placed on material values during the advance of the Industrial Revolution, which has resulted in the almost complete identification of human wellbeing or the good life with maximum consumption of goods and services.

In the West, greed and the love of riches and material abundance, which from the first have been the primary motives behind capitalism, have at last penetrated every section of society. They have neutralized the idealism of the early socialists—the men who stood for a qualitative civilization—and through Marx have passed on the incubus of materialism to Communism. Today a devouring materialism is ravaging the earth's resources at a greater rate than they are being replenished, either by maintaining the earth's fertility or by discovery and invention.

Devouring Earth's Resources

In the *London Times* (17-8-49), an article on "The Wastage of Raw Materials" drew attention to the urgent need for their conservation, and quoted Dr. R. P. Linstead, F.R.S., at a meeting of the British Association, as follows:

"Man is now making vast raids upon capital resources. It has been stated that more minerals have been taken out of the ground in the U.S. since 1900 than from the whole world during the whole of previous history."

The article also stated that the American Association was told the year before that

"by the end of 1947 the cumulative production of coal during all past human history amounted to approximately 81,000 million metric tons. Of this, 62,000 millions have been mined and consumed since 1900."

The U.S. uses more iron and steel, more petrol, more news print, and more rubber, than all the rest of the world put together. She now imports all these raw materials and over eighty others, having largely exhausted her own supplies. Indeed *Time* (31-12-51) declared:

"In many ways the U.S., once the owner of seemingly inexhaustible natural treasure, was in danger of becoming a have-not nation."

And what is the goal of Western civilization? It is to reach America's standards of living!

Whither Mankind?

Almost throughout the West it appears to be taken for granted that the real issue today is the struggle for supremacy between the Western or American "way of life" and Communism. This is a tragic misreading of the times, and a world war fought on that issue would be the greatest calamity imaginable. It is an entirely unreal issue, as both these "ways of life" rest on power for the achievement of the highest possible standards of material living. The real difference between them is as to who shall distribute the national wealth and on what principle. As the conflict between these two ideologies deepens, the freedoms of democracy visibly weaken.

From that impasse there is no escape other than that of accepting the guidance of spiritual values and principles. The new materialism, so far from satisfying basic human needs, is producing a spirit of restlessness, and nowhere more strikingly than in the U.S. In the realm of appetites and indulgences there is no end to the multiplication of wants, while the more one has the more restless one becomes.

It is the nature of our life, due to modern industrialism, that is wrong, and it is wrong because it does not conform with man's spiritual needs, that forgotten better part of his nature. When the main motive of labour and industry is switched from satisfying self-expression to money-making, men become machines and societies competitive gladiatorial associations that live on excitements which they miscall sport and on self-indulgences, which they call fun.

A Civilization in Decay

Ours is a civilization in decay. It has become so outward and unstable that growing fear is shaking its very foundations. If the decay is to be arrested, many of the spiritual rights and values that have been lost during the course of the Industrial Revolution must be restored. This will involve major changes in our economy, in our social, political and industrial organization and techniques: indeed in our entire way of life.

OUR HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

(By Benarasilal Bazar)

The problem of handloom weavers is agitating the minds of our thinkers such as Rajaji and Vinobaji. It is undoubtedly the most important cottage industry which must survive if Rama Rajya is to be established in our country for which our leaders fought with the British under Bapu's guidance.

Myself a habitual wearer of pure Khadi, I deal in handloom products and mill-made yarn and cloth. Hence I take the liberty of placing the following facts so that they may assist the efforts which are being made to revive the handloom industry.

During and after the war when mill-made cloth was in short supply, the handloom weavers reaped a rich harvest by weaving loose cloth, dyeing *katcha* shades and charging exorbitant rates for their products. They had no fear then of any competition from any quarter and were unmindful of the fate that always awaits the unscrupulous.

During the year 1949-50 when mill-made cloth was plentiful, the handloom weavers were in the same plight as today. But as soon as the export of mill-made cloth began, cloth prices went up and the handloom weavers were again at their best till the present slump which began with the fall in prices a few months back.

The present situation is that the handloom products can only be sold when the mill-made cloth is in short supply. In fact even the Khadi sales are now dependent on the availability or non-availability of mill-cloth. Formerly Khadi was running its course independently of mill-cloth. But now like the ordinary handloom products, pure Khadi sales have also linked up with mill-cloth. Khadi sales shoot up when mill-cloth is scarce and go down as soon as the mill-cloth becomes plentiful.

It is within everybody's memory that when cloth was in short supply, people preferred to remain semi-naked and waited in queue for hours together to get a few yards of mill-cloth. But they would not spin yarn to work the idle handlooms. Bapu cried in vain to change the menta-

lity of the people. He even made changes in the system of Khadi production and sales so that the producers must wear Khadi and consumers must spin yarn. How splendid was this scheme to produce more and more cloth? Enough cotton is grown in our land to be spun and turned into cloth to meet the requirements of all the people. But the people did not listen and as I have said before, preferred to remain semi-naked. The result was setting up of more machinery to accelerate the production of mill-made cloth which caused further decline of the handloom industry.

If the mills are asked not to manufacture *dhotis* and *saris*, the next step to be taken will be that at least half of the looms, if not more, must stop working so that the mill yarn may be available to the handloom weavers. Otherwise wherefrom such a huge quantity of yarn will come? The cry for increasing the production of cloth by the mills must stop as the mill production can only increase at the cost of our handloom weavers.

Again the situation in our country has become more grave and complicated due to heavy influx of art silk and rayon products. Being cheap and fancy, they are gradually replacing cotton products.

In short, I make the following tentative suggestions for consideration by the Government and the people:

- (1) Government policy of increasing the production of mill cloth must stop. On the other hand gradually the loom capacity of the mills should be decreased say @ 5% per year as the gradual decrease will not upset the present equilibrium. The present spindle capacity should not be decreased for a few years to come as we shall require mill-made yarn till our villages produce their own yarn.

- (2) Nation-wide drive should be made specially amongst the weaving community to prefer handloom products.

- (3) All the Government departments should stop buying mill-made cloth.

- (4) Efforts should be made to revive hand spinning in the villages so that in course of time the villages or units of villages may be independent of mill yarn.

- (5) Government should open dyeing depots in the weaving centres to dye fast colours and to impart knowledge to the weavers.

- (6) Import of rayon yarn and its products should be gradually stopped and its manufacturing in our country should not be encouraged. It should remain an article of luxury for the rich only.

- (7) Import of all foreign cloth and yarn must be totally stopped for ever.

If the handloom problem is solved, our other cottage industries are bound to revive in its wake.

I hope my suggestions will receive due consideration by all concerned.

Banaras

THE ETERNAL IDEAL OF EQUALITY *

The word 'Swaraj' inspired thousands to brave deeds and acts of sacrifice and delight in sacrifice. People joyfully went to jail and even braved death. Such was the power of this magic word. After independence, we needed another such magic word, expressive of a great ideal, to rouse us to activity, and we found it in 'Sarvodaya'. The word was there, but I felt that there was needed a programme of work that might catch our imagination and inspire us to great deeds. For a *mantra* remains unmanifest, unless it is joined to a programme of work, and then it activates the general mass of people. I was therefore on the look-out for such a programme and it came to me in the course of my tour in Telangana. My work is not limited to the solution of the land problem. What I want is to initiate and establish a great moral idea, which is of the nature of an Eternal Dharma as distinguished from our formal religions like Hinduism, Islam etc.

The Eternal Dharma

We often use the word, 'eternal', but without fully understanding its implication. Dharma has two aspects, one changeless and the other changing. The observance of truth is as much a duty today as it was in days gone by, and as much in other countries as in India. The difference of time and space does not limit it. It is of the kind of eternal verities, which are the same always. So are love and compassion. But the rules of conduct through which they are sought to be expressed cannot last for all time. They change according to age and circumstance and country. *Bhakti* i.e. devotion is again an eternal Dharma and equally true for all, but form and ceremonial designed to express it will differ. What we must do therefore is to hold fast to this changeless soul of Dharma and keep it continuously in our mind.

I am not concerned with the transitory forms, I am calling you to the changeless essence of Dharma. This changeless essence consists in the establishment of equality and unity, notwithstanding the diversity and differences of outward life. These differences will remain, but there will be equality and an inner unity.

Ideal of Equality

When children are young, it is parents' duty to keep them under proper discipline. But when they are out of their teens they should have freedom. The parents will then merely advise them. Then when the parents are old, it is the children who look after them and so lay down the discipline to be followed by the latter. Thus the form changes, but the essence, — in this case the duty of the parents to love their children and provide for their right development, — continues unchanged. It is the same with society. When it was in the infant age, there was need for kings. It was the duty of the kings to keep the people under proper discipline and the duty of the people to follow it. But now when society has outgrown its infancy, a monarch is anachronistic and out of place. The power has now passed into the hands of the representatives of the people. The Sanskrit adage that "the king is the maker of his age" is no longer true. It is now the people who give shape and character to the age. Thus much has changed with the passage of time. But the fundamental truth of equality and harmony being the basis of a right type of a social organization has not grown stale and remains true to this day as it will in future also.

In olden times, it was not necessary to divide land for promoting equality, because there was enough to till and spare; but now it is necessary. Of course, equality does not mean that every one should have five acres of land, and the same kind of house-building, or an equal

yardage of cloth. We only want that the things, which are necessary for life, such as air, water and land, should be equally accessible to all. None will grudge the surplus which may be left over with some after all have had enough of these things.

Discriminative Equality

We want equality tempered with discrimination. The attempts made in other countries to bring about equality by force lacked the light of discrimination. That is why the idea of equality in those countries is proving abortive. The mother does not distribute food among her children on the basis of mathematical equality. To the youngest one she gives only milk, to the next some milk and some bread, and to the grown-ups only bread. In the same way, in society also we will exercise discrimination and take into account the intensity of hunger and the power of digestion of each in the distribution of food. Where equality is brought about by force, all are compelled to conform to the same pattern. We are totally against this kind of regimentation. We aim at spiritual equality based on discrimination.

(From Hindi)

Ramulubhai

Shri Potti Shriramulu of Madras died a martyr to the intransigence of those who could not see their way to deciding upon the quick formation of a separate Andhra State under an agreed formula. I knew him as an old inmate of the Satyagrahashrama, Sabarmati, to which he came leaving off his old job to join the service of the country under Gandhiji's leadership. We of the Ashram called him Ramulubhai. He was one of the Dandi marchers of 1930. He was with us who went to Bihar in 1934 for the Earthquake Relief. For four years after that he was in Saurashtra at the Rajkot Rashtriya Shala. After 1938 he went back to Andhra and was doing constructive work in his home province. A few days back he surprised me by a letter (30-10-52) telling me that he was fasting unto death for the cause of Separate Andhra State and was running its 12th day. I immediately wrote back to say that fast was no remedy for it and it was not a proper step. But I had all fears that he would not heed to it. He was a brave man with a strong will and unbreakable courage. It was almost impossible to dislodge him from his decision on a matter he might be seized of. Andhra State was such a matter. It is tragic that the Madras leaders could not save him by reconciling their differences in the face of Ramulubhai's self-imposed ordeal. May he rest in peace.

16-12-'52

M. P.

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* From Shri Vinoba's prayer-speech at Kudu, Ranchi District, on 26-11-52.