

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

## 'THE GREATEST ACT'

(By Gandhiji)

[Shri Sitaram Shastri of Vinayashram, Andhra, drew my attention to Gandhiji's article 'The Greatest Act' (*Harijan*, August 28, 1937), particularly to Gandhiji's suggestion in that article, viz.

"Revival of the activities of temperance associations in support of the campaign against drink."

The need of such a step is increasingly being felt today, chiefly in those States where the Government do not seem to endeavour to prohibit drink and drugs.

The article is noteworthy from another point also. Gandhiji quotes the Congress Working Committee's resolution and says that "it is the greatest act of the Working Committee at any time of its chequered career." (Italics mine). The country expects that the Working Committee will similarly resolve now in the same way as it did when we began to see the dim twilight of Swaraj dawning in our land. Today we have Swaraj. I reproduce below from this article of Gandhiji.

53-54

M. P.]

"Inasmuch as prohibition has been one of the chief planks of the Congress since the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement in 1920, and thousands of men and women have had to suffer imprisonment and physical injury in furtherance of this cause, the Working Committee is of opinion that it is incumbent upon the Congress Ministries to work for this end. The Committee expects them to bring about total prohibition in their respective Provinces within three years. The Working Committee appeals to the Ministries in other Provinces, and to the Indian States also, to adopt this programme of moral and social uplift of the people."

I regard this resolution as the greatest act of the Working Committee at any time of its chequered career.....

I know that many are sceptical about prohibition being achieved. They think that the financial lure will be too strong for them to resist. They argue that the addicts will procure their drinks and drugs anyhow, and that when the Ministers discover that prohibition means mere loss of revenue without any appreciable diminution in the consumption, though illicit, of drinks and drugs, they will revert to the tainted revenue and the then state will be worse than the present.

I do not share any such fear. I believe there is the requisite moral momentum in the nation to achieve the noble end. If prohibition is to be a reality, we shall begin to see the end not with the end of the three years but inside of six months. And when the reality dawns upon India,

those Provinces or States that have lagged behind are bound to bow to the inevitable.

We have the right, therefore, to expect the sympathy and support not only of all the parties in India including the Europeans but the best mind of the whole world in this, perhaps, the greatest moral movement of the century.

If, then, prohibition is to mean a great moral awakening in India, the closing of liquor shops should merely mean the indispensable beginning of the movement ending in the complete weaning from drink and narcotics of those poor people and some rich people whom the habit has ruined, body and soul.....

At the risk of repetition of what is stated by Mahadev Desai in his notes let me summarize what should, in my opinion, be the comprehensive programme:

- (1) A drink drug map showing the locality of liquor and opium shops in each province.
- (2) Closing them as liquor shops on the expiry of the licences.
- (3) Immediate earmarking of liquor revenue whilst it is still being received, exclusively for the purposes of prohibition.
- (4) Conversion, wherever possible, of the liquor shops into refreshment and recreation rooms in the hope that the original visitors will continue to use them, liquor contractors being themselves persuaded to conduct them if they will.
- (5) Employment of the existing excise staff for detection of illicit distillation and drinking.
- (6) Appeal to the educational institutions to devote a part of the time of teachers and students to temperance work.
- (7) Appeal to the women to organize visits to the persons given to the drink and opium habits.
- (8) Negotiation with the neighbouring States to undertake simultaneous prohibition.
- (9) Engaging the voluntary or, if necessary, paid assistance of the medical profession for suggesting non-alcoholic drinks and other substitutes for intoxicants and methods of weaning the addicts from their habit.
- (10) Revival of the activities of temperance associations in support of the campaign against drink.

(11) Requiring employers of labour to open and maintain under first-class management refreshment, recreation and educational rooms for the use of their employees.

(12) Toddy tappers to be used for drawing sweet toddy for sale, as such, or conversion into *gur*. I understand that the process of collecting sweet toddy for drinking, as such, or for making *gur* is different from the one for fermenting toddy.

So much for the campaign against drink and drugs.

Now as to how to make up for the loss of revenue in some Provinces to the extent of one third? I have unhesitatingly suggested cutting out the educational budget for which purpose mainly the excise revenue is used. I still maintain that education can be made self-supporting. With this I must deal elsewhere. It cannot be made so in a day even if the possibility of its being made self-supporting is accepted. Existing obligations have to be met. Therefore, fresh sources of revenue have to be tapped. Death duties, tax on tobacco including *bidis*, have already been given as some suggestions. If these are considered impossible of immediate accomplishment, short-term loans may be devised to tide over the deficit; and if even that fails, the Central Government should be approached to curtail the military budget and give the Provinces the proportionate grant. The demand would be irresistible especially if it is demonstrated by the Provincial Governments that they do not need the military, at any rate for their internal peace and tranquility.

*Harijan*, 28-8-37

## PROHIBITION AND CORRUPTION

(By P. Kodanda Rao)

Pending the availability of the full text of the Andhra Prohibition Enquiry Committee's Report, a tentative observation based on the published official summary may be permissible.

The Report found that the three Departments concerned with the administration of Prohibition had "lamentably broken down" and that "there was wide-spread and bare-faced corruption in the three Departments". If this assessment be correct it is a severe censure on the authorities concerned. Either the officials were aware of it and failed to warn the Government or the Government ignored the warning and deliberately misled the confiding public. In the first case, the officials should either resign or be dismissed; in the latter case, the Government should resign, if a minimum of decency in administration is to be maintained. Or, the Committee's assessment is incorrect. In which case, the Committee may well apologize.

The Report found that Prohibition did not prohibit and therefore recommended its repeal and the revival of Excise. In doing so, it drew

attention to the "imperative need for men of honesty and integrity if any system of administration was to succeed". Apparently, the Report presumed that, while men of integrity and honesty were not, or could not, be found to administer Prohibition, they could be found to administer Excise! Or, that the same persons could be honest when administering Excise, but corrupt when administering Prohibition!

The Andhra Report favoured the system of Excise *auctions*. The majority of the Madhya Pradesh Prohibition Enquiry Committee, which, like the Andhra Committee, found Prohibition an utter failure, observed that the system of Excise auctions was a "prolific source of a variety of scandalous malpractices" and was "largely responsible for corrupting the Excise administration in the wet districts" and recommended its abolition forthwith.

Regarding the value of the evidence, it is interesting to recall that the *very same issue* of the *Madhya Pradesh Gazette*, which announced the appointment of the Committee to review Prohibition policy, published also the Government's very favourable review of Prohibition! Government officials, who had earlier given favourable reports when they thought that Government favoured it, turned round with unconscious humour to denounce Prohibition as a failure when the appointment of the Committee led them to think that Government had changed its mind!

The Andhra Committee feared that if Prohibition was continued, it "might produce a general disregard for law". The Madhya Pradesh Committee found that the detected offences under the *Prohibition Act* in the *dry* half of the State were *fewer* than under the *Excise Act* in the *wet* half of it, (p. 85) and that, relatively and over some years, the *Police Act* was violated *more often* than the *Excise Act*, and the *Excise Act* *more often* than the *Prohibition Act*! If disregard of a law warranted its repeal, the *Police Act* would have to go first, then the *Excise Act* and only then the *Prohibition Act*! The Madhya Pradesh Committee observed that since independence there was a general and growing disregard for law and that freedom had degenerated into licence, and that Prohibition was not alone in contributing to the disregard of law in general. (p. 53). The Inspector-General of Police saw no difference between enforcing the *Excise Act* and the *Prohibition Act* except that Excise brought large revenue and Prohibition did not.

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## SHRI VINOBA IN GAYA DISTRICT

Scattering the seeds of a silent revolution, and beholding with his eyes the vision of the *gram rajya* \* springing up in every Indian village, Shri Vinoba is again moving about in Gaya, this time, exerting himself and exhorting the people to do their duty in the 'do or die' spirit. His goal is *gram rajya* and Bhoodan the first step in that direction.

Speaking at a prayer meeting in Siyadh in February 18, Shri Vinoba described what constituted for him the essential conditions of a *gram rajya*. He said that a *gram rajya* could be brought into existence only after fulfilling the following three requirements:

1. Every family in the village must have some land. There should be none without land, even though, in a few cases, it may be only a few *bighas*.

2. In every village there must be industries for fulfilling the primary needs of the people. Cloth, oil, *gur*, leather goods etc. — all such articles of primary need must be manufactured in the villages. In short, we must have village industries.

3. Every village should be provided with suitable arrangements for the education of the children. Practice in reading and writing will not get more than an hour every day. The rest of the time should be spent on learning useful arts and crafts. The teachers must also work with the children. Then, they will be paid for the most part in kind. Everyone must now learn to work. Those who have so far been wont not to work must now learn it and must get their children trained in it. It will do good to them.

The villages, he added, have to be made independent. That is our objective and the redistribution of land through Bhoodan is the first step in that direction. Land is the basis of all wealth. Nothing can be done or produced without land. The redistribution of land, therefore, constitutes the foundation of our work.

Speaking at Tikari, the same day, he declared, "All know it in their hearts that land belongs to all equally. But man suffers from attachment to wealth and feels unable to act on his conviction. We are endeavouring to set him free from this cramping attachment."

Speaking further, he said, "Bapu always said that in life we must proceed on the basis of devotion to certain principles. He placed before us for this purpose eleven vows, such as, non-violence, truth, etc. and urged that if we observed them, success would certainly attend our efforts. They would make progress easy and enable you to overcome all difficulties. To these eleven vows, he added two more: humility and resolution. Without these two, he said, the others cannot be carried out, and we are experiencing the truth of his saying every day. Where there is no humi-

lity the resolution weakens. And in the absence of resolution work suffers. Even what has been achieved gets undone. I have learnt a lot from this experience. I therefore tell the workers again and again that they must be humble and maintain their resolution, then only will they succeed in doing their work efficiently."

In another speech at the same place on the 23rd February, he emphasized the need for having full confidence in the people. He said, "The Bhoodan work in which we are engaged is no mere external affair. Its springs lie deeper than might appear to superficial observers. The workers should sincerely feel in their hearts that the people are waiting to do the right thing. Just as a magnet attracts only the iron filings leaving out the particles of earth, even so would we, if our hearts are full of sincerity and unmixed goodness, draw out only the goodness of the people with whom we come into contact. If, however, we have no such confidence in the goodness of the people, then the response of the people too will be correspondingly poor. The fact is that the response of the society is merely a reflex of our own self. The child never doubts whether the mother would give him food or no. He has full confidence in her and therefore the mother never disappoints him. She may deceive others but not her son, because the son has absolute faith in her. We must therefore go to the people in an attitude of faith and confidence: Faith that the work we are doing is demanded of us by God and that it will bring good to humanity; and confidence that the people will not fail us and will surely respond to our appeal."

There is some talk at times of the paucity of workers. Shri Vinoba is not at all worried about it. What he wants very much is this that the workers, whatever their number, must constantly strive to get rid of their imperfections. He said, "Even with the workers that we have our movement can and will spread speedily. Only they must strive to achieve purity, more and more purity. Christ, after all, had only twelve disciples. But they were pure of heart and therefore they succeeded in their task."

Vinobaji felt much pained at the obstruction offered against the entry of Harijans in the temples at Kashi, even after the Vaidyanath incident. Expressing his grief over this obstinate obscurantism, he said, Dharma is the manifestation of our love and sympathy for fellow beings. All great men of our time — Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekanand, Mahatma Gandhi and many others; all of them have stressed the need of opening the temples to all without any restriction. In fact, caste differences should have been wiped out by now. But they seem to be on the increase. Tulsidhas has defined what is true religion. Compassion, he says in one of his most memorable verses, is the root of all religion. Religion is only where there is compassion and absence of pride. Having pointed out the

\* i.e. Economically and politically self-supporting villages.

essence of religion in these words, he appealed to the people of Gaya to give up untouchability. He said, "I hope that at least the people of Gaya which is hallowed by the penance of the Buddha, that prince of compassion, will not let any such thing happen here."

This is Shri Vinoba's fourth visit to Gaya. He wants to use this land of Buddha's penance as his laboratory. Entering Gaya, he declared, "In Gaya, this time, I am commencing a new chapter of Bhoodan work, the chapter of *upaya-samshodhan* (उपायसंशोधन) or the search for the method for the most perfect organization of our work."

(From Hindi)

L. N.

## HARIJAN

March 20

1954

### MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Thanks to a recent declaration by the Minister of Education, Bombay State, that Government colleges in the State, will begin to teach through Hindi from 1955, the question of the medium of instruction and examination for higher education has been spotlighted as never before. The question, obviously, is not local to Bombay State only; and therefore people outside the State also might be keenly watching the developments in Bombay with interest and concern. This is as it should be, as can be seen from the editorial notice ("Hindi as College Medium", March 5) by a journal like *The Hindu* of Madras, which I came across when writing these lines.

The reaction of the reputed S. I. journal can be taken to be typical and representative in some manner, of South Indian opinion. I reproduce below from it:

"The Bombay Government have taken an important decision which is bound to rouse a good deal of controversy. They will be introducing Hindi as a medium of instruction in the State-run colleges from June 1955. .... Mr Dinkarrao Desai, while not forgetting the general opinion in favour of replacing English if and when suitable by the regional language, thinks that this may be disregarded for reasons which will not bear scrutiny. He says that the difficulty in employing the regional languages as the media is the lack of suitable text-books and the difficulty of transferring professors, competent to teach in these languages, to these colleges. ....

"Hindi is still very far from being an effective substitute for English. It is not more developed than the regional languages in this respect. The vast body of the authoritative opinion including the University

Commission favours the view that it is the regional language that must be the medium of instruction at the University stage. This need not stand in the way of Hindi coming into use as the State language on the appointed date or of orderly attempts being made to effect the change-over smoothly. The Bombay Government's decision to introduce Hindi as a medium of instruction in their colleges may have the effect of prejudging this major objective."

It is clear by now that English has to go from our country, surely not as an important language of study, but as the medium of instruction and examination. This naturally raises the question, what shall be its substitute? The answer must be equally natural and clear that the substitute will be our Indian languages. And all are agreed about it. The Bombay Minister's declaration raises the further question, which among the Indian languages should be that?

We all know that we have many languages. These are now generally called regional languages. And, so that we should have an all-India medium of expression and intercourse, we have decided that we shall evolve and develop it by assimilating "the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the 8th Schedule" of the Constitution of India. We have named that language also Hindi, and it will be in Devanagari script only. This Hindi obviously is different from the one named in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India. A question that is now before us is, whether this all-India medium that is to be should be the medium of higher education, or whether it should be the respective languages of the regions or the States in India?

In a way, the question is not new nor unexpected. It was anticipated that it would crop up at its right time when the question of changing the medium of higher education came up for actual implementation and ceased to be merely academic or hypothetical. The State of Bombay, as in some other nation-building activities, has taken a lead in this matter. This paper has all along stood for the most obvious and world-accepted principle that the medium of instruction in all stages of education should be the language of the region to which the child belongs, — its mother-tongue.

In an earlier issue (*Harijan*, 27-2-'54) I had reproduced Gandhiji's views on the matter. In this issue, readers will excuse me for reproducing relevant portions from 'My Note' that I appended to the report of the Gujarat University Committee of the Government of Bombay (1949), of which I had the honour to be a member. At the present time when the question has become relevant and urgent, I hope it will help the reader to assess its great importance and nation-building significance. I invite readers to send their reactions and views on this great question.

11-3-'54

## HINDI vs. REGIONAL LANGUAGES

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

It is significant to note that the medium of instruction has been the crux of the problem of modern education in India, and ever since its beginning in 1835, it has exercised all along, till now, the ablest and the best of the minds, both in the official and the non-official world. Today we find that the question has come to the fore as never before, excepting perhaps as in 1835; the difference being that in 1835 those whose responsibility it was to decide the issues were foreigners and today it is we ourselves who have to decide as a free people. The decision we take today is going to be equally important and epoch-making, if not more.

Thanks to the forces of national self-assertion and freedom operating during the Gandhian epoch, one thing is certain and agreed on all sides that English is to go. And till the birth of freedom the following things were also taken as generally accepted that—

(a) the mother-tongue should take the place of English as the medium of instruction;

(b) the provinces in India, ill-arranged as they were from the national point of view, should be re-arranged linguistically;

(c) Hindustani should be the National Language for inter-provincial intercourse and central administration.

But with the touch of freedom and responsibility to manage our own house, these things appear to demand a reconsideration, if not of all the three, at least of the second regarding linguistic provinces.

The first point—that the true medium of education is the language of the child—is a principle universally accepted, and there need arise no question on it. But unhappily, there has arisen a school of thought which would set aside this sound principle of education and advocate that the medium for higher education should be the National or Federal Language. As a result a situation almost similar to the one facing the country in 1835 (English vs. Indian languages) has arisen now, calling upon us to decide between Hindustani vs. the Indian languages. And on the questionable analogy of English which has operated as one common official medium for the upper classes all over the Indian sub-continent, this school argues chiefly in the name of Indian unity and adduces minor academic considerations in favour of this plea like migrations of students and teachers from province to province, availability of competent teachers etc.—i.e. facilities which we are used to, as they were easily available to us under the existing order of university organization.

Looking at the question *per se*, we can say that the provision of the above facilities is not the *sine qua non* of a medium. If it were so, it

would lead us into the absurd position of having one world language for all universities! But we know that it is not necessary; nor is it feasible. And these facilities are merely matters of adjustment to new requirements. Students and teachers at higher stages of education easily pick up another language whenever necessary. Again, the common National Language is to be adopted as a compulsory second language for all the provinces. And further, regional languages are bound to be studied more and more in all our universities henceforth.

The other argument advanced in favour of the National Language as the medium is in the name of the unity of India. It is admittedly right that provincialism is bad. But is it alleged that it is born because of the provincial language? Surely not. Is it not there, even though we have English as the common medium today? It may be true if one were to say that the creation of a regional or territorial university smacks of and may provoke and encourage provincialism. As a matter of fact, we saw in the earlier chapters, that many people intend it as a preliminary step to provincial demarcation. Therefore, a regional university and its creation as conceived by some to be the centre for the study of the so-called 'regional culture'—the repository and seat of provincial patriotism, is surely undesirable and must be wholly out of court. This only amounts to saying that a university is not a territorial or a parochial concept, but is a general concept in human culture and learning, whatever the medium through which it may work. In fact, that is one of my main contentions in this note. Surely, a university must have a medium and if it is sound principle that it should be the mother-tongue, then like honesty, it is the best policy and the surest expedient. In the affairs of a nation or a people, it is always sound policy and sure wisdom to entrust its future to truth rather than to its realistic looking counterfeits.

And it is not mere idealism and pure theory here; there are very real and positive grounds why we must introduce the mother-tongue as the medium and not Hindustani. They pertain to the reconstruction and reorientation of the role of the university in our national life, which is what we are considering now.

Firstly it must be realized that the problem of deciding the medium for higher education is not merely to find out a substitute for English, which would superimpose itself on the various regional languages, as English has been doing till now. That the new superimposition is to be an all-India common language does not alter its character nor make much difference in the fundamentally unsound claim of the all-India common language to usurp the place of Gujarati whose claim is admitted on all sides.

Again, we should realize that the role of our universities henceforth has to change. Till now we had to play second fiddle to the British universities. Now they have to fulfil the true role that a university has to play in the life and culture of a free people. It is no more merely supplying English-knowing Government servants and a few specialists. "It will have to concern itself with the training of three sections within society—the elite, the specialists, and the residual mass." And these three cannot be exclusive of one another, but they together should weld themselves into one homogeneous entity—the Indian Nation. And if this three-fold training is to be democratic, it cannot be done without the use, in the case of all sections, of the language of the common man. Then only can the university grow to be and function as the people's; and as the custodian and transmitter of their culture.

There is another consideration to be kept in mind also. If we look at the history of progress of democracy and culture among a people we find that the language of the classes i.e. the elite, lording over the regional vernaculars, has given place to the latter, and these have, in course of time, grown to equal eminence. In Europe, in the centuries after the Renaissance and the Reformation, Latin gave place to the European languages and they are today mediums in their respective universities. It was the need of the common man to know and play his part along with the classes that caused this revolutionary phenomenon. Look at the Pali and the Prakrit and the 'Bhakha' (भक्ता) movements against Sanskrit. The twelve or fifteen major Indian languages that have grown during the last six or seven centuries and which are spoken not by a few thousands, but crores of people, are born of a similar historical process. They have withstood the worst days of the domination of Persian and English. They have in fact shown their vitality by assimilation from both and growing richer in spite of their domination.

But there are some who, in their enthusiasm for the medium of the National Language, go so far as to say that they would not mind if, due to that, the provincial languages were eventually wiped out! But happily for us true nationalism does not require us to do so. As we saw above, the development of these languages could not be destroyed and it is not merely possible but is really good and necessary that they, along with Hindustani, should weave themselves into one national pattern. There should not be created by our wrong decision a fratricidal war between our languages. However, if the National Language is misused and made to substitute English, what will surely happen is that the regional languages will continue to remain undeveloped, and not reach the uni-

versity status, which is their legitimate claim and birthright. Because, surely if we may not use them as the media of all our learning, teaching and research, they remain undeveloped to that extent. As I have tried to show, such an eventuality would be a calamity, and would surely retard the growth of democracy and education.

And further, it will set in a tension between Hindustani and these languages which will really be very dangerous. In fact, the tension will work for the encouragement of narrow provincialism which the advocates of the National Language as medium fear so much.

The position of the Hindustani-medium-school would have been at least intelligible if there was one commonly accepted National Language ready to start with. As a matter of fact, the position is that it has to evolve along with our nationhood. This evolution is going to be the symbol,—the very expression of our national unity. But here also parochial ideas of Hindi and Sanskritist and Hindu revivalism are trying to assert their narrow values and disrupt the march of true national growth. It appears that this evil is emerging, as if from the very depth of our national subconscious.

The provincial languages are free from such revivalist and communal considerations. That they are not sufficiently developed is of course true. But Hindi also sails in the same boat. One thing however about these languages is that they have no rival claims to assert against anyone and are ready to develop themselves to university status in a joint and common effort, each in its own way. If at all, the National Language should supplement this common effort, but never contest it or stand as a rival to provincial languages.

It is necessary to remember here that the corner-stone of the National Language Movement has been the assurance to the people of the whole of our country that Hindustani was "not designed to replace the provincial languages, but is intended to supplement them and to be used for inter-provincial contact." (Gandhiji). If now we go out of our way to replace them in the very place of our honour and esteem that is theirs, viz. the obvious right of being the medium of all instruction, the whole edifice of the National Language Movement will come down, which will mean the undoing of the work of more than a generation; and it will only lead to the continuation of English. And if the Hindi Nagari School does it it will be resented still more because it will be taken as the linguistic imperialism of Hindi, which is only one of the provincial languages in the North.

But the change of the medium has to begin. And the Tarachand Committee has given a clear lead in this matter and directed the universities

to implement their advice as soon as possible. It is as follows :

" (1) English as the medium of instruction at the University stage should be replaced during the next five years by *Indian languages*.

(2) Universities should within this period adopt the language of the State or province or region as the medium of instruction and examination. After the period of five years (from 1948) English will cease to be the medium of instruction and examination."

And the Committee has also said that "there should be a compulsory test in the Federal Language during the first Degree Course of the University...." This is a new subject. Therefore the right line will be immediately to devise a preliminary course in Hindustani and begin it at once in all the years of the colleges for all the students. And as we proceed on, this course will be amplified year by year, ultimately leading to a Degree stage.

There is one more point in this connection of the change of medium, which it is in the hands of our Governments to do. In a previous chapter I have said how English education was encouraged by the language being adopted for State, educational and business purposes. The new medium and the National Language should also have the same recognition now. Government should declare that provincial affairs will be conducted in the language of the province or the region and the central affairs in the National Language. For people residing in a region and not knowing its language, it is of course clear that they can use the National Language. I hope this will be done by our new Constitution \* which is being framed at present.

7-1-48

[From the Gujarat University Committee Report (1949) ]

\* This is amply done by it as we know, in its Arts. 343-7 etc.

By Mahatma Gandhi

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## SWAMI SITARAM'S STATEMENT

[I got a copy of the following English translation of the statement by yesterday's post which is published below:

10-3-54

M. P.]

From the time I took the Purity Pledge in my student days in 1903, from the time I gave up my profession in response to the call of Mahatmaji in 1920, from the time I undertook the service of the Andhra country as Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee in 1921, and from the time of the establishment of the Vinayashram in 1933, the practice and preaching of Prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs became a continuous and compelling duty.

From the time rumours were set afloat that there would be a deficit in the annual administration of the Andhra State about to be formed, and the same might be wiped out by the drink and drug revenue, it became a cause of anxiety to me. The recommendation of Justice Wanchoo in this regard further alarmed me. In the letters written to the leaders of the people and the Government, since January 1953 and in the propaganda I carried on ever since, I proclaimed categorically that Prohibition was an imperative duty. In the statements I issued on October 8, last year (at the time of the conclusion of my *tapas* for a Sarvodaya Andhra State), on 30th January last, and on the 24th ultimo, I clearly mentioned my demands and my duties. In the wire I sent to the Kalyani Congress, I gave expression to my feelings in this matter.

I have mentioned several times that the Andhra Sircar has no power under the present Constitution Act to relax or to cancel the Prohibition Law prevailing in the country. I think that even the Central Government has no power to do so, so long as the Constitution is not modified.

This question involves a fundamental principle which transcends the ordinary, mundane level and belongs to the higher moral, religious and spiritual plane. Intoxicants have been condemned as the worst of the five heinous sins by all the religions, all the prophets and the Maharshis of the world. They have been roundly denounced for years together by the Congress and by Mahatmaji. To tempt people to take to such condemned things, to suck out their blood in the shape of taxes, and to utilize the same in extravagant expenditure of the State is a serious offence in my opinion.

In spite of all these happenings the Congress or the A.I.C.C. has not yet declared its present attitude. The Central Government has not divulged its views and policies. The events in Andhra State tend in the opposite direction.

The attitudes and policies taken towards this such a clear moral issue (*dharma*) are causing serious dissatisfaction in my mind and prompt me to discharge my duty. I hereby express my pleasure and my gratitude for the

occasion and the opportunity afforded for giving indubitable testimony to the longing for Prohibition deeply implanted in my heart for over half a century. The saying of Jesus Christ that "No man can give greater proof of his love than that he lay down his life for it" is well known to all.

I begin this difficult *tapas* for what can be termed as Vishwayagna from the afternoon of this Phalguna Shuddha Padyami, Friday, being my 70th birthday and I shall continue the same till my desire is fulfilled and my heart feels satisfied over such fulfilment.

Two of my co-workers are ready even now to undertake this *tapas* along with me. But I have prevented them for the present from doing so. The use of intoxicants is definitely opposed to and is destructive of the Welfare State envisaged by the Indian Constitution or the Sarvodaya State clearly demanded by the people in general.

The merciful God may kindly grant that no danger happens to valuable lives, that no bad repute may attach to the Andhra and the Central State and that the Andhra people may not be subjected to deep distress and dishonour.

I desire the Andhra State to strengthen the provisions in the Prohibition Act and entrust its administration to persons with faith and rectitude, so as to make Prohibition a complete success in Andhra State.

I pray the Andhra and Central Governments to find suitable work to those persons whose hereditary occupations are lost owing to the Prohibition Act. To allot sufficient lands is the best way.

My friends may not attempt to keep up this body of mine by the use of medicines etc. even during my unconscious stages.

May God grant that the Vinayashram may render service to living beings like the moon in the spring in times of peace and plenty and like the sun in summer in times of stress and war.

During this period of *tapas* to lighten the bodily trouble, I may use enema, tub-baths, mud-packs, massage with coconut oil, in addition to the ordinary baths. Towards food and drink, I may take lime-juice in water with two *Chittikes-para* flowers, three *Tulasi dalams* and common salt or soda bicarb.

I offer up myself in the Vishwayagna.

I sacrifice myself every day and every minute with increasing humility for the restoration of Dharma.

God's great Leela may kindly point the way for my salvation.

Vinayashram, 6-3-'54

SITARAM

## SWAMI SITARAM'S FAST

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

I was out of station for a week from 8th to 14th this month. On coming back on the 14th I saw Shri Swami Sitaram's letter to me of 10-3-'54 wherein he writes:

"Your article dated 25-2-'54 has been read to me, published in *Harijan* dated 6th March. I appreciate very much. I thank you heartily for the full support you are giving to the cause which we both have at heart, for which I am staking my very life on the threshold of my 70th year."

I learn from papers that Swamiji began his fast on March 5, as an appeal to the conscience of our people in general and Andhra and its Congress Government and all that are concerned with its running well in particular, to see that they do not go back on the promise of Prohibition which they gave to us and began to fulfil. And today I have a wire from Shri Venkatachala-pathi that Swamiji's condition is alarming.

Swamiji issued a statement on the occasion of his fast, which appears elsewhere in this issue. Fast is a delicate weapon. Our leaders are rightly telling us that its use should be avoided in socio-political affairs. However, its use has a definite place as a weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha as Gandhiji taught us. And if a breach of a public promise can be a valid ground for undertaking it by one who, by his purity of life and service, has earned competence for it, then surely Swami Sitaram's resolve to fast is right. The Working Committee of the Congress, to whom the Andhra Government has approached for direction and advice, should immediately move and satisfy Swami Sitaram so that he can spare himself the self-immolation that he has ordained for himself. I hope all concerned will not sit inactive over any formality of ceremony or procedure. May God guide us all aright in our steps towards His way of life and endeavour.

16-3-'54

## WHY PROHIBITION

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