

HARIJAN

16 Pages

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor : K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

NOTES

Governorships

It is gratifying to note that the Constituent Assembly has revised its former decision and decided to keep Governorships outside the sphere of elections. The nomination of the Governor should also, as a general rule, be of a person not belonging to that province. I do not see how such nomination is inconsistent with democratic principles. Democracy does not mean that there should be direct election at every stage and for every office. If the person empowered to make appointments is responsible to the people, that is, can be removed from office by the will of the people duly expressed, an appointment made by him is a kind of indirect election. Every association has to invest its office-bearers with important powers. The delegation of the power of appointing constitutional Governors to the President and his Prime Minister is perhaps a less important one than many executive powers with which they are invested.

Wardha, 2-6-'49

"On Rupee One Per Month"

Equally gratifying is the appointment of Dr. Jivraj Mehta as Adviser to the Ministry of Health on the nominal salary of Re. 1 per month. It is a good innovation, and I hope will be repeated in suitable cases in other spheres of service also. When an appointee either because he is already rich or drawing sufficient salary from some other post, does not really need a salary, and being fully qualified, is willing to offer his services free to his country, there is no reason why they should not be availed of free of charge. If it is a service post, honorary appointment might conceivably present some difficulty and hence the fiction of a nominal salary. Some people carry a feeling that there is honour in becoming an honorary officer and if that is not possible, one should receive the salary which is proper to the dignity of the post. It is creditable to Dr. Jivraj Mehta that he carries no such vain feeling and has allowed himself to be described a paid servant of the State, though virtually he receives nothing. I hope

some day we might have some Governors and other dignitaries also who draw only a nominal salary.

Wardha, 2-6-'49

"The Problem of Criminal Tribes"

Shri V. Raghaviah, Joint Secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, Delhi, has always taken deep interest in the life and conditions of the Penalized Castes of India otherwise called 'Criminal Tribes'. Before he took up his present duties he was for a long time serving these people in Andhra. In a pamphlet of 32 pages titled as above, he has given a detailed report of the condition of these unfortunate people in various parts of India. The condition of even *bhangis* is much better than that of these people, for a *bhangi* is not placed under police surveillance and driven from place to place simply because he is born of *bhangi* parents; but a child of these people is a victim of police persecution simply because of its birth in that particular caste.

This pamphlet must be studied by every Home Minister and M.L.A. It might be had from the office of the Sangh at Harijan Colony, Kingsway, Delhi.

30-5-'49

K. G. M.

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With the reopening of our school on July 1, '49, we intend gradually converting it into a full-fledged institution of Basic Education for girls. This year Basic Education will be introduced only in the first two grades.

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By Nirmal Kumar Bose

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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

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SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

12th June is the foundation date of the Servants of India Society. Fortyfour years ago, Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the youngest all-India leader of the day, and I believe, three colleagues, took a pledge at Poona to dedicate their lives to the service of the country. This was the foundation of the Servants of India Society, the first of its kind in our country. In course of time it attracted several talented and earnest young men, so that within a decade or two, it had branches in most of the provinces of India, carrying on national activities of various types. It is not only one institution itself, but parent of several institutions through each of its members.

As is well known, Gandhiji claimed Gokhale as his political *guru* and had applied to be a member of that society. Though he could not be formally enrolled, he always regarded himself as its unregistered member and took as deep an interest in it as a regular member would, and freely took its aid, as also gave it his in many a national activity and the Society's good and bad fortunes.

I did not have the privilege of having come into personal contact with Gokhale, but it was one of his senior disciples and namesake, Shri Gopal Krishna Deodhar, who first injected in my mind the idea of a life of national service. As I reckon, I find that it is more than 40 years since, when a strange personal factor first brought me in touch with the Society. Though it was yet only three years old, it had gained strength enough to establish a branch in Bombay. That branch came to be located in the same part of the house in which I had passed my childhood. The boyish attachment to the family house and the desire to take every opportunity to visit it made me cultivate relations with Shri Gopal Krishna Deodhar and his colleagues. Thus I came to know Shri N. M. Joshi, Shri Thakkarbapa and others. One afternoon, as I was seated alone with Shri Deodhar on its terrace, he made me seriously consider the condition of the country and the need of young men for her service. I was so moved that if family circumstances had been favourable, I would have promised to seek admission into the Society as soon as I had graduated. But as it was, the idea planted by him took ten years to mature. By that time Shri Amritlal Thakkar (Thakkarbapa, as he is now) had become almost a member of my family. When he found me ready, one day he quietly pushed me on into Gandhiji's service.

I offer my homage to this pioneer institution of national workers and its illustrious members.

Wardha, 28-5-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

RETURN OF ECONOMIC CONFIDENCE

All who do not want to be forced into the role of speculators must demand from their government that the purchasing power of money be kept permanently stable.

If the general price level rises or falls, as in the past, then money's purchasing power fluctuates. But if the general price level, as expressed by a commodity index, becomes stabilized, then money has a stable purchasing power.

The most urgent task before any government is, therefore, to see to it that stable purchasing power of money be established. Such a stable currency system would eliminate most of the restlessness, worries and difficulties which a fluctuating currency imposes on every nation. It would do away, once and for all, with the traditional chaotic currency policy leading to an ever changing value of money as measured in the products we buy.

(1) Stable currency would mean for the *workers and employees* that wages and salaries would have a permanently stable purchasing value. They will not have to go on strike for a raise in wages or salaries in order to be able to buy just as much food, clothing and shelter as before.

(2) Stable currency would mean for the *pensioners or retired people* that their small incomes would on the average always buy the same amount of products. They would not be rendered helpless by observing how, in spite of a nominally equal income, they can buy less and less for it.

(3) For the *farmers* a stabilized currency would mean that in selling their products as well as buying the articles and equipment needed by them, they can reliably base their budget on stable prices.

(4) For the *contractors, manufacturers and merchants* a stable currency means that they need no longer worry about the fluctuations of the price level which caused their estimates of production and inventories to be all wrong.

(5) For the *Government* a stable currency means that the tax sources of the country will flow richly and easily to meet governmental expenditures.

Consequently, the introduction of a stable currency represents an essential condition for the return of economic confidence. Without a stable currency, agriculture, industry and trade will never be able to develop freely and fully.

* * *

He who has the power to cause, by means of deflation, a falling market and, by means of inflation, a rising market, has also the power, just like a general on the parade grounds, to command the entire industrial activity with a *Halt* or a *Forward*! I am ready to take it upon myself, with the limited powers of the central bank of issue, to drive the merchants and employers to despair, to throw the workers into the streets to bring all freight lines to a stop, to let the mines fill with water, and within a week, nay, 48 hours later to start the maddest boom the world has ever seen.

(1919)

SILVIO GESELL

(From *Freedom and Plenty*, Jan.-Feb. '49)

THE SO-CALLED CRIMINAL TRIBES

I

My work amongst the Harijans and close association with Thakkarbapa got me into contact with a section of our people called the 'Criminal Tribes'. They belong to the category of Harijans, but their sufferings and their problems are quite different. They are not free men and have been kept under the control of the Government for several years past. I was, therefore, not able to come into as close a contact with them, as I did with the rest of the Harijans, but I was interested in them, and watched their plight and their difficulties from a distance. I visited their colonies which were run by Government in many places. But naturally I did so in the company of Government officials, and so could only see the side of the picture presented by them. But I was conscious all along of the fact that there was another side of the picture which required presentation before the public.

There is an old *basti* called the Sansi *Basti* which has been in existence in Delhi for some time, where some of these people live. An old and devoted worker Prabhu Dayal who has dedicated his life to the service of these unfortunate persons was deputed by the Harijan Sevak Sangh a few years ago to serve in this colony. He has served the inmates, watching their interests and solving their difficulties as best he could. He has succeeded in making many men and women literate, some of whom have become fairly educated. During the last year Sir Arthur Dean, the president of the Improvement Trust, also interested himself in this Colony, and arranged educational facilities for the children. Recently I renewed my acquaintance with this *basti* and its affairs.

In Delhi there is another lot of Sansi refugees from the West Punjab who are at present living in batches of 5, 7 or more families in different parts of the city. In company with Shri Sevakram I went to see them, as reports of their terrible sufferings were brought to me. I can never forget the miserable conditions and surroundings in which these poor out-castes of humanity were living. The picture of an old woman crushed with misfortune with grey hair and a wrinkled face is indelibly printed on my memory. She said in pitiable despair, "No one helps us, even our God has forgotten us." There was no anger, no bitterness in her words, only helpless despair in her eyes.

These people along with those large numbers of displaced persons who poured into Delhi, found their way here. They got themselves fixed somehow in wretched hovels made of rags or old tins. But as soon as they were settled, the police pounced upon them and started harassing them as they belonged to the Crimi-

nal Tribes. Not that they had done anything criminal, but only because they were born amongst them. They were ousted from wherever they pitched their improvised tents and were hunted out from one place to another. They could stay only on payment of bribes to the police who were extracting money and even then harassing them. No help of any kind was given to them either by the Government or by the people. They lived in most neglected and filthy places which were unfit for human habitation. There were naturally no arrangements for water, sanitation or lighting. Their women and children had to go long distances to fetch a pale of water and even in these conditions they were not left to stay in peace. They were told to leave Delhi which they did not want to do, as they had already fitted themselves in the economic life of the city.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that most of them were occupied in gainful occupations. Some of them were even earning as much as Rs. 100 and over. Many of them were educated. Even some of the women could read and write. They looked perfect specimens of healthy humanity, and yet were made to undergo terrible sufferings. They had lived in Government Criminal Tribes Settlements in the Punjab and the education and training they had received was the result of their residence in those Settlements, where arrangements for their training and education existed.

Latter on Thakkarbapa also visited their haunts and took with him one highly placed officer of the Ministry of Rehabilitation to see their condition. Thakkarbapa, Shri Sevakram and myself then interviewed the Chief Commissioner, explained the whole situation to him and requested him to give a plot of land adjoining the Sansi *Basti* for the permanent residence of these people. After great efforts and long negotiations he has agreed to do it, and it is now proposed that all these sixty families will be shifted on to this plot of land and gradually houses will be built for them for their permanent residence. The whole of the *basti* will be entrusted to the Harijan Sevak Sangh for social welfare work in co-operation with the Government. The work will soon be started, and I hope that this will result in the mitigation of the sufferings of these people. But, of course, the remedy lies in a more radical change.

RAMESHWARI NEHRU

BAPU — MY MOTHER

By

Manubehn Gandhi

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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Post Box : 105, AHMEDABAD

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June 12

1949

DISAPPEARANCE OF COMMUNAL ELECTIONS

The disappearance of reserved seats for minority communities in legislative elections is one of the several major national achievements since India's Independence. The report which the Minority Advisory Committee had placed before the Constituent Assembly in the early days of its career had not been able to discard that principle altogether. That it has been possible to do so now shows what progress the country has made during less than two years of her independence. Reservations have been maintained for ten years for two classes only, namely, Harijans (Scheduled classes) and for a similar class among the Sikhs.

The fact that this resolution was almost unanimously adopted and several of the leaders of minority communities had expressed their whole-hearted satisfaction to the decision speaks volumes in favour of the present Government. The credit of bringing about this result goes to the constructive statesmanship of Sardar Patel, who received unstinted tributes from every section of the Assembly. To the merger of States, Sardar Vallabhbhai has added merger of communities. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said the resolution means an 'historic turn of our destiny'. He also reminded the various communities to realize their responsibility hereafter :

"Now when this House is going to take a major decision which will affect our future greatly, let us be clear in our minds that in order to proceed further, each one of us, whether belonging to a minority or majority, should try to function in a way so as to gain the goodwill of the other group or individual.

"Mahatma Gandhi stressed the good in every individual or group and drew good out of him and made him function to the best of his ability. That is the only way of going ahead. Mr. Anthony had reminded the House that the motion before it was an act of faith for all, particularly for the majority community because it would have to behave towards others in a generous, fair and just way. Let us live up to this faith."

Sardar Patel reminded the majority community about its duties towards the minorities and Harijans in particular. About the latter he said :

"Have they any place which they can call their home, though Mr. Nagappa (Scheduled Caste member from Madras) said that India is his? I am proud of it. But what about the poor people who are oppressed

continually? They are not safe yet under our protection. We have given a pledge to them under the Poona Pact. Have we fulfilled that? We must confess we are guilty. Thousands of them in other parts of the country (obviously the reference is to Pakistan) want to come back, but they are not allowed to return. Unfortunately, we are not able to help them. That is the position of the Scheduled Castes."

Further, thanking the leaders of the minority communities for their co-operation in achieving this great task, he spoke these memorable words :

"Although you have acknowledged with gratefulness the concessions shown to you, I am grateful to you because in this country we want an atmosphere of peace and harmony, not of suspicion and distrust.

"India today is suffering from want of blood. It is completely anaemic. We must put blood into her veins first. We have to build up the country and lay the foundation for the future.

"I feel proud that today we are able to bring about unanimity in removing the past blots in our constitution.

"And now, we are today, with the grace of God and with the blessings of the Almighty, laying the foundation of a true, secular, democratic State where everybody has an equal chance and equal opportunity. May God give us wisdom and courage to do the right thing to all manner of people as our Constitution provides."

Wardha, 30-5-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

"FOOD SHORTAGE AND AGRICULTURE" *

[Under this title, the Navajivan Publishing House has just published a collection of articles by Gandhiji and others in the Harijan mostly during 1942 to 1947, edited by Dr. Bharatan Kumarappa. The following is taken from his editorial note.—Ed.]

"One thought which runs through all Gandhiji's writings is that we must be self-reliant, and solve our problems ourselves without looking for aid from outside. In regard to food shortage, he is convinced that if all of us, rich and poor, agriculturist and trader, Government and the people, did our part, there will be enough food in the country and no need to beg for it from abroad. An agricultural country like India should, he holds, be able to feed itself, and not only itself but also help to feed others.

This passionate belief in self-dependence is what underlies also his intense dislike of Government control over food. He cannot tolerate the idea of the people being made to depend on the Government for this most primary need of life. He can understand the Government stepping in in times of emergency, like war, to tide over the effects of economic dislocation. But to continue control and rationing even when the war is long over, he regards as positively wrong. The people should stand on their own legs and

not be spoon-fed by the Government. Otherwise, he believes, democracy will be a mockery and *swaraj* a delusion. True democracy requires that the people should manage their own affairs. The less there is of Government, therefore, the better. Instead of this, food control increases the dominance of the Government over the life of the people. Hence his uncompromising opposition to control.

Besides, food control has led to corruption and black-marketing. Never before has the business morality of our people been so low as it is under control, when traders hoard up stock and thus increase scarcity, sell in the black-market and pile up huge fortunes for themselves. The temptation for Government officers, both high and low, to receive bribes has increased with the advent of control, and many are falling a prey to it. Naturally, both these interests would have the controls remain, and so work hard against their withdrawal. But if Gandhiji's advice is to be followed, it would seem that the Government would have to be firm and remove the controls resolutely. This may lead to high prices temporarily, but Gandhiji held that they would settle down soon to a more normal level. He believed in the end that there really was no food shortage beyond what was created by hoarders under the food control policy of the Government.

Under Agriculture have been included here from the *Harijan* whatever hints could be found generally regarding methods of improving agriculture even if they were not made from the point of view of meeting food scarcity. So far as agriculture went, Gandhiji seemed to concern himself only with the question of increasing soil fertility by the use of organic manures and with improving our cattle, apparently because other problems relating to agriculture were too big to be tackled by the individual immediately without State aid. Consequently the suggestions contained here relate primarily to these two topics. They are however of great importance, especially as the tendency in our country today seems to be towards the use of chemical fertilizers and tractors, and away from a realization of the vital importance of tackling problems relating to cattle both for supplying us with milk as well as with manure and motive power for agriculture. As Gandhiji himself did not write much in regard to agriculture, it seemed well to include more matter on this topic by others.

If our devotion to Gandhiji is sincere, both the Government and the people should try to put his teachings into effect. Besides, the problems of food shortage and agriculture are confronting us everyday and on all sides, and require to be tackled immediately. It is to help in these directions that this book has been compiled.

BOARD OF REFEREES

The *Bombay Chronicle* of 26th May, '49 has examined carefully my article, *Democracy and good Government*. It has come to the conclusion that the suggestion of a Board of Referees is an impracticable scheme.

Another correspondent in a private letter has also questioned the wisdom of my scheme.

The editor of the *Mauli* (a Marathi weekly from Miraj) on the other hand commends it and suggests that the principle should be extended to village panchayats also, and has desired me to pursue the point further.

This means that further explanation is necessary. Let me try.

Let me make it clear at the outset that I do not run down the democratic basis of the State. The word "substitute" used by me in the sentence, "What is needed is to find such substitute for the type of democracy known as government of majority as could be of use to all minorities which consider themselves to be placed under similar handicaps" has been unhappy. It is, as the *Chronicle* has rightly pointed out, normally no more than the suggestion of an additional "check or a system of checks in the Legislature and the Executive"; in an abnormal situation, it can also be a substitute for the normal type of responsible government. Instead of "substitute for", I ought to have said "checks upon". I am glad to note that the necessity for such checks is recognized.

The *Chronicle* concedes further: "Few regard it (democracy) as a panacea for all social ills. Few also need to be reminded that 'mere majority opinion is not necessarily correct'." With these concessions, I would say, put aside my suggestion if it is considered an "impossible" one. Find out some other way.

One more thing I would like to make clear. Though my suggestions might appear as academic, they are suggested from a consideration of realities facing the country. These must be faced and solved. In my recent article, *Group Politics*, I have shown how power politics has been caricaturing democracy in several of our provinces. Leaders of rival groups are asked to work together. They are unable to do it. Though with less or no justification, the situation created by their mutual rivalries is not different from that created by the enforced coalition of the Congress-League parties by Lord Wavell. That tangle was solved by the partition of the country. Such solution is not possible and would be still worse if applied to provinces. As the editor of the *Mauli* says, the existence of rival groups in the provinces is but the magnification of the same evil which exists in almost every village of India. Most villages are torn by parties not based on ideologies but personal or caste leadership.

When this happens in large areas like provinces, the solution provided is that of Sec.

93 of the Government of India Act, i.e. the autocratic rule of the Governor or Administrator appointed by the Central Government. So there is a direct flight from full democracy to absolute autocracy. There is no middle course. This was the course, historians say, the *gana rajyas* of ancient India became subject to when they began to fail. It led to permanent monarchical rule. Republican governments, even on a district scale, never seem to have reappeared in India thereafter.

This is also what happens at present when a District Board of a Municipal Committee or a Village Panchayat fails to function. The top government gives good-bye to all semblance of democracy. An officer of the government is appointed to take over the whole administration.

Heaven forbid, but suppose that what has happened in some of the provinces happens also in the Central Government some day. Suppose the House became a divided body under three or four influential leaders, unable to work together and having sufficient number of followers each to disenable any one leader from forming a stable government. This has happened in France and there need be no surprise if some day it happens in India also. It is God's kindness that we have at present two wise leaders in the Central Assembly to save the country from such a catastrophe.

What is the safeguard against this mishap? Nothing except fresh elections, I believe. But as in France, fresh elections may not improve the situation much and you cannot have too frequent elections. Elections are to a certain extent morally as bad as war.

As a remedy against this, I have suggested the Board of Referees to carry on the Government in a democratic manner until situation improves. It is a purely democratic body, being elected by the people's own representatives, but on a different principle. Its election would be the first act of the houses after they are first summoned, and it will not be confined to the members returned or persons belonging to their parties. It is akin to the provision in a document for the appointment of arbitrators before any dispute has arisen.

The *Chronicle* thinks that this cannot be done by law or convention. I do not see why. Consider the election of our Constituent Assembly itself. It was elected by the Provincial Legislatures. By convention, it so arranged that several eminent persons who could not have been elected under ordinary party system were returned without being bound to vote with the parties who had nominated them.

We must bear in mind one more feature of the temperament of several good and capable men in our country. They are not unwilling to take part in the affairs of the country. But standing up and campaigning for elections does not suit them. They would render service but

would not enter into the election *akhada* (ring) for the purpose. It is these who are capable of taking a detached view of matters. Democracy must not be deprived of them. It is not impossible to do so either through convention or legal provision.

It can be done in several ways. When it is known that members have to nominate also persons outside their parties, they would necessarily cast their eyes on good men outside their circles and propose their names. Thus if 30 referees are to be elected, there might be about 70 or 80 nominations. These may be classified into groups according to their political affiliations, if any. If the rule is that no member may vote for more than 15 nominees from his own party, and there will have to be members necessarily from other groups, they will not refrain from exercising their vote in favour of people of the other party if for nothing better than to see that right type of people come from the other parties.

The *Chronicle* feels that this Board would share a sort of dual government with the Ministry. Not so. When the ministerial government is functioning, it will not interfere with the administration any more than the legislature itself does. It is only in legislative matters that it functions as a kind of superior house. It is like a Standing Committee of the two houses. Or its function may be compared to that of the Select Committee on a Bill. The difference is that the Select Committee's report is not final and is, therefore, again discussed and liable to be altered by the legislature, and what results becomes binding on the Government; while the decision of the Referees will follow the full discussion by the two lower houses, and give the bill its final shape, before it becomes law.

The *Chronicle* also doubts if the referees will have no party bias, even though they may not technically belong to any party. This is quite possible; not only so, it would be expected that in making their reports they would bear in mind the fundamental principles to which the party in power is committed. But the fact that they are expected by their opponents and pledged to be impartial and fair in spite of party bias, and will not be subject to party discipline, may be taken as a sufficient precaution. We have already a precedent of this method in the election of the Speaker. The fact that he is returned by a party and is often a prominent member of that party has not proved to be a handicap in the proper performance of his duties.

In a way the idea suggested by me is a revised edition of the Panchayat principle traditionally familiar to India.

Finally even if this is a novel experiment, it will be on democratic lines, and for making democracies more successful and strong. It is a second line of action, in the absence of which absolute rule becomes the only alternative.

Wardha, 30-5-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

MANBHUM

I have been criticized in some of the Bihar papers for expressing my high esteem for Shri Atulchandra Ghosh. I am told that my high opinion about him was correct some years ago ; but now he has fallen low and does not merit it. I came into almost daily contact with him for some months in 1947-48. My old esteem for him increased rather than otherwise during the period. It is difficult to believe that he has fallen suddenly in the course of less than twelve months.

I know there is in Bengal a group, which agitates for the transfer of Manbhum to Bengal. I have received from that group as also from Biharis considerable literature dealing with the distribution of the two languages in this district among its inhabitants, and have been asked by each to study it.

Let me make my views clear.

I view the question in the same way as I do the case of Dang and Thana as between Maharashtra and Gujarat, or of Belgaum as between Maharashtra and Karnatak. They are mixed areas, and should be recognized as such by whatever province they are administered.

I do not attach much importance to past investigations of scholars. It is the present that matters, however brought about. The people who will understand a writing or a speech made in Bengali more easily than one in Hindi are Bengalis and vice versa, for the purpose of their literary languages. They are all Biharis for administrative purposes.

The Adivasis have their own dialects. Both Bengali and Hindi have been either imposed on them or they have picked up the one or the other according as they came into close contact with the speakers of the one or the other language. The present reality must be accepted as such and should not be disturbed. They should be allowed to have the language they have assimilated better. If they wish to change it, let them do so by their own choice.

Hindi or Hindustani will be there for everyone : even for the Bengalis of Bengal proper. So provision to teach it will always be there. But it is advisable that everyone in Manbhum should learn Bengali also, being the language of his neighbour, either as the principal language or as next to the principal.

The question of amalgamation with Bengal must not be raised. I have been clearly given to understand by Shri Atulbabu that he and his friends do not agitate for getting Manbhum transferred to Bengal. If he resiles from that position, I would say that he has changed from a nationalist into a provincialist. His love for Bihar must be as strong as that of every Bihari of, say, Patna or Champaran. He says it is so, and his word must be accepted. Subject to this all reasonable apprehensions of the Bengalis must be removed.

I understand that the Working Committee has appointed a Committee of four to investigate the matter. Whatever decision it comes to must be accepted as final by both sides and faithfully acted upon. The names of Dr. P. C. Ghosh, Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani, Shri Jagjivanram and Shri Prajapati Mishra, must inspire confidence in everyone that what they will decide will be, to the best of their lights, in accordance with the true interest of the people of the district and the nation.

Wardha, 1-6-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

"LIGHT HOUSE"

The reader will remember the historic march of Gandhiji from Sabarmati to Dandi (literally, light-house or lamp-post) in 1930 for breaking the Salt Laws. Karadi is the village nearest to Dandi and has been for more than quarter of a century now a centre of national education and *khadi*. The population of the village is about 1200. It is a village of sea-men and agriculturists. The national school (Bharat Vidyalaya) under the able management of its two successive principals, Shri Manibhai Patel and Shri Labhshankar Vyas, carries on constructive activity among children. It has now entered upon making experiments in the field of Basic Education from the point of view of making it a self-supporting school. For instance, in October last, the teachers and pupils of Standards VI and VII made a project of going on a journey to Vedchhi about 60 miles on foot. They decided that they should earn the money needed for the travel. This is the report of the experiment :

"The experiment was so very successful that I have begun to feel that it will be possible for us to realize in actual life Bapu's dream of self-supporting *Nai Talm*. 32 pupils spun for 1½ hrs. daily for 23 days. The remaining hour and a quarter was given to weaving. (As we have not yet acquired proficiency in weaving, we had to get part of the yarn woven by artisans.) The *khadi* thus produced, on sale, fetched us Rs. 127. The cost of cotton and weaving charges was Rs. 56. Our travelling expenses including railway fare for our return journey were Rs. 68-12-0. So the result has been very encouraging.

"Thereafter during 33 days of work from November to January last (there was vacation for about a month), 104 boys studying in Standards III, IV and V produced collectively 185.5 sq. yards of *khadi* (width 45"). After deducting the cost of cotton, weaving charges and miscellaneous expenses, we have realized Rs. 250 in cash. During the current year 210 boys of the lower standards, who are still plying the *takli* will begin to ply the *charkha*. Necessarily the out-turn of yarn will be greater with their help. I, therefore, believe that we shall surely be able to reach the ideal of self-support. We shall know the result more definitely at the end of the year. The monthly paysheet of the teaching staff of the school is Rs. 800. If we succeed well, we may not have to go a-begging before the government or other donors for funds....

"Shri Vinoba was pleased with our efforts and remarked: 'The experiment is good.' He explained to us that co-ordination of knowledge with work was

the central principle of *Nai Talim*, and if we could prove that the school can earn the salaries of the teachers fully or at least 50 to 70 per cent thereof, it would be qualified to be regarded a *Nai Talim* school. I am trying to make the school fit for this test."

The letter also related another experiment :

"The Gujrat Nai Talim Sangh was founded at the Gujrat Basic Schools Conference held here in August last. It was decided that the whole school should work for one full day every year and pay its entire earnings as its fee for the membership of the Sangh.

Our school observed 30th March for the purpose. The boys made various proposals for getting the best returns ; such as, fishing, collection and sale of salt, digging, sewing, etc. Ultimately we did the following :

Work	No. of workers	Hours of work	Measure of work	Value Rs. as.
Spinning	175	1145	23 srs. 5 tolas (yarn)	86 4
Digging	25	90	525 cft.	10 8
Sewing	4	22	30 Shirts	11 4
Carpentry	1	8	A cupboard	3 0
Total	205			111 0

"Of the 205 boys, 54 were quite young. The older boys worked for 7 to 8 hrs. each; digging was done for 4 hrs. only by each worker.

"The value of yarn (Rs. 86-4-0) represents the net gain after deducting the cost of cotton, weaving charges, etc.

"The accounts for February and March for the students of Standards III, IV and V show that the boys earned Rs. 225 collectively. The salaries of the teachers for these three classes are Rs. 200. We have yet to see what the result of the whole school will show in relation to the entire budget."

While this is going on, the Gandhi Kutir founded by Shri Dilkhush Diwanji has organized a strong *khadi* centre among the villagers of Karadi and round about. Shri Dilkhush Diwanji is also a teacher and his whole outlook is educative and not professional. His speciality is that he has carried on his work mainly through local boys trained by himself.

Shri Vinoba visited Karadi during his itinerary recently. The following report of *khadi* work placed before him shows what well-employed leisure can do in terms of production and money :

Spinning

Age of workers : From 7 yrs. to 103(!)
Period of report : 50 months
Hours of work : Leisure only
Number of spinners : 103
Daily average production : 80 hanks
Total production : 51 mds. (very nearly)

Weaving

Weavers : 20
Engagement : 21 months full employment
Khadi produced : 11227.5 sq. yards weighing 53.3 mds.
Total value of yarn and *khadi* produced : Rs. 30089 - 8-0
Wages earned : 6837 - 6-9
Net profit of the village : 5794-14-3

This is exclusive of the production of *khadi* for self-sufficiency. The figures relating to this activity are :

Period : 21 months
Spinners : 235

Yarn produced : 27.3 mds.

Khadi produced : 4946 sq. yards

Production per capita : 20 sq. yards.

Advantages secured by the spinners : useful employment of leisure ; freedom from the worry of getting ration cards for cloth, and standing in queue ; conquest over idleness ; creative activity ; satisfaction of self-reliance ; sense of dignity ; love of labour ; moral awakening ; and solution of the cloth problem.

It is a village which leaders and other doubters in the message of the *charkha* should visit and see for themselves what *charkha* can do.

The following message given to the people of Dandi by Shri Vinoba is worthy of record :

"I am glad to see your achievements. But there is much yet to do. You must not get even an inch of cloth from outside. Dandi means light-house or lamp-post. It must give its lustre to the whole country. It was Dandi that awakened the whole country. The first battle of India's freedom was fought at this place. You know its history. You have seen Babu with your own eyes, have heard him with your own ears. You saw how he electrified the whole nation. In course of years, the story will appear like those we hear in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Dandi will be made world-famous. People of the world will come to visit this place. They will like to see what you do, how you live, to what extent you are united, clean, healthy. All these gifts will come to you through your industriousness. You must stand on your own legs. You must produce all you need normally in your own village : your food, milk, cloth, fruit, education, sanitation, and other necessities.

"This is *Rama Raj*. It is the installation of Rama in every heart. He cannot be installed if passion and anger reign in the heart. May your schools and families develop all those virtues which are needed for the establishment of *Rama Raj*."

Wardha, 18-5-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

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