

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor : K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## REPREHENSIBLE

Of late there has been a clamour to "acquire for the nation" places and residences in which Gandhiji lived at one time or other or which had any historical association with him. Birla House at New Delhi has been made a particular target. Pressure has even been put upon our legislators, ministers and local bodies in this behalf. One wonders if this is regarded as rendering service to Gandhiji's memory. There is always a right way and a wrong way of doing things. Attachment to signs and symbols is natural and legitimate when it brings one close to high ideals and inspires right endeavour. But it becomes a menace when it results in escapism and negation of those ideals. Gandhiji had a meticulous regard for his hosts. One can never forget his blazing indignation when, in their eagerness to see him, love-mad *darshan*-seekers trampled over the lawns and smashed the flower pots in the bungalows of his sometimes fastidious hosts. It would be a flagrant negation of what Gandhiji stood for if association with him is allowed to bring embarrassment to the owners of such places or force them to part with them. It should be left entirely to the free will and initiative of the persons concerned.

In case of Birla House in particular I know that the owner himself had always wanted to do something in the case commensurate with the regard and affection in which he held Gandhiji. But he was hardly given a chance and tactics were adopted to force his hands which touched him to the quick. Birla House has had as guests many of our great leaders with whom Shri G. D. Birla was intimately associated. It has been the scene of many a national, historical event. It has thus become to the owner a rich storehouse of sacred memories and a perennial source of inspiration and solace. In spite of it, as early as May last, he offered to place the whole of his palatial residence at the disposal of our Prime Minister, to make such use of it as he chose. But after careful consideration Panditji, in consultation with colleagues, decided that the house should remain in the possession of the owner, and only the portion where Gandhiji used to hold his prayers and where he fell, should be thrown open to the public. This has since been done. But it would have been more graceful if he had been given the chance of moving on his own initiative and in his own time. We have developed

the habit of demanding donation as a debt. That is wrong. It takes away all the aroma out of it.

There are other important places also, where Gandhiji made history. To mention only a few, there are the Bhangi Niwas at Reading Road, New Delhi, Swaraj Bhawan at Allahabad, the late Maulana Mohammed Ali's House, where Gandhiji's 21 days' Hindu-Muslim unity fast of 1924 was commenced, the late Dr. Ansari's residence, where he stayed at the time of signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Ferangi Mahal at Lucknow, where he was the late Maulana Abdul Bari's guest, Parnakuti at Poona and a host of other places, too numerous to mention. Are the individuals and institutions in possession of them to be asked to surrender them? Is this the form our gratitude is to take? Where is the line to be drawn? If Gandhiji had known that such would be the consequence of association with him, he would surely have followed the example which he was fond of citing, of Caliph Omar who, when requested by the Christians of Constantinople to come and pray in their Church, declined to do so on the ground that if he went there to pray, his successors might one day claim it as a mosque.

We have set up a Relics Preservation Committee. Shall we turn it into an instrument of spoliation or violence to the sentiments of those who had been good to Gandhiji and whom Gandhiji loved? Nay, it would be its sacred duty to resist any such unreasonable and unreasoning demands, and thereby help to preserve the most sacred relic that Gandhiji has bequeathed to us, viz. the spirit of his teaching and the tradition of lofty conduct which he exemplified in his life.

A fitting memento in the case of Bhangi Niwas, for instance, would be to improve the *bastis* in the midst of which it is situated, in regard to general sanitation, cleanliness, water-supply and other amenities of life so as to make them commensurate with the dream with which Gandhiji had come to settle there. These were his words:

"I have . . . decided that I must go and actually live in the Harijan quarters. I however do not delude myself with the belief . . . that by staying here I am sharing the actual life of the Harijans. . . . My coming to stay here, I hope, is the first step, not the last. It is my constant prayer and I look forward to the day when I would actually go and stay in a Harijan

hut, and partake of the food they may provide me there. . . . The present conditions under which they live should be intolerable even for a day to a decent-minded person. I pray for the time when the conditions of life, as regards sanitation, cleanliness etc. in Harijan quarters will be such that *even a person like myself might be able to go and stay there without any compunction.*" (Italics mine)

(Harijan, April 14, 1946)

Nearly three years have passed since he poured out that agonized cry. Are we any the nearer to the realization of his dream? Great things have happened in the interval. Independence has come and our cherished leaders are today in seats of power. The whole world has changed. Only the filth, squalor, indigence and sub-human standard of amenities in Harijan *bastis* in the midst of which Gandhiji chose to settle down to perform vicarious penance for the sins of Hinduism and our society at large, remain unchanged in the midst of the changing picture. What have we, what have our sentimental folk done to fulfil his wishes? Gandhiji wanted people to go in their midst and act as the Good Samaritan. How many have done so? Human nature is prone to seek cheap moral alibis and salves for the conscience. That is not how Gandhiji's memory can be served. The first criterion for us should always be whether a particular step quickens our conscience and stimulates our effort to realize the ideals for which he lived and laboured, or whether it is calculated only to fill us with a delusive sense of merit at others' expense. The least we owe to Gandhiji's memory in the Imperial City at least is, before we spend a pie on any other project, to tidy up the Harijan quarters in Bhangi Niwas and elsewhere and introduce in them the minimum standard of sanitation, cleanliness and comfort that Gandhiji had envisaged and to the realization of which he had mortgaged his future hopes.

Delhi, 23-3-'49

PYARELAL

### One More Authority on Humus

"A further point of greatest importance is that artificial fertilizers in time kill the soil population without which healthy crop growing is impossible. On humus-rich land these fertilizers apparently give wonderful results but this is due to their effect in stimulating humic activities. They supply no new humus. When the original stores are exhausted the soil dies and soil erosion and the dust bowl era has arrived. The soil population as a whole, including the invaluable earthworm, are our greatest friends. Artificial as a class kill them all. In this category I exclude dried blood, fish manure, hoof, and horn meal and all such as have once been alive and only gone through a drying process. These together with vegetable wastes constitute compost material." (*Organic Husbandry* by John Brown, quoted in *Heal Thyself* of November 1948)

H. M.

## POSSIBILITIES OF BASIC EDUCATION

The following was written as a personal memorandum to friends at Sevagram. They have asked that it be published. Since the subject-matter is entirely separate from the Inquiry of the Universities' Commission, I see no reason why it may not be used.

The question will continue to arise in the field of basic education as to how much reliance shall be placed on activities such as weaving and gardening in the earlier years and on wood-working, iron-work etc., in later years, and how much reliance should be placed on learning from books. The education of the past fifty years depended almost solely on books, and in India as in America, it not only put active, growing children in the prison of the school room for many hours a week but it tends to reduce the mastery of traditional arts. The new education sometimes goes to the extreme of using no books, and of requiring all education to grow out of home and craft activity.

In various American schools the pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other; while a large number of schools still depend almost wholly on book-learning, the movement to introduce normal life activities into teaching is applied by nearly all leading educators, and is becoming so general as no longer to seem unusual. The question is not whether normal life activities should be introduced, but only what right distribution should be between normal life activities and learning from books.

My own ideal of education for young children is that they should grow up in families and villages or other communities of educated and cultured people of fine character. Without school regimentation or formality, by sharing in the natural and normal activities of family and community, they would imbibe and inherit most of the cultural values of the past. If a spirit of open-minded inquiry should permeate the community, the natural curiosity and interest of the children would not be killed by the process of trying to make them believe in old custom or old doctrines without question. Questioning is as natural as believing. With a free play of questioning and learning in the friendly sincere atmosphere of home and community, superstition and prejudice gradually fade. The good of the traditional culture will be kept, while the obsolete and the mistaken will be discarded. An ideal community will have a tradition of free critical inquiry and will not be stagnant.

In such a home and such a village or other community there will be books. For little children there will be books with pictures. If the word and the picture are side by side the process of association helps learning. Stories of children of other lands will help to create world outlook. Children can be helped to learn that under the surface differences of custom, all children are essentially

alike in their hopes and desires and their joys and sorrows. In many ways books can enlarge a child's view beyond the local scene.

In an ideal community this improved process of all round education and development, without textbooks of classes and with only occasional formal teaching, as in learning the multiplication table, would result in finely developed personality. Wherever any family or community will give their help to realizing that ideal, as I understand is the case at Sevagram, such effort should be welcomed and encouraged.

In one respect such undertakings may not be representation of what is immediately possible on a large scale. Some of the leaders there have a wide and rich cultural background, and have developed great skill in informal education. Even though the expenditure of money is small, the expenditure of life and service may be concentrated in a way that for a long time will not be generally possible. Its cost must be measured, not only in rupees, but in the available selfless service. In those terms it will be very expensive. How to make the total available resources, both personnel and financial, accomplish most, is a major problem.

In my opinion neither India nor the United States can rely wholly on project-centred schemes. In America, it is found too expensive, even in very well furnished private schools to rely entirely on what in America is called, 'the project method', that is, learning through the natural and normal activities of living. It is expensive not only in money and the time of teachers but in the life and time of the children. Through the ages, men have learned how to organize and to clarify knowledge, so that it can be presented and acquired with economy of time. The problem is on the one hand to have enough experience in the normal and natural activities of living so that children become at home with them and skilled in them, and on the other hand, to take advantage of the economy of the living process which books and formal teaching will provide. Book learning is so deeply entrenched in conventional education that there is constant danger that after slight effort to introduce experience with the natural process of living, such methods will be declared unpracticable or visionary, and teaching will lapse back into the old routine of learning only, or chiefly, from books. Lip service may be paid to basic education long after the spirit has departed.

I believe it is important that a large amount of freedom be left to individual teachers, schools, communities and provinces to experiment with various methods and combinations of learning from life and learning from books. In as much as learning from books has been the nearly universal method and has the prestige of usage, while learning from life has not yet gained full recognition or fully developed its methods, it would seem to be wise to give most of the time and effort of teacher-training

to the process of learning from living. However, learning from books has been done so badly that it, also, needs research.

The matter of keeping active, growing boys and girls confined in school of the conventional kind for twenty or thirty hours a week is a form of imprisonment often as painful and as harmful to the child as a penal imprisonment is to an adult. Most adults forget how it is to be a child. Childhood should have a large amount of time for sharing in home and community life and work and for play, or just for idleness and service.

Taking these various conditions into account, and taking into account also the very great financial burden involved in overcoming illiteracy in India, I should like to suggest the following programme for the early school-years in a village:

The children of the village would be divided into two groups. Each half would attend school half the six working days of a week, either alternate days or three days at a time. On the other days they would be free to live at home to help their parents or simply to live and grow.

The school days would be under the programme of basic education. Considerable freedom should be left to each teacher and to each community to work out plan as to the relation of learning from life to learning from books.

There is some interesting evidence to the effect that children learn much more than half as much in short study periods than in periods twice as long. The learning process seems to continue in the subconscious mind when our attention is on other matters. If children should attend school three days in a week, there would be several advantages. They would have less stress of physical imprisonment, which, in my personal opinion, is one cause of maladjustment in America. They would be living with their families and in the community and would be getting informal education. Lastly, with a given public expenditure the whole of India's children could be reached nearly twice as soon. In America the loss of traditional arts and culture is great because children are so much cut off from home and community life.

In case of many villages the traditions of common life may have become so impoverished that much of the time boys and girls would spend there without direction would be loss rather than gain. Each situation should be judged on its merits, but there should be care lest we overlook those elements of culture that are so elemental that they seem to be a part of nature.

ARTHUR E. MORGAN

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By

*Manubehn Gandhi*

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## THE NEW FELLOWSHIP

The following is the text of the statement issued simultaneously from No. 10 Downing Street, London, and the office of the Indian Deputy Prime Minister, New Delhi:

"During the past week the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon and the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs have met in London to exchange views upon the important constitutional issue arising from India's decision to adopt a Republican form of constitution and her desire to continue her membership of the Commonwealth.

"The discussions have been concerned with the effects of such a development upon the existing structure of the Commonwealth and the constitutional relations between its members.

"They have been conducted in an atmosphere of goodwill and mutual understanding and have had as their historical background the traditional capacity of the Commonwealth to strengthen its unity of purpose, while adapting its organization and procedures to changing circumstances.

"After full discussion the representatives of the Governments of all the Commonwealth countries have agreed that the conclusions reached should be placed on record in the following declaration:

"The Governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon whose countries are united as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations and owe a common allegiance to the Crown, which is also the symbol of their free association, have considered the impending constitutional changes in India.

"The Government of India have informed the other Governments of the Commonwealth of the intention of the Indian people that under the new constitution which is about to be adopted India shall become a sovereign independent Republic.

"The Government of India have, however, declared and affirmed India's desire to continue her full membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and her acceptance of the king as the symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and as such the head of the Commonwealth.

"The Governments of the other countries of the Commonwealth, the basis of whose membership of the Commonwealth is not hereby changed, accept and recognize India's continuing

membership in accordance with the terms of this declaration.

"Accordingly, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon hereby declare that they remain united as free and equal members of Commonwealth of Nations, freely co-operating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress."

The very fact that in spite of our declared intention to become a Republic, and to work for peace and to take an independent attitude in international politics, the other dominions were anxious to keep India as an equal member is a success of the force of Satyagraha. For Satyagraha cannot be said to have fulfilled itself wholly until it establishes friendship and goodwill between parties, which were erstwhile mutually hostile. This friendship is coming about. Let us hope it will still develop, until there is peace and friendship also between India, South Africa and other dominions.

It is a sort of fellowship, whose members will co-operate with one another for mutual peaceful progress, but will be under no obligation to stand by one another for militarist policy or for the formation of political power blocs.

India, with her declared policy to support the cause of world peace, may be regarded as having secured seven members of a single federation as its probable co-operators. How far India is able to advance this cause will depend entirely upon her own earnestness, ability, idealism and internal advance. If we are able to continue the line of Gandhi and Nehru without a break, we have now at least a good chance for doing so. It is a long time programme of continuous devotion to an ideal.

The position of the King in this Commonwealth may be thus stated: He will continue to be the head of the other members of the Commonwealth as he is now. He will not be the head of India. But he will be accepted as the head of the fellowship called the Commonwealth of Nations. To speak concretely, as between the King and the President of India, the King will take the senior rank. The King will have no power over India, even as the President of India will have no power over other members of the Commonwealth. Within their own domains, they will exercise such powers as their respective constitutions allow.

Considering the subject purely from the point of Peace and Non-violence, I regard this new orientation of the old British Commonwealth as a step to be welcomed.

Wardha, 30-4-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

### Vanaspati Reduces Nutrition

According to the Annual Report of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, their experiments show that feeding *vanaspati* to animals reduces the absorption of carotene by 15 to 25 per cent as compared with ghee. It also lowers the absorption rates of calcium and phosphorus.

J. C. K

## CHARGE OF LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM

That a North Indian language should be put forth as the common language for all India is regarded by a section of South India as "Linguistic Imperialism" of the Northerners! The charge is not well-conceived and should not be nourished and encouraged by thoughtful people. A common language for all India has always been a great necessity and some language or another has always occupied that position. Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, Urdu (or Hindustani), English, have for a short or a long period rendered that service. Among these the Persian and English have been the only languages which were imposed by rulers over the ruled. The rest assumed that importance in a democratic manner.

The contribution of the Dravidian Provinces in the development of these languages has been unique and of a special character. Though these common languages (except English) were born in the North, in every case they have been purified, standardized and developed to a high degree of perfection and preserved by the people of the South. Thus Sanskrit was born perhaps in Kashmir or Punjab, propagated from Banaras, but it is the South Indian pronunciation of Sanskrit which is regarded as more perfect. For instance, the Northerners do not distinguish between the sounds of श and ष, which even a child in Andhra can. The Northerners have also persianized the pronunciation of ज्ञे and औ even in pure Sanskrit words. It was the South Indian *Acharyas* who made the study of Sanskrit indispensable for the study of Hindu scriptures—whether philosophical or devotional—through their *bhashyas* and other Sanskrit works.

So also in regard to the development of Hindi or Hindustani. Its literature owes not a little to persons hailing from the South (including Maharashtra) for its evolution, even before it was energetically put forth as the common language. Since its importance as the common language was realized, South India has already given a greater contribution to that language than any northern province whose regional tongue is not Hindustani. Shri M. Satyanarayana and his organization have already occupied an important place in the development of the common language and I would not be surprised that if a question arose about a usage as to which of two forms was more correct, a day might come when a South Indian may be regarded as the proper referee. During the times when Persian was the court language, it often happened that a Hindu scholar was regarded as a greater authority than a Muslim one on questions of Persian or Arabic grammar and spelling. The reason is this: a North Indian (such as a Gujarati, Central Indian, Rajasthani, Bihari, Punjabi, and others), because he thinks that there is not much difference between his own tongue and the common language, learns it indifferently and often mixes up his own words and forms with the common language. The South Indian, because he has no such assumption, learns

it carefully and uses it exactly. He pronounces it very carefully, even if it is over-done.

Even if its basic form is Hindi, (as distinguished from Hindustani), in less than a generation, its structure will so change that it will not be the present Hindi of the Hindi provinces. The national Hindi and the provincial Hindi will be rather different, even as British English and Colonial and American English have become somewhat different. Every province will set its impress upon the common language and South Indian provinces will not be exceptions.

There need be, therefore, no apprehension in the South Indian mind that the acceptance of the proposed common language (Hindi or Hindustani) will in any way be injurious to the South. The South Indian journalists and steno-typists have spread all over India even through English. They will do the same through Hindustani also.

English came upon us by reason of political domination. It was accepted submissively. And yet the South Indians made great progress in that language. What progress may they not make in Hindustani? They must drop the hostile feeling towards it.

Since we must have a common language and since it cannot be English, Hindustani is the only possible vehicle. Let it be accepted as inevitable for the *sarvodaya* of India.

Wardha, 27-4-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

## RESETTLEMENT OF WEST PUNJAB HARIJAN REFUGEES

While it should be most repugnant to discriminate between one refugee and another as Harijan or non-Harijan, Sikh or Hindu, it is highly important to understand the social and economic background of various categories of refugees in the interest of their proper rehabilitation. Approached in this light the problem of refugees resolves itself into that of various groups and classes that have migrated from West Punjab, e.g. shop-keepers, businessmen, clerks, lawyers, teachers, labouring classes, agriculturists, etc.

Like the Harijans of East Punjab, those migrating from West Punjab have been landless labouring classes, living in the countryside and following agricultural-cum-industrial pursuits in varying degree, but predominantly agricultural. As casual field labourers, farm servants and tenants, they have been playing an important role in the rural economy of the province. There are also among them weavers, shoe-makers, tanners, but only in very exceptional cases they exclusively follow these crafts and professions. In practice they always keep agriculture or some craft as a second string to their bow.

Socially, the condition of Harijan refugees in their ancestral homes was far from enviable. They were treated as outcasts from the society and deprived of the elementary civic rights of drawing water from public wells, and visiting places of worship, and mixing with the so-called higher classes

on terms of social equality, etc. In brief they carried the halter of social and economic inferiority round their necks until their migration to East Punjab as refugees.

It is impossible to ignore the psychology created by this background. The Harijan refugees have been asked to fill the gaps in villages created by the exodus of Muslim landless classes. While a majority of them have gone and settled in villages, the more self-conscious and self-respecting among them are clinging to the refugee camps and refuse to lead the life of serfs which luckily or unluckily they have forsaken. Such a notion might be false or misguided on their part, but its existence must be noted by those interested in their rehabilitation.

There are, according to the latest computation, about twentyfive thousand Harijan refugees taking shelter in various refugee camps, mainly at Jullunder. The quickest and easily the soundest way to rehabilitate them would have been to resettle them on the evacuees' lands as cultivating owners or to be more precise, as allottees on quasi-permanent basis. This the East Punjab Government are unwilling to do, as their declared policy is to allot land to those who owned land in West Punjab to which blessed category the Harijans have never belonged. In these days of food-shortages, the Government would rather commit the folly or the error of allotting land to non-cultivating refugees, than to genuine cultivators like the Harijans. That land has not been allotted to true sons of soil is not denied, but our contention is that not all allottees are technically equipped to exploit land in the best possible manner.

Be that as it may, the resettlement of the Harijan refugees on land having been ruled out, the next best thing is to settle them in urban areas. This involves consideration of two problems, i. e. that of housing them and providing them with occupation.

With regards to housing, it is high time that the East Punjab Government took up the question of providing permanent shelters to labouring and poor class refugees to which section the Harijans belong. About 4000 houses of bungalow type built by them and now being auctioned at Jullunder, Ludhiana, Khanna, Panipat and other towns are being purchased by richer and well-to-do refugees. Their construction, however, has touched only a fringe of the stupendous housing needs of the refugees.

In preparing a programme for housing the Harijans and allied classes, due consideration must be given to the following, to ensure their practicability viz. (a) availability of land and space required for a single housing unit, (b) minimum built area required for meeting the urgent needs of one refugee family unit (five persons), leaving enough scope for subsequent additions, (c) resources of the Government.

The acquisition of land for housing the Harijan refugees with whom a beginning for a labour class housing scheme should be made need not present much difficulty. Big areas of land left by Muslim

evacuees are available near about Batala, Amritsar, Jullunder, Ludhiana, and they can be put to no better use than providing shelter to the refugees. The technical difficulty that houses cannot be built on evacuees' property, which is legally supposed to be held in trust, can be got over by leasing out house-sites to the Harijan refugees preferably on co-operative basis.

An area of 5 *marlas* or 1125 square feet (one *marla* = 225 square feet) should normally suffice to house one family unit. Each of these houses when completed would have a built area of about 350 square feet, leaving an ample open space of 775 square feet. As there are about 4000 families or 20,000 Harijans now stranded in various refugee camps, the total area required would be 20,000 *marlas* = 125 acres. If an equal area is reserved for streets, open space and common amenities, the total area for 4000 families will be 250 acres only.

A commencement may be made by building only one room and one kitchen of stabilized *kachcha* bricks, which refugees should be made to prepare themselves. Inclusive of the cost of common roofing material and two doors and two windows, taking a common-sense estimate, the total cost per house at existing rates should not exceed Rs. 250. If one labouring class housing colony consists of 500 family units, the cost will be Rs. 1,25,000 and inclusive of cost on lay-out and common water supply, about Rs. 1,50,000 at the maximum.

Precise data of recurring expenditure now being incurred on the upkeep of various refugee camps is not available. But the cost per refugee on top-heavy staff, feeding, accommodation, cannot be less than Rs. 20 p. m. There are about two lakhs refugees in various camps in the East Punjab, on whom the Government are easily spending 40 lakhs every month. Housing is three-fourths of rehabilitation. This scheme if faithfully worked out, with the added advantage of bringing about a drastic reduction in the State expenditure, will also largely help in the settlement of refugees. Evidently no better use than on housing can be made of not very affluent resources of the Government.

Providing work to the refugees in the long run is a part of the productive drive which the Government are making for bringing down prices, and if the schemes are prepared with sufficient forethought and executed with determination and vigilance, they can bring income to the people and also enrich the State. The Harijan refugees at Jullunder camp have organized four Industrial Co-operatives of Weavers, Tailors, Sport-workers and Trunk and Bucket-makers, but red tape is obstructing their progress at various ends. A number of similar co-operatives can be formed among the Harijans and allied class of refugees, for the idea has in it the seed of immense potentialities. What is needed is that the people at the directing end should have sympathetic understanding, foresight, authority and determination to get things done.

MOHANLAL

## ASHRAM OBSERVANCES IN ACTION

(By M. K. Gandhi)

## VII

## REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY

(Continued)

Three callings followed by the so-called untouchables are practised in the Ashram, and improved methods are devised in each. Every one in the Ashram has in turns to do sanitary service, which is looked upon not as a special calling but a universal duty. No outside labour is engaged for this work, which is carried on on lines suggested by Dr. Poore. Night-soil is buried in shallow trenches and is thus converted into manure in only a few days. Dr. Poore says that the soil is living up to a depth of twelve inches. Millions of bacteria are there to clean up dirt. Sunlight and air penetrate the ground to that depth. Therefore night-soil buried in the upper layer readily combines with the earth.

Closets are so constructed that they are free from smell and there is no difficulty in cleaning them. Every one who visits them covers the night-soil with plenty of dry earth, so that the top is always dry.

Then again we have handloom weaving. Coarse *khadi* was manufactured in Gujarat by Harijan weavers only. The industry was almost on the verge of destruction, and many weavers were compelled to take up scavenging for a living. But now there has been a revival of this handicraft.

Thirdly we have tanning. We shall deal with it in the chapter on cow service.

The Ashram does not believe in subcastes. There are no restrictions on interdining, and all Ashramites sit to dinner in the same line. But no propaganda in favour of interdining is carried on outside the Ashram, as it is unnecessary for the removal of untouchability, which implies the lifting of bans imposed on Harijans in public institutions and discarding the superstition that a man is polluted by the touch of certain persons by reason of their birth in a particular family. This disability can also be removed by legislation. Interdining and intermarriage are reforms of a different type which cannot be promoted by legislation or social pressure. The Ashramites therefore feel themselves free to take permitted food with every one else but do not carry on any such propaganda.

Schools are established and wells sunk for Harijans through the Ashram which chiefly finds the finance for such activities. The real anti-untouchability work carried on in the Ashram is the reformed conduct of the Ashramites. There is no room in the Ashram for any ideas of high and low.

However the Ashram believes that *varnas* and *ashramas* are essential elements of Hinduism. Only it puts a different interpretation on these time-honoured terms. Four *varnas* and four *ashramas* are an arrangement not peculiar to Hinduism but capable of world-wide application, and a universal rule, the breach of which has involved humanity in numerous disasters. The four *ashramas* are *brah-*

*macharya*, *garhasthya*, *vanaprasthya* and *sannyasa*. *Brahmacharya* is the stage during which men as well as women prosecute their studies, and should not only observe *brahmacharya* but should also be free from any other burden except that of studies. This lasts till at least the twentyfifth year, when the student becomes a householder if he wishes. About 99.75 per cent of the students thus become householders. But this stage should close at the age of fifty. During that period the householder enjoys the pleasures of life, makes money, practises a profession and rears a family. From fifty to seventy-five wife and husband should live apart and wholly devote themselves to the service of the people. They must leave their families and try to look upon the world as a big family. During the last 25 years they should become *sannyasis*, live apart, set to the people an example of ideal religious life and maintain themselves with whatever the people choose to give them. It is clear that society as a whole would be elevated if many carried out this scheme in their lives.

So far as I am aware, the *ashram* arrangement is unknown outside India, but even in India it has practically disappeared at present. There is no such thing now as *brahmacharya*, which is intended to be the foundation of life. For the rest we have *sannyasis*, most of them such only in name, with nothing of *sannyasa* about them except the orange robe. Many of them are ignorant, and some who have acquired learning are not knowers of *brahma* but fanatics. There are some honourable exceptions but even these well-conducted monks lack the lustre we love to associate with *sannyasa*. It is possible that some real *sannyasis* lead a solitary life. But it is obvious that *sannyasa* as a stage in life has fallen into desuetude. A society which is served by able *sannyasis* would not be poor in spirit, unprovided even with the necessities of life, and \*politically dependent, as Hindu society is at present. If *sannyasa* were with us a living thing, it would exert a powerful influence on neighbouring faiths, for the *sannyasi* is a servant not only of Hinduism but of all the faiths of mankind.

But we can never hope to see such *sannyasis* unless *brahmacharya* is observed in the country. As for *vanaprasthya*, there is no trace of it. The last stage we have to consider is that of the householder. But our householders are given to unregulated self-indulgence. Householders in the absence of the three other *ashramas* live like brutes. Self-restraint is the one thing which differentiates man from beast, but it is practised no longer.

The Ashram is engaged in the great endeavour to resuscitate the four *ashramas*. It is like an ant trying to lift a bag of sugar. This effort though apparently ridiculous is part of the Ashram quest of truth. All the inmates of the Ashram therefore observe *brahmacharya*. Permanent members must observe it for life. All the inmates are not members in this sense. Only a few are members, the rest

\* Written in 1932.—V.G.D.

are students. If this effort is crowned with success, we may hope to see a revival of the *ashrama* scheme of life. The sixteen years during which the Ashram has functioned are not a sufficiently long period for the assessment of results. I have no idea of the time when such assessment will be possible. I can only say that there is nothing like dissatisfaction with the progress achieved up to date.

(Translated from Gujarati by V. G. D.)

(To be continued)

## SMOKING

I take the following from a correspondent's contribution:

"Smoking is in a way a greater curse than drink inasmuch as the victim does not realize its evil in time. It is not regarded as a sign of barbarism, it is even acclaimed by the civilized people. I can only say, let those who can, give it up and set the example." (Mahatma Gandhi — *Young India*, 4-2-'26)

"Smoking was once considered as pollution by Hindus and Muslims alike. Even today nobody is allowed to smoke in the precincts of a temple or a mosque in South India. In the North, priests can be seen smoking whilst chanting *mantras* and propitiating deities. After tea and dinner parties, cigarettes are provided just like *pansupari*. Even today in addition to local manufacture of *bidis* and cigarettes, quality cigarettes are imported into the country of amounts running into many lakhs. In the army it is given a place of priority and it is a part of the equipment of a soldier. I have read of a summary dismissal of a brigadier because of his failure to supply tobacco to his victorious troops.

"I remember that Dr. P. C. Ray, the great scientist, carried on a tireless campaign against this evil, especially among the student community.

"First of all smoking has to be recognized as an unclean, evil habit and then measures could be taken to eradicate the evil. There are bread-winners who spend more for their tobacco proportionately than they do for food and clothing of their dependents. Economically too it is a great waste.

"Having recognized it as an evil, the first thing is to carry on an intensive propaganda against the habit, by all modern methods, newspapers, handbills, lectures, slides and shows in cinemas and in various other ways. Smoking could be prohibited in theatres, hotels, eating houses and other places of public resort including railway carriages, trams and buses. Men in public eye could give a lead by giving up smoking. Distribution of smoke (as it is popularly called) should be prohibited in official parties. Restriction should be placed on the import of cigarettes. Intensive propaganda should be done especially among students."

Tolstoy considered tobacco as more injurious than drink. But its eradication will require a new generation of ministers and legislators — if it is to be done by Government machinery. The present generation can at the most make it more costly to

smoke, or prevent juvenile smoking. Legislation far in advance of public opinion tends to make law a dead letter. The propaganda or rather the reform movement must, therefore, be carried on by those who are convinced of the evil irrespective of what leaders, legislators and administrators are able to do.

Wardha, 3-4-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

## NOTES

### The Mango Kernel

This is the season for mangoes. Maunds of mangoes will be eaten and their seeds thrown away in the dustbin and wasted. The kernel within these seeds is an edible starchy substance. If properly treated, it can be used as an article in diet. Its flour can be mixed with wheat or other flour for making *chapatis*. It can also be commercially made use of for the manufacture of starch. This would save maize, *juar* and other costlier grains from being used for industrial purposes.

If properly burnt, its carbon can be used in place of costlier carbon prescribed by doctors for intestinal disorders. It can also be used as tooth-powder. If industrially used, its collection would provide labour to some needy workers, besides reducing the work of the sweeper.

Wardha, 28-4-'49

### The Manbhum Satyagraha

I understand from newspaper reports that in obedience to the Congress President's directive, Shri Atulchandra Ghosh has withdrawn his Satyagraha campaign against the Bihar Government. I hope that the High Command will now see that the Bengalis of Manbhum get full justice not only on paper but, what is more important, in action. I shall not go into the merits of the issues between the Bihar Government and the cause espoused by Shri Atulchandra Ghosh. But I have no hesitation in declaring my faith in Atulbabu's sincerity, freedom from narrow provincialism, open-mindedness, fairness and the spirit of Satyagraha. If he can be convinced that he was wrong, he would retrace his steps even at the cost of popularity; at the same time he will not put up with untruth. It is extremely to be regretted that the Bihar Government should not be able to come to terms with a co-worker of his type.

Wardha, 26-4-'49

K. G. M

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