

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

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TWO ANNAS

THE PROBLEM OF NATION'S EDUCATION

(By Gandhiji)

[At a time when the problem as to how to provide nation-wide fundamental or Basic Education has come to the forefront and is engaging the serious attention of all concerned, it will be worth while to pause and reflect on the following article written by Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, about 15 years ago in a similar context. The passage of time has not affected at all the force of the truth contained in it. If we are more open and receptive, it is now the right time to assimilate the truth enunciated by Gandhiji and strive our best to translate it into life and manifest it in reality. I would do well to state here the two or three conditions emphasized by him which stand unfulfilled as yet. They are as follows:

1. The State should take over the manufactures of these schools. That is, it should establish an economic order wherein the products can be disposed in an easy manner.

2. Ministers should formulate an all-round policy to adopt Basic Education and strictly implement it.

3. Officers and inspectors of the Education Department should proceed with the work with faith and loyalty and bring into play their experience, knowledge and educational science and resources to evolve a regular system to further and develop Basic Education. This is the task that is devolved on them to fulfil which is their highest duty.

It is needless to say that the above conditions do not make unreasonable demands from the Government and educational officers.

1-11-54

M. P.]

How to solve the problem of education is a problem unfortunately mixed up with the disappearance of the drink revenues.* No doubt there are ways and means of raising fresh taxation. Professors Shah and Khambhatta have shown that even this poor country is capable of raising fresh taxation. Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this of all countries in the world, possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore the maximum limit of taxation of riches beyond a certain margin can never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as 70 per cent of the earnings beyond a prescribed figure. There is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure. Why should there not be death duties? Those sons of millionaires who are of age and yet

* Today the problem has become mixed up with finding finance for Development Schemes instead of with 'disappearance of drink revenues'. Thus the problem remains more or less the same. — Ed.

inherit their parents' wealth, are losers for the very inheritance. The nation thus becomes a double loser. For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation. And the nation loses again in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out, being crushed under the load of riches. That death duties cannot be imposed by Provincial Governments does not affect my argument.

But as a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfil our obligations to the nation in this respect in the given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend on money. I have therefore made bold, even at the risk of losing all reputation for constructive ability, to suggest that education should be self-supporting. By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man — body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore again begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools.

I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without some confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method is being adopted more or less completely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal-making and even spinning on these lines with good results. This method does not exclude a knowledge of history and geography. But I find that this is best taught by transmitting such general information by word of mouth. One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing. The signs of the alphabet may be taught later when the pupil has learnt to distinguish the wheat from the chaff and when he has somewhat developed his or her tastes. This is a revolutionary proposal but, it saves immense labour and enables a

student to acquire in one year what he may take much longer to learn. This means all-round economy. Of course the pupil learns mathematics whilst he is learning his handicraft.

I attach the greatest importance to primary education which according to my conception should be equal to the present matriculation less English. If all the collegians were all of a sudden to forget their knowledge, the loss sustained by the sudden lapse of the memory of say a few lakhs of collegians would be as nothing compared to the loss that the nation has sustained and is sustaining through the ocean of darkness that surrounds three hundred millions. The measure of illiteracy is no adequate measure of the prevailing ignorance among the millions of villagers.

I would revolutionize college education and relate it to national necessities. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. Thus the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the State, the mill associations would run among them a college for training graduates whom they need. Similarly for the other industries that may be named. Commerce will have its college. There remain arts, medicine and agriculture. Several private arts colleges are today self-supporting. The State would therefore, cease to run its own. Medical colleges would be attached to certified hospitals. As they are popular among moneyed men they may be expected by voluntary contributions to support medical colleges. And agricultural colleges to be worthy of the name must be self-supporting. I have a painful experience of some agricultural graduates. Their knowledge is superficial. They lack practical experience. But if they had their apprenticeship on farms which are self-sustained and answer the requirements of the country, they would not have to gain experience after getting their degrees and at the expense of their employers.

This is not a fanciful picture. If we would but shed our mental laziness, it would appear to be an eminently reasonable and practical solution of the problem of education that faces the Congress Ministers and therefore the Congress. If the declarations recently made on behalf of the British Government mean what they sound to the ear, the Ministers have the organizing and organized ability of the Civil Service at their disposal to execute their policy. The Services have learnt the art of reducing to practice the policies laid down for them even by capricious Governors and Viceroy. Let the Ministers lay down a well-conceived but determined policy, and let the Services redeem the promise made on their behalf and prove worthy of the salt they eat.

Harijan, 31-7-57

VINOBA IN DARBHANGA

(By "Dadu")

Revolution and Discontent

"Would not your movement, by relieving the woes of the poor to some extent, result in delaying the chances of a revolution in the country?" asked a Darbhanga Socialist M.L.A., to Vinoba one day in his morning walk. Vinoba was amused at the question and said, "Do you think that poverty is a necessary condition for a revolution?"

"At least, discontent should be there," faltered the M.L.A.

"You know that thirty lakhs of people died of starvation in Bengal in 1943, yet there could be no revolution. Why?" Vinoba paused for an answer. Receiving none, he continued, "I believe that a revolution requires two forces for its fulfilment: (i) *vichar-shakti* (thought-force) and (ii) *pran-shakti* (vital-force). Discontent alone is meaningless. No revolution can be achieved without force of thought. Bhoodan seeks to change prevalent socio-economic values and establish new ones. It is not a relief work but a mission to transform the man and build up a new society on the basis of love and non-possession." The words went straight to his (the M.L.A.'s) heart. And in fairness to him, I must add that he had commendably devoted himself to the Bhoodan cause.

On Sunday morning, September 26th, we encamped at Chatauni. An American correspondent who had spent more than two days with us saw Vinoba in the noon. The interview lasted for an hour in which Vinoba answered his interesting questions.*

Requirements of Samya Yoga

In his post-prayer discourse, Vinoba pointed out that *Samya Yoga* was the call of the day. Several things were required to be done for its accomplishment. First, none should remain without performing bodily labour. "Everybody must take part in the production. God has given us all hunger and hands. Hence every one should do productive work. Work should not be regarded as evil or degrading. Secondly, the idea that physical labour must be paid for less than intellectual labour is to be cast away. In the *Samya Yogi Society* the sweeper and the President would be equally paid. They would command the same respect. The wages therein should differ no more than the fingers of the hand. The production so had should be equally available to all." Thirdly, "We have to wipe out the feeling of ownership of land, wealth or factory, of all sorts. Only the society is the real owner. Hence the demand for land from every landholder." The idea was to extend the family feeling. Vinoba continued that all that was to be brought by law and persuasion. "As the Prophet of Islam, Mohammad says, no force can be employed in religion, so also in revolution we have to explain the thought to the people and win them over."

Vinoba went on to add that he proposed to build up an army of those who gave donations with understanding. "My army would be that of peace, *shanti sena*. Gandhiji gave much thought to it. The armies today carry on loot and destruction. But the Bhoodan Yajna provides us a new method to raise up the *shanti sena*. In that could be admitted those who offered land or wealth and changed their life as well. They must be prepared to work according to the new thought. Raising this *sen* is the first task whereas it would be possible to usher in *Samya Yoga*."

Impressing upon his audience the need for self-reliance, Vinoba stated in his prayer meeting, "I regard those who toil and sweat as belonging to the first order of the servants of the nation. I regard all others who claim to be servants of the nation—granted that their claims be right—as servants of the second order and those whose claims are unjustified are mere hypocrites. When we want to build up the strength of the country we must

* A full report of the interview will be given separately hereafter.

first strengthen the said first order people. For, the foundation bears the whole brunt of the multi-storied building. Should the former be weak it would endanger the safety of the whole house. Likewise for making the country strong and great we must have this foundation as solid as possible. That is why I go from village to village to awaken you all and ask you to stand on your own feet." In the workers' meeting held at night nine persons accepted *Baba's Jail*, i.e. exclusive devotion to Bhoodan-work until 31st December next.

Walking down ten and a half miles we reached Khajauli at about eight on Wednesday morning. In his post-prayer address Vinoba removed the misconception that Bhoodan denoted an act of little kindness. He remarked, "There is kindness in Bhoodan Yajna but not occasional or fruit-earning kindness. This is a kindness to be observed at all times. It will render the entire structure of the society in a model of love and compassion. It will bring in equality in the society. No doubt that kindness is at the basis of religion but equality is the finished product obtained from religion. Unless kindness permeates the life of all, there cannot be any equality. Hence there is a world of difference between Bhoodan Yajna and ordinary kindness. People try either to secure an increase in the wages of the labourers or a decrease in their work-hours. But none cares to bridge gulf between the mill-owner and the labourer. Where there is an attempt to bring the two together it would mean a fundamental difference, a revolutionary difference. Every large-scale work is no revolution. Some people imagine that Bhakara dam is revolution. It is a great work indeed, but not a revolution. A revolution implies a fundamental change, change in current values. Only that kindness is significant which renders the donor equal to the donee. This is the spirit behind the Bhoodan. It is no relief work. It is no leisure work. It is a work only of those who dedicate themselves entirely for it."

The journey from Khajauli to Baboo-barhi next day recalled to our mind our visit to the Rosara and Singhia thanas, in the Samastipur sub-division. Wading for three hours through water, knee-deep, waist-deep and even chest-deep at one place, Vinoba arrived at the spot at about ten in the day after a walk for a little less than six hours. This affected Vinoba's throat further for he had had an attack of cold already. He took some rest in the day but to little effect. Yet he maintained his hours.

In his evening speech, he observed that Bhoodan Yajna was in keeping with the tenets of all religions. "Islam teaches us that everybody should part with a portion of his or her income for the poor in the form of *zakat*. It is regarded as a pillar of religion, *ruten-i-deen*. In Hinduism, *dan* is a daily duty. The Vedas enjoin upon us to give ceaselessly and give with faith. Christianity also urges upon us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Thus what I say is not something very new. It is the immortal message conveyed by all Prophets, Saints, Rishis and great men. But as the people are prone to forget it, it must needs be re-collected to their mind again and again."

Cent Per Cent Good

On Friday morning Vinoba was not feeling well. However, he walked on as usual, reaching Khutaana eight miles away, at about seven o'clock.

Addressing the post-prayer meeting, he said, "So far it is held that one man's food is another man's poison. This is a wrong contention. We believe that a true gain of an individual implies a gain of the entire society and vice versa. The reason of the current false notion is that money has been given the place of God and manual labour is at a discount. Everybody seems to be anxious to earn the maximum money by the minimum endeavour. Several years ago, when I, together with a friend, was out for a morning walk, his eyes fell upon a gold piece. He picked it up and asked me, what to do with it. I advised him to restore it back at the place where he had picked it up from. Being a business man he was wonder-struck at it. He told me that the time-old lesson of treating gold and dust alike was practised by him only that day. Well, if

we are imparted education of true religion, only the owner will pick up a thing. In case no owner is available, it can be sent to the Government. Should we do likewise, Dharma will flourish. But in our country there is only talk of Dharma."

Vinoba went on, "You know that a mere repetition of the word *roti* (bread) will not give you *roti*. You have to earn it and prepare it. So also how can a repetition of Rama's name suffice? You will have to do Rama's work. You can't cheat Rama by talking of Rama while doing work of *Haram* (evil). People in India are not imparted the education of real Dharma, which has shattered our villages. The same can be saved now through the Bhoodan Yajna."

Gandhi Jayanti Day

The close of the week marked India's new festival, the Gandhi Jayanti day. We were at Siswar. Happily it rained heavily for more than an hour from nine onwards. They were the most welcome and long-awaited showers in the area. The local spinners of the village gave demonstration at their Charkhas and presented a hank each as *sootajali*.

In his post-prayer address, Vinoba observed, "Today is Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. Great is the grace of God that He has been sending saints and noble souls in our midst regularly. Among them was Mahatma Gandhi whose life was dedicated for the service of humanity, i.e., he had neither any self-interest nor any pride or conceit. One who is miserable in others' misery and happy in their happiness is regarded as a selfless man. In fact, this should be the mark of man as such which distinguishes him from animals. It is wrong to attribute this quality to saints alone. This must be the characteristic of every man. But Mahatma Gandhi was far greater than this. He not only felt miserable in others' misery but regarded himself a sinner for others' sins."

Vinoba went on, "This makes a world of difference. Those who regard others' sins as their own punish themselves for those sins and are ready to suffer any punishment for the same. This trait had gone deep down in Mahatma Gandhi to an unfathomable extent. His soul had grown so vast that it aligned itself with everybody and he took the burden of others' sins on his own head. Rare are the souls going to this extent. Such people even do not desire salvation. Salvation is highly esteemed. It emancipates one from all good or evil. Great souls try for it. But those who take others' sins on their own head are (what should I call them?) great *bhaktas*. They do not aspire even for *mukti* for attaining bliss. When we pay our homage to him on his birthday, we do it for our own good. Great is our debt to him. By remembering him, we come to recognize the strength of our own soul. These great men tell us that we can develop the same strength in us as they had if we rise above self. These noble souls confirm our belief that we too can rise to great height."

Vinoba further remarked that in memory of Mahatma Gandhi, he had placed the programme of *sootajali* before the country. It required every man or woman to spin one hank (640 rounds or 850 yards) of yarn by one's own hand and submit it every year in the name of Mahatma Gandhi. The last date of this submission is 12th February. Vinobaji said, "There should be as many *sootajalis* as the inhabitants of the country. Everybody who could spin (from and above the age of four years) can offer it. Gandhiji taught us the use of the *charkha*. *Sootajali* gives us the training (*deeksha*) for Sarvodaya."

Animal Sacrifice: An Ungodly Practice

Next he asked all landholders, small and big, to offer their land so as to wipe out landlessness in the country. Lastly, he referred to the fast unto death of the local Mahanta of the village. It was a fast to stop the sacrifice of the he-goat on *puja* occasion. Vinoba characterized this practice as ungodly and non-religious not in keeping with this spirit of the age. "If God becomes happy at the sacrifice of a goat why should not man be sacrificed to add to his supposed happiness? It is a fantastic and baseless

practice. You can offer fruits and flowers to the Devi, but not animals or dead creatures. Shall the goat bless you for the sacrifice? Will not its soul curse you? So you must all abandon this evil practice for good."

We enter Saharsa district next week after spending three more days in Darbhanga district.

23-10-'54

HARIJAN

Nov. 13

1954

REVOLUTIONARY IDEA FOR NATION'S EDUCATION

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

There is a growing awareness that the prevailing system of education is not proper and that if we do not or cannot mend it while there is yet time, it will gravely imperil our onward march. This certainly augurs well for the country.

The dissatisfaction with the present education is expressed in two ways: 1. The defects of what goes on in the field of education today are subjected to severe criticism. Curiously, among those who do so are also found Government Ministers who are technically responsible for this state of affairs. 2. On the other hand, it is repeatedly asserted by Government spokesmen,—quite naively, it appears, and as though they believed it to be the only way out of the present impasse,—that the present system should be immediately replaced by the system of Basic Education propounded by Gandhiji. But considering the way they implement it, it looks far from reassuring; on the contrary, it provokes almost an adverse impression.

Another aspect of the situation which has lately emerged into evidence is this that the believers in the old system of education—who had hitherto secretly laughed at Basic Education and kept silent about it out of contempt—are now stirring out of this kind of initial stage of their reaction to it and are openly shouting against it with visible concern. For example, Shri Mirza Ismail, Dr. Amarnath Jha and others belonging to their class. True, the way they talk shows more pique than understanding.

This too is welcome. For it means that the question of the implementation of Basic Education has passed the initial stage when it could be laughed away or dismissed out of existence with no more than contemptuous indifference.

Though, as we pointed out, it is good that people of this class have become vocal, yet one does feel that they had better speak with a sense of greater responsibility. In any case, they must first study the subject on which they speak. Because their utterances in this regard hardly give an impression that they are based on any serious study of the problem.

The Constitution of India says in its article 45 that the State should endeavour to provide for

free and compulsory education of all children until they complete the age of fourteen years, by the year 1960. This has got to be done. The question is, how to do it.

The answer to this question, given by Sir John Sargent on behalf of the British Government in 1944-45, was that for this, like other countries (e.g. England, U.S.A. etc.), India too will have to do as they did and similarly find money for it. He denied that it could be made to pay its way and be self-supporting. He had also worked out the amount of money which should be required for the purpose, of course, on the basis of the prices then prevailing. The full implementation of his scheme, he said, would take 40 years and cost about 300 crores of rupees annually. Considering the rise in the prices since then the cost would be about four times more.

Schools working under this method of bringing about a free and compulsory system of education were given a fitting name some time back by Dr. Amarnath Jha in Bombay. He called them "traditional schools". He and others who hold similar views seem to hold that this old system is essentially good. Briefly stated it means that the Government should agree to employ more and more teachers, pay them good wages and continue the system introduced by the British Government without any great change or modification: They as if say that the heart of that system is sound. However, Government may, if they like, add craft to the old curriculum, but that would not, they would say, make any material or radical change in the cast and character of that education.

The so-called educated liked this scheme. But how could they wait for forty years? To that extent, therefore, they thought over the problem and tried to reduce the number of years. But if the educational expansion is sought to be effected along the old lines of the Sargent scheme—and that is what this group would want to do—it is now sufficiently clear that the attempt is bound to fail with terrific monetary loss to the nation, to boot.

Another prop of the traditional system of the British days was that the drink revenue will be a big source for financing education. It might even have been thought that this revenue would go up with the advent of Swaraj!

A different scheme which struck at the root of both these features of the traditional system was put forward before the country in 1937-38 by Gandhiji. Sir John Sargent had taken note of this new scheme in drawing up his own report. But he rejected both the principal suggestions of Gandhiji. He regarded it as beyond imagination that the current expenditure of a school could ever be met by the earnings from the craft. He could not, of course, condemn the drink revenue as the source for financing the education. The educationists of the old system have scarcely felt anything worth considering, from the social and educational point of view,

in regard to the use of the excise revenue in educating our children. Gandhiji and other national educationists could never agree with Government on this point.

Thus Gandhiji's scheme of Basic Education was also there before the country. He held the view that the acceptance of education through craft will not only, after some time when its technique and methodology were evolved, meet the current expenditure on education, but also put an end to the mal-education which today goes on in the name of education, and open the way for real education embracing all aspects of the development of personality physical, intellectual and moral. Without such a basis of the nation's education, full employment of the people or giving them the right to work in any real sense, will be an impossibility. Therefore, the time had come, he said, to abandon the old way.

Our Governments cannot reject out of hand this way shown by Gandhiji. Nor, even if they like it, can they find the money for putting into effect the expansion programme of the traditional system. Besides, the latter has come to be discredited. We have seen its evil results and no one has any attraction for it now. This is the dilemma in which our Governments are caught at present. This is why they hesitate to forego the drink revenue and keep on evading the reform in the Nation's basic education, and the faith and zeal which one expects to be brought to bear on such an important task is nowhere to be seen. This has led to a strangely anomalous situation in which, it appears, we believe and say one thing but do and desire another.

Some of the educated classes have recently described the problem as one of 'Free and Compulsory Education v. Basic Education'. But they forget that free and compulsory education is only an administrative ideal accepted by the State and not either a system or a method of education. The question is: how to put it into effect? Another question which is even of greater importance than the first is that of the character and content — the quality of the education that is desired to be made free and compulsory. It is therefore entirely fallacious, if not mischievous, to treat the two ideas as opposites; not only that, it rather helps in confusing what is essentially a very simple issue.

The British rulers had devised a system of primary education. The expansion of education according to that system involves huge expenditure running into several crores of rupees. Besides, if we think of what our boys and girls get from it we find that as a result of it we are not only not where we were, but our condition has worsened. Dislike of physical labour, waste of effort in search of jobs, unemployment, an insatiable greed for money and pleasure and other evils are the direct product of that system; and far from disappearing, they are increasing. It would seem that we are engaged in disseminating

them throughout the country compulsorily and free of charge! Because rules are being framed to punish the parents who would not accept it.

It was after having fully pondered over this situation that Gandhiji put forward his scheme before the country. To say that the motive behind it was merely economic or materialist one of eradicating unemployment is to betray ignorance. Moreover, it would amount to accusing Gandhiji that he had no conception of real education and that his view of it was dominated by such one-sided development of man.

We are therefore reprinting in this issue the prophetic article in which he had put forward his scheme of education. The readers are requested to read it again with care and ponder over it.

In that article he had also discussed, to some extent, the so-called higher education. The advocates of higher education had not liked it then nor are they likely to approve of it now. Today, we find a number of new Universities being started in the country for providing this higher education. It seems that such moves are actuated by motives other than those of education. I would not enter here into any long argument about it. Suffice it to say that Gandhiji had also something to say about the reorganization of the Universities; and it is high time that we heeded to it.

What is needed is nothing less than a radical reorientation of education. It is regrettable that the need for a new beginning in education has not yet been felt as clearly and urgently in the quarters concerned as it should have. That is the most important task to be undertaken. It also contains the seeds for realizing the ideal of a classless society based on equality.

26-10-'54

(From the original in Gujarati)

MY GOOD WISHES

(By Jawaharlal Nehru)

[Message to the Tenth All-India Nai Talim Conference, Sanosara (Saurashtra)]

"I send my good wishes to the Tenth All India Nai Talim Conference. I have often expressed my belief in Nai Talim or Basic Education. As our experience grows, no doubt, some changes and variations might become necessary in that approach to education. But I believe that the basic idea behind it is not only sound, but is especially adapted to present day conditions in India.

"Probably there might be some advantage in some variations being introduced in different parts of the country, so that our experience might be richer and we might be able to choose better. Even apart from this, conditions in our country differ so much that any rigid pattern, which is suited to one part, might not completely fit in with another part of the country.

"I travel about greatly in this vast country of ours and nothing surprises me so much as the great variety and richness of our ways of life in these different parts. There is, of course, the underlying unity which binds us together, but there is also this variety. Most of us imagine that

India is after our own pattern, wherever we might live. But India is bigger, richer and more various than any particular part, and we must not try to confine it and limit it by our narrow outlook.

"The problem before us is how to maintain and strengthen the unity of India, and yet, also maintain the variety of India, just as, in the larger field, the problem is how to preserve individual liberty and yet have that central direction and co-ordination which are so essential in the complicated structure of the modern State. Neither can be ignored.

"Sometimes well-meaning people, eager to impose their own ideas and ways of living on others, do more harm than good. That applies to nations as well as individuals. In the international field, we talk of co-existence. This should not be open to argument because, without co-existence there is inevitable conflict and mutual destruction. And yet, this very idea of co-existence is challenged and repudiated by some.

"Similarly, in the somewhat narrower national sphere, there has to be this co-existence, not merely a passive acceptance of others, but an active co-operation and a harmonious development of the different aspects of the nation. Education is, presumably, meant to bring this about as well as the growth of the individual. Even the individual has to develop in an integrated and harmonious way.

"Recently I have had two reports of the educational activities in some of our tribal areas. One was a report of Christian missionary activities. The other was a report of some kind of Ashram which had been established by some of our own colleagues. The two were in different areas of India. And yet, both the reports pointed out how the approach to the people there had resulted in depressing and stultifying them. The tribal people often have a special culture of their own which some of us, with our limited outlook, may call primitive and backward. Nevertheless, that culture leads to a way of life which in some ways is suited to those people and which particularly makes them rejoice in song and dance. Our mentors, who go to them, frown at their ways and tell them to desist from them in the name of reform. The result is that they lose somewhat that joy of life, which they possess in abundant measure and gain little else in its place. They become joyless and devitalized, dull and insipid.

"Surely, that is a wrong approach, whether it is by a Christian missionary or by any other. In this matter an example taken from the tribal people brings out rather an extreme case, but in some measure, that applies to others also.

"Basic Education, properly organized, of course tries to avoid this kind of thing; but it is important that this aspect should be borne in mind."

THE BIRD IN HAND

(By C. Rajagopalachari)

Let us imagine for a moment that all the cloth which the people require were produced by the mills in Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places. Let us also imagine that by some misfortune thousands of rural families spread all over the country were suddenly thrown out of occupation and as a consequence were starving and dying. Now if some one had a brain-wave and suddenly invented the handloom so as to take a third of the cloth production off the mills and distributed that work in the starving countryside. Suppose he demonstrated also that his invention required only a capital of Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 each and nothing more, he would have been hailed as a God-sent saviour and honoured by the nation and the Government as one who solved a great problem for them.

But we have this very thing now. Not only has the handloom been invented and propagandized but it has been actually installed in tens of thousands of cottages. The men and women have been perfectly trained to use and repair the tools without being a burden on any one. The entire family is busily engaged on each loom and they and their neighbours are happy. They are finding their own market. The masses too are satisfied with the cloth and wear it even on occasions when they wish to appear in festive make-up. Surely, it is not right and it is folly to undo it by tolerating a vulgar competition against these weavers, a competition based originally on copying their very technique using the power of capital and of imported machinery.

May the gods give us the gift of clear thinking and help us to pierce the wall of illusion! Industrialization which involves a ruinous de-industrialization of thousands of villages is not what will help us. Let us think in terms of real men and women with eyes that weep and mouths that hunger and not be confused by lifeless figures of increasing production somewhere but not where we want.

One reads a great deal about revival of cottage industries and plans therefor. Can decorative individual work support the millions that now find their food out of the established handloom? Let us not destroy what is there and is of immense value, dreaming about what can be brought into being with great difficulty and which, even if accomplished, will be inconsequential in the context of the immense numbers of our rural people.

We should not confuse art with large-scale employment for bread. Not artistic work here and there but large-scale work can save our people. Let us protect the handloom that is there, even if a portion of established capitalistic endeavour may suffer some inconvenience on that account. Let our cottage-industries' policy-makers remember that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. The proverb indeed understates

the case for handloom protection. The bird is worth much more than two which we think we see in the bush. Unless we feed and protect this bird in hand we kill it. There is no alternative between killing and protecting. If we do not protect, it means we wish to kill.

(From *Book University Journal*, October 24, 1954)

HAND-POUNDING OF RICE

(By N. R. Malkani)

Rice Production in India

Rice is an important foodgrain, and is no. 1 cereal of India. It is the staple food of South and East India. For a few years we had a deficit production and rice prices rocketed high. In undivided India we were always importing rice to the tune of 1½ million tons annually, mainly from Burma. The import continues at a much lower level, but we are always on the margin of an inadequate supply. It is therefore heartening to know that our production of rice is going up fairly fast and there will be a record production of 27.1 million tons this year. The yield almost equals the target of 27.2 million tons envisaged for 1955-56 in the (F. Y.) Plan. Our total production in 1947-48 was a little above 21 million tons and in 1952-53 a little less than 24 million tons. This increase is mainly due to improvements in the methods of cultivation and seed selection. The acreage under cultivation has shown a small increase. In fact, the average yield per acre has risen from 700 lbs. per acre in 1950-51 to 800 lbs. this year. Considering that the average production can rise to 3,000 lbs. under the Japanese method and there are only 4 lakh acres out of 75 million acres under this method, one should realize the vast scope for improvement. With increasing population and wayward monsoons we can never rest on our oars and take it easy.

Dehusking and Processing

But while the production side allays anxiety, the dehusking and processing side is rapidly deteriorating. On the average for India "about 60% of the total paddy processed is carried on through hand-pounding and 40% by milling." The position is specially bad in 4 States Saurashtra has 90% milled rice, Madras 70%, Bombay 70% and Punjab 66%. What causes apprehension is the general tendency all over India, where the proportion of milled rice is rising rapidly at the cost of hand-pounding. This tendency may be partly due to unfavourable price equations and money valuations of husking costs. But it is mainly due to the thoughtless and now negligent policy of State Governments. The number of rice mills has rapidly increased since the last war and is due to the procurement policies adopted. All the rice procured was transported to big towns and sent to mills for husking before distribution to consumers. This was an easy method of securing large supplies of de-husked rice, without taking into consideration the heavier costs of transporting unhusked rice. But it was almost a criminal method of wasting the limited supplies of our staple food, besides creating serious unemployment in rural areas. There are at present about 1,400 rice mills which come under the Factories Act according to the 4th census of Indian Manufactures 1949. The number in 1954 may be anywhere round 2,000. The number of mills not registered is legion and whether it is 10,000 or 20,000 is anybody's guess, for no one knows.

Bad Effects on Nutrition and Employment

The problem of rice de-husking, to my mind, is a grave one for more than one reason. It is so as it seriously affects the supply and nutritive value of our cereal No. 1. It further accentuates the perennial problem of unemployment in rural areas. Lastly it is the acid test of Governments' policy with regard to rural uplift in general and village industries in particular. Experts are unanimous that hand-pounded rice is superior in every sense to milled rice. Unpolished or semi-polished rice is more nutritive than polished mill rice. The bran of hand-pounded rice, if any, is excellent fodder. The husk separated from bran

is good fuel if properly treated. Above all de-husking by hand yields 3% more grain than milled rice. Milled rice injures the rice by polishing it, mixes bran with husk so as to make it unfit as fodder. Thus it is bad both for man and animal. The taste of the consumer is a matter of guess. Consumers are quite aware of the superiority of hand-husked rice, but in towns and now even in rural areas the taste for polished rice grows by feeding. But there are extensive rural areas, specially in North-East India, where the taste has not yet been spoiled. But the position can be easily redeemed by firm action, for both the educated and illiterate know that hand-pounded rice is superior in every sense to milled rice. Some public agitation followed up by Government action in time can easily right the present wrong position.

Deploable Position in Some States

This question is all the more pressing in some States which are deficit regions and depend on imports. These are Saurashtra, Bombay and specially Madras. I have returned from a fortnight's tour in Tamilnad and tried to meet some experts to help me to study the situation on the spot. It appeared to me that the rice situation there needs immediate attention. Undivided Madras State had an area of 10 million acres (out of 75 million acres) and produced more than 4 million tons (out of 24 million tons) in 1952-53. It has the largest number of rice mills and out of "the more important rice milling units" numbering nearly 3,000, there are 1,038 in this State alone. Most of these are huller mills, which are more injurious than sheller mills, as they polish the rice more and mix up bran with husk more than sheller mills and very much more than the pestle and mortar common in rural areas. At present 70% of rice is milled and 30% only hand-husked. It is well known that the Madras diet is inferior to the North East and of course the North West diet of India. Most preparations—sweet or savoury—are made of rice mixed with other edibles. The process of treating rice from beginning to end is a continuous process of ill-treating that favourite, including the throwing away of rice water after cooking. Paddy before going to mills is not par-bolled but sent raw so that rice may be double polished. And yet the quantities eaten or rather swallowed are large by northern standards and no southerner feels he has had any meal unless some rice has been taken in first, if not also last.

Indifferent States Policy

The indifference of the consuming public is no less matched by the sheer thoughtlessness or perhaps calculated inaction by the Government. In spite of circulars by the Central Food Ministry licences are being given quite freely to new mills and additions made to old mills, most of them being of the huller sort. In fact, Madras has discovered a special device for speeding the mill mafia. Small "hiring mills", with 20 to 30 H.P. costing less than Rs. 10,000 are planted in rice tracts, at the rate of one hiring mill per one village area of 5,000 persons. Such a mill de-husks 20 to 30 maunds per hour. It used to deal with 200 to 300 maunds, in the good old days of procurement, but now in these unfortunate days of comparative ease it works 2 to 3 hours only, for six months or more. A bag or paddy (1½ mds.) as husked for as. 6 and the resulting bran can be sold as fuel at as. 8, with a net gain of as. 2 per bag. And so there is a stream of villagers vending their way to the neighbouring hiring mill, with baskets and bags of paddy for de-husking. Often the licence is taken for an electric dynamo or diesel engine for pumping water or pressing seeds, but is also used for husking rice on the sly. The disease spreads openly and wantonly for there is no public realization of the peril to health and strength.

Rice Mill v. Hand-pounding

The hand-pounding industry is the most wide-spread of rural industries, giving partial employment to lakhs of women. It is thus the most unorganized of village industries that is being ruined by the mill. On the other hand the mills have both money and influence in Government circles,

Quite a number of legislators are owners or interested in these mills. It is almost impossible for the Tamilnad Assembly to entertain a resolution for banning the huller and gradually the sheller mills. The handloom industry found its god-father in Rajaji, supported by well-organised co-operative and more or less urban societies that could be vocal. The hand-pounding industry is a fatherless and motherless orphan, that has not even learnt to sigh or sob in the public. The Union Food Ministry in a recent announcement has appointed an Enquiry Committee, on the recommendation of the Khadi Board. But before it sits, reports and its recommendations are implemented the mills will have made further criminal encroachments.

Ruining Hand-pounding Industry

From the point of view of employment the position is sad for the country and almost tragic for the South. At present 60% of the total paddy of India is hand-pounded. On the basis of 20 million tons of paddy being de-husked (after deductions for sowings, wastes etc.) the hand-pounding industry would account for nearly 12 million tons, at the rate of 2 tons of paddy processed per person working for 6 months in a year, this would provide partial employment to nearly 60 lakhs of persons. If the entire quantity of paddy were hand-pounded, there would be work for another 40 lakhs. So also the wage bill paid to hand-pounders would rise from say Rs 50 crores to Rs 80 crores. The "hiring huller mill" now processing 30 maunds of paddy per day could give work to 30 whole-timers at as. 12 per diem. In a village of 3,000 persons with about 900 adults, there would be full work for 150 and part-time work for 300 persons. And the South has only 30% of paddy husked by hand, as against 95% in Bihar, 88% in Orissa, 87% in West Bengal and 83% in Uttar Pradesh. The Bihar Assembly even passed a comprehensive resolution on 29th July 1953 banning new mills, limiting output of existing mills, levying a cess on rice mills, and purchasing Government supplies from hand-pounders only. It is upto the Union Food Ministry to issue immediate instructions to the Madras State to stop giving new licences until the Enquiry Committee sends its report.

Need for Improved Implements

The Khadi Board also has a great responsibility in this matter. It has prepared a programme for the development of hand-pounding of rice for 1954-55. It is already giving a subsidy of as. 9 per maund of hand-pounded rice and is making arrangements for supply of standard quality of rice through co-operatives. But its attention should mainly be given to the improvement of implements and tools. The Madras Dhenki and pestle-mortar are rather heavy to work. De-husking work is mainly part-time work and by women of the family. It is also full-time work by Harijan men and women in the off season. Some consider the mill as a relief from the drudgery of the heavy pestle, forgetting the unemployment it brings. Wanted a light and durable chakki, made of local stone, that will de-husk completely at one grind. The present chakki leaves 10% to 15% paddy un-husked, which requires tedious separation and re-de-husking. If taste requires the chakki rice may then be slightly polished by the pestle and the bran used as fodder. So also a process is necessary for using husk as fuel in place of cow-dung or wood. The fuel situation is never easy in poor villages. Fortunately the mill winnow for separating husk from grain can be easily adopted to hand use. The research section of the Khadi Board has a technical problem before it that needs a prompt solution. I am of opinion that if there is one type of village industry that has the clearest case for preservation it is the food-processing industry, more specially the hand-pounding of rice. It is the one test of the efficiency of the Board, the bonafides of the Government and the common sense of the consuming public.

29-10-54

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO CHINA

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Papers are full of lavish praise and high sounding appraisals of Shri Jawaharlal's visit to China. And that is all true and well merited. But then, there appears to be a kind of naivety and infantile wonderment about it, which may not be good for a mature people like ourselves.

The reader, I hope, will not misunderstand me when I say as above. It was a tremendous and brave step for our Prime Minister to decide to go to China and other S-E. Asian lands, even in a flying manner. It might be perhaps misunderstood by the anti-Soviet bloc in the West; and such a misunderstanding on its part, at the present juncture, may not avail us in a material sense. Because, as we know, at that very time when Shri Nehru went to China, a member of his Government was in America invoking its aid, may be without strings. But the Prime Minister's China visit was for a cause too high for such pragmatic or utilitarian reasons to affect it in any manner. It was a mission in search of pure peace for India, for Asia, — for the whole world, as it may well come to be. And it was not to be through the Churchillian theory of strength which only means armed strength, nor through the American edition of the UNO doctrine of 'collective security', which is abused to mean organizing global armed camps and garrisoning; but it was on the pure plea of humanity's peaceful progress on the basis of the law of co-existence almost ordained by nature to man if he wishes to live in peace here. Naturally we may feel proud that our people, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, are in the vanguard of such a noble mission. That shows that we deserve to be the faithful children of our great 'Father of the Nation'. However, there should be with us a kind of wise restraint on such feeling; we should, as a people, cultivate a natural sense of balance and proportion which is born of maturity. Such pride and hero-worship on the part of a people are understandable; but it has a limit which we may transgress only at the cost of healthy democratic growth of our republic, which we have chosen to be.

5-11-54

Corrigenda

In the note "In Praise of Action" in *Harijan* of July 24, 1954, p. 167 for *Crave* please read *Crane*.

In "Your Light Not the Only Light" in *Harijan* of August 7, 1954, p. 183 for *Digment* please read *Dymint*.

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