

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

VOL. XIII. No. 34

AHMEDABAD — SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1949

TWO ANNAS

## RAILWAY TRAVELLING IN 1917

[The following is a cutting from the *Times of India* of 1st October, 1917 preserved by Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi. There are perhaps some improvements in the conditions since that date. But to a large extent the picture is true even to this day as will be seen from the experience related by Shri G. Sitaramsastry in an article which I hope to publish in the next issue. — K. G. M.]

To the Editor of the *Times of India*

Sir,

I have now been in India for over two years and a half after my return from South Africa. Over one quarter of that time I have passed on the Indian trains travelling third class by choice. I have travelled up north as far as Lahore, down south upto Tranquebar, and from Karachi to Calcutta. Having resorted to third class travelling among other reasons for the purpose of studying the conditions under which this class of passengers travel, I have naturally made as critical observations as I could. I have fairly covered the majority of railway systems during this period. Now and then I have entered into correspondence with the management of the different railways about the defects that have come under my notice. But I think that the time has come when I should invite the Press and the Public to join in a crusade against a grievance which has too long remained unredressed though much of it is capable of redress without great difficulty.

On the 12th ultimo I booked at Bombay for Madras by the Mail train and paid Rs. 13-9. It was labelled to carry 22 passengers. These could only have seating accommodation. There were no bunks in this carriage whereon passengers could lie with any degree of safety or comfort. There were two nights to be passed in this train before reaching Madras. If not more than 22 passengers found their way into my carriage before we reached Poona, it was because the bolder ones kept the others at bay. With the exception of two or three insistent passengers, all had to find their sleep being seated all the time. After reaching Raichur the pressure became unbearable. The rush of passengers could not be stayed. The fighters among us found the task almost beyond them. The guards or other railway servants came in only to push in more passengers. A defiant Memon merchant protested against this packing of passengers like sardines. In vain did he say that this was his fifth night on the train. The guard insulted him

and referred him to the management at the terminus. There were during this time as many as 35 passengers in the carriage during the greater part of it. Some lay on the floor in the midst of dirt and some had to keep standing. A free fight was at one time avoided only by the intervention of some of the older passengers who did not want to add to the discomfort by an exhibition of temper.

On the way, passengers got for tea — tannin water with filthy sugar and a whitish looking liquid, miscalled milk, which gave the water a muddy appearance. I can vouch for the appearance but I cite the testimony of the passengers as to the taste.

Not during the whole of the journey was the compartment once swept or cleaned. The result was that every time you walked on the floor or rather cut your way through the passengers seated on the floor, you waded through dirt.

The closet was also not cleaned during the journey and there was no water in the water tank.

Refreshments sold to the passengers were dirty looking handed by dirtier hands, coming out of filthy receptacles, and weighed in equally unattractive scales. These were previously sampled by millions of flies. I asked some of the passengers who went in for these dainties to give their opinion. Many of them used choice expressions as to the quality, but were satisfied to state they were helpless in the matter, they had to take them as they came.

On reaching the station I found that the *ghari* would not take me unless I paid the fare he wanted. I protested and told him I would pay him the authorized fare. I had to turn passive resister before I could be taken. I simply told him he would have to pull me out or call the police.

The return journey was performed in better manner. The carriage was packed already and but for a friend's intervention, I would not have been able to secure even a seat. My admission was certainly beyond the authorized number.

This compartment was constructed to carry 9 passengers but it had constantly 12 in it. At one place an important railway servant swore at a protestant, threatened to strike him and locked the door over the passenger whom he had with difficulty squeezed in. To this compartment there was a closet falsely so called. It



was designed as a European closet but could hardly be used as such. There was a pipe in it but no water and I say without fear of challenge that it was pestilentially dirty.

The compartment itself was evil looking. Dirt was lying thick upon the wood-work and I do not know that it had ever seen soap or water.

This compartment had an exceptional assortment of passengers. There were three stalwart Punjabi Mahomedans, two refined Tamilians and two Mahomedan merchants who joined us later. The merchants related the bribes they had to give to procure comfort. One of the Punjabis had already travelled three nights and was weary and fatigued. But he could not stretch himself. He said he had sat the whole day at the Central Station watching passengers giving bribes to procure their tickets. Another said he had himself to pay Rs. 5 before he could get his ticket and his seat. These three men were bound for Ludhiana and had still more nights of travel in store for them.

What I have described is not exceptional, but normal. I have got down at Raichur, Dhond, Sonepur, Chakradharpur, Purulia, Asansol and other junction stations, and been at the Mosa-firkhanas attached to these stations. They are discreditable looking places where there is no order, no cleanliness but utter confusion and horrible din and noise. Passengers have no benches or not enough to sit on. They squat on dirty floors and eat dirty food. They are permitted to throw the leavings of their food and spit where they like, sit how they like and smoke everywhere. The closets attached to these places defy description. I have not the power adequately to describe them without committing a breach of the laws of decent speech. Disinfecting powder, ashes or disinfecting fluid are unknown. The army of flies buzzing about them warns you against their use. But a third class traveller is dumb and helpless. He does not want to complain even though to go to these places may be to court death. I know passengers who fast while they are travelling just in order to lessen the misery of their life in the trains. At Sonepur flies having failed, wasps have come forth to warn the public and the authorities but yet to no purpose. At the Imperial Capital a certain third class booking office is a Black Hole fit only to be destroyed.

Is it any wonder that plague has become endemic in India? Any other result is impossible where passengers always leave some dirt where they go and take more on leaving.

On Indian trains alone passengers smoke with impunity in all carriages irrespective of the presence of the fair sex and irrespective of the protests of non-smokers. And notwithstanding a byelaw which prevents a passenger from smoking without the permission of his fellow in a compartment which is not allotted to smokers.

The existence of the awful war cannot be allowed to stand in the way of removal of this

gigantic evil. War can be no warrant for tolerating dirt and overcrowding. One could understand an entire stoppage of passenger traffic in a crisis like this, but never a continuation or accentuation of insanitation and conditions that must undermine health and morality.

Compare the lot of the first class passengers with that of the third class. In the Madras case, the first class fare is over five times as much as the third class fare. Does the third class passenger get one-fifth, even one-tenth, of the comfort of his first class fellow? It is but simple justice to claim that relative proportions be observed between the cost and the comfort.

*It is a known fact that the third class traffic pays for the ever increasing luxuries of first and second class travelling. Surely a third class passenger is entitled at least to the bare necessities of life.*

In neglecting the third class passengers, opportunity of giving a splendid education to millions in orderliness, sanitation, decent composite life, and cultivation of simple and clean tastes is being lost. Instead of receiving an object-lesson in these matters, third class passengers have their sense of decency and cleanliness blunted during their travelling experience.

*Among the many suggestions that can be made for dealing with the evil here described, I would respectfully include this: Let the people in high places, the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, the Rajas, the Maharajas, the Imperial Councillors and others who generally travel in superior classes, without previous warning, go through the experience now and then of third class travelling. We would then soon see a remarkable change in the conditions of third class travelling and uncomplaining millions will get some return for the fares they pay under the expectation of being carried from place to place with the ordinary creature comforts.*

Ranchi, 25-9-'17

M. K. GANDHI

### MEENAS OF JAIPUR

Shri Ramsingh Naurawat, Convener, Rajasthan Meena Panchayat, Jaipur, who has been working amongst the Meenas of Jaipur for long narrates to the following effect :

There are four *lakh* Meenas in the Jaipur State. The State authorities have chosen to apply the provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act to this caste, and have thus placed a large number of people under the operation of this cruel law. As can be expected, since the application of this Act, their men and women are no longer allowed free movement, as a consequence of which they can do no business to earn their living. The use of a conveyance is denied to them; cycles, camels or ponies are all equally prohibited. They are not allowed to keep a weapon without the previous permission of the police. Even a *lathi* is a prohibited article. Whenever a theft occurs in any locality, it is taken for granted that one of these people has committed it and their property is forfeited. They are arrested and kept behind the bars without prosecution. As usual they are the victims of police exploitation and have to give bribes. They are forcibly employed without remuneration by rich Marwadis to guard their houses



and property. In this way, even the right of living has been taken away from these people. They are veritable slaves and are constrained to lead sub-human lives.

On the occasion of a special *Mela* on the 14th of April, 1949, when nearly fifty to sixty thousand people had collected together to celebrate the birthday of Shri Mahabirbhagawan, accidentally a fire broke out and there was some disturbance. The police opened fire without notice; four persons were killed and six others seriously injured. An independent inquiry was urged by the Rajasthan Meena Panchayat, but Shri Ramsingh Naurawat says in his report that no action was taken on it. Since the Meenas were supposed to belong to the criminal tribes, their lives were cheap and it was not considered necessary to make any enquiry. Such things would appear preposterous, but for this antiquated Act which should be abolished without delay.

We are still waiting for the Committee which the Government of India promised to appoint for investigating the working of the Act with a view to abolish it.

New Delhi

RAMESHWARI NEHRU

### CAPACITY OF INDIAN LANGUAGES

[In the course of a statement on the language of questions and answers in the Assembly, Shri Ghanshyamsinh Gupta, Speaker of the C.P. Legislative Assembly, explained:

“Speaking strictly, the constitutional position is that except under certain circumstances (in the discretion of the Speaker) English has no place and Hindi and Marathi are the languages to be used. The Constituent Assembly has, in Article 184 of the Constitution, somewhat modified the present position. But that is for the future.”

Proceeding further he gave a discourse which deserves to be studied by all those who are diffident about the capacity of Indian languages. — Ed.]

It has been the universal desire of the honourable members of this House since this Assembly was constituted that our affairs should be conducted in Hindi and Marathi. Sometimes they expressed this desire of theirs in forceful manner. There is no doubt that in this they voiced the feelings of the general public of this Province as their representatives. So it comes to this, that the constitutional position and public opinion demand that we should resort to our own languages as soon as possible in place of English. If there is any hitch in this, it is only the difficulties in our ways. And we must take into account these difficulties if we want to progress on sure ground. We dare not close our eyes to them. The difficulties are of two kinds: one is regarding the vocabulary of our languages and the other is our own unpreparedness. I humbly but very strongly differ from those who think that our languages are incapable of becoming vehicles for carrying out such business as drafting of constitutions and making of laws requiring intricate and fine distinctions in the use of language. I do not admit that our lang-

uages are incapable of this. They are fully capable. There is no doubt that because of their disuse they have not come into their own. It is not the fault of our languages. It is because these fields were the close preserve of the English language and were absolutely denied to our languages. Our languages showed a remarkable stamina and capacity in those spheres which were open to them. Since this sphere also is now open to our languages I have no doubt that in a very short time our languages will show their inherent capabilities in the fields of drafting constitutions and laws. Very soon they will perform all these functions correctly and accurately provided nobody comes in the way of their development.

More than the shortcomings of our languages are our own personal shortcomings. We are habituated to think, to write and to speak in English, and therefore we find it difficult even to conduct our ordinary business in our languages and when we fail to do that, we sometimes fasten our incapacity on our own languages. We have to change our attitude of mind and get habituated to the use of our languages.

\* \* \*

I have no doubt that the time has come when we can safely have our languages, Hindi and Marathi, for the purpose of questions and answers and we may not retrace our steps. The honourable member has given as his argument that there is one honourable member . . . . . who does not know Hindi and Marathi and knows only English . . . . . In this house there are quite a lot of honourable members who have no knowledge of English at all and who know only Hindi or Marathi. As against one member not knowing Hindi and Marathi and knowing only English, we have a large number of members who do not know English. But that is not really the point. If every honourable member were conversant with English, even then I think it is our clear duty that we should replace English by Hindi and Marathi in those fields where there is no risk.

But I find that a special love for English has recently grown in the minds of some of us. They say that if the English language goes, we shall lose much. We shall not be able to conduct our affairs and our efficiency will deteriorate. This reminds me of those old days when some of the political leaders thought that we might agitate for betterment of the British Government but not for its replacement. That was in pre-Tilak days. They used to say that heavens would fall if the British rule ended. Thank God, our Swaraj and the end of the British rule have brought no such calamity. I am positive that no calamity would ever befall if the English language goes away and the fears of those people would be equally false.

GHANASHYAMSINH GUPTA

(Official translation of the original in Hindi)



# HARIJAN

October 23

1949

## IMMORTAL HOPE

When this issue falls into the hands of the reader, India — particularly commercial India — will have just passed through the Divali Week. The round of friendly gatherings and greetings may not have been yet complete. Whether the previous year had proved profitable or otherwise and whether the next one will prove blissful or unhappy, during Divali we like to dream our best dreams for the future, and wish likewise for our friends.

Life and hope are inseparable. It might even be said that hope is life. With hope gone, life itself or at least the desire for it ends. Even the pessimist, if he is carefully and consciously carrying on the functions of life and takes interest in any item of life, has at least some small root of hope still firmly imbedded within. Well has a Gujarati poet said :

“Hope lies immortally hidden even in a million failures”.

If we draw the balance-sheet of the past two or three years of the nation, the total of the success and failures of our hopes will be found to be incalculably great. Since these items are not exactly assessable in terms of money, some will claim that the total of assets is greater than that of liabilities, while others will assert otherwise. It is incapable of exact ascertainment. But we might look at the major items on either side. On the one side, we have the great event of our political Swaraj ; the liquidation of small states, the regrouping of the country into a few major units — a transformation perhaps without precedent throughout Indian history. We can also claim as our assets the great respect and prestige which our country has already secured among the World States ; we have also the honour of presenting to the human race within a single generation not a few men and women of such supreme eminence as have gained admiration throughout the world — Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari, Rajendraprasad, Sarojini Naidu, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and others. The moral value of all these assets is immeasurable.

On the other side, our liabilities and losses are also equally great and difficult of accurate assessment. Our foolish and wicked communal spirit led us into killing thousands of innocent human beings ; made lakhs homeless and resourceless ; they are still to be settled in life ; as if this was not enough, the same wickedness led us into the perpetration of the foulest crime of patricide — nay, not merely patricide, but the assassination of one to whom the whole world looked for guidance and light ; the relations

between India and Pakistan, the two limbs of Bharat, continue still to be very unsatisfactory ; the war in Kashmir, the maintenance and rehabilitation of the displaced people, the famine in Gujarat and Saurashtra, the unbearably high prices, rendered more so on account of profiteering and black-marketing ; the moral degeneration of the Congress and the people ; the inefficiency and corruption of the services and the like : all these are our huge liabilities and losses, the moral value of which is equally enormous.

Every family and every nation has its periods of good and evil luck ; of joys and sorrows caused by births, deaths, sickness, marriage, etc. Some of our miseries are the result of our own ignorance and follies ; some are unavoidable with all our wisdom and foresight. A wise, hopeful and vigorous nation takes such evils without falling into despair, because what is most important for the prosperity and development of a nation is its moral wealth. If we preserve that wealth of ours and keep it ever growing, the other trials and vicissitudes of life are evanescent and often even blessings in disguise.

May God guide us to our moral rehabilitation.

Wardha, 11-10-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

*(Translated from Gujarati)*

## IN HONOUR OF THAKKARBAPA

Readers must have seen in the Press an appeal signed by thirty-seven leaders, prominent citizens and workers, for celebrating Shri Thakkarbapa's completion of 80 years on 29th November next.

Ten years ago when he completed seventy, his assistants in the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi, conceived the idea of presenting a very small purse of six or seven thousand rupees to Thakkarbapa to commemorate that occasion. They communicated their idea to Gandhiji. The smallness of the figure almost gave him a shock. It must be seventy thousand, he decided. The conceivers of the idea were modest Harijan *sevaks* and felt diffident about their capacity to collect a subscription of that amount. But Gandhiji offered his own assistance, and deputed Mahadevbhai for collecting subscriptions. Gandhiji's influence, combined with Mahadevbhai's sweet persuasiveness raised an amount of Rs. 1,17,000 within a few days. It became a successful celebration. Of course, it is well known that under traditions set by Gandhiji, the presentation of a purse is merely another method of raising a fund for a public cause. Nothing goes to the private purse of the honoured individual.

Between 1939 and 1949, there have been unprecedented rises and falls in the monetary condition of our country. We are in the middle of a heavy downward flow at present. So the signatories of the present appeal have altogether refrained from suggesting the presentation of a purse to Bapa on his completion of 80 years.



Instead, they have an idea of publishing a memorial volume in his honour at a cost of about Rs. 25,000 which they hope to collect privately. The net profit of that volume will be expended as Thakkarbapa might desire. To the general public, they appeal that on 29th of November they should pray for Bapa's "long and useful life and pledge their service to the oppressed and depressed of the country for whom he has literally spent himself during the last forty years."

The absence of an appeal for funds must not be mistaken as an indication of sufficiency of funds for Harijans and *Adivasis*, the two dear wards of Thakkarbapa. The necessity for these is all the greater now than before on account of two reasons: Gandhiji, as was his wont, lost no opportunity of collecting small subscriptions for Harijans in public meetings, travels, etc. He also paid all his autograph fees to that fund, and besides relieved his rich visitors and hosts, in a number of ingenious ways, of their notes and ornaments. This brought every year a decent amount to the Harijan Sevak Sangh. This source has been irreplaceably lost. Secondly, several people who were good donors before, since Independence and the raising of the Gandhi Memorial Fund, imagine that it is now for Government and that Fund to do everything in the way of philanthropy and constructive services. They have thus become lukewarm in subscribing to public funds. But while Government and the Gandhi Memorial Fund can help public institutions to a certain extent, it must be remembered that in no country can philanthropy and public causes depend upon Government and a single Trust Fund, however big it might appear to be. These helping bodies have their own rules, regulations and limitations in the way of offering assistance and furthering their development. Also, big funds and governments have always on hand schemes as big as their resources. Ultimately it is the people who must support moderate and small charitable institutions by their generosity. The continuous unconditional donations of the people, even though very small in amount, help the growth of humble institutions much better than a great donation by a rich person or organization hedged with a number of conditions.

I suggest therefore that when Bapa's birthday is celebrated on the 29th November, people attending the meetings will bring some present, whether small or big, as their offering to the cause of Harijans and *Adivasis*, who are the most needy of our countrymen.

An appeal also to the workers themselves. Most workers nowadays take fixed allowances from the institutions. Though such allowances are not always on a liberal scale, still it is necessary that workers themselves should also pay something in charities. They often avoid doing so. This is not in the interest of their own moral development. For Harijans and *Adivasis*, workers, to whatever constructive organization they

might belong, should pay something out of their personal allowances on 29th November.

The amount collected at such meetings should be immediately sent to Shri Thakkarbapa by the organizers and announced locally.

Wardha, 7-10-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA

#### MORAL RESTRAINT IN MILITARISM \*

Pandit Nehru, after laying the foundation stone of the National Defence Academy near Poona on his way to the U.S.A., delivered a short speech. Nowadays, whenever he addresses a public meeting, his mind is full of Bapu's memories and this was a typical occasion for being naturally reminded of him, since there is a definite conflict between military training and Bapu's teachings. Every one realizes this conflict, including Pandit Nehru. He said that the oddness of life was such that they were talking about non-violence and at the same time were starting military academies. He also expressed the hope that, if an Academy were to be started, the training given would be of the very first quality.

Then recalling Bapu's teachings, Pandit Nehru said that they would use their military training not in aggression but only in self-defence and that too helplessly. In saying this, he was not voicing merely his personal opinion but the opinion of the whole country, which gave expression to our self-restraining qualities.

Such contradictions as Pandit Nehru referred to are found in mankind as a whole. Man is made of spirit and body, both of which appear to be mutually contradictory. As our life depends upon both, we have to satisfy both, and that is how it looks odd. This applies equally to our country, which also possesses a soul as well as a body. When the body adjusts itself to the spirit, then the conflict is the least. The spirit of India is non-violent; the first expression of this spirit was made by the seers of old and the latest expression by Mahatma Gandhi. We have to reach that stage of the spirit but before that, this restrained militarism becomes indispensable in many circumstances. We have of course to break this militarism and rise above it. Till our country acquires that strength, military training and our professions of non-violence, though patently contradictory, will stay. We need not be ashamed of that.

Some people believe that the preaching of non-violence will weaken our military power, because the latter is put up as censurable, and therefore made less effective. I feel otherwise. If militarism bears non-violence in mind, it will exercise self-control, which will increase its strength. If we harbour violence in our mind, our physical energy leads us to barbarity and ultimately to failure. If physical prowess alone is considered as strength, then as Poet Kalidas has said, शौर्यं इनापदचेष्टितम् (bravery is brute behaviour). Such outward strength, being

\* (Prayer speech of 9-10-'49 translated from Hindustani).



irrational, aimless, unrestrained and uncontrolled, cannot become successful in these days. The wars of today are ideological and are fought in a wide sphere and, therefore, are not won purely by the strength of arms. In such wars, armed might needs to be supported by objectives, ideas and strength of character. In the recent war between Russia and Germany, the Russians fought with tenacity because they were motivated and inspired by an ideology. I do not say that in an armed fight, only the ideology wins; because armed might is a blind force. Even then, in an ideological war fought on a wide scale, there is necessity for an inspiring ideology along with the strength of arms. If our soldiers possess love of humanity and universal feeling—and that is called *ahimsa* (non-violence)—their prowess will be greatly enhanced and strengthened. It will therefore be beneficial—I would say it is even necessary—to our soldiers to carry non-violence on their lips. As I said in the beginning, we are built of the body and spirit and therefore, in every one of our dealings, we have to keep this oddness or duality—whatever you may call it. On the one hand, we feed our body every day and on the other we train ourselves to feel above it. It is also odd that we believe in the mortality of our body and at the same time feed it regularly with *sattwic* food. But this oddness is such that it will, we hope, one day become a happy combination.

In this respect, Pandit Nehru's speech, it will be realized, was an expression of his pure and simple heart. Some people of late accuse Pandit Nehru of hypocrisy on account of such contradictions; but, whatever his other failings, he is completely free from this failing. I need not speak in his defence; my object today is only to explain an idea.

Wardha

VINOBA

#### NATAL POLL-TAX

[Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi has discovered from his old records a typed copy of the following article contributed by Gandhiji presumably in one or more Indian newspapers in May, 1902. There are one or two obvious typing mistakes which I have indicated in parenthesis. The purpose of reproducing the article at this date in the *Harijan* is primarily to save his miscellaneous writings from being lost. Incidentally, it throws light on the South African question, as well as on Gandhiji's faith in British Imperialism in 1902.

— K. G. M.]

The imperial wave is passing just now throughout the British dominions. There will be general rejoicings wherever the Union Jack is floating at the time of the coronation. At such a time, peace and goodwill unto all British subjects should be the desire of every one owning the sovereignty of Edward VII. There can be no doubt that true imperialism cannot be, unless there is oneness and toleration among all classes of British subjects. Let us see then how the Colony of Natal, which prides itself on being the most (best?) British Colony in South Africa, proposes to render assistance in realizing imperial brotherhood and in spreading peace and

goodwill unto all. The "Times of India" has done excellent service by drawing the attention of the public to the piece of injustice sought to be perpetrated by the Natal Government upon the British Indian settlers in that fair land. To understand thoroughly the gravity of the situation, it is necessary to know the history of Indian emigration to Natal.

As early as 1862, the Colony found after several experiments that it could not "stand on its legs" unless it imported Indian labour in order to develop its agricultural resources. The natives of the soil, 400,000 in number, were found to be too lazy to work. The climate was too trying for the White men to do much outdoor work. When therefore the "fate of the Colony hung in the balance", the Indian Government were approached to help it out of its difficulty. All kinds of inducement were offered to the first Indian settlers and a continual stream of emigrants flowed into the Colony from India. Later on when doubts were entertained with reference to the utility of introducing the Indian element into the Colony, a Commission was appointed to overhaul the whole question and one of the Commissioners, Mr. Sanders, thus records his opinion:

"Indian immigration brought prosperity, prices rose, people were no longer content to grow or sell produce for a song, they could do better, war, (for?), high prices for wool, sugar, etc., kept up prosperity and prices of local produce in which the Indians dealt.....Our records prove as do those of other Colonies that the introduction of coloured labour which develops and draws out the hidden capabilities of the soil and its unoccupied acres opens out at the same time numerous unforeseen fields for the profitable employment of white settlers. If we look back to 1859, we shall find that the assured promise of Indian labour resulted in an immediate rise of revenue.....But a few years later, alarm arose that it would be suspended simultaneously, down went the revenue;.....and yet another change, a fresh promise of renewed Indian immigration created its effect, and up again went the revenue.....Records like these ought to tell their own tale and silence childish sentimentalities and mean jealousies."

The present Premier of the Colony has informed us only lately that a stoppage of Indian emigration would paralyze its industries. The Indian labourer then is admittedly indispensable to the welfare of the Colony. As in 1862, so in 1899 it was India which came to the rescue in its need. Without Indian labour in 1862, it would have become bankrupt, if its legislators have given us correct information. In 1899, as the whole world knows, without an Indian army its capital and its port would have been in the Boer hands.

As a reward for all these services, the Natal Parliament has passed a bill imposing an annual tax of £3 on the children of indentured Indians (males 16 years, females 13), unless on attaining the artificial majority, they would either deport themselves from the Colony, (it is true at its expense. What a poor relief!) or enter into a series of indentures during their stay in the Colony. It may be parenthetically remarked



that the indenture wage is 10sh. per month minimum, and £1 per month maximum, — a rate which is far below the market-rate; moreover breaches of these indentures on the part of the indentured men become criminal offences which under ordinary contracts can only be dealt with civilly.

It is painful to recall the fact that it was Lord Elgin who paved the way for the imposition of a poll-tax on the children of the immigrants by consenting to a levy of the tax on the parents, but we have no hesitation in saying that the parents' liability to pay the tax cannot justify a similar imposition upon the children, for the former at any rate are presumed to know the condition under which they go to Natal, — and lawyers may say if they choose to accept very onerous conditions, it is their look-out. But are the children presumed to know any such conditions? That they are born of such parents is no doubt a misfortune and a serious mistake. Unfortunately they cannot help themselves. The parents again know what indentured labour is, they know what India is, but the same cannot be said of their children born in the Colony. To expect them, after they have perhaps received some education and know their worth in the Colony, either to go to India or to accept a state described by the late Sir W. W. Hunter as that of semi-slavery is a mockery.

Evidently the Colony wants to get all it can out of the poor Indian and to avoid the consequences of the introduction of Indian labour. A more straightforward course to adopt would be, if they would not have the Indian as he is, to do away with Indian labour altogether — an attitude which would be at once intelligible, satisfactory and unexceptionable. We have no desire to force our countrymen on them, but it is nothing but fair to expect a just and British treatment for those who are invited to the Colony, and if it is impossible for the Indian Government to secure for the settlers a fair treatment, and if the Colony would not, of its own accord, stop the state-regulated importation of Indian labour, it is clearly the duty of the Indian Government to help it to do so. We have fortunately a watchful and strong Viceroy in Lord Curzon and we doubt not that His Excellency would not allow the contemplated injustice to be perpetrated. May we not also appeal to the sober-minded people in the Colony itself? We see that one member at least of the Natal Parliament, Mr. Morcom, would have nothing to do with the bill, the un-British character of which he showed in forcible language. We are sure there must be many who think like Mr. Morcom. Why would they not all speak out like him and break down the unreasonable prejudice against the poor British Indians? In the meanwhile, however, we have a right to look upto Mr. Chamberlain to exercise his great and powerful influence with the Colonies on the side of justice and fair-play.

Rajkot, 22-5-1902

M. K. GANDHI

### LEAKAGE OF INFORMATION

In a society based on love, non-violence and self-discipline there is no need for secrecy as such. But even there, discretion has to be used in disclosing confidential matters. But in one based on the strength of laws and regulations, intended changes of policy must be carefully guarded, and any leakage is attended with grave consequences to the well-being of the people.

Dr. John Matthai has just told us that the intention of the United Kingdom to devalue the pound was so carefully concealed that even the Commonwealth Finance Ministers had no inkling about it.

In India it is often different. The information regarding the devaluation of the rupee was announced in some Nagpur papers quicker than elsewhere. The mutilated form in which it was announced created a panic among the people. The form in which it was announced was that the rupee was devalued to 14 as. 7 ps. I wondered how this value was arrived at. It appeared that some reporter with a brain for arithmetic was first to obtain privately from the Secretariat information that the rupee was devalued by 9 cents (from 30 cents to 21 cents). Not knowing what 'cent' exactly referred to, he imagined that the rupee was devalued by 9 per cent. Since 9 per cent would come to 17 ps. roughly, he announced that the rupee was devalued to 14 as. 7 ps. ! The effect of this among the villagers and even semi-literate traders may be imagined.

Similarly, papers are able at times to announce weeks ahead the intended changes in policy. Traders are pre-warned if controls are to be imposed or withdrawn, and they get sufficient time to so manoeuvre that they profit by the changes both ways. The latest instance is of sugar. Even retailers of Wardha came to know days before the freezing order that sugar was likely to be controlled and rates less than their own cost price were likely to be announced. They therefore restricted their own purchases to just their daily sales, although at the time they were in a position to keep greater stocks. What the retailers came to know could not have remained concealed from their suppliers and producers. On the other hand, Government imposed control without any stock in their own hands. This too was pretty well known to traders. This shows what havoc leakage of information creates in the life of the people.

It is well known that some of the big industrialists and bankers have very close contacts with ministers and the Secretariats and they fully exploit the information which they manage to receive in advance to their own advantage and to the detriment of the public. Ministers and Government servants should have a greater sense of responsibility to the State and the public than what prevails.

Wardha, 7-10-'49

K. G. MASHRUWALA



## RETRENCHMENT IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

We hear a good deal of talk about retrenchment and cut in the expenditure of Government. As one with first-hand experience of the departments in the Bombay Province, I offer a few suggestions calculated to bring about not less than 10 per cent to 15 per cent of savings in the normal expenditure of the Provincial Governments.

Revenue is the biggest department that can be tackled first. If a review is made of a number of gazetted and higher subordinate posts which have been created in recent years, nearly 50 per cent of these will be found to be superfluous and unnecessary. Since each of the Departments like Supply, Rural Development and Revenue is under the administration of the Collector (Deputy Commissioner) and is manned by responsible gazetted officers, there seems to be no need for a Personal Assistant for the Collectors. There are head clerks and *chitnises* besides the Supply Officers, Prant Officers etc. to assist the Collectors in the Administration of the District and so the posts of Personal Assistants to the Collectors can be abolished without any loss of efficiency.

Then, in recent years there have been a number of Head Karkuns and A. A. Karkuns appointed in all subordinate Revenue Offices; there is hardly any real need for all these. In a Mamlatdar's (Tahsildar's) office, one will find a greater number of Head Karkuns than the clerks under them. The creation of higher posts without looking to the real need has resulted in a number of junior clerks with hardly 3 to 4 years' service getting promoted as Head Karkuns. As soon as these young clerks are promoted, they assume the authority of merely supervising over the works done by the clerks under them without themselves doing much. The clerks who are all recruits of yesterday or the day before are quite raw and inexperienced and can do very little of useful work. The machinery has thus become very brittle and is nearing a stage when a break-down is round the corner. The remedy is in abolishing the superfluous posts of Head Karkuns by 50 per cent of the present strength, so as to bring back the experienced hands to clerical grades, where they will be able to turn out better work, with a considerably reduced staff. If efficiency is to be brought back, it has to be rather said bluntly, higher grade posts created during the last four years require to be reduced.

Improper distribution of work among the several members of the office is another disease that has paralysed the administration of the present day. If the heads of offices take a little more interest and see that the members working in their offices get sufficient work, properly and evenly distributed this disease can be effectively cured.

The state of affairs described above exists in a lesser degree in other Departments also, such as Rationing, Agriculture, Co-operative and P.W.D. The mere appointment of a Committee to go into the details of the problem will not help very much. That would only mean unnecessary delay in a matter which is of pressing urgency. Indeed a directive should be sent to all Heads of Departments asking for statistics of new higher posts created during the past years and steps to cut them down to the minimum requirement should be taken by the Honourable Ministers of Government.

"ANUBHAVI"

### Evasion of Responsibility

A correspondent, who gives his name but not the address, describes in detail the various methods employed by businessmen for successfully evading the Income-tax, the Sales-tax and black-market profits, through what are known as bogus transfer entries and *satta* transactions. There are methods, he says, whereby every amount is apparently accounted for, and yet payment of taxes amounting to crores of rupees a year is avoided and balances successfully concealed. He professes to give this information in public interest and desires stringent measures and special methods for catching these people, but is, apparently, afraid of being traced out.

What he describes may be, (I believe, is) quite true. But it has no value, since he himself is unable to take the risk or the trouble of helping the law. And correspondents of this type are not few. They complain of corruption, bribery, ill-treatment by police, black market, etc., but no one would pursue the matter himself. They themselves have no leisure or time for it. Every one wants *Government* to trace and catch every malpractice by instituting special classes of C.I.D. and by passing more and more severe laws for punishing the offenders.

This is not the way public life can be corrected and raised. It is the people themselves who have to obey the law in their own person first and disclose those who, to their knowledge, break it. The best of governments cannot do anything without full public co-operation.

Wardha, 2-10-'49

K. G. M.

| CONTENTS  | PAGE |
|---|------|
| RAILWAY TRAVELLING IN 1917 ... GANDHIJI               | 281  |
| MEENAS OF JAIPUR ... RAMESHWARI NEHRU                 | 282  |
| CAPACITY OF INDIAN LANGUAGES ... GHANASHYAMSINH GUPTA | 283  |
| IMMORTAL HOPE ... K. G. MASHRUWALA                    | 284  |
| IN HONOUR OF THAKKARBAPA ... K. G. MASHRUWALA         | 284  |
| MORAL RESTRAINT                                       |      |
| IN MILITARISM ... VINOBA                              | 285  |
| NATAL POLL-TAX ... GANDHIJI                           | 286  |
| LEAKAGE OF INFORMATION ... K. G. MASHRUWALA           | 287  |
| RETRENCHMENT IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS ... "ANUBHAVI" | 288  |
| NOTE:   |      |
| EVASION OF RESPONSIBILITY ... K. G. M.                | 288  |