

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

SUDDEN HEART FAILURES

On Friday (4th August), Col. Ganguli of Nagpur had worked as usual during the whole day, and was apparently in good health till 9 a.m. He suddenly took ill thereafter, and before midnight came, he was reported dead.

On Saturday (5th), Shri Gopinath Bardoloi had a busy day, and had returned home at about 10 p.m. after attending a function apparently in normal health. At 11 p.m. he had a heart attack, and at 2-40 a.m., the doctors declared that he had ceased to live. Both were about 59 years old.

Dying in harness and without a lingering illness is an enviable condition — particularly to people who are continuously ill and often seriously so, and yet seem to be never wanted by *Yama*. Also, a short but useful and brilliant career is far more preferable and is a greater boon to society than the mere functioning of the heart for 80 or 90 years without any use to the world. Nevertheless these sudden deaths by heart failure of men in responsible positions are a subject for serious consideration. They have become almost an item of daily news. Surely there is something in our modern activities, which offends against the laws of nature, to cause them.

One of the aims of modern science is to annihilate distance and time. If it were possible, we would start from India after breakfast in the morning, take lunch in London, dinner in New York, and return home before sleeping time. During these 12 hours, we would take part in half a dozen conferences, interview several visitors, and address or face huge gatherings. As it is, within a week our ministers can pay visits to every province of India, where they undergo all the strain involved in them. In the brief period of a week, they endeavour to cope with more tasks than what great empire-builders of past ages performed in, perhaps, a year. But while the net result of our hectic activities is not much greater than that of the statesmen of previous ages, the better means of travelling and communication have enormously, and much of it unnecessarily, increased the volume of work, which each has to perform. I think that more

than 60 per cent of the meetings and functions and visits could be dispensed with without any loss to the public. This unnecessary strain on the physical system, accompanied with transgressions of the laws of nature in respect of food, drink, rest, exercise, emotional excitements etc., seems to be the principal cause of these sudden deaths. Not for austerity as an end by itself, but in the interest of public life and duty, statesmen and leaders with heavy responsibilities should rigorously regulate their life. Leaders think that it is their duty not only to grant interviews and address meetings etc., but that they may not refuse tea, refreshments, food, possibly liquor too, etc., no matter how many times and at what hour of the day they might be offered, and to find time to witness any showy and passion-stirring performance arranged for their entertainment. And this sort of life has to be led from early morning till late in the night from this end of the year to the other. And, strangely, if they run away from this for a few days in order to take rest, the period is not one of solitary retirement but of fun, frolic and free eating. The heaviness of the body is mistaken for robustness, and several of the ministers, officers and legislators are getting rounder than what they were ever before. Not the best of constitutions can put up with these infringements of nature's laws with impunity. They know it, but try to save themselves by drugs. But nature is not to be hoodwinked, and suddenly and unexpectedly, her arresting officer comes to take one in her custody. Let us seriously think if our time-saving and distance-killing conveniences are drawing not only the distant corners of the world near to us but also the moment of our exit from the world.

There is no reason to look upon death as an unwanted thing. It is a fitting culmination of a good life. A good and healthy life should also end in a healthy way, that is, without illness and at an age when all the responsibilities of the man have been taken charge of by younger men. It is also better to die in harness rather than by reason of disease. But it should also be remembered that the death of a horse in harness often betokens cruelty of the owner. So too, if our leaders die in the midst of their duties, it means that our civilization cruelly kills them.

Just a day or two before Shri Bardoloi's death, there was a report in the Press that a tonga-driver had been sentenced with imprisonment for cruelly whipping his horse to death, while harnessed to the tonga. The horse had, indeed, died in harness, but the driver was not to be exonerated. Can this civilization, which whips to death her best devotees, be exonerated?

Wardha, 9-8-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

A GOOD EXAMPLE

Mr Abdul Qayum Ansari has done well in deciding not to accept any invitation to feasts, which are "one of the most pernicious sources of food wastage". As he rightly says,

"It is really a huge mockery to hold feasts and waste precious foodgrains over false shows and merry-makings, when millions of our countrymen are in the clutches of starvation and slow death. I appeal to all to exercise a little patience and resist the temptation of holding or attending feasts so long as the situation of the country does not improve. Both the holding and the attending of any type of feast should be considered a sin. As long as the food position of India does not improve I have decided not to accept any invitation to feasts. I beseech my countrymen to keep before their mind's eye the haggard faces of the dead and the dying while they think of holding or attending feasts and wasting precious foodgrains over them—foodgrains that could have saved the lives of millions of their unfortunate brethren."

I hope his example will be followed by others. Incidentally it stands in contrast against the recent Bombay order, which has relaxed the feast rule of the last two years or more.

At-Homes and Parties

It will be appropriate, in this connection, for correspondents, who often draw my attention to news items in the Press of at-homes and parties given in the Government House and by Ministers in New Delhi or States, to know that the public has been several times informed that no rationed article is used at such functions. Correspondents never seem to remember it and always find some bitter words to find fault with these functions. This is unfair to office-holders. But having regard to the general situation, it would be better if the authorities restrict them to absolutely unavoidable occasions, and either avoid publicizing it, or do not forget to mention on each occasion what the menu consisted of. After all, how is it an important event which the world needs know, that the President or the Prime Minister was at home with the members of his Parliament or in honour of a distinguished guest? Such things are a part of their routine public life and must be taken for granted. It would be necessary to publicize the function, if there was a novel feature in it, such as for instance, that lemons being very costly, the guests were served with tamarind water, along with salt, soda bi-carb and pepper added to taste, or instead of mangoes, oranges and other costly fruits, berries, *karaundas* and similar forest fruits were laid on the tables.

Wardha, 16-8-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

PRAHLADA, THE FATHER OF NAI TALIM

[Extracts from a speech delivered on 30th April, 1950 at Gram Seva Kendra, Shivrampally, on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Buniyadi Talim Mandir by Swami Sitaram of Vinayashram.]

The life of Prahlada was one of truth and non-violence. One could compare him to Buddha. Prahlada's life was dedicated not only to these great ideals but to the removal of ignorance and the spread of the light of knowledge through education from the time of conception to the time of extinction of the body. That is the reason why this particular day (*Narasimha Jayanti, Vaishakh Sudi 14th*) was selected for the opening of the Buniyadi Talim Mandir (Basic Training School).

One who is acquainted with our ancient culture and Puranic history, should know that today is *Narasimha Jayanti*. Personally I call it *Prahlada Jayanti*. It is but the good fortune of one and all of us that a personality even greater than Prahlada and Buddha was born in our times. Like Prahlada he practised truth and non-violence in his life, but even more than Prahlada, he extended its application to every sphere of activity including politics.

Gandhiji told us that the child begins to learn, even when he is in his mother's womb. Compare this teaching with Prahlada's own life as narrated to us in the *Puranas*. Prahlada's father was Hiranyakashipu. He was a tyrant and a menace to the people and the world. His uncle Hiranyaksha was no better. They say that the latter attempted to roll the whole world like a mat and carry it away. To interpret this in modern language, we should only say that he was a tyrant and an arch imperialist. Strangely enough a child like Prahlada was born in the family of such ruthless tyrants. It shows that God can make some good to result out of even all evil. The lovely lotus is to be found only amidst dirty mud. But this is not to say that this happens as a result of any eccentric whim of the Divine mood. There is reason for everything and there is one for this too. Prahlada's life has proved it beyond doubt. As the story goes, at the time when Prahlada was still in the womb, his mother was kept in the *ashrama* of the Sage Narada. Narada used to speak to the mother about goodness and divinity and all that he said was assimilated even by the child Prahlada in the womb. These impressions had great bearing on his actual life. This was well understood by our law-givers and is the reason for clear injunctions that pregnant women should be treated with kindness and understanding, that they should never see things of horror and should be guarded against all ugly spectacles like eclipses, or scenes of war and conflicts. These traditions have been handed down and are observed carefully even among the poor people. In order to secure the best sympathy and understanding, and an atmosphere of love and affection, a pregnant woman is sent to her mother's place. She is generally given nice food; and attempts are made to look to her comforts. All these things are done so that the child might not only resemble its parents in its physical appearance but should also acquire their traits and characters, and inherit the impressions of the surroundings in which it is born.

The child in the womb has power to destroy even bad *karma* and create good *karma*. Ancient masters believed that the child even though inside the womb can establish its connection with the Almighty. The story of Vamadev is the stock instance. It is stated that he had the vision of Divinity while he was still in the womb and that his soul had been freed before he was born. We have also the instance of Arjuna in later history. Arjuna is said to have confided the secrets and technique of *padmavyuha* warfare to his wife Subhadra, when she was carrying Abhimanyu. For sometime she continued to give the nod of being attentive, but later she was drowsy and fell into a slumber. Thereupon the unborn Abhimanyu started giving the nod from inside. Unfortunately, Abhimanyu learnt the technique only incompletely as Lord Krishna intervened and stopped

Arjuna from completing his discourse. This incident has its own significance. The child not only could hear what Subhadra heard but could also see through the help of her eyes. These pieces of evidence show that the child begins to learn even from the mother's womb. Education starts in the womb and continues even in the early parts of childhood through the help of the mother.

Gandhiji advocated what is known as pre-Basic education, that is from 3 to 7 years. From 1 to 3 years the child grows and absorbs and depends wholly on its mother's efforts, if there is no possibility to place the child immediately to an ante-pre-Basic education centre. In the industrial areas, in big factories, mothers are provided with creches for the children, where they are looked after and provided milk and nursing. If this is not done, evils like giving opium to children, as was done in Bombay, show their face. In the year 1921, we fought against such evils. Now we are an independent nation and have acquired Swaraj.

Education passes through many phases. First is the stage of the child in the womb; next are the ante-pre-Basic and pre-Basic stages; thereafter Basic education, as it is called, till 14 years of age; after this post-Basic college education; subsequently adult education, and education even during the whole life-time of a person until his death. And the method of imparting all such education is through the instruments a man uses in his profession. The tiller can learn through the grain, the mason through sand and stores.

There are temples, churches and mosques and other charities in our country. They are innumerable. The old rulers were wise men. They bestowed land endowments to provide for adequate funds for running these institutions. These institutions served also as places of learning and education. Even now these endowments continue to exist and they yield far more than what they did previously and after expenditure much surplus is left. These surplus incomes should be put to a good use in the field of education.

I was born in a rich family. I know what wealth means. But there is no greater wealth in the world than our children. If we desire that we should have a cleaner and more peaceful world, we should impart proper education to our children so that they could become architects of a good world and become good citizens of the world.

The responsibility of parents for the behaviour of children is equally great. That is why when people marry they should be very careful. Marriage is a sacrament and trust. It demands that we should bring forth only good children. Personally I may do little damage by being bad. But if my children and their children are bad, they are capable of doing greater harm to the world. It is said that till the seventh generation children acquire the character and defects of their ancestors. Take for example the case of leprosy: it remains and leaves traces till the seventh generation. That is why Gandhiji advocated *brahmacharya*. This has not been understood properly. *Sada-brahmacharya* (constant self-control) may also mean bringing forth good and healthy children. The best way to serve the cause of humanity is to refrain from bringing forth children, who may be unhealthy and evil-minded and thus cause trouble not only to themselves but to others.

I went round the surroundings here. The garden here contains good fruit trees, the wall plates bear the names of people who have extended their generosity to this institution. But all institutions require the help of both the rich and the poor. Donations and generosity must be extended not only to this institution but to all institutions, wherever they exist, for the benefit of the country. Consider what you give to this institution as putting money in a National Educational Bank. Every rich man is a National Bank on which the servant of the country can write a draft. What is the use of wealth, if it cannot be put to good purpose? Generosity and philanthropy cannot be restricted to any particular religion or sect or locality.

Generosity well directed will pay richest dividends in the national interest.

In conclusion, Basic education is most essential for the people of our country today. Through Basic education should be taught the gospel of *ahimsa* and truth. Perfection belongs to man and to all animate and inanimate things on the face of the earth. What of this earth, life, if any, even on the millions of other planets shares this characteristic. So if out of *Poorna*, that is perfection, perfection comes out, nothing of the original *Poorna* is lost. We all know the maxim of the mathematicians. If out of infinity, infinity is subtracted, only infinity remains.

Let us all further the cause of Basic education and help the national wealth of our country by transforming our children into better citizens of the world and aim at perfect living.

SITARAM

PRICE LEVELS AND PRODUCTION

There has been of late a great deal of talk as to the connection between deflation, controls and production. Dr Werner Zimmerman, a follower of the late Silvio Gessel, had been in our country a few months ago. He, naturally, favoured stabilizing present price levels and managing the volume of money in circulation by activating or retarding the rate of circulation by regulating the amount of issue money by an index compass. This idea seems to have fascinated a few amongst us.

It is necessary to understand the background with which Dr Zimmerman is speaking and the vast difference that would make to our own setting. He is thinking of a highly literate people working under conditions of general industrialization. To some extent these two conditions prevail in our large cities. But on the whole we have to think of the masses of our people who are practically illiterate and are engaged on agriculture or allied occupations.

Industrial sector is built on money and credit mechanism and by manipulating these delicate nerves of this organization it is possible to control its working within limits. Labour here is also affected by the money wage and is towed along with the fate of industries.

Our agricultural section is largely based on weather conditions and *primaevial* wants. Whether the prices are high or low, whether interests and rents are attractive or not the peasant will plough his land to get his morsel of bread even if it be only to fill his stomach half way. Strictly in an agricultural economy interest and rent should not arise. Such of it as we find is a carry over from the industrial sector. Subsistence farming is what we have in India. Its economy differs widely from that of agricultural production for exchange as practised in the U.S.A., Canada or Australia. Therefore, in subsistence farming while hoarding has a place banking has none. What our farmer wants is to be able to depend on his purchasing power to carry him from one harvest to another. If burying it will ensure this banking will be all the bother for him. Interest and rent are aliens to such an economy.

Hence Dr Zimmerman's schemes will not affect price levels and production in our country especially in the rural parts. What is not efficient to regulate the productivity of about 80 per cent of our people need claim no priority on our attention.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

HARIJAN

August 26

1950

INDIA'S FOOD CRISIS

There is some amount of truth in the complaint which the Food Minister of India made at the opening ceremony of the *Indian News Chronicle*, at New Delhi. He holds not a very enviable office in the Central Cabinet, and one feels sympathy for his mood of depression. In his speech, Shri Munshi is reported to have laid down the following propositions :

(1) The food self-sufficiency of India is not a national problem, but an international problem of the greatest importance ;

(2) We must have a unified system of procurement and share in the food resources in all the provinces ;

(3) Consequently, in the present crisis all provincial barriers must go ;

(4) No province can have a 14-ounce ration, when another is having only 6 ounces ;

(5) No minister, no Government can solve the problem of such magnitude without having the full support of the nation as a whole ;

(6) The charge of complacency against the Government of India is entirely unjustified ;

(7) The panic is entirely unjustified and is, in part, the result of hostile propaganda ;

(8) The parties to blame for the present situation are the hoarder, the ghost card-holder, the corrupt official, the general atmosphere which maintains the black-market, and the vastness of the problem ;

(9) These can be removed only by the nation supporting the Government as "one man".

He is also reported to have said, "During the last two months, everybody seemed to think that he had the power to kill monkeys, grow more food, to move wagons which did not exist, supply rice which was not in existence, and keep alive people who died 20 years ago. If I say that more food is grown into the country, it is doubted. If we enquire into alleged starvation deaths, some critics begin to say that there were starvation deaths, and, if not, there ought to have been. Every one seems to be knocking everything about the food except the Government of India." He made an appeal to the country to rise superior to this and do its utmost to restore confidence.

It is to be regretted that in the above paragraph Shri Munshi should have spoiled his appeal and invited further severe criticism of himself by giving vent to rhetoric.

Otherwise there is much worthy of sympathetic consideration in the nine propositions set forth above. But while sympathizing with him and agreeing with him on some at least of these points, it is necessary to mention that there are other propositions, which need to be considered by the Government of India, in order to make the nation support the Government as "one man", as Shri Munshi desires. Why does not the nation co-operate with the Government in the utmost production and just and equal distribution of food ? Surely it is not that the nation does not acutely feel the shortage of food and the extreme pressure on its purse on account of high prices—even when it is available at control prices ! It should be accepted without doubt that barring the comparatively small number of land-owners and grain-dealers, the nation in general is extremely interested in growing as much food as possible, and having it priced as low as possible, and getting it without resorting to the black-market. No landless agricultural labourer, no worker of factories, and no peon, clerk or other employee with a fixed salary can want prices to soar high or prefer to purchase from a hard-hearted employer or grain-dealer, if he could get regular, sufficient and good food from the official ration-shops. These constitute at least 70 per cent of the people. Of the remaining 30 per cent, about 5 per cent may be classed under those who are so well-to-do that they do not mind how high the prices go and are unrumbling patrons of the black-market. The balance of 25 per cent may be allowed for that section of cultivators and merchants, who are interested in creating scarcity and raising the prices. Thus 70 per cent of the nation are immensely interested in the production of the highest possible quantity of food at the cheapest prices possible. Of these 10 per cent may be deducted as belonging to that class who are not in a position to contribute anything towards growth of food, being town-dwellers and non-agricultural workers. But 60 per cent consisting of landless agricultural labourers and 20 per cent or more of land-owners take direct share in the production of food. The co-operation of these 80 per cent of the nation is required to solve the food problem. The Government of India has spent money and energy enough after the "grow more food campaign" in the shape of speeches, broadcasts and advertisements. The advertisements appear even in English papers, although few working on land can read or understand them. But it is still constrained to complain that the co-operation of the people is not forthcoming, and everybody wants the Government

to do what the people should themselves have the enthusiasm to do. This should be an indicator for the search of the causes, which make the people non-co-operate at their own cost and risk. However illiterate our people might be, surely they are not so dull-headed as not to understand their own interests. The causes must, therefore, be sought in the country's economic and social system and the policy of the Government. There must be serious defects in both, killing the people's enthusiasm to work even for their own life. Unless these causes are studied and removed, no amount of appeals, threats, coercion or fidgetiness can bring about a change in the people's behaviour. A peculiar and strong characteristic of our people is their instinctive non-co-operation with any movement, which they don't appreciate. They do not always care to organize an active propaganda against unpopular movements as long as they can stifle them with silent and sullen non-co-operation. Let it be realized that this is actually happening at present, and unless policies are revised in favour of food-growers, in the words of Shri Munshi, "no Minister, no Government can solve the problem of such magnitude."

After all man is a gregarious animal. He loves and wants society. He cannot afford to be anti-social. And yet if he is behaving so, we must exert to find out where the current of social instincts has failed and what can be done to repair it in order to electrify the nation.

Wardha, 16-8-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

Assam's Calamity

The extent of the quake calamity of Assam is still only partly known. We do not yet know the areas beyond Assam which have been similarly shaken, and the amount of damage done there. The little that we know is sufficient to tell us that it is the second greatest earthquake of the world since scientific records have been maintained, and even the damage already reported is incalculable. As details are gathered, its accounts might put in the background the anecdotes of the Bihar and the Quetta shocks.

A calamity has fallen on Bihar too, also by heavy floods. The great railway accident of Karmanasa is also a major calamitous incident. Though these might all look pale before the one of Assam, every one of these events must move us to the depth of our hearts and raise the noblest sentiments man is capable of and stir us to acts of help, service and self-purification. Such events should make us forget all differences of distance, race, language, religion, nationality etc., and make us realize that all life is one and a mishap to one of its parts is a pain to the whole.

Wardha, 19-8-'50

K. G. M.

KOREA AND NON-VIOLENCE

Please find space in the pages of *Harijan* for an appeal to your readers for constructive suggestions as to possible action that those who believe in non-violence can take quite apart from any action that may be taken by Governments, to hasten peace and to bring succour to the land and people of Korea. Since the fighting in Korea began, I have had several letters asking me "What are the world pacifists doing about Korea?" I am not sure what a "world pacifist" is, or whether such a person exists. But what I am rather sure is that all those, who believe that there are non-violent ways of resisting evil and violence and that the way of life taught by Gandhiji can be practised in all situations, ought to be asking: "What can and must we do about this new outbreak of naked violence?" I am entirely unconvinced by those who say: "We ought to have acted sooner. Now it is too late." Surely, it is never too late to try to sow seeds of peace in the midst of strife.

But what can we do? Here are one or two things that may give some idea of possible lines of action. I learn that members of the War Resisters League, and perhaps others in America, issued a printed leaflet demanding mediation, which they distributed at Lake Success early in July. And some undertook a fast. Similarly in London, the "Faithful Few", if I may so describe them, got busy along these same lines. These efforts are continuing. No doubt in other countries similar efforts are being undertaken. They do not get into the Press, because I suppose they do not fit the popular mood. But surely these are the things that we, who believe in ways of peace, should tell each other about, so that we may support one another in these efforts.

In Calcutta, a meeting had been held, attended by representatives of the local Red Cross and of the International Red Cross, the Marwari Relief Society, the local Y.M.C.A. and the Friends' Service Unit, together with concerned individuals, which "expressed its deep concern for arranging some relief and reconciliation work in connection with the Korean conflict." They would like to see a relief or ambulance team formed in India, preferably on a national basis, to serve in both North and South Korea. I am also assured from the Quakers in England that if anything of this sort is undertaken in India, under Indian leadership, but allowing for international personnel, they and others would be keenly interested, and would like to participate in some way.

Please do not think that I am trying to persuade any one to abandon essential work that they are already doing, which may be attacking the real roots of war more effectively than anything that can be done by a Relief Unit for Korea. I am not even sure that a Relief Unit is the right answer. But, taking the pacifists

or Satyagrahis as a whole, I am not convinced that we can be satisfied to say, in answer to those who ask us, "What are you doing about Korea?", "We are going on with our regular work". Yes, that we certainly must do. But I think we ought also to do something more. What can your readers advise? And what offers of service can they make?

24, Rajpur Road, Delhi

HORACE ALEXANDER

[Note: I feel rather diffident and do not venture to give any advice. It seems it is to a great extent a matter of temperament and different individual capacities. Going to distant lands and working among unknown peoples comes naturally to some, and many a such noble humanitarian has done splendid and immortal service to suffering humanity. To others, working nearer home to establish peace and goodwill among their own neighbours appears to be the only thing they can do. The world is large enough for both types of workers. Let each choose according to his temperament and capacity.

K. G. M.]

FOR AND AGAINST VANASPATI

Correspondents inform me of the methods adopted by *vanaspati* agents to obtain signatures in favour of *vanaspati*. As the writers are from different provinces, it appears that they are in accordance with a plan. One correspondent says that a fee of five annas per signature is paid by way of commission to canvassers of signatures. They do this job by standing in a crowded street and accosting passers-by, getting into a bus or a train and inducing passengers, entering a tea-shop and asking customers to give their signatures in favour of *vanaspati*. Another says that he met a canvasser, who offered a free cup of tea to every one who would put down his signature. A third one says that four annas were paid down in cash to the signatory. I hope some of these stories might be exaggerated in the sense that although they are from different provinces, such canvassers must be exceptional.

On the other side, I find that several people in various provinces have of their own accord taken upon themselves the duty of canvassing signatures in support of Pt. Bhargava's Bill. So far as I know it is all voluntary work on the part of the people, who honestly hold that the manufacture of *vanaspati* is not in the interest of the country. They have been doing this work at their own expense, and if credit for prompting them to do so has to be shared between *Vanaspati* Manufacturers' and *Vanaspati* Objectors' Organizations, I think greater credit is due to the former. Their very frantic activity for obtaining monster petitions for *vanaspati* has created a scare among the public who are opposed to it. They thought that if no counter-petitions are made the cause of the public might fail by mere neglect. Some people even wrote

to me that I should meet the propaganda of the manufacturers by an equally well-organized counter-propaganda, and must not content myself by writing now and then in *Harijan*. But my capacities being extremely limited, having neither the physical energy nor the monetary resources and organizational capacity for such movements, I wrote to my correspondents that people must act on their initiative without expecting any prompting or direction from me. Nearest to me Shri Radhakrishna Bajaj, Secretary of the All India Goseva Sangh, is, of course, playing his part within the limitations of his institution. But even he does not receive any prompting from me. It is all his initiative. Perhaps, it is he who has made me do what I have done in the matter. Similarly, Shri Hardev Sahaya in East Punjab and New Delhi, Muni Santbalji in Gujarat, the Anti-*Vanaspati* Committee in Nagpur and similar prominent or non-prominent workers in various parts of the country have taken up the work out of their own feelings in the matter. Shrimati Kaushalyadevi Chaudhari, a lady far off in the Himachal Pradesh, has sent me a well-bound book containing a few hundred signatures in support of the Bhargava Bill. She assures me that not one signatory is illiterate, or under 18 years of age, or has put down his or her signature without full knowledge of the contents.

This voluntary response of the public is very instructive as it is encouraging. It shows that when people have a daily realization that a particular substance which they thoroughly dislike is forced upon them they will enthusiastically and voluntarily support a movement directed against it. Whatever might happen ultimately to Pt. Thakurdas Bhargava's Bill, I consider that its publication for eliciting public opinion, was a welcome step. It has given the people an opportunity to express their opinion both ways without fear.

I believe we would have a repetition of the same experience if suitable proposals are made in respect of such other burning topics of the day, as touch the daily life of the people, e.g., controls, food-crops vs. money-crops, etc. By suitable proposals, I do not mean mere academic discussions about these, but proposals meant to be put into execution.

Wardha, 8-8-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

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ASHRAM OBSERVANCES IN ACTION

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Introduction

(Begun on April 5, 1932)

Ashram here means a community of men of religion. Looking at the past in the light of the present, I feel that an ashram was a necessary of life for me. As soon as I had a house of my own, my house was an ashram in this sense, for my life as a householder was not one of enjoyment but of duty discharged from day to day. Again besides the members of my family I always had some friends or others living with me, whose relation with me was spiritual from the first or became such later on. This went on unconsciously till 1904 when I read Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, which made a deep impression on me. I determined to take *Indian Opinion* into a forest where I should live with the workers as members of my family. I purchased 100 acres of land and founded Phoenix settlement, which neither we nor any one else called an *ashram*. It had a religious basis but the visible object was purity of body and mind as well as economic equality. I did not then consider *brahmacharya* to be essential; on the other hand it was expected that co-workers would live as family men and have children. A brief account of Phoenix will be found in *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

This was the first step.

The second step was taken in 1906. I learnt in the school of experience that *brahmacharya* was a *sine qua non* for a life devoted to service. From this time onward I looked upon Phoenix deliberately as a religious institution. The same year witnessed the advent of Satyagraha which was based on religion and implied an unshakable faith in the God of Truth. Religion here should not be understood in a narrow sense, but as that which acts as a link between different religions and realizes their essential unity.

This went on till 1911. All these years the Phoenix settlement was progressing as an *ashram* though we did not call it by that name.

We took the third step in 1911. So far only those people lived at Phoenix who were working in the press and the paper. But now as a part of the Satyagraha movement we felt the need of an *ashram* where Satyagrahi families could live and lead a religious life. I had already come in contact with my German friend Kallenbach. Both of us were living a sort of ashram life. I was a barrister and Kallenbach an architect. However we led a comparatively very simple life in the sparsely populated country, and were religiously minded. We might commit mistakes out of ignorance but we were trying to seek the root of every activity in religion. Kallenbach purchased a farm of 1,100 acres and the Satyagrahi families settled there. Religious problems faced us now at every step

and the whole institution was managed from a religious standpoint. Among the settlers there were Hindus, Musalmans, Christians and Parsis. Yet I do not remember that they ever quarrelled with one another, though each was staunch in his own faith. We respected one another's religion and tried to help everybody to follow his own faith and thus to make spiritual progress.

This institution was not known as Satyagraha Ashram but as 'Tolstoy Farm'. Kallenbach and I were followers of Tolstoy and endeavoured to practise much of his doctrine. Tolstoy Farm was closed in 1912 and the Farmers were sent to Phoenix. The history of Tolstoy Farm will also be found in *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

Phoenix now was no longer meant for the workers of *Indian Opinion* only; it was a Satyagraha institution. That was only to be expected, for the very existence of *Indian Opinion* was due to Satyagraha. Still it was a great change. The even tenor of the lives of the settlers at Phoenix was disturbed, and they had now to discern certainty in the midst of uncertainty like the Satyagrahis. But they were equal to the new demands made upon them. As at Tolstoy Farm, so also at Phoenix I established a common kitchen in which some joined while others remained aloof. The congregational prayer in the evening played a large part in our lives. And the final Satyagraha campaign was started by the inmates of Phoenix settlement in 1913. The struggle ended in 1914. I left South Africa in July that year. It was decided that nearly all who wanted to go to India should be enabled to go there. Before going to India I had to meet Gokhale in England. The idea was to found a new institution in India for those who went there from Phoenix. And the communal life commenced in South Africa was to be continued in India. I reached India early in 1915 with a view to establish an *ashram* though I was still unaware that I would call it by that name.

I toured all parts of India for a year, and visited some institutions from which I had much to learn. I was invited by several cities to establish the ashram in their neighbourhood with a promise of assistance in various ways. Ahmedabad was selected at last. This was the fourth, and I imagine the last step. Whether or not it will always be the last is something of which no forecast is possible. How was the new institution to be named? What should be its rules and regulations? On these points I had full discussions and correspondence with friends, as a result of which it was designed to call the institution Satyagraha Ashram. It is an appropriate name if we take its object into consideration. My life is devoted to the quest of truth. I would live and if need be, die in prosecuting it, and of course I would take with me as many fellow pilgrims as I can get.

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

(To be concluded)

QUESTION-BOX

Election of the Congress President

Q: There is likely to be a triangular contest for the Congress Presidentship among Shri Purushottamdas Tandon, Acharya Kripalani and Shri Shankarrao Dev. The election is important particularly as under the new Constitution of the Congress, this office will now be held by the incumbent for three years. Whom should the delegates who think more or less on Gandhiji's lines prefer?

A: I feel very little interest in the present Congress organization. I am afraid that the organization has fallen so low morally that honest men should abandon it altogether. But I know that all do not share this view which they think to be that of a defeatist and a retreator. Any way, whether good or evil, it is the organization which none of the present Governments can ignore, and so the election of its President has its peculiar importance.

I had long before expressed the opinion that the Prime Minister, i.e. the *de facto* leader of the country is the only right person to preside over his party. Shri Mohanlal Saxena put it the other way when he said that the President of the Congress should be the Prime Minister of India. For day to day work, a Chairman of his choice might be appointed. But if this is regarded impracticable, the next thing necessary is to see that the Congress President is a person who will be a real source of strength, support and advice to the Prime Minister. The relations between the two should be very cordial and their approaches to various important and far-reaching problems should be as much as possible identical. If it is not so, the Congress President and the Prime Minister can hardly feel at ease with each other, and sooner or later one would have to leave or suppress himself.

It was very much desirable, as Acharya Kripalani suggested, that the Working Committee should have given the lead to the Congress by recommending their candidate. That they could not do so is just another symptom of the deterioration that has set in in the organization. In my opinion, the next best thing is for the Prime Minister to unequivocally declare his preference. Or, alternatively, the candidates should declare what their views are in relation to those of the Prime Minister on matters which are seriously debated by Congressmen.

Holding the views as stated above, I think that the delegates should consider the election of the President as in a way a vote on the Prime Minister. If they want the present Prime Minister to continue to govern the country, they should give him a President, who will be a source of strength, if not also inspiration, to him. If they want him to leave that high office, they should give him a President, who will be a thorn in his sides.

The Prime Minister's views are well known. He is an internationalist, a thorough non-communalist, extremely broad-minded on matters of religion, culture, language etc. He hates intrigues, group politics and all those ugly features which are ruining our public life. These are all points which are, I believe, dear to constructive workers. At the same time his views on industrialization and his approach to village industries often puzzle constructive workers. He has also the reputation of spending too much public money and launching too heavy schemes. But I am not sure that he alone is to be blamed for the top-heavy administration. At any rate, I do not see among other leaders also any, who will satisfy the ideals and aspirations of constructive workers on these matters.

Upon all these considerations my view is that if constructive workers have any say in the matter they should vote for the candidate, who will be a help to the Prime Minister, and who will do his utmost to purge the Congress of the evils of corruption, *goondaism*, communalism, parochialism etc. Let the Prime Minister declare his choice or let the candidates declare what their attitude towards the Prime Minister will be, and on that the delegates should make their choice of the candidate for the President's office.

Yarn Contributions

Q: May I know if the people of other provinces can also send their contribution of hanks to the Sevagram Ashram? The doubt has arisen because the appeal is addressed to the people of Saurashtra.

A: As Shri Narandas Gandhi's activities are mainly confined to Saurashtra, he naturally made an appeal to his own provincials. But there is no objection to any one presenting self-spun yarn hanks to the Sevagram Ashram. However, for the facility of making a correct estimate of the response to the appeal, it is desirable that all contributions should be sent through Shri Narandas Gandhi, Rashtriya Shala, Rajkot (Saurashtra).

Wardha, 17-8-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

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