

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## MISAPPLIED SCIENCE

Last month while I was ill, a news item in the *Hindustan Times* was brought to my notice, which I felt I must write about as soon as I was able. It is dated Mysore, October 22nd, 1950, and gives a description of the formal opening of the Government of India Technological Research Institute in that city. The passage which has struck in my mind, as if thrust into it red hot, reads as follows:

"He (Dr S. S. Bhatnagar) declared: 'I have assured Rajaji and others who have made anxious enquiries about the immediate usefulness of this Institute that within a year of its inauguration, it will make a distinct contribution towards the solution of food shortages in India by its technological research.'

"Dr Bhatnagar stated: 'New food industries such as the manufacture of breakfast cereals and yeast are being established in the country and for their proper development, a research institute is a real necessity.'"

Breakfast cereals and yeast, forsooth! What fraction of good will they do to the hungry masses? These things will, at the most, supply more delicacies to those who are already fully, if not overfed. It is a big joke, but a still bigger tragedy. Our leading men of science, who are now-a-days busy *developing the country* are so completely divided from the toiling poor that it is impossible for them to think in terms appropriate to the needs of the millions.

The distinguished Doctor, whom I know personally, must forgive me for my frankness. In the name of the voiceless tillers of the soil, who produce the food that counts, I would appeal to him, and all those in his category, to apply their science to the labourer's hut and empty stomach instead of the rich man's breakfast table.

Pashulok, 24-11-'50

MIRA

By Mahatma Gandhi

BAPU'S LETTERS TO MIRA

(Written to Mirabehn during 1924-'48)

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## IMPROVEMENT OF KHADI IMPLEMENTS

[Summary of speech delivered by Shri Krishnadas Gandhi, Secretary, A. I. S. A., on 18th November 1950, at the Fourth All-India Khadi Conference, Mathurai (Tamilnad).]

This is the fourth session of the Khadi Implements Conference. The small beginning on which we embarked three years ago has opened up a new hope. It brings in a glint of light in the field of *khadi*. *Khadi* is struggling for its very existence. It is a critical problem and demands from us a decisive answer. Lovers of *khadi* build great hopes in this regard on what technical improvements we can effect in the *khadi* implements. The loving hospitality which we have received here can be recompensed only by fulfilling these hopes. Let us try to do that.

We have certainly made some progress during the last three years. But life is changing more swiftly than our pace, and makes our progress look slow and unimpressive. The centralization of industries advances rapidly, and along with it the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few. The whole atmosphere is filled with a mad run after these twin companions. Indeed the lure is so strong that even *khadi* is sought to be made an instrument of acquiring power and wealth. And when people find that it promises neither, they lose interest in it. But, be it remembered that the whole objective of *khadi* was and has been not one of seeking and winning power and wealth for oneself but of distributing it all round. In other words, its object is not to establish one's own authority over others, but to free oneself from servility to others. It was devised not for amassing wealth, but for freeing oneself from its grip. If we want to retain this intrinsic purpose of *khadi* intact, and make it the means of achieving this object, whatever innovations we introduce in the tools must be consistent with it, no matter how slow their working speed, and consistently with it, we have to reach the goal of self-dependence and self-sufficiency. Hence, we want that cloth must be produced in every village and in every home. The old implements to do this are extant. But we are not content with them. The new ones are also there. But they do not lend themselves to be used in the decentralized way. Hence we want to introduce such improvements in them as would give us satisfaction for their efficiency, and at the same time be employable in every home. Every new age has its new aspirations giving rise to new problems. If our improvements have reckoned with these factors, we would be able to induce people more easily to take to making their own cloth.

That gives the direction of our efforts in tool-improvements. With this object, we cast our eyes on similar tools and devices employed in other countries. It was reported that Japan had some good types of spinning apparatus, and so we decided to send some of our technicians there. In the meanwhile, we got an opportunity of examining some models of Japanese spinning machines imported by the India Government. Actual comparison



showed that they did not produce more yarn than our ordinary *charkha*. Besides, the experiments which we are carrying on at present promise better results than the Japanese models examined by us.

Last year we paid particular attention to such experiments carried on elsewhere in India also. And I am glad to report that we are fairly on our way to a *charkha* which will produce more yarn and enable the spinner to be self-sufficient more easily and conveniently without, at the same time, making him a victim of capitalist monetary economy, or dependent on tools and their parts which he cannot himself manufacture, or driving him to leave his home for obtaining employment during periods of leisure. Also, as you know, our aim is to make use of the spare time and energy of even an unskilled man. We have not yet achieved complete success but the prospect is brighter than before. You will see some of these models here and be able to discuss them.

We have to bear in mind that we shall not have achieved our purpose merely by devising a *charkha* which can produce more yarn. We have to consider the whole cycle of operations from the production of cotton to the manufacture of cloth, and contemplate both the instruments used and the way to work them. All the four operations, namely the growing of cotton, carding, spinning, and weaving have got to be organized on the basis of self-reliant self-sufficiency. Only then shall we have secured conditions for the making of cloth in every home, and for laying a strong and deep foundation of *khadi*. In our discussions here we shall have to consider improvements in all these operations and treat them as forming parts of one entire process.

The discussion of implements will necessitate the consideration of the different needs of *khadi* manufactured for commerce (wages) and that for self-sufficiency. The aims of the two being different, each will give a different direction to our efforts for the improvement of tools. In commercial *khadi* the earning of the worker is an important factor, while in self-sufficiency *khadi* the convenience of the individual is the major consideration. This has resulted in a bifurcation of efforts in devising the implements. They go along two different lines. At times, they seem even to conflict mutually. The commercial approach leads us to the extent of a *charkha* with most parts made of iron as in a machine; while the self-sufficiency approach prompts us to confine ourselves to the use of the bamboo. This apparent contradiction arises, as I have observed, from our attempt to reconcile our objective with the aspirations and expectations of the modern age. However, both the approaches have one common point, namely, the object of making every village self-sufficient in its requirements of cloth. The difference between the two is that while in the one case, the idea is that the job will be done by a few people in a village as a vocation, in the other, it will be done distributively in every home, even as cooking is done. There is also a suggestion that both these approaches can be mixed so that some operations are performed professionally, and others distributively. Again, in the approach to the problem as a profession, there are two different sub-approaches: Shall we insist more on self-dependence regarding the material and the appliances, or on the speed of production? Shall we give more importance to the individual and the development of his artistic skill, or only to the quantity of production irrespective of skill? There are differences of opinion on all these questions and these differences have led to different ways in the conduct of experiments also.

However, I think that if the main objective of *khadi* is not overlooked, all these different experiments may prove beneficial to us in one way or another, though we shall certainly have to consider very carefully the

extent to which we shall adopt one or the other variety. At one period, we were enamoured of the idea of *swadeshi* and thought that it would be conducive to national prosperity. The reason was that we were struggling at that time against foreign domination. That reason no longer stands. Mere *swadeshim* can now be only a half-truth and as such fraught with mischief, for at present our own cities are ruining our villages. Even so, while we aim at village self-sufficiency, we must bear in mind that the interests of the individual home-unit, the objective of the integral development of the entire village community, and the full utilization of the cheap man-power are not in any way jeopardized. This will require some amount of patience on our part. During the last three years of our experiments, we have also felt that there is considerable room for fresh efforts and improvements in the tools for the purpose of obtaining freedom from the grip of money. Take the example of the bamboo *charkha* both as a home-made implement as well as an efficient spinning wheel. It has proved its superiority over the *kisan charkha*. Again, three years ago it was no more than a fond hope that carding could be done in the same way as spinning instead of with the heavy carding machine, and that both spinning and carding could be done simultaneously. Now that hope has well-nigh materialized. We are not yet fully successful, but the reason is that we have resisted the temptation to achieve easy success and continued our insistence on the use, as much as possible, of material which could be obtained and manufactured locally. So there might be some delay; but why need we be impatient and disheartened? We have also now embarked upon a more ambitious project of a *charkha*, one which can be manufactured wholly with village materials and yet have the capacity of producing more yarn. And the project promises to be successful. This is, indeed, the time when we should call forth all our energy and devote ourselves with full determination to devise the implements fully consistent with our aims.

It is against the background of these ideas that you will examine the efficiency of the improved *khadi* tools collected here for exhibition.

Let me, in the end, address a few words to the *khadi*-lovers. They should ask themselves why they use *khadi*. Many took to it out of sympathy for the poor. But shall we limit this sympathy only to the point of rendering a slight relief to the poor and stop there? Or shall we extend it and transform it into the force which will let nobody be poor, eradicate inequality and establish a society based on non-exploitation? If we have set our heart on that consummation, that is, on a society free from exploitation, where nobody needs relief, then mere mechanical adoption of *khadi* will not suffice. Because, today exploitation by numerous other means far exceeds the little relief which *khadi* might give. The duty of every *khadi*-lover is to construct a society and create a culture where exploitation will be impossible. Every *khadi*-lover must see to it that he does not engage himself in any activity tainted with exploitation. In the commercial economy which obtains today many of the ways by which the rich earn their wealth are merely ways of exploiting the masses. On the one hand, they are being deprived of their means of livelihood and on the other, ways are being devised through false trade and commerce to rob whatever little is left with them. Self-sufficiency is the only way how they can free themselves from its strangling meshes. This self-sufficiency starts with cloth. That is why we have adopted *khadi*, and want to promote it. It is not my present purpose to go deeper into this subject; but let us bear in mind the essential point that we use *khadi* fundamentally because we want to eradicate this exploitation. This means that we cannot limit ourselves merely to cloth self-sufficiency, we have to go forward all along the way to complete village self-sufficiency. We have to direct our efforts



to the end that in the primary necessities of life a village or a group of villages must be fully self-sufficient. Not only that, we shall also have to see that in these units of our national life the whole power either of wealth or governmental authority remains decentralized. Then only shall we reach the goal we have set for ourselves.

(Translated from Hindi) KRISHNADAS GANDHI

### KHADI IMPLEMENTS CONFERENCE

The following resolutions were passed in the All-India Khadi Implements Conference, held at Mathurai on 18th to 20th November, 1950:

#### 1. Invitation to Technicians

"In order to encourage research work in *khadi* tools and implements so that results might be expedited and ways found for giving them a practical shape, the Implements Improvement Committee resolves that as many of its members as possible should work together in a central research laboratory in order to complete their experiments. This conference invites also other technicians engaged in the improvement of *khadi* implements, to join this laboratory for at least one year."

*Note:* The Implement Improvement Committee was founded about three years ago. It was felt during this period that given facilities and encouragement, workers can produce good research work. During the last year several good models were devised, as was seen from some of the samples and demonstrations shown in the exhibition of the conference. But the conditions are such as would hamper progress unless a vigorous and concerted effort is made in this direction. It was, therefore, decided that arrangements should be provided for the concentration of selected workers of the A.I.S.A. at one place where they could enjoy the benefit of mutual consultation and advice and make better and quicker progress. With this end in view, we invite, besides the A.I.S.A. workers, other independent workers also in this field, to join and share the responsibility with us, in order that we get an opportunity to exchange notes on the work done in the past as also the one in hand. We hope that the country will welcome this announcement with enthusiasm and a band of workers will devote itself to this enterprise for the service of the country.

#### 2. Limitations of Research Work

"This conference expresses its satisfaction at the various attempts made to produce more yarn, both qualitatively and quantitatively, by different workers in order to secure the end of attaining cloth self-sufficiency in every home and village. The spinning wheels received in this connection are in the experimental stage and more work will have to be done on them. Along with this it is necessary that the workers should have before them some clear limiting principles, which should guide them in carrying on this work. The workers assembled here request the A.I.S.A. to give them clear directives on the subject."

*Note:* It was noticed in the exhibition that different people have devised ways and means of increasing yarn-production in their own manner. They differed very materially as the inventors had no clear idea of the principles on which improvements have to be made in respect of production, cost of implements, dependence on machine-made parts, employment of electrical and other power etc. For instance, one of the samples exhibited contemplated the use of electricity, toothed wheels, ball-bearings, spare parts of mill-machinery and cycle and other foreign articles for yielding about two hanks (of 640 rounds or 840 yards) in an hour, thus making its cost price somewhere between five and seven hundred rupees. Such a machine will not serve our purpose, as it can neither compete with the mill as regards yarn output,

nor have a place in our decentralized economy from the point of view of the outlay of capital. It is very desirable that the views of the A.I.S.A. on such points must be made clear to technicians so that they might work within such limits.

### 3. Importance of Bamboo-Charkha and Self-weaving

"This conference is glad to note that the number of self-sufficient spinners is growing, that this work is being organized also by the spinning clubs and that attempts are made to introduce basic crafts like agriculture, cloth-production etc. in our primary schools. In order that the *khadi* work may proceed on right lines this conference requests all such workers and bodies to carefully attend to the following matters:

(i) The annual cotton requirements of an organization should be produced by itself or secured from the surrounding locality.

(ii) Tools like the *charkha* etc. have been hitherto purchased from *saranjam* workshops and also sent there for repairs etc. This is too costly for a common man's purse. It is, therefore, necessary for homes, schools and institutions to introduce bamboo *charkhas*, which must be prepared and repaired by oneself or at least locally. The production of bamboo *charkhas* is specially recommended for schools from the educational point of view also.

(iii) The problem of weaving hand-spun yarn continues to be serious. If the yarn is sent outside for this purpose it entails much cost. Weaving must, therefore, be given a definite place in our curricula and self-sufficiency programmes. Spinners must be able to weave by themselves or in co-operation with others *khadi* of a width of at least 36 inches."

*Note:* Cloth self-sufficiency occupies a very vital place in the social order of decentralized and non-exploiting economy. If we are in earnest about it, this conference, through the above resolution, fervently appeals to all individuals, workshops and institutions, engaged in the task to leave no stone unturned in carrying out all operations from the cultivation of cotton to the weaving of cloth in their own area or locality. Though a small proposition in appearance, it is so sound that if given effect to well, it can fulfil our hopes.

(Translated from Hindi)

NANDLAL

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# HARIJAN

Dec. 16

1950

## SHRI ARAVINDA

No more will be seen even by the permitted few on the special days the great Yogi, Shri Aravinda. The unexpected announcement on the radio this morning of his passing away at 1-30 a.m. came as a shock. The passing away from our midst of a great man, who was not only a great jewel of India but of the entire world, naturally saddens us. But regardless of human joys and sorrows, the laws of Nature ceaselessly work and it befits man to keep his fortitude and understanding unimpaired in both the situations. Along with his great co-worker, the "Mother", and his countless disciples and admirers I pay my humble homage to the illustrious Teacher.

A patriot, a revolutionary, a politician, a scholar, Shri Aravinda had, for nearly the last forty years, devoted himself to the realms of *yogic* discipline and spiritual life. His new interpretation of *yoga* attracted followers from far and near. He inspired hope and self-confidence in countless seekers in the East and the West and helped many a sinking soul to rise out of the mire of despair and melancholia caused by an erroneous understanding of religious life.

Readers and Shri Aravinda's followers will excuse me if I repeat what I said at the immersion of Shri Ramana Maharshi into the Infinite. An unhealthy and disfiguring development has taken place with the Hindus to found a new sect in the name of a *guru*. The followers instal their *guru* on the throne of God and begin to offer him worship and homage as an *avatara* of God.

Humbly but definitely and seriously, I submit that this practice must be abandoned. If humanity is on the path of progress, individuals with progressively higher attainments in *jnana*, *yoga*, action, prowess, and capacities will continue to be produced from time to time. To worship the *guru* as the full and perfect *avatara* (manifestation) of God is to limit Him. That Supreme Power is incapable of full manifestation in any one thing or animal. The aim and the efforts of followers should be to attain at least the place reached by the *guru*, along the path shown by him and, if possible, to proceed further. It can never be to say simply that their *guru* had attained the utmost height, and neither was there any in the past, nor will there be any in the future, who can be compared to him, and to credulously believe that he is the sole regulator of the Universe, and to take in that belief the satisfaction of having achieved the *summum bonum* of life.

Shri Aravinda made new contributions in the realm of philosophy, religion and *yogic* discipline. Some of these are of a permanent nature and ever useful to mankind. But the good of mankind lies in looking upon and representing him as man, not God. This submission I place humbly before the Mother and Shri Aravinda's followers to ponder over.

Wardha, 5-12-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

## CORRECTIONS

In my article "The People and the Policies" (25th November, 1950), I observed:

".....What is complained of is that he (Shri Mahtab) represented Gandhiji in a distorted manner, and he did this as an important Minister of the Central Government, and under circumstances in which he could not have been replied to by any one in the audience (even if one qualified to do so was present), about the manner in which he represented the so-called Gandhian principles of non-interference by Government and its non-responsibility for shortages, famines, evils of mal-distribution etc...."

Shri Harekrushna Mahtab says about this in a letter to me:

"It passes my comprehension how this could be written by you in the *Harijan*. The fact is that I issued a statement to the Press explaining the Congress Resolution on Controls, immediately after the Nasik session of the Congress. Shri Kumarappa referred in his criticism to this statement. I do not understand how I misused my powers 'to suit my own ends' in explaining a Congress resolution as a Congressman. If the holding of the office of a Minister can be misused, long association with Gandhiji also can be misused."

The articles both of Shri Kumarappa and myself were based on a report of the P. T. I. as published in the *Times of India* dated 25th September, 1950 (dak edition). The report is so worded that we took it to be the report of a meeting and not a statement to the Press. Hence our charge against Shri Mahtab of having misused his position as a Minister to suit his own ends. Now that I learn that it was not a speech, but a Press statement in his capacity as a Congress leader, I am happy to withdraw the words complained of by Shri Mahtab and express my regret for having caused him mental hurt by an uncharitable imputation.

This of course does not affect our views about the policy of controls and about the basic matters discussed in the articles. Some of these may have to be further cleared up by and by, but one misunderstanding I might correct at once. If there is an impression (as Shri Mahtab has carried hitherto) that we are against controls as such, it is erroneous. Nor did I understand Gandhiji's advocacy of decontrol in that sense. It is not an absolute case of control *versus* decontrol, though it is so loosely spoken of at times. But it is not also a case of mere mechanical and statistical details. There are also some fundamental principles involved. Some of these have been already discussed before, e.g. in the article "The Ism of Controls" last week.

Wardha, 30-11-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA



## SARVODAYA "LETTER-BOX"

### Stress on Weaving

If we do everything else but neglect *khadi*, I feel we go astray from our ideal. All workers, great or small, should now learn weaving as they learnt spinning in the past. If feasible every worker should weave his cloth. This is easy with *dubata* (double-twisted yarn) which should be done. If one can weave without making *dubata*, it may be done. Vallabhsami wove his cloth just a few days back. He writes that due to want of practice for many years, he experienced a little difficulty. As a singer keeps his voice by constant practice and the gardener, his field by constant ploughing, so should all arts be practised continuously.

### Adopt the Spirit, not Forms

One thing I have been clear about from the beginning. We should not adopt the specific habits, forms or activities of Bapu or any other hero, but their pure character and the spirit behind their activities. Bapu is now gone. If we introspect and serve our neighbours to the best of our capacity with a pure and contented heart, we shall achieve a great deal. But if we involve ourselves in diverse activities, I fear we shall lose much.

### Detachment

I desire to place before you and other earnest workers an important point. You are keen, you desire to serve, most of you have no ulterior motives. Even then you will not attain purity of mind and inner satisfaction without possessing the important quality of detachment. We should not be obsessed with any pet idea, but should learn to forget the ego while thinking. I have seen many virtuous people having acute corners somewhere in their minds. Some are attached to the cut of their hair, others to their loin-cloth. I have seen people who are not attached to anything, but are proud of their beard. *Sannyasa* therefore enjoins renunciation of even good desires. Prejudices and pre-possessions must be discarded completely. You should ceaselessly remind yourself that you are pure *atma* and nothing less.

### Village-mindedness

The starting of Kasturba-Gram is an auspicious beginning. The selection of small villages as units of service by the Kasturba Seva Sangh is a fit tribute to Ba's heart. Ba was an image of Bharat Mata who resides in her tiny villages. I hope the training received by our sister-workers in Kasturba-Gram will make them rural-minded and imbued with a spirit of village service, that is, make them rural in the real sense. That it is impossible to serve villagers without becoming village-minded, is a proposition I discovered from my own experience. It is a happy augury that Sardar, who still carries his village outlook, is blessing the function.

### Anger and Hate

Introspection consists in examining our faults, resolving to free ourselves from them, realizing the original pure nature of the soul and taking the support of God's name for that purpose.

Seers have followed the practice of naming spiritual qualities in negative terms; for example *ahimsa*, *advesha*, etc. Negative language helps selflessness and frees us from feeling the burden of duties. The efforts, however, have to be positive. The mind should always overflow with kindness and friendliness, without being conscious of them. This constitutes *ahimsa* and *advesha*. As we progress in overcoming the love of the body, the sense of difference between 'I' and 'not-I' diminishes and non-hatred becomes natural.

Anger is very much different from hate. The latter is altogether an evil and not to be tolerated. One who is free from hate may at times succumb to anger. The

anger of a hate-free man will not be violent; but at the same time it can do no good. Hence one should not allow it to sprout. My experience is that simple rules of life can conquer anger. I have advised in a light vein, but from experience, to take a piece of sugar in the mouth when one gets angry. But uprooting the thorn of hate is not so easy. Sometimes it might require the whole power of *ahimsa* to do that.

### Do not be too Soft

My final conclusion is: *Atma* is free and unrelated. It has neither father and mother, nor brother and sister. Therefore, while a person should have due respect for others, the right thing for him is to do what he himself thinks to be proper and able to bring him satisfaction.

My mother often used to quote a Marathi proverb and tell me, 'Vinya, do not be too soft (delicate). If the earth is too soft, man digs it even with his elbow, instead of the pick-axe.' This is a leading maxim. It should be discriminately followed.

The desire to be in the company of the good and the wise is not to be deprecated as gross attachment. But remember that the good and the wise does not mean their physical bodies only.

### Hindi Has to be Ocean-like

(Message to the Hindi Sahitya Parishad, Barhaj)

I am unable to attend the Conference.

The responsibility on the protagonists of Hindi has increased now. They must be sufficiently large-hearted to allow every one to enter into it, and to make it strong and easily accessible to all. The people of non-Hindi provinces have also a responsibility. If both will fulfil their respective obligations, they will make India a homogeneous and integrated whole. I hope we shall serve the cause of Hindi and endeavour to make it rich with this aim before us.

VINOBA

(Translated from the *Sarvodaya*, Nov., 1950)

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## INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND GOODWILL

### APPENDIX II

#### The Lessons of History

"The watchwords of the nineteenth century have been struggle for existence, competition, class warfare, commercial antagonism between nations, military warfare. The struggle for existence has been construed into the gospel of hate. The full conclusion to be drawn from a philosophy of evolution is fortunately of a more balanced character. Successful organisms modify their environment. Those organisms are successful which modify their environment so as to assist each other. This law is exemplified in nature on a vast scale.....

"There are associations of different species which mutually co-operate. This differentiation of species is exhibited in the simplest physical entities, such as the association between electrons and positive nuclei, and in the whole realm of animate nature. The trees in a Brazilian forest depend upon the association of various species of organisms, each of which is mutually dependent on the other species. A single tree by itself is dependent upon all the adverse chances of shifting circumstances. The wind stunts it; the variations in temperature check its foliage; the rains denude its soil; its leaves are blown away and are lost for the purpose of fertilization. You may obtain individual specimens of fine trees in exceptional circumstances, or where human cultivation has intervened. But in nature the normal way in which trees flourish is by their association in a forest. Each tree may lose something of its individual perfection of growth, but they mutually assist each other in preserving the conditions for survival. The soil is preserved and shaded; and the microbes necessary for its fertility are neither scorched, nor frozen, nor washed away. A forest is the triumph of the organization of mutually dependent species. Further, a species of microbes which kills the forest also exterminates itself.

"Again the two sexes exhibit the same advantage of differentiation. In the history of the world, the prize has not gone to those species which specialized in methods of violence or even in defensive armour. In fact, nature began with producing animals encased in hard shells for defence against the ills of life. It also experimented in size. But smaller animals, without external armour, warm-blooded, sensitive and alert, have cleared those monsters off the face of the earth. Also, the lions and tigers are not the successful species. There is something in the ready use of force which defeats its own object. Its main defect is that it bars co-operation. Every organism requires an environment of friends, partly to shield it from violent changes, and partly to supply it with its wants. The Gospel of Force is incompatible with a social life. By force I mean antagonism in its most general sense.

"Almost equally dangerous is the Gospel of Uniformity. The differences between the nations and races of mankind are required to preserve the conditions under which higher development is possible. One main factor in the upward trend of human life has been the power of wandering. Perhaps that is why the armour-plated monsters fared badly. They could not wander. Animals wander into new conditions. They have to adapt themselves or die. Mankind has wandered from the trees to the plains, from the plains to the sea coast, from climate to climate, from continent to continent, and from habit of life to habit of life. When man ceases to wander, he will cease to ascend in the scale of being. Physical wandering is important, but greater still is the power of men's spiritual adventures—adventures of thought, adventures of passionate feeling, adventures of aesthetic experience. A diversification among human communities is essential for the provision of the incentive and material for the *Odyssey* of the human spirit. Other nations of different habits are not enemies; they are godsend.

Men require of their neighbours something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to provoke attention, and something great enough to command admiration. We must not expect, however, all the virtues. We should even be satisfied if there is something odd enough to be interesting.

"The very benefit of wandering is that it is dangerous and needs skill to avert evils."

— A. N. Whitehead: *Science and The Modern World* (The Times Broadsheets, Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 130-32).

#### MAHADEV DESAI

[*Romance of the Oriental Translator's Office, Bombay*, \* by Z. A. Barni, a retired assistant translator of that department, is a small book containing some interesting accounts and anecdotes of several distinguished people who had worked in that office whether for life or for a short period. It contains a note about Mahadevhai Desai also. The author did not ever come into personal contact with M. D., but has given some account of the latter's life in that office as heard from others. A part of the note is extracted with the author's permission. — K. G. M.]

Mahatma Gandhi wanted a reader for himself and M. D. consulted his friend, J. E. Sanjana, as to what he should do. I describe in Sanjana's own words how it happened. He writes on page 214 of his admirable book entitled *Caste and Outcaste* thus:—

"I told M. D. long ago when he asked my advice as to which of the two offers then before him he should accept. I told him to reject the safer one from the worldly point of view—it was from his old friend, V. L. Mehta—and unhesitatingly to follow his conscience and his idealism which prompted him to prefer Mr Gandhi's invitation to join him; but I warned him never to forget that the cleanest politics, even spiritualized politics, must clash with his idealism."

M. D. accepted the offer and became Mahatma's secretary, and remained devotedly attached to him through thick and thin until the last day of his earthly existence.

\* \* \*

As long as M. D. remained in the O. T.'s Office, he led a very simple life. He had a cheerful disposition and always wore a smiling face. His manners were so amiable and polished that to see him was to love him. Those who had a pessimistic trend of mind immediately changed it into an optimistic one when they came in contact with him. He never offended or displeased any one. He was a gentleman in the true sense of the term as used by Cardinal Newman in his definition of a gentleman. It is my life's sorrow that I could not get a chance of meeting him, but I have begun to love him and respect him from what I learnt about him from his class-mates, the late Syed Abdullah Brelvi, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, and V. L. Mehta and also from J. E. Sanjana himself.

In the O. T.'s Office his initial salary was Rs 55 only, the lowest pay that could be offered to any translator in those days. He occupied a junior post in the Gujarati branch and his work was supervised by two persons, viz., Motilal Shah and Champaklal Mehta, who happened to be above him and were able translators in their own way. When he was in the O. T.'s Office nobody ever thought that a junior translator like him would one day become a great author or rise to the great heights of fame to which he actually rose. All that they knew was that he was an amiable gentleman and a lovable personality. His work in the office was, however, above the ordinary rut. He was very diligent and a voracious reader, qualities which stood him in good stead throughout his association with Gandhiji.

Z. A. BARNI

\* Published by Talimi Markaz, Karachi.



### VILLAGE PANCHAYATS IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

In December, 1947, when the new Constitution of India was being drafted, I had drawn the attention of Gandhiji to the fact that there was, till then, no mention of village *panchayats* in the future administrative set-up as visualized in the draft Constitution. Commenting on this point in *Harijan* (Dec. 21, 1947), Gandhiji observed :

"It is certainly an omission calling for immediate attention, if our independence is to reflect the people's voice. The greater the power of the *panchayats*, the better for the people. Moreover, *panchayats* to be effective and efficient, the level of people's education has to be considerably raised. I do not conceive the increase in the power of the people in military, but in moral terms."

Several members of the Constituent Assembly took note of these observations of Mahatma Gandhi and pressed for the provision of village *panchayats* in the new Constitution. As a result of such discussion, the following directive was also included in Part IV of the Constitution of India :

"The State shall take steps to organize village *panchayats* and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

This directive is surely to be welcomed. But much would naturally depend on the way it is implemented. If the directive is not to remain a pious wish and a paper-resolution, the Government of India should appoint a Commission at an early date to report on a systematic plan of *panchayat* organization throughout the country. The Commission should carefully study the working of village *panchayats* as they exist today in different parts of the country and recommend a suitable scheme for adoption by the State governments. At present several State governments have passed Panchayat or Janapada Acts. But their working cannot be regarded as satisfactory. The Commission should make detailed recommendations with a view to achieving uniformity in basic principles of decentralized democracy and self-government.

One of the main reasons why the village *panchayats* under the existing conditions have not been able to achieve good results is that the ancient *grama-panchayats* were founded on the principle of "composite" democracy, whereas the modern parliamentary government is based on democracy along party lines. The sound working of Western democracy presupposes the existence of well-knit political parties ; and the party which captures the majority of seats in Parliament rules the country. India has also copied the same type of democracy under the new Constitution. But this kind of party-democracy runs counter to the genius of village *panchayats* that existed and flourished in India for centuries. In our country, the *panchayats* were regarded as the very representatives of God because they represented all the different elements of society. It is true that in some parts of India, the *panchayats* gradually degenerated into

cliques of particular castes or sects. But the fact remains that a majority of the *grama-panchayats* in ancient India represented the elders of various castes and sects inhabiting the villages. They were, thus, in the nature of coalition governments for the village communities. In the absence of such composite village cabinets, it is impossible to expect the modern *panchayats* to fulfil the important functions that they are supposed to perform. The organization of political parties for the Union Parliament and the State Assemblies cuts at the very root of the *panchayat*-system and results in a host of undesirable consequences. This important aspect should be carefully considered by the Commission which may be set up by the President or the Government of India in future.

Mahatma Gandhi was always of the definite view that there should be the widest decentralization of economic and political power for the real welfare of mankind. Many western political thinkers like Prof. Laski and Prof. Cole are of the same view. Modern democracy easily degenerates into "mobocracy" or totalitarianism. Decentralized democracy is, therefore, the hope of humanity. In India, the toiling millions will never be able to feel the glow of freedom if they have to look to New Delhi for everything. Village self-government along healthy lines would enthuse them into wonderful constructive activities without which our Swaraj would remain a vacant dream. I am, therefore, confident that the directive relating to village *panchayats* in the Indian Constitution would receive the most serious consideration of both the Government and the people.

Wardha, 23-10-'50

S. N. AGARWAL

### Care of Teeth

I have read with interest Shri P. G. Gogate's article on the "Care of Teeth" (*Harijan*, Sept. 23). Over and above what has been said therein, interested readers may find a simple practice, given below, very helpful in retaining the strength of their teeth :

"Keep both the upper and lower sets of teeth tightly pressed against each other at the time of passing urine and stool."

This advice appeared in an article in the Hindi monthly, *Kalyan* of Gorakhpur, and has since been practised by a large number of readers successfully.

As regards the prescription consisting of salt and bi-carbonate of soda—an even more simple and convenient one is that of salt liberally soaked in mustard oil. This is also very efficacious for decaying and bleeding teeth.

One of the important reasons for the early decay of teeth these days seems to be people's addiction to too hot and cold drinks which cause slow erosion of the gums.

No doubt it is also due to the modern unhygienic and artificial living. It is the author of all sorts of stomach and dyspeptic troubles, the latter quickly affecting the teeth in their turn.

LAKSHMINATH SHRIVASTAVA



## RUSH TO ANGUL

[Angul in Orissa came into prominence by holding the session of the Sarvodaya Conference last April. It is the centre of rural work of Shri Nabakrishna Chaudhuri (now Chief Minister of Orissa) and his wife Shrimati Malatidevi. Lately it has become a centre of popular interest by the appearance of a 'divine' healer. People from various parts of India and particularly from Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have been making a mad and superstitious rush to Angul in several hundreds every day to get the benefit of his miracle. Shri Malatidevi sends the following note of warning to the credulous public against this rush.

Ministers of State and other responsible public men have been found to be infected with this superstition. Even if it is conceded that such miracles are possible, these leaders should know that if it turns out to be a mere hoax, their example is followed by ordinary people giving the practitioners a great opportunity to exploit the masses. They must at least show the patience of taking action after a careful investigation.

— K. G. M.J

It pains me to see the heavy bankruptcy of reasoning being exhibited day after day just in the vicinity of my village, Angul.

There is a village named Rantulai, at a distance of about four miles from here, where a shepherd boy about 10 years old has been distributing a 'divine' medicine for the last six months. No doubt there are also other interested people behind him. Thousands of patients from Orissa and other provinces, Madhya Pradesh in particular, have been thronging to this place every day, so that the town and the roads leading to the village have become dangerously overcrowded. There have been some fatal accidents also. People suffering from infectious leprosy, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, cancer, asthma, paralysis, crippled limbs, cough, fever, itches, eczema etc. arrive from distant places in the hope of being healed. They include also women, anxious to have children. All believe that the boy's 'divine' medicine will cure them of their ailments and defects.

There is no definite evidence that any person has been fully cured by taking the treatment. But our people are so anxious to believe that they have no patience even to wait and see. And it is not only the illiterate who are credulous. They include District Magistrates, Commissioners, Government Secretaries, and even Ministers and Chief Ministers! And of course wealthy merchants, pleaders, and others. A London-returned gentleman said, "There must be some spiritual power in the boy; otherwise why should so many people be attracted to him?" He forgets that many people are tempted to go simply because other people, looked upon by them as discriminating and intelligent men, have preceded them, and they have not the courage to confess that they had made a foolish mistake.

This traffic has been very profitable to local traders, bus-drivers, cartsmen and printers. Tra-

ders, bus-drivers and cartmen have been charging exorbitant prices and fares, and a few village poets and pamphlet printers have occupied themselves in making a propaganda for the boy by publishing attractive and exaggerated songs and reports of his miracles. It has been given out, for instance, that corpses have been brought to life, the blind have begun to see, Shri Rajendrababu and Sardar Vallabhbhai have returned cured, and Shri Jawaharlal is expected to arrive! And, by way of precaution, it is added "only those who have full faith will see the benefit." Hence no blame can be attached to the 'divine' medicine if it does not cure!

I am staggered by the consequences of this mad rush. There is dearth of grain already. And the visitors, on account of their wealth, and the villagers, on account of their short-sighted greed, have been depleting the taluka of whatever stocks there be. After a few days they will see this folly, when they find that though they have the money to pay for there is no food to purchase. And all kinds of diseased people have been mixing together freely, so that there is every danger of infections spreading far and wide.

This madness must stop. I know this particular superstition may not last long; but before it expires, it will have spread much evil. And knowing how superstition pays, another designing person in some other part of the country will invent a new method of exploiting this credulousness.

Let sound sense help us.

MALATI CHAUDHURI

(Freely translated from Hindi)

By J. C. Kumarappa

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