

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## GANDHIJI IS TIMELESS

At midnight on August 14, 1947, I was present in the Legislative Assembly when power over India was transferred from British to Indian hands. I was profoundly struck by the fact that Gandhiji was not there. On Thursday, January 26, 1950, India became an independent Republic. Again Gandhiji was not present. And yet, we err when we say he was not present on Freedom Day or at the time of the founding of the Republic. He was there, for he is timeless. He was in Delhi on August 15, in the words of the speakers, in their hearts, and in the very fact of freedom. His image today is upon the Republic; he is one of its great foundation stones. For Gandhiji is timeless, as timeless as the sun and the stars, as the hills and the seas. When Delhi is in dust and when Washington is no more, he will still live.

He is timeless because of his consecration to Truth — to the eternal. On August 11, 1947, I raised with him the question as to the use of non-violent method to compose the struggle in America between the white and the darker races. He said he was unable to help me for he himself was in darkness. He described his long struggle to convince his people of the validity of the spirit of non-violence — non-violence in thought and word and deed. But then he referred to the fighting which at that moment was going on in Calcutta. I ventured that perhaps he was too pessimistic. To which he replied, "I am not pessimistic because I believe in Truth. Even though the whole world goes against me, I will still believe in it. That is my optimism. I sleep well at night."

The genius of Mahatma Gandhi lay not only in his timelessness but in the fact that he translated the timeless into time, ideals into reality. Upon his death, I was deeply disappointed in some of the commentaries upon him. He was called a saint and an idealist, and men were warned that they could not be expected to follow his lofty teachings. What we have in his life a record of the realization of ideals which he taught.

He demonstrated, for example, the only truly effective way for men to gain their freedom

in this world. In leading India into her freedom, he demonstrated that first, the oppressed must never cease to seek his freedom; second, he must seek his freedom in such a manner as always to preserve his own soul; and third, he must seek his freedom in a manner that will lift to a higher moral and spiritual plane the oppressor from whom he wrests his freedom.

## Path of Peace

In the second place, he demonstrated the only true and lasting way to bring hating and warring factions into reconciliation. Toward mid-August of 1947, he was besieged by the people of Calcutta to remain there and try to bring calm out of the chaos that was developing — peace out of the conflict. His answer was that he would stay provided he could move about the city, in his room, on the prayer ground, everywhere, in company with the Muslim Premier who was regarded as a bitter enemy of his own people. This was a revolutionary suggestion. It was acceded to, however, and in the wake of this action there came upon Calcutta a peace which had not been known in that city for months on end.

Later, when violence broke out again in Calcutta, he entered upon his fast of indefinite duration. Calcutta, by this act, was lifted to the greatest heights of self-examination, self-criticism, and penitence, and when finally he broke his fast, a peace descended upon that city which lasted for months. All men know the story of the Delhi fast and of its enormous fruits to the stricken people of that city and of India. In all of these ways he performed the miracle of transforming the ideal into reality.

Men will continue to believe in Gandhiji, to revere him, and to memorialize him. The great question in the world situation today is whether or not they will follow him. Let us pray for an affirmative answer to this question by men everywhere as individuals and as the nations of the earth.

(Dr) WILLIAM STUART NELSON,  
Dean of Howard University (USA)

(G. I. I. S. — Canada)



### A NEW SITUATION CREATED BY VANASPATI

Although it may have been possible for *ghanis* to withstand competition from the crushing mills to some extent so far, it is going to be very hard for them to be able to do so hereafter. *Vanaspati* is making it difficult for the small man to operate at all. It is leading to monopolizing the crushing of seeds by big concerns alone. *Vanaspati* can fetch higher and higher prices as it bears resemblance to *ghee* and catches the imagination of the consumers. This has raised the price of oils, specially groundnut oil, which is used for *vanaspati*. Groundnut oil has ceased to be the cheapest edible oil that it used to be. The average annual price of groundnut oil was less than that of linseed oil by about 12.5 per cent. In May 1950, the price of groundnut oil per maund at Bombay was Rs 69-6-10 and for linseed oil, 62-7-2. The groundnut oil has become costlier than linseed oil by about 11.2 per cent. With the rise in price of groundnut oil, the prices of other oils have also risen in sympathy. The prices of oilseeds have consequently proportionately risen. The Government of India's Economic Advisers' Index Numbers of prices show that in July 1950, while the cotton prices rose to 483, those of *jowar* and *bajra* rose to 353 and 245 respectively and that of groundnut rose to 767, taking August 1939 prices at 100 for all the above four. This abnormal rise in the price of groundnut is due to a major factor, viz. *vanaspati*, in addition to the general rise in prices.

With practically no resources at his hand, the village oil-presser is unable to hold any stock for crushing. Even the duration of the season when seeds are available to him for crushing is getting shorter. It is difficult even for an ordinary co-operative society in a village to lock up a capital of the order of about Rs 15,000/- which is required to stock seeds for running a unit of 2 *ghanis*. The high prices are diverting more and more oil-seeds from the villages to the factories. This process is bound to eliminate the village oil-presser from the field of operation. Adequate steps should therefore be taken for the retention of sufficient oil-seeds in the villages through the arrangements of Government godowns and with the help of all regulatory powers if necessary.

It is not only the small oil-presser who is thus touched by *vanaspati*. The poorer sections of the rural population are practically being deprived of their quota of edible oils. The story of the centralized large-scale oil mills thus makes distressing reading. They began with a claim of supplying cheaper oil than the *ghani* to the consumers. Together with their appendages, the *vanaspati* factories, these mills seem to end in making the oils more and more costly. Thus the question of the relative efficiency of

the *ghani* and the mill dwindles into insignificance before a new set of circumstances created by powerful influences working towards centralization.

JHAVERBHAI PATEL

### HIMALAYAN LESSONS

#### II

#### At Nilkanth

At Nilkanth people had kindly put at our disposal one of the only two private houses in the place, which belong to the Nepal royal family. These buildings usually remain empty, with the inevitable result that they are slowly, but surely, crumbling away. However, though the doors and windows were hard to open and shut, and the kitchen had no roof, the rest of the house was spacious, and kept out the rain. These, as we came to know in our later peregrinations, were luxuries we were not going to find again!

The little temple of Nilkanth Mahadev lies at the confluence of two small mountain streams, with the hills rising steeply on three sides. The house we occupied was situated about 100 yards up the right bank of the main stream, on a small piece of flat ground cut out of the side of the mountain, from where one looked down on to the roofs of the little buildings surrounding the temple, which nestled in a thick grove, the shrine itself being held in the embrace of an ancient *peepal* tree.

#### Seeking A Site

I immediately began to look about for a possible site for the contemplated branch Ashram, but this was not easy. Though these first mountain ranges are not very high (3,000 to 5,000 ft.) they are very steep, with deep valleys, and there is hardly a flat piece of ground or a level path to be found anywhere. I used to be a good walker in the old days, but now, at 58, I found it a bit of a strain to climb up these precipitous paths. Mana I had sent back to Pashulok, as there was nowhere for him to live or to graze, and now-a-days his front legs are not quite strong enough for the steep mountain paths. Anyway by studying the map and the landscape from nearby hill tops I began to get a clear idea of the countryside. The villagers also began coming in from round about. Each one would explain how his village was the ideal place for the Ashram. This was very complimentary, but not very helpful!

#### Problems of the Peasantry

Day by day, as I contemplated the landscape and listened to the villagers' talks, several things began to impress themselves upon me. The most striking was the lack of any practical Government help or guidance — only dues to be paid and a certain amount of harassment. What I have often felt in the plains I felt with double force up in these hills, and that is that the



villagers pull on not *because* of the Government, but *inspite* of it.

All agricultural operations throughout the Himalayas have to be carried on in terraced fields. The rice fields are very well built up, but the others are often so badly made that the soil is getting washed away year by year, and patches of erosion are spreading. It is a hard job to prepare and keep in repair these terraced fields, and, the peasantry being poor and neglected, conditions go on deteriorating. Their handicrafts in the Nilkanth area are in no better state. Cotton spinning and weaving is neglected. Close contact with the modernized plains has also spoiled the former tenacity of these lower hillsmen. The peasants look down on the sparkling electric lights of Haradwar and Dehradun, and like moths, rush into the fire, only to get burnt up morally and physically.

The cow, as a milk-yielder, has so seriously deteriorated in these mountains that she gives about half a seer (1 lb.) per day. A cow giving 2 seers (4 lb.) is looked upon as something very special. The chief cause for this seems to be the absence of any breeding bulls. Such local bulls as I saw were little tiny fellows, not bigger than a lowland calf of 15 months.

#### The Little Friend's Fate

On the steep hillside opposite the house in which we were staying, there was a little cottage with terraced fields belonging to the *chowkidar*. I used to watch their comings and goings. My attention was particularly attracted by a small goat which lived tied up in front of the cottage. It used to play with the children and seemed very much attached to its owners. If the whole family happened to go out to work in the fields, it used to bleat frantically, and on their return would greet them with bouncing joy. I thought of climbing up one day to the cottage and said to myself, "I will take a little gram for the goat, and play with it for a while." But in a day or two there was no sound of its voice, and it was not to be seen. That evening Swamiji and Bhawani Singh, on their return from a walk, reported having met the *chowkidar* family returning from the nearby temple of Bhuvaneshwaridevi with the remains of the goat in a basket! They had sacrificed their little friend as a preliminary to a feast of meat! It is no good getting angry. If people so near to us still have blind faith in animal sacrifice, we should blame ourselves, and make a concerted effort to bring such practices to an end through the spread of enlightened sentiments and beliefs.

#### The Plight of Holy Places

Unfortunately for us we had come to Nilkanth in the height of the pilgrim season. On Sundays and Mondays the place used to become packed. Sometimes over two hundred people would be crowded into the tiny valley. The *dharamashala* by the temple would overflow and the rest of the crowd would surge into the house

next to ours. The worst part of it all was the complete lack of any sanitary arrangements, and it used to become intolerable to go out anywhere until there had been two or three heavy downpours of rain to wash away the filth. This condition of things is not peculiar to Nilkanth, but is common to the shrines and pilgrim routes throughout Uttarkhand. The so-called guardians and servants of religion in these parts, as elsewhere, amass huge piles of wealth out of the donations of the devotees. But what happens to these piles of money? Precious little of it goes towards the well-being of the pilgrims, or the purity and beautification of the holy temples and shrines! *Dharmashalas* are inadequate, sanitary arrangements are nil, and the surroundings of the sacred temples and shrines are not adorned, as they should be, with lovely flowers and fruits, but are, instead, encircled with foul nightsoil and the hateful smell of human urine. At the same time there is no feeling of sanctity, no impressive chanting of *Vedic mantras*, or uplifting ceremonies, or readings from the scriptures. All is unguided, undisciplined noise and shouting. The people who are responsible for this state of affairs are never tired of crying "Hinduism in danger"! The greatest danger to Hinduism is from these very people themselves.

#### Mosquitoes, Bugs and Sickness

As the days went by the climate at Nilkanth became more and more oppressive. The clouds sat on our heads, the rain poured down and, to add to our troubles mosquitoes and bugs started tormenting us. No one kept good health, and Krishnamurti, each time he had visited our camp, collapsed with a severe attack of fever immediately on his return to Pashulok. At last he said he dreaded to come up at all. As for myself, my health, which was sufficiently run down from the beginning, got steadily worse. Now-a-days, if I get overstrained, or the climate disagrees with me, or both, as was the case at Nilkanth, I develop severe pain in the head and a feeling of sickness, which leaves me very exhausted. Three such attacks got hold of me in succession, the last being exceptionally severe. It had become clear that Nilkanth was no place for a branch Ashram, and we all felt that the sooner we got away the better. But where to go, and how to get there in this weather?

MIRA

(To be continued)

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# HARIJAN

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## THE REALIZATION OF SARVODAYA

This is the last number of this volume. The year which we have left behind has not been looked upon by the people in general as showing indications of leading them from darkness towards light, from a sense of depression and frustration towards that of inspiration and hope. Nature has not been very kind to the country, and those whom the people looked to for working for their well-being have failed in their eyes in improving their condition. Rather, there is a growing feeling that the situation has gone worse during the year. Almost every old institution shows signs of deterioration. None seems to work with a unity of purpose, a common mind, faith in a common creed, loyalty to a common ideal, and feeling of mutual respect and affection among principal workers. Old organizations have been breaking up into various groups, none of which is composed of persons, who inspire people with their sterling character, capacity and high moral standards. There is a general feeling comparable to that of a people sailing in a ship, which they suspect to be sinking. It is provided with several boats and life-belts, which on examination are found to be all damaged. They have not the courage to plunge into the sea with any of these saving appliances, and still less on the strength of their own limbs. They fondly look in all directions to see if any ship will come to their rescue. They feel now and then as if they saw a ship on the horizon, and cry out to it for help. But they get no answer. Sometimes a ship is seen to have heard their call, but it too fails to give them the aid they need. The sense of their despair may be gauged.

There are several who are conscious of this state of the popular mind, and feel that something must be done to change this situation. It is imperatively necessary, they feel, that the people must be provided with a proper medium for effectively expressing their grievances, and guided to some work, which they might undertake on their own initiative and with self-help. It must be such as might make them feel while doing it that they have found a way which will lead them to a better life, and give them strength to resist the evil which seems to surround them on all sides. They feel that if the people can be made to discover their own strength and set to work in an orderly fashion with faith and hope, they might realize that the remedy for some of their ills is in their own hands, that some of these ills are more imaginary than real, and some need only to be expressed in a determined and unmistakable manner for their redress.

I have noticed this expectation of the public. How it can be fulfilled, of this I have not a clear idea. The attempt of *Harijan* has been all along two-fold : to give expression to the hardships of the people in a truthful manner along with an analysis of their causes and suggestions for meeting them ; and to create in the people the *real strength of Swaraj*, that is self-help.

Ultimately we can have only such Government and social and economic order as we deserve. Self-Government can be Good Government only if we work for it, suffer for it, to make it so. It cannot drop for us from the sky ; nor can it come merely from the brain of a leader or a philosopher, with his elaborate plans or accurate diagnosis and theories. Good Government like the remedies of a naturopath demands a careful, determined and life-long discipline. In Naturopathy, in the beginning, the patient has to submit to a course of fasts, baths, enemas, heavily restricted diets consisting of foods which do not give him satisfaction of a full and tasty meal, and several other curious practices, which he feels to be irksome and anything but natural. Provided the patient has sufficient vitality still subsisting when he begins the treatment, and provided he patiently and meticulously follows the treatment, he may hope to see himself restored to real health, and enjoy its blessings. But if, like me, a patient is unable to submit himself to all such discipline, and is content to carry on with drugs which give temporary relief, he must thank himself only, if he leads a life of wretched health. Similarly with Good Government and *Sarvodaya*. We can have them only if we will patiently work for them. Let us resolve to do so, and God Who blessed us with gems among men like Gandhi and his illustrious companions and contemporaries, will surely help us further.

Wardha, 13-2-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

## PROHIBITION ENQUIRY

Since I wrote on this subject, I have received a copy of the terms of reference of the Madhya Pradesh Prohibition Enquiry Committee. They are as follows :

"The Committee shall—

- (1) examine how far prohibition has been effective in achieving its primary objective of eliminating or reducing the drink evil ;
- (2) examine whether it has given an impetus to malpractices, such as illicit distillation and smuggling, and consumption of deleterious substances ;
- (3) examine whether and, if so, how far it has contributed to the disregard of law in general ;
- (4) examine whether and, if so, how far it has led to corruption ;
- (5) inquire whether it has resulted in any improvement in the economic, social and physical condition of the drinking classes, and whether the general standard of living has been in any way affected, and, if so, how far ;
- (6) ascertain what effect, if any, it has had on the efficiency and well-being of labour in the industrial areas ;
- (7) examine what effect, if any, it has had on juveniles and juvenile delinquency ;



(8) examine what effect, if any, it has had on the general financial position and inflationary pressure;

(9) examine how far the policy of prohibition has received the active support of the people in general; and

(10) make recommendations with regard to the policy the State Government should adopt in future."

The issues framed above are not quite as fair as are expected of a Government definitely committed to prohibition. They give, not to say wrong, an indefinite lead to the Committee and the public about the nature of evidence to be particularly collected. But I shall not resort to hair-splitting arguments on that point. I would be prepared to regard such a "fact-finding" inquiry as proper, if the terms of reference had been preceded by a clear preamble. No such preamble is given in the appointment order itself. It is provided by a Press Note. It, too, lacks definiteness, and seems to forget the existence of Art. 47 of the Constitution as well as the mandate of the Congress, which are definite in their respective directives. When the Press Note says that "the objective of Government in introducing prohibition was to ameliorate the moral, social, economic and physical condition of the people", it forgets that it is a servant of the Constitution since 26th January, 1950, and was an agent of the Congress before that. The Constitution and the Congress might put forth these objectives, but so far as the Madhya Pradesh Government is concerned, it has to go further than the objective, namely, to carry out a directive. This is a definite duty laid upon it under Art. 37 of the Constitution. This is lacking in the directions. The Government attitude is what is termed 'an open-minded approach'. It may be a good approach for a principal or for a scientist. It may be an allowable approach in the absence of a definite direction. But like a court of execution or an agent, the Government has no scope for an open mind here. It has not even the liberty to be satisfied with a 'reduction' of the consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs. It has to prohibit their consumption, except for medicinal purposes. The Committee appointed ought to have been told this, and the last term of reference should have been "to make recommendations with regard to the measures which the State Government should adopt in future for successfully carrying out the principle of prohibition as required by Arts. 37 & 47 of the Constitution read together."

Wardha, 14-2-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

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#### LESSON OF THE THREE MONKEYS

While going through the literature on mental hygiene, I came across the following:—"Particularly, it is highly desirable that the next generation should not be able to fool themselves as casually and as unconsciously and as easily as we have done. They should not be the same kinds of people who can avoid unpleasant things by not looking at them. They should not be brought up, as many of us have been brought up, on a perfectly ghastly symbol, that I am afraid many of you have seen in quite civilized homes. The symbol I refer to is three little monkeys, one with his hands over his ears, who will hear nothing distressing, who will hear no evil; another with his hands over his eyes, who will see no evil; another with his hands over his mouth preventing his saying anything about it."

I was amazed to find such a caricature of a beautiful idea. The intolerance and lack of understanding appeared to me inconsistent with the very fundamental of mental hygiene. While it is perfectly true that we must do everything possible to avoid self-deception and face the facts of life, the illustration chosen by the author in support of his argument is unfortunate. The lesson of the three monkeys is not to avoid hearing of distressing things or to escape the unpleasant duty of raising one's voice against them. The three monkeys simply say: "Speak no evil of others, do not listen to those who talk ill of others. Let not your eyes dwell on things evil, rather use them to peruse good." We all know how some people delight in talking about a particular thing being evil because inwardly that particular evil has a fascination for them. The lesson of the three monkeys is not to seek an inverted pleasure in evil while denouncing it but to seek and find good even in things evil.

What is the meaning of not to see or hear evil? There is plenty of evil in the world. But there is plenty of good too in the world. What we seek we find. The philosopher who conceived the symbol of the three monkeys wants us to concentrate on the good in the world rather than evil. We become what we think. In order to avoid evil from entering into our own lives we must avoid dwelling upon it needlessly. It is only a man leading a good life who can resist evil. Mahatma Gandhi kept the three monkeys on his table and called them his *gurus* (teachers). No one will accuse him of taking evil lying low. All his life he fought evil in every walk of life, social, political and economic. But the rock-bottom of his efforts was a living faith in the essential goodness of human nature. If man appears to act evilly, there is always a reason for it. Man is a combination of the divine and the brute and the way to fight the brute or the evil instincts in us is to awaken and strengthen the divine. Reform of character is not ultimately brought



about by the denunciation or wide publication of the evil, or the punishment of the evil-doer, but by making him see his mistake. Suppose someone is beating a child mercilessly, should I, too, hit him on the head in order to stop him? No. For, in that case, I endorse the same principle on which he has acted. The right way to do is to make him see his mistake in a positive manner. The principle involved is the principle of mental hygiene — not to drive the evil inward by suppressing the manifestation of outward symptoms, but to cure it by rousing his healthier or better self — to treat him as a sick man and find the cause of his peculiar malady. Use of superior force might cause him to desist for the time, but he will indulge in it or something worse whenever he gets the chance again. Instead of that if he can be made to see his mistake and desist, the cure would be permanent.

In the language of the philosopher who designed the three monkeys we must not keep our eye glued on the evil deed; we must get behind it and try to see some spark of goodness on which we can work and build. It is the same principle which has led to the psychiatric treatment of delinquents. In the case of a delinquent child we try to divert his emotions and aggressive impulses into constructive channels. We must use similar techniques for children in grown-up form. Prevention is better than cure. But we cannot afford to neglect the sick. In order to treat them and to prevent mental ill-health in the coming generation, we must constantly make an effort to cultivate our own mental health. An essential requisite for that is to constantly turn the searchlight inwards as distinguished from morbid brooding over real or imaginary sins. And I must not force my truth on any one. I must be open-minded enough to try to see the truth from another's viewpoint and be humble enough to accept it and admit my own mistake if I can see it. Only when I find after as impartial an examination as possible that the other person is wrong, I must stick to my truth, and then my duty is even to die for it if necessary.

Without any study of the scientific theories and principles of psychiatry, Gandhiji had come to recognize that mental health, peace of the individual and peace of the nations depended on the inner growth and maturity of men and women so that they should be able to say what they think and do what they say. This has been termed by the philosophers 'adherence to truth in thought word and deed'. The pursuit of truth is only possible through the practice of love. Men of truth and love do not look for evil, do not talk about nor listen to evil but try to eliminate evil through the practice of good — the practice of truth and love.

That is the lesson of the three monkeys — the soundest lesson for those who wish to work for peace, goodwill and brotherhood of man.

Such people ever keep growing and help others to grow till they have attained full emotional maturity which is synonymous with the *sthita-prajna* (man with balanced intellect) of the *Bhagavadgita*.

New Delhi, 22-12-'50

SUSHILA NAYAR

### SELF-HELP IN RURAL UPLIFT

[The following is abridged from the report of the Tirumangalam Firka Development Officer, of the uplift work done in the Appakkarai village in the Madhurai district of the Madras State. Similar work is being done in some other villages also of that area. The inmates of the Kallupatti Ashram have been doing constructive work in that area since long. It seems the field was prepared by their activities and it is now bearing fruit under the present favourable circumstances. This is an instance worthy of attention by village-workers who endeavour to do work on similar lines. — Jaju]

There are about 150 houses with a population of 800 people. The villagers have constructed pucca masonry street drains connecting every nook and corner, at their own cost. The work was undertaken by the local Gram Seva Sangham itself and the required money was collected from the people concerned proportionately to the length of the drain that was to run in front of their respective houses. In the case of poor labourers who were unable to find money for such work, the committee itself has helped them by meeting the cost from the common fund. The estimated cost per running foot of drain was about Rs 2-12-0 but when it was actually done by the villagers, it came to only about Re 1-12-0. 2,700 feet of the drain have been constructed at the cost of individual villagers and 930 feet at the common cost. There is no house in the village which has not been provided with a drain in its front. The foul water that is drained through the drains is collected in 2 big masonry pits specially built as per design and the whole waste material is converted into manure by mixing it with earth. There will be usually 2 pits, so that when one is filled up, the other is used. The manure that is collected from the pits is auctioned and the amount so obtained is added to the common village fund. There is a great demand for the manure so prepared and it is found very useful for crops and vegetables. Government have contributed only Rs 500 towards the cost of the disposal drains and the balance has been met by the villagers. The estimated cost of the drains is about Rs 4,500.

For the construction of the drains technical assistance is given by the department. A sanitation squad has also been formed in the village who will do the street cleaning once in a week. It is now planned that once in a week the sanitation squad with the help of the villagers will do the entire cleaning of the village in the morning and conduct *bhajans* and prayers in the evening. They will have the community prayers in the place which has been cleaned in the morning. The village Bhajan Sanghams are becoming popular.

2. The villagers are also constructing a village road around their village at their own cost to enable them to take their bullock carts to the fields and to serve as a means of communication.

In the matter of construction of the village road the arrangement is that each bullock-cart owner should give his cart free once in a week and each house-holder should also contribute labour free once in a week, till the work is finished. The work is almost completed. Besides the construction of the village road, all the unhealthy pits are also filled up and the streets are levelled up by spreading cart-loads of earth on them.

3. The village has now an elementary school run by the District Board. With a view to convert the school into a Basic school the villagers have contributed 2 acres of land free and also Rs 2,000 towards the cost of the construction of the building.



4. The villagers take keen interest in spinning also. There are about 70 *charkhas* working. Generally women and children do spinning work regularly. It is proposed to start weaving also in this village very shortly.

5. A *Panchayat* Board and a multi-purpose co-operative society have also been formed.

6. There is an adult night-school.

7. A building is being constructed for the purpose of starting a maternity home.

8. It is one of the few villages in the *firka* area that has taken a leading part in Harijan uplift work.

9. A few Wardha-type single-cell latrines are in use in the village. The work of constructing a new type of latrine, based on Wardha pattern has been started.

10. Besides the above activities great attention has been paid in developing village cultural activities like the radio and the reading room also.

### A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THAKKAR BAPA'S LIFE

#### II

Thakkar Bapa made up his mind to join the Servants of India Society. Dr Dev, who had also made up his mind to do so, recommended him to Shri Gokhale. At first Thakkar Bapa proposed that during his period of probation in the Society, he should go on a long leave from his service in the Municipality, and resign after his regular confirmation as a member. But Shri Gokhale did not want half-hearted people. He sternly told him to burn his boats if he wanted to be a Servant of India. Hence, Thakkar Bapa resigned outright, and both he and Dr Dev were accepted as full members immediately.

He was 45 years old then, and till his death at the age of 81 served the country with a devotion and energy now well known to every one.

Bapa's first work as a Servant of India was one after his own heart—famine relief work in U. P. Since that time he has appeared on the scene of every famine and flood in the country with his well-organized relief measures. In 1915, he organized co-operative societies for sweepers and scavengers in Bombay. In 1916, he organized famine relief work in Cuttch. In 1917, he worked in collaboration with Shri Devdhar and Joshi in conducting a revenue inquiry in the Kheda district of Gujarat.

In 1920, he performed one of the most memorable pieces of his life's service. In that year Orissa was under the agony of a widespread and intense famine. At Gandhiji's request Thakkar Bapa went to Orissa to put in operation comprehensive famine-relief measures.

While the Orissa work was still unfinished, the Servants of India Society desired him to go to British Guiana for assisting some of our countrymen there. Gandhiji did not appreciate this step, and he wrote to Shri Shrinivasa Shastri :

"I wanted to talk to you about Amritlal's proposed visit to British Guiana. The work to be done there is not to be compared with the work he is at present doing in Orissa. Any third-rate man could go to British Guiana but no one can efficiently replace him in Orissa. I hope therefore that you will not remove him till he has finished this famine work."

And so Bapa was allowed to continue his work.

In 1921, Shri Thakkar was engaged in *khadi* work in Kathiawad. Like Gandhiji he also was a firm believer in hand-spinning. 1922 saw him again doing famine relief work in the Panchmahals in Gujarat. In 1923, he founded the Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad. The work started with 5 settlements in the rural parts, each of which contained a school, a small dispensary and a centre for temperance and health propaganda and miscellaneous social welfare work including the introduction of scout training in Bhil boarding schools. The years 1924, '25 were mostly spent by him in the consolidation and extension of Bhil and Antyaja Seva Mandal work in Gujarat.

In 1925, he also spent about 5 months in studying the questions of the aboriginal tribes in C. P. (now M. P.), Assam and Chhota Nagpur. These and further studies of his have led to the promotion of definite schemes for the amelioration of the aboriginal tribes in the country as a whole.

He also took share in a movement for administrative reforms in the Indian States and presided in 1926 over the Bhavnagar State Subjects' Conference. In 1927, he presided over the Kathiawad States People's Conference at Porbandar. In the same year, he worked as a flood relief organizer in Gujarat, Saurashtra, Sindh and Orissa.

Between the years 1928 and 1930, Thakkar Bapa continued to take interest in the problem of the Indian States and constitutional reforms therein. He took part in the Kathiawad Political Conference and the All India States People's Conference. He was a member of a Committee appointed by the latter body to inquire into the grievances of the people of Patiala against their ruler. A report of that Committee attracted wide attention and led to the institution of a departmental enquiry by the Government of India.

As a result of Thakkar Bapa's efforts, the Bombay Government appointed a committee to inquire into the social, economic and educational condition of the depressed classes and aboriginal tribes in the Presidency and to report upon measures for their uplift. In 1928, he made a survey of the municipalities in Gujarat. In 1929, he was engaged in flood relief work in Assam. Thus between 1928 and 1930, he was also engaged in famine relief work during nearly the whole of the period, and attended particularly to the reconstruction and repairs of *dharamshalas*, schools, wells etc.

In 1930, the country was convulsed with the civil disobedience movement. At that time Bapa was working in Gujarat, the nerve centre of the movement. While observing the picketing of a liquor shop at Mehmdabad he was arrested on 2nd August 1930, and was sentenced to 6 months' hard labour, but was released after about 2 months.



Then soon came a time when Thakkar Bapa could work not only in close co-operation but also in intimate association with Gandhiji. The story of Gandhiji's epic fast unto death to resist the Communal Award and the Poona Pact is well known. Thakkar Bapa played a very important role in the negotiations leading to the Poona Pact and was one of its signatories. He was appointed General Secretary of the Anti-Untouchability League as the Harijan Sevak Sangh was then called.

Soon after taking up the new post, he toured all the provinces of India for over 6 months and studied the extent and intensity of the problem of untouchability. In less than a year he organized 22 provincial branches and 178 district centres. He travelled long distances and paid detailed attention even to district branches. He also accompanied Gandhiji in his famous tour for Harijan work and travelled more than 1250 miles in 9 months.

In 1937, Congress Governments took office in the provinces. Thakkar Bapa toured extensively, interviewed the Premiers and Diwans of the various Provinces and States, urging on them the need to provide for liberal expenditure for Harijan uplift. He prepared a scheme for Harijan uplift in all the provinces where the Congress party was in power and submitted it to the Ministers in the respective provinces.

In 1940, Thakkar Bapa was Chairman of a Committee appointed by the Government of Orissa to inquire into and report on the condition of the backward people there. After an extensive tour he submitted the Committee's report to the Orissa Government recommending various administrative changes and ameliorative measures for the aboriginals. In the same year, he again made an all-India tour for Harijan work. Side by side with this, he visited areas inhabited by the Gonds, Koyas and Banda Parajas in Orissa and other *ashrams* for aborigines in Assam and Khandesh.

1943 was a year of distress in several parts of the country. Thakkar Bapa was present in almost every one of these scenes of calamitous suffering. The people of Orissa had suffered a great deal from the cyclone and the consequent loss of standing crops. Thakkar Bapa organized famine relief work with the help of the public men of Orissa. It was largely due to Bapa's influence that money and crop for famine relief were collected. He also played a notable part in the relief of the Bengal famine.

1944 found him busy with the Orissa Famine Relief work, Harijan work and Aboriginal work. He took a leading part in organizing the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund and was appointed Secretary of the Fund and subsequently of the Trust. In the same year he found Vanavasi Seva Mandal in C. P. (now M. P.). It was about this time that he developed cataract in his eyes.

In 1945, he became the Secretary of the Mahadev Desai Memorial Fund. In 1946, he prepared five-year Adivasi Welfare plans for the

Bihar and M. P. Governments. He was appointed Vice-president of the Adimjati Mandal, Ranchi. He also worked in Noakhali and Tippera districts with Gandhiji. In 1947, he was elected Chairman of the Excluded and Partially-Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, and member of the Sub-Committee for Assam. He was elected, in October 1948, from the Union of Saurashtra to the Constituent Assembly of which he remained active member till the framing of the Constitution.

In 1949, he completed 80 years. India celebrated his birthday in a befitting manner and presented him with a Commemoration Volume.

He already had heart-attacks before this, and his health was visibly declining. But he would not rest as long as he could sit up and move. Towards the middle of 1950, he went to his paternal home in Bhavnagar for a short rest, and had sustained repeated attacks of fever and heart-disease, and became incapable of undertaking tours any longer. None-the-less, whenever he felt energy enough to go about, he visited local institutions and took part in local engagements. On hearing of the Assam Earthquake he felt sorely distressed that he could not personally visit that State. He however deputed five of his able colleagues to help the Assam Government in the Relief operations. He kept himself well informed of all current events and the welfare of his workers, and children in the various *ashrams* and personal friends. The Sardar's death moved him greatly and made him unhappy. He knew that his own end was drawing near, but he knew no depression and thought of his work and his beloved friends as if he was deathless and ageless.

He enquired on the day of his death the date and name of the week-day, and learning that it was Friday, the 19th January, he seems to have derived some satisfaction at the prospect of his end that day, as Friday happens to be the day of death of, among others, Gokhale, Gandhiji and the Sardar, and 19th (of February, 1915) was the date on which Gokhale had died.

Thus ended the career of a great saint of modern times.

(Compiled from various articles from the Thakkar Bapa 80th Birthday Commemoration Volume)

G. N.

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