

MARJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

TEACHING OF REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Referring to "the resentment expressed by the Gujarati-speaking public of Chinchani village in Thana District against the order issued by the District School Board, Thana, enjoining the primary schools there to teach Marathi as a compulsory subject", the Government of Bombay has issued a statement explaining its policy. It states that the order is in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the Provincial Education Ministers' Conference convened by the Government of India in August 1949. The rules framed in pursuance of that recommendation require, *inter alia*, that if in a particular linguistic region people speaking a language other than the regional one desire that their children should be given education (up to standard IV) through their own mother-tongue, the District School Boards would have to do so, provided that the number of such pupils is not less than 40, and provided further that "in order that the children should not be divorced from the main stream of the regional social life, the regional language is taught compulsorily from standard III onwards. Thus, for instance," the Press Note says, "in a Marathi school in Surat District, the medium of instruction is Marathi, but Gujarati is compulsorily taught from standard III onwards as an additional language, as it happens to be the local regional language."

I think that, apart from the question of detail as to whether the teaching of the regional language should commence from standard III, or IV, or V, the principle underlying the policy is quite proper. And if educationists are of the opinion that it should commence from standard III, people should bow to it, as one might bow to the opinion of a body of experts in any other field.

But I take this policy as sufficient for a whole linguistic province in general. Broach, Baroda, Ahmedabad cannot be regarded as any but Gujarati regions by normal men; similarly Poona, Satara, Nasik etc. must be regarded as purely Marathi regions. Dharwar cannot be regarded as anything but pure Kannad. But it cannot be said so about Bombay, parts of Thana, Surat, Belgaum, Dang etc. People with no political or other bias must regard Bombay to

be a multi-linguistic region, and parts of Thana, Surat, Dang and Belgaum to be bi-linguistic ones. Whether the State of Bombay remains a composite State as at present, or divides into smaller units, such multi- or bi-linguistic areas must always be regarded as multi- or bi-linguistic, and the people in these regions (i) should have the facility of receiving all the education through their respective mother-tongue (subject to provisions regarding numbers of pupils etc.), and (ii) must learn also the other language of that region. This obligation in a multi-linguistic city like Bombay would have to be restricted to knowing either Gujarati or Marathi for pupils whose mother-tongue is neither the one nor the other. Thus the pupils of a Tamil, Telugu or Sindhi school in Bombay should learn either Gujarati or Marathi as the regional language; and every Gujarati pupil must know Marathi, and every Maharashtri, Gujarati. Hindi will stand apart as the common language for all.

I admit that this suggestion casts some extra burden upon the pupils. But it must be accepted as inevitable in the peculiar geographical and environmental circumstances of these regions. And, after all, it is not so heavy a burden as to be regarded as unbearable. A majority of people in such regions do speak both the languages with perfect ease, if not with right accent and perfect grammatical accuracy. Teaching imparts to them only grammatical accuracy, and tries to correct the accent. It does not burden them too heavily with an unfamiliar vocabulary. It gives them also enjoyable and valuable literature of both the languages, besides broadening their outlook. It will establish goodwill much better than the goodwill missions trying to do so in an artificial manner. The ill-will between the Bengalis and the Biharis would not have been there and would disappear, if Bihar would treat Manbhum as a bilingual area, where every one must know both Bengali and Hindi, and public offices recognize both equally. But no; Biharis will first coerce Bengalis, and the Bengalis of Calcutta will retaliate; and after some heads have been broken, goodwill missions will start trying to repair the mischief. Can we not stop the mischief from the start?

I entirely agree with the Bombay Press Note that

"The contention that these orders are against the fundamental rights provided in the Constitution guaranteeing the culture, language and literature of all sections of the people is not correct. The learning of an additional language cannot adversely affect the culture, language and literature of any pupil."

Wardha, 9-10-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

POST-BASIC EDUCATION

Questions have been asked as to what would happen to the pupils who complete the eight years' course of Basic Education. Will they be able to go for higher education? The action taken by the Government of Bihar regarding this matter is given in the following resolution published in the Bihar Gazette:

"The first batch of pupils of the Kumbarbagh Post-Basic school, the only institution of the type now in existence (in Bihar), will have completed in December, 1950, their four years' Post-Basic school education. As contemplated in the scheme of Post-Basic Education, a majority of them should be qualified for direct entry into remunerative occupations and professions on completion of the Post-Basic or multilateral High School course, but an appreciable number of them, being the most intelligent and the ablest, should be fitted for higher University education or technological education of equivalent standard. The Basic Education Board has to form an accurate estimate of their professional attainments to be able to find out for what occupations and professions they would be most suitable. It has also to make an estimate of their general achievements and then other attainments with a view to suggest suitable planning for their higher and further education. It is agreed that their University education should be a natural development of attainments at the Basic and Post-Basic stages and that the recommendations of the Indian Universities Commission, particularly regarding the establishment of Rural Universities, might be helpful in suggesting a suitable line of such a development.

"With a view to achieve the above objectives Government have decided to appoint a High Education Committee, for planning the higher University education or technological education of equivalent standard of Post-Basic boys consisting of the following members:

1. Mr C. K. Raman, I.C.S., Development Commissioner, Bihar.
 2. Mr J. C. Mathur, I.C.S., Secretary to Government of Bihar, Education Department.
 3. Mr E. W. Aryanayakam, Secretary, Hindustani Talimi Sangha.
 4. Mr Gorakhnath Sinha, Director of Public Instruction, Bihar.
 5. Dr J. S. Patel, Director of Agriculture, Bihar.
 6. Mr Phulanprasad Verma,
 7. Principal Bhagwatprasad, and
 8. Principal Amarendranarayan,
- the last three being representatives of the Patna University appointed by the Syndicate of the Patna University.
9. Secretary, Basic Education Board, Bihar, —Secretary of the Committee.

"With a view to assess the suitability of the pupils following the different courses for direct entry into remunerative occupations and professions and

for the utilization of their services by the State and by the non-official constructive work agencies, Government have also decided to constitute an Assessment Board consisting of the following members:

1. Mr E. W. Aryanayakam, Secretary, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram.
2. Mr Gorakhnath Sinha, Director of Public Instruction, Bihar.
3. Rev. Father M. D. Moran, S. J., Principal, St. Xavier's School, Patna.
4. Secretary, Basic Education Board, Bihar —Secretary of the Board.

"The Assessment Board will have the authority to set up different specialist Assessment Committees for different departments and branches and the Development Department and the University have agreed to lend the services of specialists for working on such committees.

"The High Education Committee and the Assessment Board should submit their recommendations to the Government for their consideration by the beginning of October 1950."

Sevagram

E. W. ARYANAYAKAM

CLEANLINESS AND WORSHIP

'Cleanliness is next to godliness' and the latter cannot be realized without the strict observance of the former. With due respect to the sacredness of most of our temples it is painful to observe dirt and filth in and round about them. It is particularly so in pilgrim centres such as Rameshwaram, Banaras, Nasik, etc. In these temples, in the name of God, many precious food materials are wasted for what is called *abhishekam*: honey, milk, *ghee* or oil etc. are poured over the images; coconuts are broken and the nutritious coconut water goes to waste. If all the milk, oil and coconut water thus wasted in these temples and private houses were collected, it would make a decent quantity to feed some of God's starving children. Our "offerings to God" should not mean offerings in a wasteful manner. If our traditional ceremonies are out of tune with clean and intelligent behaviour, they should be suitably amended or altered. Our Sanskrit scholars, religious heads and well-wishers of Hinduism should initiate and popularize bold reforms and prescribe simpler and improved rituals for our masses.

Referring to the uncleanness of Kashi Vishwanath temple, Gandhiji writes in his *Autobiography* (p. 297):

"The authorities should be responsible for creating and maintaining about the temple a pure, sweet and serene atmosphere, physical as well as moral. Instead of this I found a *bazar* where cunning shopkeepers were selling sweets and toys of the latest fashion.

"When I reached the temple, I was greeted at the entrance by a stinking mass of rotten flowers. The floor was paved with fine marble, which was however broken by some devotee innocent of aesthetic taste, who had set it with rupees serving as an excellent receptacle for dirt.

"I went near the *Jnana-vapi* (Well of Knowledge). I searched here for God but

failed to find Him. I was not, therefore, in a particularly good mood. The surroundings of the *Jnana-vapi* too I found to be dirty. I had no mind to give any *dakshina*. So I offered a pie. The *panda* in charge got angry and threw away the pie. He swore at me and said, 'This insult will take you straight to hell.' (part III chap. XX).

These remarks are applicable to most of the temples and religious places. We often mistake the husk of customs, rituals, formalities etc. for the kernel of Religion, namely Truth, Cleanliness and Goodness. I end with a humble appeal to temple authorities not to allow coconut-water, oil, milk, honey and other precious articles to go to waste. If they must be offered, it is better they are collected in clean vessels and are distributed to the needy. The Deity of the image is sure to be more pleased to be cleaned often with simple pure water and appreciate our faith better if we do not wastefully use God's gifts.

R. CHIDAMBARESH

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Shree Balwantrao Chaturbhai, Bombay	2	0	0
Shree Jadavji Maru, Khandwa	3	0	0
Shree Devidayal Sharma, Rajpura	1	0	0
A Young Harijan Pleader, Ahmedabad	5	0	0
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Shree Ambalal Patel, Kasa	1	0	0
Shree Prabhudas Patel, Kasa	1	0	0
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VANASPATI AND MIDDLE CLASSES

I have not been able to discuss *vanaspati* for some weeks, though I have received several pertinent articles and communications on the subject. I shall refer today to an article by Shrimati Sarojini Mehta, a well-known writer, social reformer and advocate of women's rights in Gujarat. She has pleaded against the banning of *vanaspati*, on the ground that such a step would cause serious inconvenience to middle-class families, who are not rich enough to purchase pure *ghee* at its present high price, and by reason of their established habits of life and traditions, cannot use oil in its liquid form in the preparation of their dishes. The service of liquid oil on *chapati* or rice to members of their class would be against etiquette. It would also not be tolerated by sensitive throats and lungs. Some preparations which are meant to be consumed during the course of several days would not keep in good condition if prepared in liquid oil. They must be prepared in *ghee* or *vanaspati*. In these days of all-round high prices and the prohibitive cost of *ghee*, *vanaspati* has come as a welcome reliever to the middle-class housewife who has to keep her husband and children pleased with tasty dishes and entertain friends in a manner befitting the position of her husband. The food must not smell of oil and must not lose its taste by rancidity. She must economize without appearing to be a stingy house-keeper, who makes confections in liquid oil. The question must be considered, she pleads, from the point of view of a housewife, who has young children and frequent guests to look after, and should not be decided by men, with logic unrelated to the art of house-running.

Having been born and brought-up in the same class for which Shrimati Mehta has put up this case, I have no difficulty in understanding her point of view. It so happens that a majority of the ministers who govern our country at present also belong to the same class, and so there is little chance of their not giving a sympathetic hearing to her pleas. If any of them are stubborn, probably their wives will pull them up. The apprehension, rather, is that since the Government of the country is in the hands of the people of our own small class, interested both financially and socially in the maintenance of this industry, they may fail to summon up courage to look to the interest of the masses, and take a decision against their own, since it is in conflict with that of the people.

Who is this middle-class, to whom *vanaspati* has become so indispensable in the course of less than 25 years? It does not comprise all those people, who are usually referred to as

middle-class people. Socially, (to mention just by way of example), Shri Purushottamdas Thakurdas, living in a palace on the Malabar Hill at Bombay, and a kinsman of his perhaps as near as a sister's son-in-law or a daughter-in-law's parents — living in a small rented block on a bye-road of Bombay, and a poor clerk who has just begun his career on terms of getting food in lieu of work, are all regarded as middle-class people. Shri C. Rajagopalachari and a poor Tamilnad Aiyangar working as a primary school master on Rs 30 per month, are both middle-class people.

Of these, Shri Purushottamdas Thakurdas and Shri C. Rajagopalachari need not go in for *vanaspati*, even if pure *ghee* cost Rs 25 per seer. Economically, they have ceased to be middle-class people. At the other end, the primary school-teacher and the new apprentice do not take *ghee* and cannot take it, even if it was available at less than a rupee per seer, if the oil also became cheaper proportionately. He has used oil from his childhood, and will use it until his pocket begins to show good savings. Hence, economically, he too does not belong to the middle class. He is still below it.

The middle class with that partiality for *ghee* or anything resembling it, which Shrimati Mehta describes, lies within the range of a family income of about Rs 300 per month to less than Rs 1,000 per month. These people find it difficult to purchase *ghee*, and at the same time do not wish to give up the pretence of doing so. And in order that they can keep up their pretences, they want the Government to allow this industry to go on, even though it has spelt ruin to the genuine *ghee* industry and ultimately to cattle and agriculture. Is this just? As a member of this very class, I ask Shrimati Mehta and the ministers and this whole class to consider. What is our number in 30 crores?

Shrimati Mehta complains about the non-keeping quality and allergic effects of liquid oil. Though ultimately it is a matter of habit, this is partly true. I say partly, because for curing the oil of these effects, it is not necessary to hydrogenate, that is, solidify the oil. Refined and deodorized oil will neither smell nor taste like oil and will not get as quickly rancid as fresh but unrefined oil. Though refinement has its own drawbacks and is not needed by the people in general, it may be allowed for the sake of these sensitive stomachs. But after doing this, there is no ground for further treating it with hydrogen. It is the hydrogenation that is objected to as an immediate step.

Shrimati Mehta has also repeated two arguments supplied by the advertizers of the industry. One of them is that the objectors must first increase the stock of *ghee*, and make it cheap before asking for a ban on *vanaspati*. Is this possible? Can a village industry like manufacture of *ghee*, depending upon healthy live cattle, ever prosper against the competition of a

modern large-scale mechanized industry? The industrialists understand this perfectly well, but purposely present a specious argument to mislead simple-minded and uninformed people.

The other argument is that water is used as an adulterant of milk; hence water should be also banned or coloured. This also is a pretentious argument invented for confusing the mind. Is water prepared by man? Is it made in a factory? Is it available only in shops? Does *vanaspati* bear the same relationship to *ghee* as water to milk? Shri Satishchandra Dasgupta has devised a simple and cheap method by which one may find out from any sample of milk, how much fat content it has. Hence, if the best milk should contain 6 per cent fat and is priced at Re 1 per seer, by ascertaining the amount of fat a given sample contains, one can price it proportionately. Thus if milk is adulterated with water, this test would enable one to eliminate the price of water. Just as you do not pay the same price for dilute hydrochloric acid as for pure one, but are supposed to pay proportionately, so milk adulterated with water alone can, so far as the price factor goes, be correctly priced. In the case of *ghee* adulterated with *vanaspati* this is not possible.

Wardha, 7-10-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

COMMUNALISM AND INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

There are occasions, when, through God's grace, one man is right and all wrong. Pandit Nehru in fighting the spirit of communalism, which again seeks to rear its head, is absolutely right.

There are two things before the country: Communalism, and India's dealings with Pakistan. The two are separate.

Communalism is the way to death. It was because of communalism that India has grievously suffered. The partition of the country was due to communalism. Communalism is against the time-spirit, the spirit of the age, against the unseen but tremendous spiritual forces that are at work over the heart and mind of the race seeking to make them conscious of their deep and fundamental spiritual unity. It is against the highest spiritual enlightenment, against divine plan and purpose. It would be going back to the Dark Ages.

If Pakistan does not deal rightly by her Hindu and Sikh minorities, that is altogether a different matter. India should not by any means neglect them. The partition has not altered India's fundamental relation with them or released her of her moral responsibility before God for their security and welfare. India should never take an attitude of *klaibya* or moral cowardice, of appeasement, but should insist, with the whole force of her being, that Pakistan should and must deal well by her Hindu and Sikh minorities. If India fails in it, she would

have to answer before God. She would not deserve to be independent. But that surely should not in any way influence India in her attitude towards Indian Muslims or in her treatment towards them. Indian Muslims are Indians and are not responsible for Pakistan's actions.

The Ganga will not flow back to the Himalayas. Revival of Hinduism, or Hindu *dharma*, even, as some people understand it, in a narrow sense, is out of the question. This is not in the divine scheme of things. What was in the past, shall never be again, as it cannot, in this changing world. Our *rishi* fathers never knew of Hindu *dharma* or Hindu culture. All that they cared for was *dharma*, pure and undefiled truth, righteousness. Their whole conception of *dharma* and culture was universal and eternal in character.

This is no age for the revival of any sectional or communal religion, Hinduism, or Islam, or Christianity, or Buddhism, in spite of the excellent things that are in each. This is an age for a synthesis of all religions. God is One, and Religion also is One and the Same. This is the grand truth that men have to learn in this age and they shall have to be, as they are being made, over-poweringly conscious of it. Forms differ. But forms are non-essential, hence immaterial. Hindus, Mussulmans, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists — we are all of One Religion. God is our Greatest Common Factor, God is our One Common Father, and we are all His children, and have to behave with one another as such. This is no age for Hindu Mahasabha or Muslim League. This is the age for Hindu-Mussulman-Christian-Sikh-Buddhist Mahasabha — in short, *Sarva Dharma Mahasabha*. If we have to shed some of our old accustomed habits of thought and action, we must do so. If we do not do it willingly, we shall have to do it under the compulsion of circumstances.

What the world needs, is a revival of *Dharma* — Religion, universal and eternal — in the hearts of men, not of any sectional religion. God will not permit it. Mankind need to be united in One God. They need one universal religion of love, piety, and brotherhood.

For the last 25 years, our mission has held that the problem of communal harmony was greater than the question of independence. India today is being baffled by it. India will stand or fall by her right or wrong solution of this one problem. She cannot solve it till her soul rises to the highest spiritual height, to a universal standpoint in all things of life. Again and again we have insisted on it that Hindus and Muslims must forget that they are Hindus or Muslims and remember only that they are children of the same Father, God, before they could be free. To the One God they have to go and unite heart with heart, and go hand in hand. Through God's grace, this shall be.

ALOKANANDA MAHABHARATI,
President, Arunachal Mission

INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND GOODWILL

VIII

'One should bring a banquet to an end with sweets' (मधुरेण समापयेत्) — is a time-honoured precept; we will close accordingly with Rabindranath Tagore's fine description of society in ancient India (*Modern Review*, April 1921, p.433 ff) :

"In our country the King made wars, defended his territory and administered his laws, but the social organization has attended to everything else from the supply of water to the supply of knowledge so simply and naturally that the repeated floods of new sovereignty which swept over the land with the advent of each new era did not reduce us to brutes by destroying our *dharma*, nor scatter us into vagabondage by breaking up our social structure. The Kings incessantly battled against one another, but in our murmuring bamboo groves, in the shade of our mango orchards, temples were being raised, rest-houses for wayfarers established and water reservoirs excavated; the village schoolmaster taught his simple lore, higher philosophy was not lacking in the *tois* and the village meeting places were resonant with the chanting of the Ramayana and the singing of *kirtanas*. The social life did not depend upon outside aid, nor did outside aggression perceptibly mar its serene beauty....."

"The State is the sovereign power in England. The old-time *raja-shakti* in our country was different. In England the State is mainly responsible for the well-being of the people, but in India this was so only to a limited extent. Not that the King had not to maintain and reward the sages who gave free education to the people in religion and science, but that was only in part. The real responsibility lay on the householder. If the King stopped his grants, or even if the land was Kingless, these primary activities of the community would not suffer any serious check. Not that the King did not provide water reservoirs for the people, but no more than what all wealthy men considered it their duty to do. The neglect of the King could not dry up the water resources of the country.

"In England every one is at liberty to pursue his self-interest, his personal comforts and amusements. He is not burdened with communal duties. All the greater cares rest on the state. In our country it was the King who was completely free and on the people was cast the burden of their civic obligations. The King warred and hunted; whether he spent his time attending to matters of state or to his personal pleasures was a matter for which he might be accountable to *dharma* but on which the people did not leave their communal welfare to depend. The responsibility for this was divided in a

wonderfully adaptive way among the members of the community themselves.

"For this reason what we understand as *dharma* permeated the whole special fabric; each one had to practise the discipline of self-restraint, each one had to conform to *dharma*.

"This shows that the seat of life of different civilizations is differently placed in the body politic. Where the responsibility for the welfare of the people lies, there beats the heart of the nation, and if a blow should fall thereon, the whole nation is wounded unto death. In England, the overthrow of the State would mean destruction for the nation. But disaster can only overtake our country when its social body, its *samaj*, is crippled. That is why we have never staked our all to resist a change of sovereignty, but have clung with might and main to the freedom of our society. It is, I say, because all good works in England depend upon the State, and in India upon the social organism, that in England to save the State is to save the country, and for India to live is to preserve her social institutions intact.....

"India has always been endowed with the power of binding together. Through adverse circumstances of every kind she has invariably succeeded in evolving an orderly system; so does she still survive. On this India I pin my faith.....

"All the four great religions of the world are here together, — Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. It is evident that India is God's chemical factory for the making of a supreme religious synthesis.....

"India never fought for domination, nor scrambled for spoils. China, Japan and Tibet, who are so careful to bar their windows against the advances of Europe, welcomed India with open arms as theirs *guru*; for she had never sent out her armies for plunder and pillage, but only her messages of peace and goodwill. This glory which India has earned as the fruit of her self-discipline was greater than that of the widest of empires.....

"The realization of unity in diversity, the establishment of a synthesis amidst variety — that is the inherent *sanatana dharma* of India. India does not admit difference to be conflict, nor does she espy an enemy in every stranger. So she expels none, she destroys none; she abjures no methods, recognizes the greatness of all ideals, and seeks to bring them into one grand harmony.

"By reason of this genius of India Hindus, Muslims and Christians need not fight here for supremacy, but will find common ground under the shelter of her hospitality. That common ground will not be un-Hindu, it will be more especially Hindu. And however foreign the several limbs may be, the heart will still be the heart of India."

THE HORROR OF IT

The Maganwadi Safai Mandal (Cleanliness Club) was out at work. A batch of us were attacking a public latrine in Wardha. The horror of the condition of the latrine was indescribable. There was nightsoil inside and outside. The buckets were either leaking or overflowing. The little drainage was cracked in many places and choking with filth. There was a pit into which the drain ran. What was inside that pit would have defied the analysis of any scientist. What we knew was that the smell that came out of it was some poison gas. People were going in and coming out in endless procession. We saw many going in with some cloth tied round their mouths and noses. That was to escape the terrible and foul smell. Even so they kept on going in. There was no other latrine in that thickly populated part of the town.

We made a quick survey of the place. We divided ourselves into four batches. The first one dug a pit further off, the second cleared the drain pit, the third removed the buckets and the fourth washed the floors and the drains. The cleaning of the drain pit was a horrible experience. There was cement on the sides but none at the bottom. It had not been cleaned for weeks. Inside up to the brim was a thick black substance, neither solid nor liquid. We could get no bucket from the scavenger in charge to put into the pit for clearing it. The scavenger was ill and sent word that there was a small tin kept behind a tree. So we got our own bucket. It was difficult to clean the pit even with a bucket. How then did the scavenger clean the pit with a small tin? He must all the time have put his own hand up to the elbow into it. We too did clean the pit. It took more than an hour. But in one sense it was an uncleanable pit because it had no bottom. The more you cleaned the pit the more you dug into loose filth. We managed it somehow. We buried the whole stew in the new pit covering up heavily with earth.

It was difficult also to remove the buckets because they were leaky or overflowing. People went in even as we were removing the buckets. No one hesitated even to use over-filled buckets. The washing up of the floors and the drains was also a hopeless task because there were cracks on the floors and in the drainage. We ended up by a good sweep all round. We had toiled from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. We sat down in the shade for a while and wondered what would be the condition of the latrine in another week. We therefore collected a crowd, conducted a *bhajan* and spoke at length to them. And then we returned. We were a strange little crowd ourselves. We had girls from the Punjab, Bengal, Mysore, Tamilnad, Andhra and Kerala and boys from the

various provinces. One girl was a South Indian Brahman, Meenakshi by name, and she had excelled everybody in the work. We had no caste or class amongst us. When people join together for *safai* work there comes to them a comradeship which nothing can equal. *Safai* can unite teachers and students into an unbreakable bond of comradeship.

As we were coming away something happened which was the climax of the story. We saw a fair-complexioned good-looking boy, not more than 12 or 13 years of age, approaching with a big bucket on his head. The bucket was full with something. We could not make out what it was from the distance. The boy came up under the strain of the heavy weight. We then saw that it was a bucket of nightsoil. He walked on to a little distance beyond the latrine where some drums were kept. Two were already overflowing with nightsoil. He went to a third and then lifted the bucket with great difficulty from his own head and poured the contents into it. It was a sight to see the deftness with which he avoided soiling his own clothes or limbs. He then put the bucket down and stood back breathing heavily.

I went up to him and put my hands on his shoulders and asked him about himself. He was the son of the scavenger in charge. The father was unwell and so he and his younger brother were doing the work for the day. Even as we were speaking the other brother arrived and performed the same painful circus with his bucket of nightsoil. They were both nice boys and were at school. Their father and their grandfather were scavengers. They did not know what they would do after they had completed their school years. How could they? Do our schools teach boys and girls what they should do with their lives? They did not like the work they were doing but they had no dread of it either. Later we went to their house. It was a big substantial house with cots and benches, plenty of vessels and pictures on the walls. More than one allied family were staying in it and several adults were scavengers. We met the old father who showed us with some pride an old photograph of himself in a black coat and a turban. We came away not knowing whether to weep or laugh.

Why should scavengers have to work under conditions of indescribable horror? I am not going into the question whether there should be scavengers at all. But can we not have adequate number of well-built clean latrines? Can we not give scavengers wheel-barrows instead of compelling them to carry the buckets on their heads? Is it not necessary to organize scavengers to make them put up a fight against the inhuman conditions under which they are compelled to work? Should we not educate them to have the courage to say that they will not

work unless the Municipality gives them the proper tools and equipment? The Harijan movement has come and perhaps gone without affecting really for the better the lives of our scavengers. And yet untouchability was and is founded to a large extent on the work of scavenging. No small effort however intense can solve the problem. What is required is a mighty national drive under some supreme moral leadership. Individuals must go on working but who will unite numerous individual efforts into a mighty stream of national purification? How long shall we wait?

G. RAMACHANDRAN

THE ROOT OF THE FOOD PROBLEM

The food scarcity and the abnormal rise in prices have put us in an extremely difficult situation. The Government have been doing their utmost to solve it, but so far their endeavour does not seem to have yielded any tangible result. It is a serious problem which has dislocated and put out of gear the nation's life. Every one from the highest to the lowest feels uneasy. Barring a few of the well-to-do, all feel its pinch. A popular democratic government cannot but feel extremely concerned over this state of affairs. That it does really feel so concerned will be admitted by all. What, then, is the reason that the situation is constantly moving farther and farther beyond our control?

To understand this we shall have to probe to the very roots of the problem. To say that prices are soaring because, in some parts, rains have been unusually heavy or rivers have overflowed and flooded vast areas of land, does not offer an adequate explanation of the situation. There is another and a more fundamental reason. Gandhiji used to say that our ever-deepening poverty will, some day, reach the breaking-point and then it will become well-nigh impossible to control it. Today, we realize the truth of his apprehension. It is not that this tragic spectacle of poverty, high prices and starvation has overtaken us suddenly. It is only an aggravated phase of our chronic poverty growing apace day by day. The situation is now so far deteriorated that the poor cannot even take advantage of such relief measures as have been adopted avowedly to render succour to them. Take for instance the case of ration-shops started in the rural area specially for their benefit. The difficulty is that the people have not the money to buy their week's ration at the right time. So what happens is this: A rich man provides them with money with which to buy their share of ration. But the ration so purchased has to be made over to their creditor, who later on sells it to them at higher prices. This is no tale, but a fact which I have witnessed with my own eyes. Unless the Government can set free these exploited masses caught in the tightening meshes of poverty and debt. I am afraid

nothing substantial will happen. Unless they can breathe an atmosphere of such freedom and opportunity as would enable them to realize their strength and be conscious of their duty, even the measures carefully devised for their welfare will turn out to be against their and the nation's good.

Let me give another instance. It relates to Bihar, but probably it is equally true of other places. There is a great *zamindar* in the Purnea District, owning forty thousand acres of land. The reader can well imagine the quantity of grain he must be keeping. I can say with confidence that he continues to sell huge quantities at high rates in the black market, even today. One really feels puzzled when one sees people dying of hunger, while there is so much food lying near-by.

The problem of 'Grow More Food' is, really speaking, the problem of inspiring the landless village-labourer groaning under poverty and over-work to take to this work. The success of the movement is absolutely dependent on his co-operation. But how can he offer his co-operation? He has neither the capacity nor the wherewithal. If he had the land and the capital necessary for agricultural work, the situation would have improved long since. It is clear that we should look for the reasons of this confusion in the economic and social structure of the country and the Government policy.

(From Hindi)

GOPAL KRISHNA MALLIK

Students and Assam Relief Fund

The efforts made by students at various places to render help to the quake-stricken people of Assam deserve credit. It shows that the hearts of students are ever filled with tender feelings and sentiments. The struggle for existence has not yet hardened their hearts. At some places they have done manual labour and at some others they have forgone their meals for helping Assam with funds. The other day it was reported in the newspapers that some students in Surat took to polishing boots of visitors to the municipal garden in order to collect funds for Assam. Such help, even if small, is a more precious and pure gift. To all such students and their teachers I extend my commendations.

Wardha, 10-10-'50

K. G. M.

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