लाल बहादुर शास्त्री प्रशासन अकादमी
Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration
मसूरी
MUSSOORIE

पुस्तकालय
LIBRARY

अवाप्ति संख्या
*Accession No.* 103885
वर्ग संख्या
*Class No.* 320.092
पुस्तक संख्या
*Book No.* Tha



(By courtesy of Shri Kanu Gandhi)

HOLY SERVANTS OF THE NATION WRAPT IN THOUGHT

# THAKKAR BAPA

## EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATION VOLUME

*Compiled and Edited by*

T. N. JAGADISAN

*and*

SHYAMLAL

MADRAS

1949

PRINTED IN INDIA
AT THE DIOCESAN PRESS, MADRAS—1949

## PREFACE

ON September 15, 1949, an appeal was issued in connection with Thakkar Bapa's 80th Birthday over the names of 38 of our country's leaders headed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Rajendraprasad. The appeal said :

> 'Shri A. V. Thakkar, affectionately known all over India as Thakkar Bapa, will be completing his 80th year on November 29. He is truly the Grand Old Man of India today. There is no figure in the country more venerated than Bapa. Aged as he is, he is as active as younger workers, and inspires them by his untiring devotion to a multitude of causes. When one contemplates the long unbroken record of service of the forlorn and the forgotten which Bapa's life has been, one realises why Gandhiji once said that his ambition was to equal Bapa's long record of selfless service. Shri Srinivasa Sastri who worked with Bapa for long years as Servant of India referred to Bapa as the supreme embodiment of human sympathy. It is needless to recount his various fields of untiring service such as famine relief work, Bhil Seva, Harijan Seva, Kasturba work and, indeed, the service of all sections of humanity that are neglected. It is fitting that the country should honour itself by honouring one so great and so rare.'

The signatories to the appeal proposed that a Commemoration Volume should be presented to Thakkar Bapa at a formal ceremony in Delhi, and they entrusted to us the work of compiling and editing the Volume. We undertook the task in faith, and, realizing the immensity of the project and our own unworthiness to execute it, we did each day's work prayerfully. To our joy and surprise, friends and admirers of Bapa rose to the occasion and in less than three weeks a wealth of material, remarkable alike for its quality and for its range, was gathered. The Diocesan Press, Vepery, Madras, undertook what seemed almost an impossible task and put all the resources of their mammoth establishment almost wholly at the task, which they regarded from the beginning as sacred, even as we did. We are glad and grateful that their efforts have been crowned with success.

We have departed, in one particular, from the usual style of compiling a Commemoration Volume. In addition to the tributes, reminiscences, and articles dedicated to Bapa, we have included a representative selection from Bapa's occasional writings and his Diary. We feel sure that admirers of Bapa

would be glad to read these extracts from Bapa's own pen. For they reveal a mind, varied in its range, sensitive in its approach, tenacious in its grasp, a method born of study and reflection, and a style which is the mirror of the author's discipline, accuracy, patience and unexcited ardour.

Associated with us in the conception and execution of this undertaking, has been Shri Devadas Gandhi. Asked for a message or article for this volume, he said that his love for Bapa was too deep for words, and that in Bapa he saw Bapu living. His association with this labour of devotion and love has therefore been naturally too intimate to be acknowledged.

To Shri D. V. Ambekar, Secretary, Servants of India Society, Poona, and Shri K. S. Shivam, Assistant Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi, and D. J. Naik of Bhil Seva Mandal, Dohad, we owe deep debts of gratitude for much detailed and enthusiastic help. To the contributors, to the friends and colleagues who helped us with advice, photographs and newspaper cuttings, we wish to express our deepest gratitude. We also thank most sincerely those friends and admirers of Bapa who have subscribed generously and willingly towards the expenses of this Volume.

Even the praise of Bapa is some little service of the downtrodden, said Gandhiji. There is much magnificent praise of Bapa in this Volume. May these pages so inspire the young that they will befriend the 'Lost causes', and without wasting energy and thought in futile controversies or getting lost in theories and forms of Government, put their shoulder to the wheel and render practical, selfless service to the masses in a spirit of dedication to the country. We join with the millions, and on this the eightieth birthday of Bapa, wish him many many returns of the auspicious *Jayanti*. For every year of Bapa's life will mean a century of progress in the Social Affairs of our country.

BAPA JAYANTI
*November* 29, 1949

T. N. JAGADISAN
SHYAMLAL
(*Joint Editors*)



SHRI RAJAJI PRESIDED OVER BAPA'S 70TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS HELD IN BOMBAY

## FOREWORD



GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
NEW DELHI.

16th September 1949.

It is a piece of great national good luck that such a downright lover of the lowly and the depressed was salvaged for social welfare work from humdrum Government service and that he should be untiring in his work and as industrious as the best of our young men even when he has reached the age of 80. Shri A.V. Thakkar is father to ever so many grateful boys and girls scattered throughout the country. His intense affection for his adopted family is an example and a spiritual force. There is not a single blemish but quite a heap of rare virtues that go to make up the personality of Thakkar Bapa and we honour ourselves by celebrating Thakkar Bapa's entry into his 81st year on the 29th November 1949.

C. Rajagopalachari

# CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| PREFACE | iii |
| FOREWORD. *C. Rajagopalachari* | v |
| MESSAGES— | |
| *M. K. Gandhi* | xiii |
| *Srinivasa Sastri* | xiv |
| *Jawaharlal Nehru* | xv |
| *Vallabhbhai Patel* | xvi |
| *Rajendraprasad* | xvii |
| *Vinoba* | xviii |
| *Pattabhi Sitaramayya* | xx |
| *G. D. Birla* | xxi |
| *B. G. Kher* | xxiii |
| *Mangaldas Pakvasa* | xxiv |


## SECTION I—BIOGRAPHICAL


| | |
|---|---|
| 1. TRUE TO THE KINDRED POINTS OF HEAVEN AND HOME. *Kapil Thakkar.* | 3 |
| 2. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GOKHALE | 14 |
| I. The Story of Bapa's Admission. *D. V. Ambekar* | 14 |
| II. Bapa Becomes a Dedicated Spirit | 16 |
| III. Bapa the Servant of India. *K. J. Chitalia* | 18 |
| 3. FROM GOKHALE TO GANDHI. *T. N. Jagadisan* | 26 |
| 4. THE STORY OF BAPA'S IMPRISONMENT. *D. V. Ambekar* | 39 |


## SECTION II—BAPA THE GOOD AND GREAT


| | |
|---|---|
| 1. REMINISCENCES. *Dr. D. K. Karve* | 53 |
| 2. BAPA JAYANTI IN BOMBAY. *Mahadev Desai* | 56 |
| 3. A PERENNIAL SOURCE OF INSPIRATION. *K. G. Mashruwala* | 58 |
| 4. THE ANGEL WHO ATTENDS TO THINGS. *Verrier Elwin* | 61 |
| 5. AN APPRECIATION. *Amrit Kaur* | 63 |
| 6. THAKKAR BAPA. *Sri Prakasa* | 65 |
| 7. AMRITLAL THAKKAR. *H. N. Kunzru* | 69 |
| 8. WORK, WORK, ALWAYS WORK. *Jagjivan Ram* | 72 |
| 9. THAKKAR BAPA OF ORISSA. *Harekrushna Mahtab* | 74 |
| 10. THAKKAR BAPA OF ASSAM. *Gopinath Bardoloi* | 76 |

PAGE

11. BAPA OF BAPU. *Pyarelal* .. .. .. .. .. 80
12. THE FORERUNNER. *Swami Anand* .. .. .. .. 84
13. THAKKAR BAPA—A TRIBUTE. *S. G. Vaze* .. .. .. 86
14. TWO PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS. *A. P. Pattani* .. .. .. 90
15. THAKKAR BAPA. *P. Kodanda Rao* .. .. .. .. 92
16. THAKKAR BAPA—AS I KNOW HIM. *N. R. Malkani* .. .. 94
17. PIONEER WORKER IN THE SERVICE OF ABORIGINES. *V. N. Barve* .. 97
18. BAPU AND BAPA. *G. Ramachandran* .. .. .. 101
19. THAKKAR BAPA AND FAMINE RELIEF. *Dinkar Desai* .. .. 104
20. IN HOMAGE TO BAPA. *Rameshwari Nehru* .. .. .. 109
21. पुण्यश्लोक बापा· *Viyogi Hari* .. .. .. .. 112
22. A FEW REMINISCENCES. *Krishnalal Jhaveri* .. .. .. 117
23. A TRIBUTE. *V. Bhashyam Aiyangar* .. .. .. .. 119
24. THAKKAR BAPA—A TRUE 'KHUDAI KHIDMATGAR'. *Sumant Mehta* .. 121
25. MY FIRST DHARSAN. *P. G. Vanikar* .. .. .. 122
26. THE LESS KNOWN ASPECTS OF THAKKAR BAPA. *L. N. Rao* .. 125
27. BAPA'S WORK FOR THE MURIAS AND MARIAS OF BASTAR DISTRICT, C.P. AND BERAR. *S. P. Shrivastava* .. .. .. .. 131
28. A DISCIPLE'S TRIBUTE. *Ambalal Vyas* .. .. .. 134
29. दीनबन्धु टक्कर बापा· *Shyamlal* .. .. .. .. 137
30. टक्कर बापा को विशेषतायें· *R. G. Tyagi* .. .. .. 151

## SECTION III—DEDICATED TO BAPA

1. INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER. *R. R. Keithan* .. .. .. 159
2. THE IMPORTANCE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT. *G. V. Mavalankar* .. 165
3. 'PUBLIC LIFE MUST BE SPIRITUALISED.' *D. V. Gundappa* .. .. 171
4. THE INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY AT WORK. *Sardar Bahadur Balwant Singh Puri* .. .. .. .. .. .. 178
5. SOLVING THE FOOD PROBLEM. *R. K. Patil* .. .. .. 183
6. THE HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH AND ITS WORK. *Rameshwari Nehru* .. 191
7. THE HARIJAN MOVEMENT. *S. R. Venkataraman* .. .. 208
8. चरखा संघ, खादी और उसका विकास· *Secretary, Charka Sangh* .. 222
9. THE PROBLEM OF ABORIGINES. *B. H. Mehta* .. .. 235
10. THAKKAR BAPA AND THE KASTURBA TRUST. *Shyamlal* .. .. 245
11. NAI TALIM AND THE 'PRIMITIVE' PEOPLES. *Aryanayakam and Marjorie Sykes* 253
12. ALL INDIA VILLAGE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION. *G. Ramachandran* .. 257
13. जौनसार बावर के आदिवासी· *Dharma Dev Sastri* .. .. .. 261
14. THE HARIJAN ASHRAM, PRAYAG. *Shankar Saran* .. .. 270

PAGE

## SECTION IV—GLEANINGS FROM BAPA'S OCCASIONAL WRITINGS

1. FAMINE RELIEF

I. Famine Tour in Panch Mahals . . . . 277
II. Famine in Puri District . . . . . 280
III. The Muddle of the Puri Famine . . . . 284

2. EDUCATION

I. Compulsory Education . . . 287
II. Primary Education in Bombay . . . . 290
III. Mass Education . . . . 293

3. THE ADIVASIS

I. The Bhil . . . . . 296
II. Social Work amongst Gujarat Bhils . . . . 297
III. Social Work amongst the Aboriginals . . . 299
IV. The Neglected Bhil . . . . 301

4. KHADI WORK

I. An Experiment in Hand-spinning . . 304
II. Charkha or Revival of the Spinning Wheel . . 306

5. LABOUR WELFARE

I. Social Work in Tata Iron and Steel Company's Works . . 308
II. Labour in Jharia Colliery . . . . . 311
III. The Oppression of the Poor . . . . . 315

6. ORISSA AND ITS PROBLEMS

I. Dismembered Orissa . . . . . 317
II. Angul and Its Lesson . . . . . 319
III. Mahanadi . . . . . 321

7. HARIJAN WELFARE

I. Housing of Untouchables . . . . . 324
II. The Redemption of the Doms . . . . . 325
III. Sixty Millions or Thirty? . . . . . 327
IV. The Poona Pact . . . . . 330
V. The Poona Pact and Bengal . . . . . 332

8. THE BACKWARD CLASSES AND MINORITIES

I. How are the Backward Classes? . . . . 336
II. Protection of Minorities . . . . . 339

PAGE

9. LEPROSY RELIEF WORK .. .. .. .. .. 343

10. V. R. SHINDE .. .. .. .. .. .. 346

11. IN THE LOWEST RUNG OF THE SOCIAL LADDER

I. Our Sweepers .. .. .. .. .. 348

II. A Village Sweepers' Society .. .. .. .. 349

III. Social Uplift of Bedias .. .. .. .. 351

12. THE PROBLEM OF ABORIGINES IN INDIA .. .. .. 354

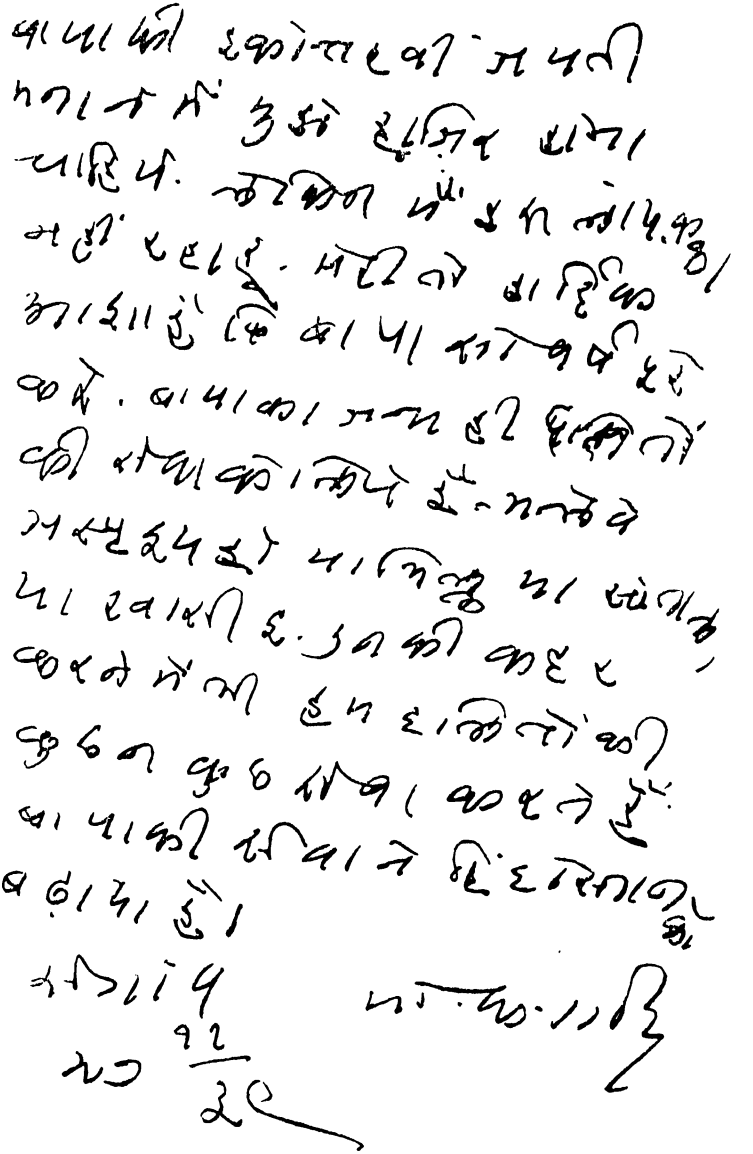
SECTION V

EXTRACTS FROM BAPA'S DIARY .. .. .. .. 381

APPENDIX .. .. .. . .. .. 419

# MESSAGES

## MESSAGE SENT BY GANDHIJI ON THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY OF BAPA



ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

ANNAMALAINAGAR

26 Nov 1939

My dear Thakkar Bapa,

Allow an elder brother though only by two months, to greet you on the public honour to be accorded to you on the 29th instant. Gandhiji asked me whether I could be present at the great function but with two long journeys in prospect at about the same time, I had regretfully to decline. But be sure I am beside you. I yield to none in admiration of your unequalled work for the lowly and the suffering classes or in homage for the singleness of purpose and the high consecration that have marked all your undertakings. I must not claim more of your time or attention. Accept my profound affection and good wishes for many more years of service to suffering humanity. Always in brotherly bonds of love, Yours

C. Srinivasan

I send my affectionate greetings and homage to Thakkar Bapa on this happy occasion. By long years of service of tribal and other backward peoples, who need such service most of all, he has become an institution in this country. May he long continue to give this selfless and efficient service!

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

*November 22, 1949*




## HON'BLE SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL'S MESSAGE FOR INCLUSION IN THE COMMEMORATION VOLUME TO BE PRESENTED TO SHRI A.V.THAKKAR.

It is hardly necessary for me to commend Thakkar Bapa to the public. His life's mission has been the service of the outcast and downtrodden - those sections of the humanity which have been shunned or exploited by civilisation. His achievements are a matter of public knowledge and are spread all over India. He has been the inspiration of many a missionary in the cause of service of the backward classes and the tribal people and for other constructive work. His idealism has been tempered by practical considerations and he has always placed service before self. He has been a leading missionary at a time when true missionaries are so rare. For him the service of the people has been a labour of love. It has been the ruling passion of his life. Today, when he is nearing his eightieth birthday, the Nation has reason to feel grateful to him for all that he has done to reclaim that section of the community which had been living in poverty, in squalor and in disease. We shall always be proud to claim him as the man of our generation and I have no doubt that the next generation will always look to his example for inspiration and guidance.

Vallabhbhai Patel

(VALLABHBHAI PATEL)



THAKKAR BAPA AND SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL

*Gandhiji, Sardar and Bapa are the three very greatest men that Gujarat has produced in recent times. Though their great Leader is gone, the other two resolutely continue his work. May they both complete a century and more !*

ठक्कर बापा उन इने गिने महापुरुषों में हैं जो अपने जीवन का प्रत्येक क्षण दूसरों की ओर विशेषकर जो सब से अधिक गरीब, दलित और तिरस्कृत हैं उनकी सेवा में लगा देते हैं। ८० वर्ष की अवस्था में आज वह जिस उत्साह और परिश्रम से दलितों की सेवा करते हैं वह युवकों को लजा देनेवाला है। हिन्दुस्तान के एक सिरे से दूसरे सिरे तक बीहड़ से बीहड़ स्थानों में उन्होंने एक बार नहीं कई बार दलितों और गरिबों की खोज में, उन की दशा देखने के लिये भ्रमन किया है और अभी भी वह जितना सफर करते हैं, नबजवान उतनी तवलोफ और परेशानी बर्दाश्त नहीं कर सकते। काम का इतना बेग कि कोई भी पत्र कहीं से भी आवे, वह केवल उसका उत्तर ही नहीं देते बल्कि उसके सम्बन्ध में वह जो कुछ कर सकते हैं वह कर भी देते हैं। वह जिस तरह स्वयं काम में कड़े हैं वैसे ही दूसरों से भी कड़ाई के साथ काम लेते हैं। हरिजनों और आदिवासियों की सेवा उन्होंने अपना मुख्य काम बना लिया है और उनके जीवन का शायद ही कोई क्षण ऐसा होता है जिस में वह उनके लिये कुछ न कुछ सोचते या करते न हों। इसलिये आज जब कभी निःस्वार्थ सेवा का ध्यान आता है तो ठक्कर बापा का चित्र आँखों के सामने आता है। यह देश का सौभाग्य है कि उसे एक ऐसा व्यक्ति मिला। ईश्वर उनको बहुत बहुत दिनों तक हमारे बीच में रखे जिस में हम और आगे आनेवाली पीढियाँ उनके जीवन से लाभ उठावें और शिक्षा ग्रहन करें।

पिलानी,
२९—१०—४९.

राजेन्द्र प्रसाद

# उत्तम अभिनंदन ग्रंथ

पूज्य ठक्कर बापा को अब अस्सी साल पूरे होते हैं। उस अवसर पर उनकी सेवा के गौरव का संग्रह करनेवाला एक ग्रंथ उनको समर्पित करने का सोचा जा रहा है। कृतज्ञता ज़ाहिर करने का यह एक रिवाज़ आजकल चल पड़ा है। कृतज्ञता अनेक प्रकारोंसे ज़ाहिर की जा सकती है, उनमें यह भी एक प्रकार हो हो सकता है।

## व्यापक विधायक मुहिम

लेकिन ऐसे अवसर पर करने लायक चीज़ तो मुझे यही लगती है कि सारे हिन्दुस्तान-भर में, हरेक म्युनिसिपल-शहर में जहाँ जहाँ भंगियोंसे काम लिया जा रहा है वहाँ भंगी-काम सुधारने की या भंगियों को मुक्त करने की एक व्यापक मुहिम शुरू की जाय। अभी परसों हमारे मध्यप्रांत के प्रांतिक-कांग्रेस-कमेटी के मुखिया श्री. कन्नमवार सहज मुझसे मिलने के लिये आये थे, तो उनके सामने म्युनिसिपालिटी के भांगियों के उद्धार की हलचल, कांग्रेस की तरफ़ से उठायी जाय, ऐसी सूचना रखी। अगर ऐसा, दलितों की सेवा का कोई विधायक काम कांग्रेस उठा लेगी और उसको सतत प्रयत्न से यशस्वी करेगी तो कांग्रेस जनों की मनस्थिति का भी उद्धार होगा ऐसा भी मेरा अभिप्राय मैंने प्रकट किया था।

## अनुकूल अवसर

मैंने देखा कि वह बात उनको जँच तो गयी। अभी इस विषय के लिये मानसिक-अनुकूलता बहुतों की हो गयी है। तब करने का रह जाता है। और तभी करने का अवसर है। महाराष्ट्र के हरिजन-सेवा-संघ के अध्यक्ष काका साहेब बर्वे ने इस विषय को चालना दी है। औरोंने भी कहीं कहीं यह काम शुरू किया है।

अगर ठक्कर बापा के नाम से स्फूर्ति लेकर इस विचार को व्यापक-कृति का रूप दिया जा सका तो वह ठक्कर बापा के हृदय को संतोष देनेवाला उत्तम अभिनन्दन ग्रंथ होगा।

## आरोग्य स्फूर्ति

बापानें अण्णा-साहेब कर्वे से सेवा-कार्य की स्फूर्ति पायी है। अण्णा-साहेब बाप्पा से उम्र में बारह साल आगे हैं और साधारण अच्छा आरोग्य रखते हैं। हम आशा कर सकते हैं कि दोनों की सेवा से पावन हुए बापा के वृद्ध शरीर को उसी गुरु-स्थान से आरोग्य स्फूर्ति भी मिलेगी।

परंधाम, पवनार,
३१-१०-४९

विनोबा

SHRI THAKKAR BAPA is an institution. He has borne along with Mahatma Gandhi the burden of the untouchables, and rid the country of this blot on Indian Civilisation and sin against God. Tribals are his favourites. He has not only seen the Psalmist's span of three score and ten but added another decade of the utmost usefulness to the country. May he live long ! For, every year that this octogenarian lives adds greatly to the services he renders to the country.

B. PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA

# ठक्कर बापा

व्यासजी ने कहा था कि करोड़ों पोथियों में जो बताया गया है वही मैं आधे श्लोक में बता देता हूं—"परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम्" माने, परोपकार ही पुण्य है और दूसरों को पीड़ा देना ही पाप है। ठक्कर बापा को केवल इतने ही कथन से पर्याप्त चित्रांकित किया जा सकता है कि इस आधे श्लोक में बताये धर्म को उन्होंने अपने जीवन में पूरी तरह से ओत-प्रोत किया है।

बापा के संसर्ग में मैं किस सन् या तारीख में आया यह तो मुझे स्मरण नहीं, पर इतना अवश्य याद है कि उस समय उनका अमृतलाल ठक्कर ही नाम चलता था और पिछड़े हुए लोगों की सेवा करना उनका पेशा था। 'बापा' की यह उपाधि तो उन्हें पीछे से मिली, जो नितान्त सार्थक है।

कहते हैं कि ठक्कर बापा गृहस्थी थे, और एंजिनियर भी थे। सुना है कि आफ्रिका में रेल की पटड़ियां डालने का काम उनके सुपुर्द किया गया था, जिसे उन्होंने अच्छे शऊर के साथ पूरा किया। पर उनकी जीवन-झाँकी, रहन-सहन या बेश-भूषा से उनका गृहस्थी होना या एंजिनियर बनकर रेल की पटड़ियाँ बिछाना कुछ अनोखा-सा लगता है। ठक्कर बापा के असली माने तो उनके जानकारों के लिए इतना ही है कि वे एक शुद्ध, विनम्र और ग़रीबों के निःस्वार्थ सेवक हैं, जिनमें न थकान है और न अभिमान। सेवा में विघ्न आने पर उन्हें अवश्य रोष होता है, पर क्षणिक; और लोगों के दुख से उन्हें चोट लगती है वह स्थायी। उनकी कोई फिलॉसिफी है तो सेवा की, और भक्ति है तो ग़रीब पीड़ितों की।

मेरा गाढ़ सम्बन्ध ठक्कर बापा से हुआ १९३२ में। बापू जब यरवदा में आमरण उपवास को दीक्षा लेकर मृत्यु-शैया पर लेटे थे, तब हम कुछ लोग श्री अम्बेडकर से बातचीत करके किस तरह हरिजन गुत्थी को सुलझावें इस चिन्ता में डूबे पड़े थे। समय बीतता जाता था और बापू का शरीर धीरे-धीरे अस्ताचल की ओर डूबता जा रहा था। कुछ लोग सीटों की खैंचातान में थे, जिन पर हम लोगों को रोष आता था। उस समय कितनी सीट न्यायानुकूल हरिजनों को मिले इसका हिसाब निकालने का भार ठक्कर बापा पर रखा

गया, और उन्होंने इस भार को पक्षपात-रहित होकर उठाया। 'पूना-पैक्ट' का प्राण हरिजनों को दिया हुआ मताधिकार है, जो ठक्कर बापा की कृति है। इस दस्तावेज़ पर हम लोगों ने आँख मूंदकर हस्ताक्षर किये।

उसके बाद जब हरिजन-सेवक-संघ गठित करने का प्रस्ताव हुआ और मुझे उसका सभापति बनने का आदेश हुआ, तब इसी शर्त पर मैंने इसे स्वीकार किया कि संघ का मंत्रित्व ठक्कर बापा को सौंपा जाय। सत्तरह साल इस तरह ठक्कर बापा के संसर्ग में बीते, जिसकी स्मृति मुझे चिरस्थायी रहेगी।

ठक्कर बापा के सम्बन्ध में अधिक लिखना बेकार है। उनकी कृति ही उनका "अभिनन्दन-ग्रन्थ" है। कागज़, कलम और स्याही उनकी कृति का क्या वर्णन दे सकती है। मेरा यह सद्भाग्य है कि मुझे एक साधू का संसर्ग मिला।

श्री घनश्यामदास बिड़ला

SECRETARIAT

*Bombay, 11th November* 1949

LEADERS of great movements very rarely live to see their efforts bearing fruit. Abraham Lincoln did not live to see American Negroes going about as free citizens of the United States of America, nor did Gandhiji in our own country live to see India attain a position of honour in the comity of Nations. Thakkar Bapa who completes 80 years this month is one of the exceptions to the rule. He has been endowed with a constitution and energy which have made it possible for him to see Harijans almost freed from the stigma of untouchability and indeed to see a learned Harijan taking a very prominent part in framing the future constitution for the governance of the whole country. He has also had the good luck to see long neglected Adivasis of India coming into their own. Statutory provisions incorporated in the Constitution itself for safeguarding their interests and provisions for assisting their development into full-fledged citizens will for ever be a standing tribute to the indefatigable labour of this Grand Old Man and his associates in their cause. Even amongst social reformers few indeed have worked in such adverse circumstances and with so great a selfless concentration on a gigantic task like this and nobody need be jealous if he has the good fortune to be acknowledged as the truest friend of the downtrodden. May he live long and may his life be a worthy inspiration for generations to come.

B. G. KHER

To write anything about Thakkar Bapa is to write about yeomen's services rendered by a single individual over several decades in very disheartening conditions. Thakkar Bapa is an inspired person. God inspired him to give up the profession. God inspired him to be a servant of India. God directed him to render service to the lowliest and humblest whom even God seemed to have forsaken. He has thought of nothing else but service to the suffering humanity. The cry for help from anywhere by any suffering person or community found this unique man present to do all he can for them. He has lived a life of extreme simplicity and great austerity. Sweet in temper, persuasive in argument, gentle to the poor, he has set a very high model for social workers. If God, as it is said, is in the hut of the poor and the lowly, then it may safely be said that Bapa has been nearer to God than anybody during all these long years of service. Such persons never think of this world or of hereafter. It is said that such persons go to heaven. My belief is that heaven comes to such persons. They have not to go anywhere. They create heaven for others and heaven itself comes to such persons. May God give Thakkar Bapa long life, good health, and his inimitable strength to continue to do good work as he has done for such a long period.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
NAGPUR
*November* 14, 1949

MANGALDAS PAKVASA

SECTION I

# BIOGRAPHICAL

# 1. TRUE TO THE KINDRED POINTS OF HEAVEN AND HOME

BY

KAPIL THAKKAR

THE Lohana community in the Bombay Presidency, Cutch and Kathiawar is divided into three main sub-castes—the Goghari, the Halai and the Cutchi. It traces its original abode to the Land of Five Rivers, and although historical evidence is lacking the Lohanas trace their descent from Lava, the son of Rama. Thus they belong to the class of Kshatriyas. But the community now is mainly mercantile, and has produced a number of big and enterprising merchants who have covered all the four continents. Many famous devotees have sprung up from this community, and its history is not lacking in the war-like deeds of chivalry. Educationally, the Lohanas have made remarkable progress during the last forty years.

Our family belongs to the Goghari division. The division is so named, because of its habitation in the vicinity of Gogho, the old Port of Kathiawar. The Gogharis are to be met with in the Gohilwad District of Kathiawar, and Bhavnagar is the stronghold of this section. About 600 houses of Goghari Lohanas can be counted here.

Bhavnagar itself is not an old city historically. It was founded in A.D. 1723. So it is at present 225 years old. Lohanas from different parts of Gohilwad migrated to Bhavnagar and settled there.

Our family is one of the old Lohana families of Bhavnagar, and Thakkar Bapa's father, Shri Vithaldas Lalji Thakkar's family was of middle class but highly respected in the town. Vithaldas Lalji earned his bread sometimes by service and at others from business, but the greater portion of his life was devoted to the service of the community. He could read and write Gujarati very well, and though an orthodox Vaishnav for many years, he devoted himself entirely to the uplift of the caste, when the social and educational work had to be organised for the Lohanas in Bhavnagar. He was responsible for organising the affairs of the Caste Panchayat, for starting an education-aid-fund for the students of his caste, and for establishing a Lohana Boarding House in Bhavnagar, in the year 1906. To this Institution he gave entirely the last years of his life.

He had six sons and one daughter. My father Parmanand was the eldest, and his younger brothers were Amritlal, Maganlal, Manilal, Keshavlal and

Narayan. Muliba was the name of the mother. The family house was situated in Vasani Street, and nearly all the children of Vithaldas were born there.

I am younger than my uncle Amritlal by 23 years. So, all that I write about his boyhood, student-life and early career as an engineer, as also about the family is gathered from my grandfather, my parents, uncles and other relatives.

Vithaldas, though a poor man, was very keen about the education of his sons. There were hardly a couple of Matriculates in our caste at that time. My grandfather desired that his sons should have college education. As a result of his aspiration, among his progeny, there have been till now, one L.C.E., one L.M. & S., one M.B., B.S., two M.A.'s, two B.A.'s and four undergraduates. Our family can claim to be the most educated among the Lohanas of Bhavnagar, or perhaps of the whole of the Kathiawar, even to-day. All this honour goes to Vithaldas Thakkar.

Amritlal's primary education began when he was five years old. It was no pleasure for the boy to go to school, and oftentimes his father had to handle him roughly and drag him there. His mother would sometimes resent this treatment meted out to her child. But Vithaldas was a strict disciplinarian and would have his way. However, by the time the primary school course was finished, the boy had developed a liking for his books, and he made progress steadily through the High School classes and showed a marked aptitude for mathematics. He was not good at Sanskrit, and when appearing at the Entrance Examination he had selected Gujarati instead. And he passed his Matriculation with good marks in mathematics and the Sir Jashvantsinhji Scholarship was awarded to him. The previous year my father had won this scholarship and also Jam Shree Vibhaji Scholarship for standing first in English from among the candidates from Kathiawar; and he had joined the Samaldas College in Bhavnagar for studies in Arts. Amritlal chose to be trained as a civil engineer, and his father accompanied him to Poona to see that he got admission into the Engineering College and also to arrange for his boarding accommodation. After three years in that College, Amritlalbhai came out an L.C.E.,—the first to get that degree in the whole of the Lohana community.

I gathered from my parents that as a schoolboy, my uncle Amritlal was of solitary habits and ways, and was studious. He did not mix much with society and would go out for his evening walks at an hour at which others returned home. He was married during his High School days, to Jivkore, the daughter of a poor family in the Lohana Community of Bhavnagar. It was customary for the Matriculation students in those days to go to the school with a Bhavnagaree turban on the head, and a scarf round the neck, and Amritlalbhai observed the custom.



A FAMILY GROUP

*Dr. K. V. Thakkar (with beard)*
*Mrs. R. V. Thakkar*
*Gopalji Thakkar and Miss Thakkar*
*are seen in the picture*



*Bapa with his elder and younger brothers*

I have reasons to believe that Vithaldas Lalji had to undergo a good deal of pecuniary hardship during the early stage. My father used to take up private tuitions, and even joined some temporary service in the Railway Godowns during his vacations to supplement the income of the family. Amritlal could not have carried on his studies in Poona, entirely on the strength of the fourteen rupees that he earned as scholarship. His father must have been sending him some amount regularly every month, and I have come to know that during the last days of my uncle's stay at the Civil Engineering College, my grandmother Muliba had to sell away some of her ornaments to raise money for the purpose.

However, Amritlal Thakkar graduated as an Engineer, and he was now supposed to shoulder the responsibility of the family. He started his career as an overseer in the Barsee Railway on a pay of Rs. 75 p.m. After serving there for about a year, he got an appointment as Assistant Engineer in the B.G.J.P. Railway of Kathiawar and he came nearer home. The Headquarters of that Railway was in Bhavnagar Para. This was in the year 1892.

The family affairs were placed in order. My father had not been able to proceed further than F.A. in his college career and had accepted the post of an assistant teacher in the Dajiraj High School, Wadwan City, in 1889, where he served for 16 years. The younger brothers were having their schooling in Bhavnagar.

During the term of service in the B.G.J.P. Railway, new railway lines were being laid in Kathiawar and naturally many of them would have to go across the fields of some cultivators, who would get petty compensation for this permanent cut on their fields. Once, a number of farmers with fairly large sums of money approached Engineer Amritlal Baboo and requested him to so plan the new lines as not to cut out their fields. The sum offered for this was big enough to tempt people who were circumstanced as we were. But without a moment's hesitation the young engineer, Amritlal Baboo, indignantly refused the offer and turned out the visitors.

But, easy as it was for Amritlal Baboo to reject such offers and resist such temptations, it was difficult for a man of his integrity and principles to pull on smoothly with his less scrupulous superiors, for a long time. Some difference of opinion sprang up between him and his boss about the construction of a railway building. My uncle maintained that as an engineer he was supposed to know his business, and that the work lay entirely within his province. But his superior insisted on the work being executed as he suggested it, and Thakkar Baboo tendered his resignation.

Immediately he was taken up as the Chief Engineer of Wadhwan State. My father had already settled there, as school master ; and for some two or

three years the whole family shifted from Bhavnagar to Wadhwan. Amritlal's term of service expired when he finished the construction works for which he was appointed. He was next called to Porbander—the birth-place of Gandhiji. The Porbander State utilised his services up to 1899, and he did much useful work for the state during the time he was there. There was minority administration in the State at that time. Dr. H. S. Dev was the Chief Medical Officer there. And Mr. Thakkar and Dr. Dev, future co-workers in the Servants of India Society met in Porbander for the first time. I believe the pay that he got both at Wadhwan and at Porbander, was Rs. 200 p.m.

What next? This was the problem. The Uganda Railway was being constructed in East Africa then, and the contractors had advertised for some engineers for that purpose. In reply to an advertisement, Amritlalbhai applied for one of these posts, and he got the appointment. The job was to be on a three years' contract on a salary of Rs. 300.

The family reluctantly agreed to allow him to go abroad. Many Kathiawari businessmen from Porbander and Verawal had opened trade with Africa, years ago. Some of them were from our own community. The Lohanas of Cutch were pioneers in that line. But they were all businessmen with very little education. Not many people with University education had yet thought of going to Africa. Some of these people from Cutch,—Lohanas and Memons,—have been great adventurers and have left their mark in the History of Africa. But from our Bhavnagar side none had yet ventured to go there.

It was then not at all safe for the women-folk to sail with their husbands ; and Amritlal's wife's accompanying him to cook for him and look after the household, was out of the question. So a Brahmin cook was engaged to accompany Amritlalbhai to Africa for three years, on a pay of Rs. 35 p.m. and all found. We were an orthodox type of people then, and Vaishnavism was the religion of our family. So it was necessary that the cook should be a Brahmin. My uncle was then 30 years old.

And Engineer Amritlal Thakkar sailed to Africa. It was calculated that after meeting the cost of living, he would be able to send home a sum of one hundred rupees per month. It was enough for the family in those days—more than enough. My grandfather would thenceforward be able to devote his time entirely to the services of the community and to his pooja, his temples and his God, and there would be no need for him to take up any business or service. Maganlal, the third brother, who could not matriculate, was preparing to look after his own affairs. The fourth brother was to graduate from the Elphinstone College soon. The two younger brothers were yet in the High School. He was a lucky father who had six sons so situated.

I was about seven years old when my uncle sailed for Africa. But I have



IN KENYA AS ENGINEER (1901-1902)

a clear memory of all that I could understand in those days. My father used to pass his vacations in Bhavnagar, and so twice a year our family moved there. Every fortnight a letter from Mombassa was eagerly awaited for on a fixed day, and a day's delay made the whole family anxious. I remember, on one occasion, for two successive fortnights no letter was received. Those were days of great anxiety and suspense, and it was contemplated that a telegram should be despatched. But luckily, on the third fortnight, on the expected day, three letters from Africa were delivered. They were written and posted according to the usual practice, but postal freaks were in vogue in those days also. We were highly relieved. Every letter of my uncle contained a closed envelope, on which was written ' For Jivkore '. My grandfather at once passed it on to my aunt.

Only the diaries of Mr. Amritlal Thakkar can give a detailed account of how he passed the three years in Africa. His letters gave an account of the country, the people there, the work that he was executing, and all the details that he could put together in a fortnightly letter. I know that he subscribed for and went through carefully, *The Gujarati*, then an influential Gujarati Weekly published from Bombay. He was also in touch with current Gujarati literature, and had ordered and carefully studied the fourth and the last part of *Saraswatichandra*, which was published during his absence from home. He also read and studied the Hindu Scriptures. He has always been devoted to Gujarati poetry, particularly that of the classical poets, and even to-day the old devotional songs, psalms and hymns, and the lyrics of the modern poets, he is fond not only of listening to, but also of reciting.

It was during these years that the terrible famine of 1899-1900, occurred in India. There is no need for entering into the details of that calamity here. My grandfather, who was a potent voice in the Caste Panchayat, saw the necessity for opening a free kitchen for the poor of our community, hundreds of whom had migrated to Bhavnagar from surrounding villages, to seek or earn their bread. And he volunteered to look after the whole arrangement. There was money, workers, and an organisation was, however, needed. A kitchen was opened in the ' Vadi ' of the caste, and any person from our community was welcome to have his meal once a day, at noontime. Only such persons who were in sheer necessity would take advantage of it, but by the time that dinner hour was over, about four to five hundred persons were being fed. Thakkar Vithaldas looked after the whole organisation, and stayed on till the last guest had had his meals and the kitchen was cleaned. He would then come home when it was past midday. He would find at his door, a troop of about fifty or sixty street beggars. People at home were expected to keep ready pieces of Juwar or Bajree bread to be distributed among them.

He would do this with his own hands. Then he would have his midday meal. In the evening he would again pay a visit to the ' Vadi ' to give orders for the next day.

In his fortnightly letters to his son Amritlal, he used to send reports of this famine relief work. The son would picture before his eyes, how, in his native city, his father was devoting his time, energy and whatever money he could afford, to the relief of his caste people. He got elated and wrote back in reply encouraging letters to his father. Among the four Gurus of Thakkar Bapa, as he mentions them, his father's name stands first, the other three being Mr. Shinde, Prof. Karve and Mr. Devdhar. It was this and many other services that my grandfather rendered to the community, which gives him the first place.

One of the saddest events of our family, and the first of its kind in my memory, occurred during his absence. His fourth brother Manilal had graduated and obtained an appointment as schoolmaster in the Grassia College of Gondal, in Kathiawar. He had served there for nearly six months, when he developed a pain in his thigh and was unable to move about. He had to resign from his service, come to Bhavnagar and get admitted into Sir Takhtasinhji Hospital as an in-door patient, where he remained for five or six months, but there was no improvement. An operation was advised by the doctors, and it was decided that he should be taken to Bombay and be operated upon by the Surgeons of the J.J. Hospital. He was taken to Bombay accordingly, his father and wife accompanied him. Manilal died on the operation table. He was barely 27 years old and he left a widow, Vijuben, aged 24.

This sad piece of news was despatched to Amritlalbhai, in a foreign land. Naturally it must have shocked him tremendously. On his return home, instead of being greeted by five stalwart brothers, he was to find a young widow in the family.

On the expiry of the term of contract, my uncle sailed back to India. He visited some places of pilgrimage in the U.P. before coming home.

What was the fortune that he was bringing home with him ? This was a topic for talk and conjecture for the local people. My father and his family were all at Wadhwan, and we were to join my uncle at the station on his way to Bhavnagar. My father received a wire from him on the day that we were to meet him at the station, saying that he was short of money, and had consequently bought the railway ticket up to Wadhwan only and so my father should carry some money with him to buy a railway ticket for his brother from Wadhwan to Bhavnagar. The cook who had accompanied him had been able to save Rs. 500 during those three years.

And Mr. Amritlal was back in Bhavnagar. All the brothers with their



VITHALDAS THAKKAR
Father of Thakkar Bapa



G. K. DEVADHAR
President of the S I S and one of the three Gurus of Bapa



Bapa after graduating as an Engineer



Bapa when he was working on the Uganda Railway



Bapa while in the service of the Bombay Corporation



During the days of his labour activities in Jamshedpur (1919)

families were in Bhavnagar, and it was a happy family meeting, shadowed only by the sad memory of the one that had ' gone to peace ' during his absence. It is a custom for people returning from Africa to bring home with them a collection of the curiosities and specialities of that country. My uncle had brought with him some pieces of tree-bark cloth, a collection of photos of the natives, some rheno-hide sticks and two African parrots,—one for me and another for a niece.

People returning from a foreign country after a long stay there, are usually supposed to carry with them an air of self-importance and to create a halo around them. Amritlalbhai did not claim any of these, and his stay away from India, and the experience he gathered in the solitudes of the Dark Continent seemed to have made him a sadder and wiser man.

Visitors from all classes of people came to meet him, and he also went on his visiting rounds. There was bustle and life in the house from morning to night. There were about 20 people collected together in a small house. My grandfather was very particular about ' everything in its own place ' and on cleanliness and tidiness, and so was Amritlalbhai. Those were the days when one could learn practical lessons about life in a joint family.

I remember one small event of those days. A heap of clothes to be sent to the washerman was collected, and the bundle was pretty big and heavy. Either the washerman should come to take it away or we should carry it to his house. We had no domestic servant. It was a morning for going out on a visiting round, and we were to pass by the house of the dhobi. Amritlalbhai, all his brothers and myself made the party. Some one suggested that we would leave word with the washerman to come and take away the bundle. ' But why not carry it ourselves as we go ' ? proposed Amritlalbhai. None had ever thought of this. We were too respectable a party to carry a heavy bale of dirty clothes through the thoroughfares of Bhavnagar, in broad daylight! Amritlalbhai lifted the bundle on his back and we started. Many people greeted us on the way and naturally some of them ventured to ask what it was that we carried. Amritlalbhai coolly replied ' clothes for the dhobi.' Of course the rest of us shared the labour on the way. I was then 10 years old. I understand that this was an object lesson for the whole family.

In due course of time the happy family gathering terminated. My uncle passed some months in Bhavnagar, and in about 1903 he was called to Sangli State as an Engineer. Dr. Dev was already there in the State service as the Chief Medical Officer and the two old friends of Porbander met there again.

Mr. Amritlal Thakkar served in Sangli for a year and then he got an appointment in the Bombay Municipality on a pay of Rs. 100 p.m. He was posted at Kurla, a suburb of Bombay on the G.I.P. Railway line. His job was

to inspect the Chambur line Light Railway that carried the refuse of the whole city of Bombay to Kurla side where the Municipal sweepers were to unload it from the waggons and bury it in the pits dug for the purpose ; and it was here that he came to know for the first time the miserable lot of the Bhangis and the Mahars who had to do this work, and whose dwellings were the most wretched types of slums. Many of the sweepers, as he gathered, hailed from Gujarat and Kathiawar, and they had paid to the middle-man a pretty good sum of money as ' dasturi ', in order to secure a job. They were debtors to Pathan money-lenders for this amount, and had to pay an usurer's rate of interest. So they started their career as debtors and had no chance to extricate themselves even after years of service. Other people before him also may have had a knowledge of these things, but they must have taken it as a law of nature. But for Mr. Thakkar it had a different appeal. He made a mental resolve to alleviate the lot of these people. He had only to know the way to do it.

His wife Jivkore who lived with him, was never a healthy woman, and during these years she developed tuberculosis. She had a son born to her in 1891 who died in his sixth year. There was no other issue.

It was about this period that the Servants of India Society and the Depressed Classes Mission were organised by Gokhale and Vithal Ramji Shinde respectively. Mr. Thakkar contacted Shinde and studied his work. He developed an admiration for the man and the unassuming but wonderful work which his mission was doing to elevate the depressed classes. The Hon'ble Justice Sir Narayan Ganesh Chandavarker was the President of the Mission and Mr. Shinde was one of the Life workers. To Mr. Thakkar, Shinde was the second Guru. This middle-aged man who dressed like one of the Salvation Army men and wore a long black beard, had anticipated Gandhiji, and was fighting against the orthodoxy of Hindu society, under circumstances much harder than those that later workers had to face. He had started boarding houses for the untouchables in Parel and other places, and was ever in search of an opportunity for opening schools for them in any part of the Presidency.

A year's service in Kurla brought to the notice of his superiors Mr. Thakkar's capacity and efficiency as an engineer and his sterling honesty, and he was taken up in the Roads Department on promotion. Within the next one year he was made the Superintendent of the entire roads of the Bombay Municipality. He shifted to Bombay City from Kurla. His pay was Rs. 300 p.m. and he got an allowance of Rs. 60 for maintaining a carriage.

Meanwhile his wife's health had begun to fail. Tuberculosis appeared to develop rapidly. She was sent to Bhavnagar for change and treatment, where she died in the year 1907. Another brother, Maganlal, just younger to him, had passed away a year before this, leaving a widow and two daughters. The

father at home had dedicated himself entirely to the work for the community. A boarding house for Lohana boys was opened in Bhavnagar and its management was entirely in his charge. An education fund also was started by the Panchayat at his behest and there was work enough for him in Bhavnagar. Keshvlal, the fifth brother had taken his L.M. & S. degree, and after practising for about a year in Bombay he went to Kathiawar where he served different States as Chief Medical Officer for about 25 years. The youngest brother Narayanji had joined a Bombay College.

The mother, approaching her sixtieth year, had lost her vision totally as a result of cataract and an unsuccessful operation thereon. The only sister that he had, had become a widow and was staying with the parents in Bhavnagar.

In Bombay, Amritlalbhai rapidly developed close intimacy with Devdhar and other members of the Servants of India Society. The Bombay branch then occupied a house in Kandewadi, rented for the purpose. He also got closely acquainted with the noble and admirable work that was started by Prof. Karve for the widows, in the shape of the Widows' Home in Poona. The idea of the Indian Women's University was yet to be born. Amritlalbhai places Prof. Karve third among his Gurus, the fourth being Devdhar of the S.I. Society. Many evenings, after his duties of the day were over, he walked up to the Society's home and discussed plans for the uplift of the depressed classes, and for organising co-operative societies to redeem them from indebtedness. This part-time or spare-time work became a regular feature with him. The old parents wished to see Amritlalbhai married a second time. He was only 37. He requested them to wait for one year. At the end of that period he had to yield to the pressure of the parents and brothers. In 1908 he married a young girl from Rajkot, and took her to Bombay. Their married life lasted for a year and a half at the end of which the second wife, Diwali, also died, leaving no issue. Next year the mother at home passed away.

Between the years 1909 and 1913, the contact with the Servants of India Society and the Depressed Classes Mission developed rapidly. The youngest brother Narayanji, and the widow of his late brother Manilal, came over to Bombay and managed the household. The brother studied in the Wilson College for some time, but could not pass his Inter Science Examination and he became a teacher in one of the Bombay schools. Out of the Rs. 300 that he received, Rs. 150 were regularly sent by money order to different institutions and persons, and Narayanji was strictly instructed to finish this despatch within the first five days of the month. The household was to be managed out of the remaining Rs. 150 to which was added the earning of Narayanji, whatever it was.

The feeling that part-time public work was not enough, was getting stronger. The struggle within was becoming more and more powerful and acute. Once he wrote to his father, saying that Keshavlalbhai was now ready to shoulder the responsibility of the family and that he would, if the father permitted, devote himself to the work of the down-trodden. The father replied 'Not so long as I live, and I have not many years of life left.'

In the year 1912, the father came up to Bombay and stayed with Amritlalbhai. He had old friends, relations and associations there, and he was entitled to this rest and retirement at the end of a life full of active work and service. There he got a severe attack of paralysis and was confined to bed for some months. The faculty of speech, too, was impaired. Amritlalbhai took such care of him as such a son would, for such a father.

In the year 1912, a great event for the Hindu society took place in Bombay. It was the Aryan Brotherhood dinner, organised by a section of the Bombay Reformers, which the Hindus of all classes were invited to join along with the untouchables. A function of this sort would not attract any notice today, but it was not so thirty-five years ago. Of course there were some Gujaratis and many Deccani reformers in Bombay who knew no caste, and for them to attend such a dinner was no difficult matter. But the Panchayats of some of the high castes of Bombay, such as Banias, Bhatias and Lohanas were on the watch, if any people under their jurisdiction ventured to attend the dinner and the orthodox Hindu press was supporting them. Amritlalbhai had given up caste restrictions years ago. He had no touch with the Goghari-Lohana Panchayat of Bombay. Not that he shirked mixing with the people of his community. Far from that being so, he was intimate with many prominent people of the caste ; the late Mr. Sukhadwala was one of them, although Sukhadwala was himself an outcaste. In December 1910, when the first Lohana Conference met in Bombay Amritlalbhai was on the working committee, and the erection of the huge Mandap that was to be erected for holding the conference was entrusted to his charge.

He attended the dinner. There were two other Lohanas from the Cutchi section,—Gopalji Ramji and Mavji Govindji Sheth. The names of those who took part in the function appeared in the press the next day. The Mahajans of the Hindu high castes rose in indignation at this sacrilege, and resolved to bring the culprits to book. They were powerful bodies then. Amritlalbhai got summons to appear before the Goghari-Lohana Mahajan. Some relatives came and said to him 'There is no harm, you just come and explain your position, apologise, and a fine of five or ten rupees would be all the penalty that you will have to pay'. He went. The case was heard, and discussed by their Jury, and judgment was pronounced by the Head—a fine of

500 rupees, and *prayaschit*. If the fine was not paid and the penance performed the caste would cut off all connections with the family.

This was one of the hardest problems that my uncle had to face in his life. His action was in harmony with his principles and convictions. He had not gone to that dinner in a sudden outcome of juvenile enthusiasm. He should be prepared to face the Panchayat and accept ostracism. But, on the other hand, the father was in his death-bed. He might pass away any day. No one from the community would come to attend the funeral. The Bhavnagar Mahajan would follow suit. No caste dinner after him could be held in Bhavnagar, and he was the helmsman of the Bhavnagar Panchayat. His soul would be rendered miserable after death.

The pros and cons were weighed. Filial love had its way. The fine was paid and the penance was gone through. To go through a clean-shave was a part of it. Amritlalbhai appeared before the sick-bed of his father, clean-shaved. The father was ignorant of all that had happened. A clean-shave is usually the sign of the death of a near relation. The father asked in gestures, ' Who is dead ' ? ' Someone from my father-in-law's family ' was the reply.

In 1913 my grandfather expired in Bombay. The last tie that held Amritlal in bondage was broken. The ' *Mahabhinishkraman* ' was now overdue.

By the end of 1913, all preparations were completed. Narayanji was to live in a small room or two with his family, and look after his own affairs. Vijuben, widow of the late brother Manilal, was to join the Vanitavishram of Bombay. All the accounts were settled finally, and in January 1914, the Municipal Commissioner received the resignation of Mr. Thakkar. He tried to dissuade him from taking that step, gave promises of another big promotion, and asked him to finish 15 years of service which would entitle him to a proportionate pension, but it was not possible for Mr. Thakkar to stay on a day longer than he should. The country's call was supreme, and the voice of conscience could no longer be suppressed.

On the 25th of January 1914, Amritlalbhai wrote a touching letter to his brothers at home, acquainting them with the momentous step he had taken. It is a historical document and speaks for itself. That letter is reproduced elsewhere in this volume. In February 1914, he stepped into the building of the Bombay Branch of the Servants of India Society.

## 2. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GOKHALE

BY

D. V. AMBEKAR

### I. THE STORY OF BAPA'S ADMISSION

DR. HARI SHRIKRISHNA DEVA, L.M. & S., and Mr. Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar, L.C.E., were lifelong friends. Early in life they had served together in some States in Kathiawar and the Deccan. Being thrown into each other's company for a fairly long time, and what is more important, being men of like temperaments, they had won each other's confidence in an exceptional measure. Even while in State service, they appear to have jointly decided to dedicate their lives to the service of the motherland. Thakkar Bapa was, in fact, in contact with Mr. Gokhale even when the idea of founding the Servants of India Society was in a formative stage. As early as November 13, 1904, when Mr. Gokhale was on a brief visit to Sangli, he received a note from Mr. Thakkar (Thacker, as he used to spell his name then), asking for an interview. This is how it ran:

13*th November* 1904.

RESPECTED SIR,

I introduce myself as the present State Engineer of Sangli.

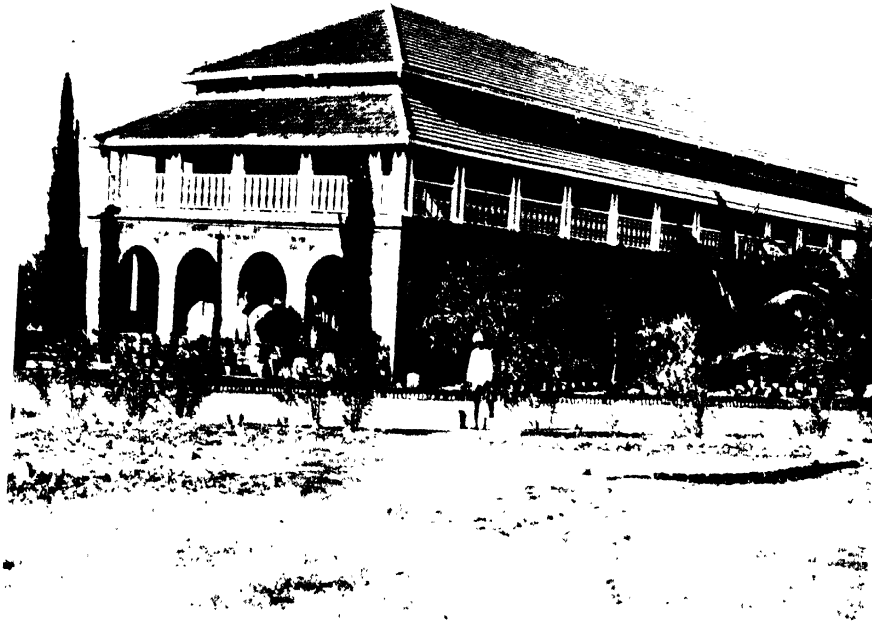
I want about 15 minutes' talk with you at your leisure. Kindly say if I can do so, and if so, at what time and place.

Hoping to be excused for the liberty taken,

I remain,
Yours truly,
AMRITLAL V. THACKER.

Dr. Deva had probably given a personal assurance to Mr. Gokhale about his joining the Servants of India Society ; for we find Mr. Gokhale mentioning, in his anniversary session address to the members in June 1910, the possibility of a 'gent'eman from S.M.[1] country in high official position' soon joining their ranks. The intentions of these two good men assumed practical shape when Dr. Deva wrote to Mr. Gokhale, First Member of the Servants of India

[1] South Mahratta



THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, POONA



Society, offering his services and those of Thakkar Bapa to the Society. Dr. Deva's letters, having an importance of their own, are reproduced below :

POONA CITY,
21*st January* 1914.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have been known to you for several years past. I am an L.M. & S. of the Bombay University and was till recently Chief Medical Officer of the Sangli State, which post I have now resigned. I am anxious to be admitted to the Servants of India Society and, if admitted, undertake to accept all the present rules, as also those that will be passed by the Council from time to time. I will try to give the best in me, which I am conscious is very little, to the cause of the Society, which aims at serving the country.

Yours sincerely,
H. S. DEVA.

21*st January* 1914.

MY DEAR SIR,

Mr. A. V. Thakkar, L.C.E., Road Superintendent, Bombay Municipality, has asked me to request you on his behalf to be so good as to admit him in the Servants of India Society. He accepts all the vows of the Society. I will see that his regular application is submitted in a couple of days more. Mr. Thakkar has sent in a resignation of the post he now occupies (in the Bombay Municipal Corporation) and will be free on the 1st of February 1914.

Yours sincerely,
H. S. DEVA.

It had always been the Society's practice to admit to its ranks only young men of the required qualifications and possessing the proper spirit of service. When Thakkar Bapa applied for admission to the Society, he was about 45 years of age and by ordinary standards, could not be described as young. How far would a man of that age suit the Society as a member? Would he be able to stand the hard and disciplined life expected of a member of the Society? Such doubts seem to have been entertained by some members of the Society's Council, which, under its constitution, is empowered to admit new members. The late Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, who had never met Thakkar Bapa before, naturally had such doubts. Applications for admission are considered at a meeting of the Council when all members are expected to attend and give frank expression to their feelings about the fitness or otherwise of a would-be member. Owing to circumstances beyond his control, Mr. Sastri could not come to

Poona for the meeting at which the applications of Dr. Deva and Shri Thakkar were to be considered, but had told Mr. Gokhale about his initial reactions, in a letter. The following extract from Mr. Gokhale's reply will be read with particular interest on Bapa's 80th birthday :

> . . . As regards Mr. Thacker, he is one of the ablest officers of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and is certain to rise much higher than his present post of Rs. 360 a month. He has been working with Mr. Deodhar for the last two years in several of our Bombay activities and he has been doing this in addition to his official work. This should satisfy you that he has far more energy than an average man. Deodhar speaks of him in the highest terms. He is an intimate friend of Dr. Deva's and they both decided to join the Society together. Neither of them has any ties now and both will live in the work of the Society. If they had wanted to lead an easy life they certainly would not have sacrificed their comfortable incomes and come forward to join us on a pittance. Both of them will proceed to Allahabad almost immediately after admission to take up famine relief work there. This would suffice to satisfy you that there need be no fear that they will shrink from hard work.
>
> . . . I tell you it is men of Thacker's type that will really build up the reputation of the Society. He is not only able, energetic and enthusiastic, he is also earnest, high-minded and unselfish.

It may be added that on the very day on which Dr. Deva and Thakkar Bapa applied for membership, the Council unanimously decided to enrol them as members and the Society's vows were administered to them by the First Member on Feb. 6, 1914. It is hardly necessary to say how Mr. Sastri must have found on his first acquaintance with Thakkar Bapa that his misgivings, natural as they were in all ordinary cases, were wholly misplaced in this particular case. After only about four and a half years' association with us, Dr. Deva was, alas! removed from our midst on Oct. 4, 1918, by the cruel hand of death ; while Thakkar Bapa is, happily, still with us. May he live long, in health and strength, to continue his magnificent work in the service of India !

## II. BAPA BECOMES A DEDICATED SPIRIT

[The following remarkable letter addressed by Thakkar Bapa to his brothers on the eve of his resigning from the Bombay Municipality to join the Servants of India Society reveals a dedication so complete and entire that it can only be compared to the highest type of *sanyasa*.—EDS.]



GOPALA KRISHNA GOKHALE

*The Founder of the Servants of India Society*

BOMBAY,
25*th January* 1914.

DEAR BROTHERS,

It pains me to write this letter and I believe it will pain you all very deeply to read its contents. I wish some one else would have communicated this to you. But after all it falls to my lot to perform this sad duty.

I have resigned my service from the Bombay Municipality and shall be relieved from my duties on the 2nd February and shall immediately join the Servants of India Society. I have consulted no one in this matter, and have acted entirely according to the dictates of my own conscience. I may have erred, if the voice of my conscience errs. Whatever it may be, I can ignore the voice no longer.

In the course of my service I have formed strong ties of affection with my subordinates, and not only that, but I have learnt to love the very roads in my charge, inanimate as they are. It pains me more to part from my servants and roads than it does to part from my kith and kin, and, as a brother-officer told me yesterday, I feel as if I am sinning against my hundreds of subordinates and thousands of coolies. I feel as if I am deserting these people who have ever showered affection on me and have blessed me from the bottom of their hearts. Some say that I shall not be able to do as much useful work, out of service, as I can do with the service and the position and prestige attached to it.

Moreover I am fully convinced that India wants whole-time and devoted workers, and not part-time or spare-time workers, and unless these are secured, no real progress can be made. There is plenty of money for real workers. Mr. Gokhale can command thousands and lakhs of rupees, but he cannot secure devoted workers. So, if in dedicating myself to this cause I am erring, I am erring for a noble cause and with the best of motives.

If I owe any money to you, please let me know in time, for I am finally clearing my accounts with all. It goes without saying that those individuals and institutions, that it was my good fortune to serve with money hitherto, will have henceforth to do without my help.

My struggle is now over. All parting in life is sad, but I leave you for a noble cause, and hope to go with your blessings.

Your affectionate brother,
AMRITLAL.

## III. Thakkar Bapa the Servant of India

BY

K. J. Chitalia

### MY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THAKKAR BAPA

The Bombay branch of the Servants of India Society conducted its activities in 1912 in a small house in Kandewadi tenanted by the father of Mr. Kishorilal Mashruwala. Mr. Devdhar, Mr. Joshi and Mr. Devale were also staying there. In the evenings, a grown up man, dressed in a white Deccani turban, used to visit them and carry on discussions on the problem of the untouchables and their uplift. A small beginning was also made. Talks were carried on either in English or in Marathi, in which I did not take part but was rather a passive listener. I thought that the man with the white turban might be some acquaintance of Mr. Devdhar and a Maharashtrian interested in the uplift of the depressed classes. One day, Mr. Devdhar gave me an urgent letter addressed to Thakkar Bapa and asked me to deliver the letter to him personally and further inquired whether I could do so. I agreed to do so and soon started with the letter to find out where the addressee was staying. I found out the place and asked an inmate of the house where Mr. Thakkar was staying. To my surprise, the person whom I thought to be the Maharashtrian friend of Mr. Devdhar was none other than Thakkar Bapa, who greeted me with hearty laughter. He said to me: 'I am Mr. Amritlal Thakkar. Please give me that letter.' Soon afterwards, my relations with Mr. Thakkar became more and more cordial and the foundation of a lasting friendship was established.

During those days, Thakkar Bapa was working as the Road Superintendent in the services of the Bombay Municipality. He used to go rather early in the morning for office duties, and after lunch he used to go back to duty. In the evenings he held consultations with Mr. Devdhar on the question of the welfare of the depressed classes. Mr. Thakkar was drawing a decent salary. His father was living at that time and the family was fairly large. As Mr. Thakkar had the very heavy responsibility of maintaining a large family, he was not then in a position to join the Servants of India Society as a regular member, in spite of his strong leanings in that direction. Yet he used to carve out a definite sum of money from his salary and regularly place it at the disposal of the Society. One of his intimate friends, Dr. Deva, also used to do the same. In this way, after nearly two years, in 1914, both the friends renounced their former jobs and decent incomes and decided to join the Servants of India Society.

At first, Thakkar Bapa's desire was to take leave for some time from his municipal service so that he could join the Servants of India Society and work as a probationer. By this arrangement he thought that he could resume his former duties, in case, after the period of probation was over, he was not considered fit to become a member of the Society. In this way his old service would continue and the Society also would get the benefit of his donations.

Gokhale did not agree to this proposal of Thakkar Bapa. Gokhale asked him first of all to resign from the municipal service. Then alone, said Gokhale, he would be free to join the Servants of India Society as a probationer-member. We can imagine the position of Thakkar Bapa. If, after the period of probation, he was not selected to be a member of the Society, where would he be? He was in a dilemma. This episode clearly shows how hard and trying is the entry into the portals of the Servants of India Society. Many are called but few are chosen. But Thakkar Bapa passed through the ordeal and was at once selected to become a member of the Society.

I was very happy over Thakkar Bapa's joining the Society. I was at that time working as an attache—later on, I also became a member. My first feeling was this. At least one person in the Society speaks Gujarati and is my fellow-traveller. After the lapse of all these long thirty-five years, the position has remained the same. There is no addition of a Gujarati-speaking member to the Society.

After Mr. Thakkar's admission into the Servants of India Society, the welfare work for the depressed classes received a good stimulus and encouragement. The municipal sweepers of Bombay were mostly the untouchables from Gujarat and Kathiawar.

In order to get their jobs, these persons had to pay 'dasturi', i.e., a large sum of money as a bribe. Again, they were constantly in debt, for they had to borrow money from Pathan and Marwari money-lenders. How to free these untouchables from the heavy debts incurred by them, was a great problem. A beginning in that direction was made by the Servants of India Society, when, with the collaboration of Sir Lallubhai, Sir Prabhashankar Pattani and Sir Vithaldas, co-operative societies were started with the sole purpose of freeing these people from indebtedness.

### HOW BAPA CAME TO HAVE A MASTERY OF MARATHI

Doctor Deva and Mr. Thakkar the engineer were old friends. Dr. Deva was a Maharashtrian while Thakkar Bapa is a Kathiawari. Both were serving

in Porbandar, the birth-place of Mahatma Gandhi. During the five years of his service in Porbandar, Dr. Deva had a working knowledge of Gujarati.

Again both of them served in Sangli. During this period Thakkar Bapa came to learn Marathi. Both were of a kind and amiable nature, dedicated to the cause of silent service of the people. Both were introduced to Gokhale at the same time and both of them were initiated into the Servants of India Society on one and the same day in 1914. Dr. Deva was appointed Secretary of the Society.

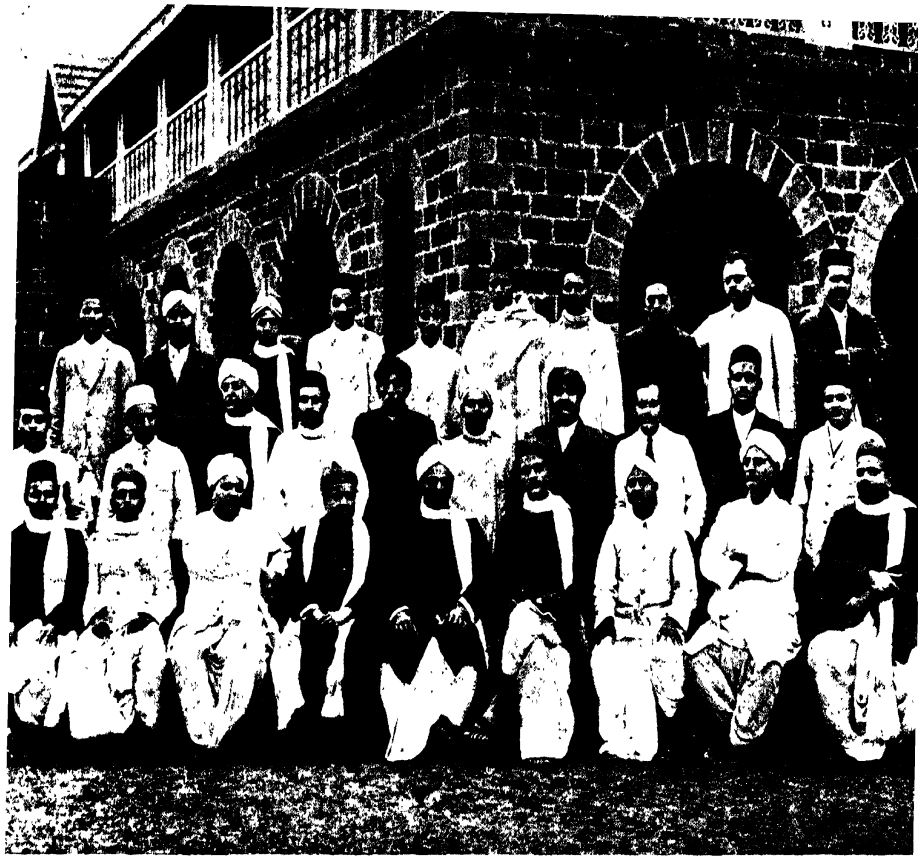
In 1914, there was famine of fodder and grass in Gokul and Mathura on account of excessive hail storms. I had to go there for relief work. But this kind of work was rather new to me. Thakkar Bapa became my guide. I had a pleasant experience of his method of exacting work from us. He used to teach us practical lessons in systematic work, cleanliness, regularity and economical ways of doing things. All this was, at first, felt as a hardship to my soft nature.

### GANDHIJI WITH THE SOCIETY MEMBERS

Gandhiji fought out his struggle in South Africa and got a moral victory over his opponents. He came to India, thereafter, at the call of Gokhale. Gokhale had visited South Africa at the invitation of Gandhiji. At that time Gokhale had exacted a promise from Gandhiji that after the termination of the South African struggle, Gandhiji should come down to India and dedicate his services to the motherland. Gandhiji fulfilled the promise to the very letter. He had intended to work under the guidance of Gokhale.

From his sick bed in Poona, Gokhale came to Bombay to welcome Gandhiji at the Gateway of India. Gokhale had put up with the late Sheth Narottamdas at Pedder Road. A sea of humanity was surging at Apollo Bunder to welcome Gandhiji. A large procession was arranged. Garlandings at various places took quite a lot of time, and after nearly three hours Gandhiji could reach the bungalow of Sheth Narottamdas.

In accordance with the instructions of Gokhale, the members of the Bombay branch of S.I.S. went to see Gandhiji at Shanti Bhuvan. Mr. Devdhar, Mr. Joshi, Thakkar Bapa and myself were present. Sheth Purushottamdas and Sheth Narottamdas Morarji, who was the host of Gokhale and Gandhiji, were amongst the persons who came to greet Gandhiji. All of us greeted Gandhiji very warmly and stood round him in a semi-circle. Gandhiji's dress at that time resembled the dress of a Kathiawari tailor—a dhoti, the old-fashioned coat and the white Kathiawari turban. A red kumkum tilak adorned his forehead.



THE SERVANTS OF INDIA

*Shri V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, President, is seen sitting in the centre*

In a low and subdued tone I asked Thakkar Bapa : 'But where is Gandhi-ji?' Thakkar Bapa loudly declared 'Mr. Chitalia wants to know and find out Gandhiji.' Then Gandhiji said 'Do I not look like Gandhi?' Gokhale then stepped forward and introduced Gandhiji to the members of the Society. Introducing me to Gandhiji, Gokhale remarked that I was a great friend of Dr. Mehta. Gandhiji said 'Dr. Pranjivan Mehta of Rangoon?' Gokhale replied 'No. Mr. Chitalia is a friend of Dr. Jivraj Mehta.'

After Gandhiji's arrival in India, a meeting of the members of the Society was convened in Poona at the Headquarters of the S.I.S. in which Thakkar Bapa was present. For nearly a week the members of the Society and Gandhiji exchanged ideas.

Gandhiji always maintained that Gokhale was his Guru in politics. Gokhale died on the 19th February 1915. Thirty-four years have passed since then. A change has come over the Indian masses. Independence has been achieved and 'Poorna-Swaraj' is established. This achievement has been recognised to be the triumph of Gandhiji and his methods. In a foreword to a collection of the Rt. Hon. Sastriar's speeches and writings entitled *My Master Gokhale*, Gandhiji, to our great surprise, writes as follows :—

> 'Whilst I appreciate Shri Jagadisan's invitation to contribute a few words by way of preface or foreword to his admirable collection of Rt. Hon'ble Sastriar's writings and speeches on Gokhale the Good as I call him, it embarrasses me. However strange my claim may appear to the reader, I have called Gokhale my political Guru. Therefore Sastriar is a fellow disciple. And what a disciple and yet an amiable usurper !!! I was to have the honour of being Gokhale's successor but I found in Sastriar a worthy usurper to whom I made a willing surrender. I could have given no satisfaction to the few well chosen members of the Society. I had and have no gifts which Gokhale had and Sastriar has in luxurious abundance.
>
> 'I confess that however great may be my attempt at impartiality, I must fail to satisfy the critical reader. Fellow admirers need no passport from me. And of whom was I to write? As I began to read Jagadisan's selection, I did not know whether Gokhale absorbed my attention or Sastriar.
>
> 'Therefore I would close these hasty and rambling remarks by warning the critical reader against his or her trying the questionable task of discovering in these pages an echo of his or her own views. It should be enough to find in them the transparent sincerity and patriotism of the writer or, shall I say, the biographer and the master.'

On the train to Madras
*20th January*, 1946.

M. K. GANDHI.

People in India will ponder over these ' rambling remarks ' of Gandhiji and understand their deep significance.

In 1915, educational classes for women were established in some parts of Bombay. Mr. Devdhar started the Seva Sadan for the education of Maharashtrian women. I followed suit and started classes for Gujarati ladies. In these activities I was greatly encouraged by Mr. Devdhar and Thakkar Bapa.

### BAPA'S SCORN OF EASE, AND HIS SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE

From the very beginning of his career, service of the depressed classes had a great attraction for Thakkar Bapa. After some years of membership in the Society he naturally selected the Bhil area of the Panch Mahals as the field of his activities. Dohad was made the headquarters. Schools and institutions for Bhil children of both sexes were established in the surrounding villages. Fortunately, Shrikantbhai and Sukhdevbhai joined him and worked with him. The work progressed very well.

Later, I went to Dohad to see the activities of the Bhil-Seva-Mandal. I had to live on loaves of maize. In the company of Thakkar Bapa, I visited the Ashram and the school. The next day, we started for the villages. In some places we had to do the journey on foot. It was noon-time. Thakkar Bapa and I were going from one village to another. I felt very thirsty on the way. The village was still far off. Meanwhile we came across a small pond of muddy water. Buffaloes and wild animals quenched their thirst by drinking its dirty water. I was asked to do the same. But I did not like to drink that dirty water and flatly refused to drink. Thakkar Bapa, however, sipped the water with his hands and heartily enjoyed the sip! This clearly shows his complete indifference to bodily ease and comforts and his spirit of non-attachment and renunciation.

In 1919, I started doing work in famine relief in Kathiawar. It was a terrible famine. Ten ladies from the Bombay Bhagini Samaj, in a team, came down to Rajkot for the relief work. I assisted them in that work. I had undertaken the responsibility of all arrangements in connection with the relief work. I was the guest of the poet Nanalal who was in complete sympathy with our work and helped us occasionally. I requested Thakkar Bapa to give us guidance in these matters and he used to give us a plan and a method for our work. The Bombay ladies, who had joined us, willingly undertook to go from village to village and readily served their poor, purda-ridden sisters of the villages. Thakkar Bapa and Mr. Amritlal Padhiar were with us in all these activities.

## BAPA'S PARTIALITY FOR THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

In 1927, Gujarat was overwhelmed by a great flood. I went to Baroda for relief work and was helped by Thakkar Bapa in my welfare work for the Harijans. Mr. Parikshitlal was asked by Thakkar Bapa to work with me. We made a thorough survey of the home-steads of nearly 30 Harijan families, estimated the extent of damage suffered by them and also the cost of repairs. We asked for Baroda State help and the then Diwan Shri Krishnamachari willingly gave us a helping hand. As a consequence, the home-steads of Harijans, which were generally located in low lying areas, were shifted and built upon a higher ground. The flood proved to be a blessing in disguise to the Baroda Harijans. The family of a common friend of mine and Thakkar Bapa, who was a man of letters, was caught in economic distress. I referred the matter to Thakkar Bapa. But he replied: 'Surely, our friend's family must be in need of help. You give three-fourths and I give my share of one-fourth. I cannot give more, because I have pledged to give my surplus to the cause of Harijans and the depressed classes; I cannot spare more for the so-called higher caste people.' Thakkar Bapa used to take active interest in the work undertaken by the Bhagini Seva Mandir located in the Harijan area of Vile Parle. Gandhiji, even from Yeravada prison, had appreciated this work in his statement No. 8 and it soon drew the attention of the people.

## HIS CHILD-LIKE SIMPLICITY

At the age of 73, when Bapa was in Delhi, he suffered from acute bleeding piles. The pain was terrible and he had never dreamt of such a dreadful thing in his life. He thought that death was at hand. He desired to see his brother Dr. Keshavlal Thakkar who was at that time a political prisoner in Bhavnagar Jail. Thakkar Bapa requested the Diwan of Bhavnagar State by telegram to release his brother from jail. His brother was duly released from jail and came down to Delhi to see Thakkar Bapa. At midnight Bapa got up suddenly from his sick bed, lighted the lamp and wrote out a long letter to me. The gist of the letter was this: He had unknowingly given trouble to me when I was staying with him. He was very sorry for what he had done to me and asked for forgiveness of his past sinful dealings with me. Thakkar Bapa is really great in his child-like innocence and simplicity!

Every year we meet in Poona to celebrate the annual function of the Society in the month of June. We stay together for nearly three weeks, when Bapa enjoys my reading the Gujarati periodicals to him in his leisure hours. He is fond of singing Bhajans and takes a keen delight and interest in the

reminiscences of old friends. He listens eagerly to the letters addressed to me by Mrs. Jaiji Petit, Mr. Mashruwala and Dr. Jivraj Mehta. He sometimes asks me to read Gujarati books like આળાંહૈયાં, શ્યામનોમા and ભદ્રંભદ્ર. So far as I know, some of his old friends were Motibhai Amin, Swami Akhandanand, J. P. Trivedi of Poona and Dr. Sumant Mehta. The circle of his devotees includes Mr. Harakhchand Motichand, Mr. Laxmidas Shrikant, Sheth Jiwanbhai, Mr. Ramjibhai and my friend Mr. Gordhandas Bhagwandas.

## INDIA'S CORDIAL GREETINGS TO BAPA

On Tuesday, the 29th November 1949, Thakkar Bapa finishes 80 years and enters the 81st year of his life. On this occasion millions of depressed class people will silently bless Thakkar Bapa from the bottom of their hearts without any formality of public lectures or garlandings, whereas we shall celebrate the occasion by holding public meetings, and people from far-off lands will send messages of goodwill and congratulations to Thakkar Bapa! The true memorial to a great man was hinted at in the parting words of Gokhale uttered from his death-bed: 'Do not waste time over the writing of my life-sketches or raising memorial statues or monuments. Spend your life-force in the service of India.'

Thakkar Bapa studied carefully the social conditions of India and carefully selected the field of his activities in which he steadily made great progress as time passed. For 40 years, the service of the poor and the down-trodden has been the very breath of his life. Take it away from him, and he would wither and perhaps die! He is a Sannyasin, without the external mark of the *Gerua* cloth. Power has never tempted him, nor love of money, nor popular applause. He sometimes gets angry, but like a child he repents for it and again bathes us with his showers of love. That he is not a Congressman is a matter of surprise to many. Gandhiji, addressing the Bhagini Samaj in 1918 said, 'Without uttering the word "Home Rule" people can serve the country. Without joining the Congress, we can serve the motherland.' Thakkar Bapa's life and activities are a living proof of this.

My joy and delight are doubled on this happy occasion because it was on one of Bapa's birthdays, the 29th November 1904, a new life was poured into me. In a few moments Gokhale awakened the depths of my sleeping soul and made me a man. He kindled the flame of my heart. His words, on that occasion, were 'Let me be what I am—I don't want to show myself better.' Gokhale in giving the picture of India told us that India was second in the world in point of population, China being the first. And still, a handful of foreigners

ruled over crores of Indians. How was this? The reasons for this must be found out. Deep study, minute observation and close thinking are necessary to do this. All is in vain without it. What is the status and condition of an average Indian in comparison with that of the average national of foreign lands? To find out our true position in point of character, health, industry, education, arts, intellect, discipline, self-sacrifice and suffering and to try to remedy our various defects, a number of young men and women of high intelligence and sterling character are needed. They must give up all ideas of self, pride or fame. They must be one with their work and duty. All this should be done not in a momentary fit of enthusiasm but consistently and steadfastly throughout life, without any hope of reward or of fame.

Thakkar Bapa's life is a literal transcription of the spirit of Gokhale's teachings. May God shower his blessings upon him! May Gujarat give birth to many more selfless and devoted workers like Thakkar Bapa!

## 3. FROM GOKHALE TO GANDHI

BY

T. N. JAGADISAN

THE earlier sections of this book give an account of Thakkar Bapa's early life and the story of his admission to the Servants of India Society. Bapa was already 45 when he joined the Society, but work under the Society was only a continuation of his earlier work on behalf of the suppressed and neglected sections of our humanity, though this earlier work was done as part-time work and under the stress of the responsibilities of domestic life. The letter which he wrote to his brothers reveals that it was no easy thing for Amritlalbhai to overcome the last hesitations of tender-hearted sensibility, but there emerged out of the struggle a perfect *sevak* who blended the tenderness of compassion with the austere sternness of the 'unattached individual'. When he writes 'that India wants whole-hearted and devoted workers, and not part-time or spare-time workers', he was giving expression to the spirit in which Gokhale founded the Servants of India Society. Amritlal was therefore a dedicated spirit long before he joined the Society. Indeed of such a man as Thakkar and of such an act of consecration as his joining the Society, in the spirit in which he did it, and, at an age which would have been considered by many as awkward for such a step, it may be said : 'He made no vows. Vows were then made for him.' For Thakkar's dedication reads like one of the great dedications of history, made not by the will of man but by the decree of God.

From its very inception, the Servants of India Society had a strong social service character to it. The illustrious Founder himself had to inaugurate and develop the political side of the work, but we have it on the authority of his gifted successor, Shri Srinivasa Sastri, that :

> 'In social matters he (Gokhale) was for bold reform; injustice of every kind revolted him; to the man who wronged women or oppressed the weak he would show no quarter; the inequalities between the classes in India, the exclusions and repugnances of caste found no apologist in him. He attached equal importance to social amelioration and political reform. . . . The activities of the Bombay Branch of the Servants of India Society with emphasis placed on the social rather than on the political side had his entire approbation.'

In the original memorandum written in Gokhale's own hand, the objects of the Society are stated to be

> 'to train men for the work of political education and agitation, and to promote by all constitutional means the national interests of the Indian people'.

Not long after, a significant change was made in this article and it now reads :

> 'The objects of the Society are to train national missionaries for the service of India and to promote by all constitutional means the true interests of the Indian people.'

Thus the scope of the Society's work was even at the earliest stage widened into comprehensive service of the country in the missionary spirit. Mr. Devadhar, one of Thakkar's gurus, is the first great missionary of the Society. Thakkar followed in his wake, and through a long life of incessant service has been the most comprehensive public worker among the national missionaries for the service of India.

Bapa's first work as a servant of India was one after his own heart—famine relief work in the U.P. Since that hour, he has appeared on the scene of every severe famine and flood in the country with his well-organised relief measures. In 1915-16 he organised Co-operative Societies for sweepers and scavengers in Bombay, thereby continuing the work which he did for this despised section of humanity even when he was an engineer in Bombay Municipality. In this period he also opened schools for the children of labourers in Ahmedabad.

In 1916 he organised famine relief work in Cutch. In 1917 he worked in collaboration with Messrs. Devadhar and Joshi in conducting a revenue enquiry in Kaira district in Gujarat. In the same year he was the Secretary of an Association of the non-official members of the Bombay Council and in that capacity studied several educational and social questions closely. In association with the other members of the Bombay branch of the Society, he played a not inconsiderable part in preparing the ground for the introduction in 1918 of the compulsory education bill in the Bombay Legislative Council, in promoting it, and, after it became law, in trying to see that practical effect was given to it. He wrote frequently on the subject of compulsory primary education in the English and the Indian language press. He visited Surat, Broach, and other municipalities in Gujarat with a view to persuade and assist them to take action under the Act. During this period he also took a keen interest in the welfare of the depressed classes.

In 1918 he organised labour welfare work in Jamshedpur for the Tata Iron and Steel Company. He made Jamshedpur his headquarters for about 18 months and assisted by Shri L. N. Sahu, another member of the Society. He organised cheap grain shops, stores for the sale of cloth and other goods, primary schools, co-operative credit societies and activities for the improvement of the housing and sanitary conditions of the workmen.

The organisation of relief in times of widespread distress and calamity has always been one of the most important items in the programme of the Society. Thakkar is the foremost figure of the Society, as indeed of the country, in the organisation of relief in distress. From February to June 1919 he organised relief operations in the district of Panchmahals with the help of college students from Gujarat. A cattle camp and several cheap grain shops were opened. It was during his tour in the famine-affected Panchmahals that Thakkar came to know of the total neglect and the wide misery of the Bhils. To the Bhil he conceived a love at first sight and to this day the Adivasi may be said to be the object of his tenderest concern and foremost love. The primitive grandeur of the Bhil, his bravery and honesty, his simple life in the brazing open air, took Thakkar captive in perpetual bondage of love and service. Amidst his varied activities of the plains and highways of civilisation, he loves again and again to return to the unexplored regions of the Adivasis with a nostalgia as strange as it is compelling. The Bhil holds the primacy of place in his heart, though he has served many another section of submerged humanity with incomparable love and devotion.

In 1920 Thakkar performed one of the most memorable pieces of his life's service. In that year Orissa, till recently the land of distress and poverty, but now, thanks to Gandhi and Thakkar, the hope of India, was under the agony of a widespread and intense famine. Thakkar went to Orissa to put in operation comprehensive famine relief measures. In this volume are published two articles on the Puri Famine from his pen, which indicate the knowledge and feeling that lay behind his work, which is still remembered by the young of those days who have now grown into maturity. Under the stress of an overwhelming calamity the young men of those days, of whom the present illustrious Premier of Orissa, Shri Harekrushna Mahtab is one, studied their first lessons of public life and work from Thakkar. His famine relief work was much more than an incident in the history of Orissa's recurring misery. It was indeed the beginning of public life in Orissa. How significant Thakkar's work was will be realised by the reader when he peruses a letter which Gandhiji wrote to Shri Srinivasa Sastri, the then President of the Servants of India Society. In 1920 there was a proposal to send Thakkar to British Guiana for assisting our Indian brethren there. Gandhiji, who was already a friend and admirer of



SCENES FROM AN ORISSA TOUR



Amritlal's sustained and single-minded work for the down-trodden, wrote to Sastriji :—

> '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.'

No wonder that Shri Harekrushna Mahtab writes with such fine feeling on Bapa's services to Orissa, and all but calls him 'The Father of Modern Orissa'. The reader will note that he mentions that Gandhiji's own interest in Orissa was largely stimulated by Thakkar.

In 1921 Thakkar was engaged in khadi work in Kathiawad. An article on hand-spinning and hand-weaving in this volume will reveal that Thakkar is as old an advocate of hand-spinning as Gandhiji himself. 1922 saw him again doing famine relief work in Panchmahals in Gujarat. Moving amongst the Bhils of Gujarat once more, he was moved to take practical steps towards social work for them. In 1923 he founded the Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad. The work started with 5 settlements in 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 the Bhil boarding schools. The reform of marriage and other social customs were also encouraged and an all-round upliftment of the Bhil community was attempted. Until Thakkar took up the Secretaryship of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932 with his headquarters in Delhi, he continued to nurture this institution and till to-day he is actively associated with the work at Dohad. The work has grown with the growth of years and his friends, who are disciples as well as colleagues, Shri Lakshmidas Shrikant and Shri Dayabhai Naik, are devoting their loving labours to the work so well started and established by Thakkar. 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 6 months in studying the questions of the aboriginal tribes in the C.P., Assam and Chota Nagpur. This 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.

1926 found Thakkar busy in more than one sphere. On his work for the aboriginal tribes in the period between June 1926 and 31st March 1927, the report of the Servants of India Society says :

> 'Mr. A. V. Thakkar's work for the uplift of the Bhils in Gujarat with Dohad in Panchmahals as his headquarters is progressing

satisfactorily. In the course of five years, the Bhil Seva Mandal has been able to start and conduct successfully 5 boarding schools, 8 day-schools, and organise an itinerating Ayurvedic Dispensary. The Mandal has undertaken fresh work among another aboriginal tribe known as the Nayaks and a day-school has been started for Nayak children. A social survey of this tribe has been made and the results have been published in Gujarati. The Mandal has now six life-workers including one from the Bhil community. The annual expenditure of the Mandal comes to about Rs. 30,000, one-third of this amount being found by the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee. Mr. Thakkar has made a careful study of the question of the aboriginal tribes in all its bearings and visited many places inhabited by the tribes. He also takes interest in the social uplift work carried on by the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee among the Raniparaj tribes. As a member of the Raniparaj Enquiry Committee he goes round the whole of Gujarat, wherever these tribes reside, and conducts enquiry into their economic and social conditions and their relation with the people of the plains.'

In this period, Thakkar was the President of the Antyaja Seva Mandal, a body of workers for the depressed classes of Gujarat. He also supervised the several boarding and day-schools run by the several Associations in Gujarat. He continued his propaganda among the Bhils against the use of drink and drugs. He organised the Gujarat Temperance Conference which met at Godhra. He introduced scout training in all his boarding and day schools. About 30 of the workers of the Bhil Seva Mandal were trained as scouters. Owing to his persistent efforts the District Board also introduced scouting in its schools. This period was marked by a growth in the movement for administrative reforms in the Indian States, for then the time for the appointment of a Statutory Commission was approaching. Thakkar took his share in this movement and presided in 1926 over the Bhavnagar State Subjects' Conference and afterwards led a deputation to the Administrator. In 1927 he presided over the Kathiawad States People's Conference at Porbunder. In the same year, owing to the unprecedented and devastating floods which occurred during the monsoon in Gujarat, Kathiawad, Sind and Orissa, the activities of Thakkar, as relief organiser, had also to be exercised in abundant measure. Along with Shri Chitalia, he took up relief measures in Baroda City and surrounding places. Money was distributed for rebuilding the huts of the depressed classes and for relief of distress among some Parsees and Muslim ladies, in the city of Baroda. Free grain and clothing was distributed and utensils were given free to the very poor. Thakkar also did flood relief work in Sind in that year. That year also saw him organising a co-operative credit society for about 100 bhangis of Navsari.

Between the years 1928-30, Thakkar 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 State 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. He devoted the major part of his attention as before to the various activities of the Bhil Mission.

One notable event of the Bhil work in this period was the opening in April 1929 of a temple of *Ram* at Jhalod in the precincts of the boarding school by His Holiness Shri Sankaracharya, Dr. Kurtkoti, who came from Bombay specially for the occasion. As a result of Thakkar'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. Thakkar was a member of the Committee. In 1928 he made a survey of Municipalities in Gujarat. In 1929 he was engaged in flood relief work in Assam. In the years between 1928-30, he was engaged in relief work during nearly the whole of the period. He attended particularly to the reconstruction and repairs of (1) Dharmasalas, schools, etc., (2) Wells for depressed classes, and (3) Village common wells, for which purposes the Bombay Central Flood Relief Committee placed at his disposal Rs. 75,000, Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 100,000 respectively.

In 1930 the country was convulsed with the civil disobedience movement. The members of the Servants of India Society did not participate in the movement, but they considered it their duty to expose the high-handed acts of the Executive and of the Police in particular. A member like Thakkar Bapa who had intimate associations with Gandhiji, because of his being not only a great friend and admirer but an ally of Gandhiji in national social service activities, came in for the special attentions of the police. He was working in Gujarat, the nerve centre of the Civil Disobedience Movement. While observing the picketing of a liquor shop at Mehmedabad where rough handling of the picketers by the police for 3 days previously had been reported, he was arrested on the 2nd August 1930, kept in lock-up for 2 weeks, and then released on his own recognisances. He was tried on the 23rd September 1930 and sentenced to 6 months' hard labour. An appeal was made against this before the Sessions Judge of Kaira who set aside the conviction on technical grounds and ordered a re-trial. But, before the latter could take place, the picketing ordinance expired, and the case automatically lapsed. Elsewhere in this volume, there is a full and interesting account of the arrest, with the relevant documents

by Shri D. V. Ambekar. The reader will find this account very instructive, not only as an episode in Bapa's life but as a page in a chapter of our public life. How hard those days were for any sympathiser with the national liberty movement is illustrated by the episode of Bapa's arrest. For Bapa 1930 and the succeeding years were years of acute mental and spiritual agony. On the one hand was his firm loyalty to the discipline of the Society which forbade him from taking a part in the Civil Disobedience Movement; on the other hand was his keen misery at the terrible happenings in the country and the untold suffering of the patriots who sought to defy the might of a Government that was resolved to put down the freedom movement at any cost and without any scruples even of ordinary humanity. On occasions Thakkar Bapa's blood rose up in revolt and he almost felt like joining the movement. We find him recording in his diary on 17th March 1932 that he wrote to Sastriji (Shri V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, President of the Servants of India Society) 'about the meanness and wickedness of Government' and that he 'also informed him that he should not be taken by surprise if I should court jail.' But always, Bapa, like the patient constructive worker that he is, held his fire in bondage and continued to serve the country amidst the conflicts and tribulations of agitated times, avoiding the highways of service and fame, and treading the footpaths and mud-tracks of humble service of the forlorn. When political passion runs high, those in the storm and fury of political agitation divide the world in simple fashion into angels and devils. That there was a man like Thakkar Bapa in the group which did not join the popular movement, and was yet an intimate colleague and a beloved friend of many of the top-ranking leaders of the national movement, was a blessing, because that phenomenon should have now and again reminded even the more excited ones that it is not the badge on the breast or the label on the forehead but the fire within, its intensity and purity, that marks out the servant of the nation. It is significant that Swami Anand in his tribute to Bapa should mention that for long years he could not conceive a proper appreciation of Bapa. Let us remember, however, that it was no easy task for Thakkar Bapa to keep out of the struggle, and that only a man of his gigantic moral and emotional strength could have withstood the internal conflicts of that excruciating period.

There 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 of Ramsay MacDonald and the Poona Pact, events of recent history, need not be detailed here. Thakkar Bapa played probably the most important part in the negotiations leading to the Poona Pact and he was one of its signatories along with Messrs. Devadhar, Kunzru and Bakhale from the Servants of India

# GANDHIJI'S LETTER TO SHRI SRINIVASA SASTRI

Society. One of the most important consequences of the Poona Pact was the India-wide campaign for the removal of untouchability and for the uplift of the Harijans. Thakkar was appointed the General Secretary of the Servants of Untouchables Society with headquarters in Delhi. Having worked for 12 years among the Bhils of Panchmahals with Dohad as his headquarters, Bapa could not leave the place without a wrench when the call came to him for Harijan work in September 1932. Gandhiji made an appeal to Bapa, pointing out that, valuable and most needed as his services were for the Bhils, his services for the Harijan cause were even more urgently and more imperatively needed. He pleaded with Thakkar Bapa that Harijan work had a deeply spiritual implication leading to the cleansing and regeneration of the nation. It was a penance that had to be performed by every Hindu heart for our treatment of the untouchables. So Bapa took up the work and did it with his incomparable devotion and concentration.

Soon after taking up the new post, he toured all the provinces of India for over six months and studied the extent and intensity of the problem of untouchability. He organised in less than a year 22 provincial branches and 178 district centres. 1934 was one of his busiest years. Besides being the General Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, he was its chief organiser for work in the various provinces. He travelled long distances and paid detailed attention even to district branches. So steeped in the work and so inspired with the zeal for the work was he that one day he conceived a big idea for promoting Harijan work. He dreamed of a whirlwind tour by Gandhiji throughout the length and breadth of India for rousing the conscience of the nation to its duties to the Harijans. What was Bapa's surprise and wonder when he found that Gandhiji responded most willingly to his suggestion! Then came the Harijan tour with Gandhiji in which 12,504 miles were travelled in 9 months. In this year Bapa had his own travels as well. The following table

| Month | Total days | Days in Head-quarters | Days on tour |
|---|---|---|---|
| April .. .. .. .. | 30 | 10 | 20 |
| May .. .. .. .. | 31 | 27 | 4 |
| June .. .. .. .. | 30 | .. | 30 |
| July .. .. .. .. | 31 | 14 | 17 |
| August .. .. .. .. | 31 | 10 | 21 |
| September .. .. .. .. | 30 | .. | 30 |
| October .. .. .. .. | 31 | 29 | 2 |
| November .. .. .. .. | 30 | .. | 30 |
| December .. .. .. .. | 31 | 22 | 9 |
| January .. .. .. .. | 31 | .. | 31 |
| February .. .. .. .. | 28 | .. | 28 |
| March .. .. .. .. | 31 | 14 | 17 |
| | 365 | 126 | 239 |

given in the report of the Servants of India Society for 1933-34 will indicate the strenuousness of Bapa's tours in the year.

The years 1935-36 saw great strides in Harijan work in the country. It was in 1936 that there was the Proclamation of the Travancore State throwing open all State temples to the untouchables. For Bapa, these years were years of frequent touring and organising work on behalf of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

In 1937 Congress Governments took office in the provinces. Thakkar Bapa toured the country extensively, interviewed the Premiers of the various provinces and the Dewans of various States, urging on them the need to provide for liberal expenditure for Harijan uplift. He visited the quarters of sweepers in many Municipal towns, studied their conditions of service and living, and made representations to the authorities concerned for improving the lot of the sweepers. 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 requesting them to give effect to the scheme. His proposals were accepted by several of the provincial Governments. 1938 finds him busy with a tour in Orissa, flood relief work in Upper Assam and a tour in the States of Central India and South Rajputana. In this year he worked as Chairman of (1) The Municipal Sweepers' Enquiry Committee of the Government of C.P. & Berar and (2) The partially excluded areas Enquiry Committee of the Government of Orissa.

1939 was a year of varied activity. He organised welfare work for the Bhils of the western part of the West Khandesh district at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi and the Bombay Government. He found time in this year to return once more with some intensity to his aboriginal work, in several provinces. He carried on relief operations for the Talcher refugees in Orissa. He toured extensively in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and the C.P. for Harijan and aboriginal work. He prepared schemes for the uplift of Harijans and aborigines in Bihar at the instance of the Bihar Government. On the 29th November 1939 he completed his 70th year. There were celebrations all over India, and at a main function at Bombay, held under the Chairmanship of Shri C. Rajagopalachari, memorable tributes were paid to Thakkar Bapa and a purse was presented.

The years between his seventieth birthday and his eightieth are probably even busier than any previous years. They are packed with varied and colossal achievement. Too often a man works hard, prepares the ground, but leaves the earthly scene before he could see the fruits of his labour. To Bapa it has been given to see the flowering of the movements he has been creating and conducting, and he lives and will live to see the full fruitage thereof. For the great

significance of Bapa's work is not that he has built institutions even as Karve or Malaviya have done, but that he has gone beyond in generating and mobilising the forces of compassion and justice and in creating and conducting movements for the liberation of large masses of our submerged sections of humanity from the bondage of man's inhumanity to man. Behind the humdrum machine-like official-seeming Secretary of several Associations and Member and Chairman of innumerable Committees, there is a soul and a vision which transcends the limitations of organised institutions, and looks beyond to an earthly paradise where there will be no sorrow and no injustice. All his long life, Bapa has worked for such an earthly paradise and only a future historian of our Social Affairs will be able to do justice to his work in taking India far towards this goal. Is it any wonder that Gandhiji should have said that even the appreciation of Bapa's service means some little service to the downtrodden ?

And now, back to the romance of a dry catalogue of incessant work.

In 1940 Thakkar was Chairman of a Committee appointed by the Government of Orissa to inquire into and report on the condition of the backward people, especially the aboriginals, living in the partially excluded areas of that province. He toured the province extensively with the Committee, studied the various administrative problems and submitted the Committee's report to the Government of Orissa recommending several administrative changes and ameliorative measures for the aboriginals. In the same year he toured practically all over India from Assam to Sind and from Mysore to Haridwar to supervise Harijan Welfare Work. But always he combined his Harijan work with work for the aborigines and the backward communities. He visited areas inhabited by the Khonds, Koyas and Banda Parajas in the jungles of Koraput in Orissa, inspected the work of the Thakkar Ashram at Rayagada, and other ashrams for aborigines in Assam and West Khandesh. In October 1940, he was appointed a member of the Aborigines Welfare Advisory Board constituted by the Bihar Government. In 1941 he continued his work as a member of this Board. He delivered the Kale lecture at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, on ' The Problem of the Aboriginals.' He worked on the Emergency Committee of the All India States' People's Conference at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi.

In 1942, besides doing his incessant work for Harijans and Adivasis, Bapa helped the Birla Education Trust in the planning of Tryambak Vidya Mandir (a residential public school) at Nasik. In July of this year, he visited Jaipur State to discuss with the Prime Minister, Sir Mirza Ismail, the needs and problems of Harijans of that State. He also did famine relief work in the Punjab, Orissa and in the Thana District of Bombay. He was also appointed

a member of the Ad Hoc Committee for the welfare of the Backward classes of Bombay Government.

1943 was a year of distress in several parts of the country. Thakkar Bapa was almost in every one of these scenes of calamitous suffering. The sufferings of Orissa were over-shadowed by those of Bengal, but they were as acute as those of the famine-stricken districts of Bengal. Thakkar who had been keenly interested in Orissa and its people for over a quarter of the century took the lead in appealing for funds and cloth in January 1943 in order to help the people who had suffered from the cyclone and the consequent loss of standing crops. He organised famine relief work with the help of the public men of Orissa, particularly Swami Bichitranand Das, and two members of the Servants of India Society, Messrs. L. N. Sahu and S. S. Mishra. It was largely due to Bapa's great influence that the money and cloth required for famine relief were collected, and pressure brought to bear on the Orissa Government to recognise the gravity of the situation. Thakkar Bapa played a notable part also in the relief of the Bengal famine. He sent out telegraphic appeals to different parts of the country, inviting the voluntary services of medical men for work in Bengal. In spite of the heavy demand made by the war on the non-official medical profession, the Society was able to obtain the doctors required for its medical centres. In this year Bapa was also appointed Chairman of the Bijapur Famine Relief Committee and the Committee under his inspiration and guidance did great work by way of human relief as well as cattle relief. In the same year Bapa turned his attention to the children who were orphaned in Malabar as a result of the cholera epidemic that raged with particular fury in that part of the country. About 2,350 orphans had been left behind by the epidemic, and like the Angel of Mercy that Bapa has always been, he came on the scene and arranged for several orphanages. He also worked as the Chairman of the Distress Relief Committee, Bombay, which helps the families of political workers in jail, and detenus, with monthly remittances varying between Rs. 10 and 30 per month. It need not be stated that he continued during the year to do touring and organisation for Harijan and Aboriginal Welfare Work.

1944 finds him busy with the Orissa Famine Relief Work, Harijan Work and Aboriginal Work, but the year opens a new chapter in Bapa's service. He took a leading part in organising the Kasturba-Gandhi National Memorial Fund and was appointed Secretary of the Fund and subsequently of the Trust. In the same year he founded the Ghond Sevak Sangh, now called 'Vanavasi Seva Mandal' in Mandla, C.P. He was appointed the Life Chairman of the Committee. In 1945 he continued the Bijapur famine relief work. The main work of the year was touring Orissa, Andhra, Madras, Bengal and Bihar for

organising Kasturba Trust work in addition to the Harijans and aboriginal work. It was about this time that he developed cataract in his eyes. As he wrote to a friend, ' feeling it at times a torture not to be able to do his normal work without help as before,' he was impatient for an operation. He got himself operated for premature cataract. In spite of the operation, his eyesight has continued to be defective and on occasions he has smarted under the agony of a growing disability. We find him recording in his diary of 10th December 1945 :

> To-day was a day of idleness and of subdued helplessness—I do not feel equal to go out anywhere unattended by a companion who will take care of me. In a crowded town like Calcutta it seems impossible for me to go out.

But the wonder is not that he occasionally felt helpless but that he is reconciled to the severe limitations of age. He still overcomes them very largely and defrauds old age of rest. In 1945 he became the Secretary of the Mahadeva Desai Memorial Fund. In 1946 he attended the All India States' People's Conference and principally looked after the Kasturba Trust work, Harijan work and aboriginal work. He accompanied Mahatma Gandhi on his pilgrimage to Madura and Palni in South India. The same year found him preparing a five-year Adivasi Welfare plan for the Bihar Government and a similar one for the C.P. Government. He was appointed Vice-President of the Adimjati Mandal, Ranchi with Dr. Rajendra Prasad as its President. From October 1946 to March 1947 he was in Noakhali and Tippera districts, East Bengal with Mahatma Gandhi among the victims of communal disturbances. In 1947 he was elected Chairman of Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (other than Assam) Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, and member of the Sub-Committee for Assam. In the same year he inaugurated the All India Leprosy Conference in Wardha. In 1948 we find him working actively in connection with the evacuation and re-settlement of Harijan refugees from Sind by land route. We find him also in increasing collaboration with Government in welfare work for the aboriginals and the Harijans. He was elected in October 1948 from the Union of Sourashtra to the Constituent Assembly, where he has been an active member. It may generally be said that in the last three years he has been able to get increasing attention from the National Government for the welfare of the aboriginals.

In the present year he was appointed General Secretary and Treasurer of the Displaced Harijans' Rehabilitation Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. He undertook a tour of backward Bundelkhand and organised the Loka Seva Sangh at Chhatarpur to work for the service of the poor, lowly and

downtrodden in Bundelkhand. How active he is even to-day can be seen by the fact that he is connected with the following major institutions :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (1) | *Vice-President* | .. Servants of India Society, Poona. |
| (2) | *General Secretary* | .. All India Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi (since 1932). |
| (3) | ,, ,, | .. Kasturba-Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Wardha (since 1944). |
| (4) | *Vice-Chairman* | .. Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, Delhi (since 1948). |
| (5) | ,, ,, | .. Adimjati Seva Mandal, Ranchi (from 1946). |
| (6) | *Life President* | .. Bhil Seva Mandal, Dohad (since 1922). |
| (7) | ,, ,, | .. Vanavasi Seva Mandal, Mandla (since 1944). |
| (8) | ,, ,, | .. Orissa Relief Committee, Cuttack. |
| (9) | *President* | .. Rajputana Sevak Sangh, Jaipur. |
| (10) | *Trustee* | .. Adivasi Seva Mandal, Thana. |
| (11) | *Trustee and Member* | .. Executive Committee, Gandhi National Memorial Fund. |

Besides, he is connected with a number of other constructive work institutions, as member, including leprosy relief associations.

On November 29 of this year Bapa will enter into his eighty-first year and be eighty-years young ! The word ' old ' and ' Bapa ' go ill together. The years will open wider and wider service for him. Bapa cannot and will not rest on his oars, and will only add to his responsibilities. For, one of the most notable characteristics of Bapa is a grand urge for visible progress in Social Affairs, which like some mighty stream carries every one with it and becomes as irresistible as some elemental force. For he feels every minute the force of the saying that social justice delayed is social justice denied. Bapa's longing for immediate and all-round progress of the common people and the neglected sections of our society seems on occasions like impatience, though the impatience of a giant. Would that more of us had this impatience, for it is a noble and creative impatience ! For then would dawn the *Ramarajya* of Gandhiji's conception. May Thakkar Bapa live long to continue the work of Gandhiji, as well as his own !

## 4. THE STORY OF THAKKAR BAPA'S IMPRISONMENT

BY

D. V. AMBEKAR

NEARLY twenty years ago, Thakkar Bapa was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on a charge of molestation as defined in Ordinance No. V of 1930. In the following paragraphs, nothing beyond a bare recital of facts based on available records is attempted. But, for a better appreciation of what follows, it is necessary first to have some idea as to the nature and purpose of the Ordinance under which action was taken against Bapa.

The Ordinance was promulgated by the Governor-General on May 30 that year and was designed 'to provide against certain forms of intimidation'. In other words, it was directed against the picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops which was then vigorously pursued by the Congress as a part of its programme. 'Molestation' was defined as follows in section 3 of this Ordinance :

> For the purpose of this Chapter, a person is said to molest another person who, with a view to cause such other person to abstain from doing or to do any act which such other person has a right to do or abstain from doing, obstructs or uses violence to or intimidates such other person or anyone in whom such person is interested, or loiters at or near a house where such person or anyone in whom such person is interested resides or works or carries on business or happens to be, or persistently follows him from place to place or interferes with any property owned or used by him or deprives him of or hinders him in the use thereof.

Section 4 of the Ordinance prescribed six months' imprisonment or fine or both as the maximum penalty for the offence of molestation.

The information about Bapa's arrest was conveyed to the Servants of India Society in a letter dated August 3, 1930 from Mr. C. C. Parikh, a co-worker of Bapa's in the Bhil Seva Mandal, Dohad. Mr. Parikh wrote :

> I beg to inform you that Mr. A. V. Thakkar, the President, Bhil Seva Mandal, Dohad, who was looking after the affairs in the Kaira District, has been arrested by the local Sub-Inspector of Police yesterday, i.e. on the 2nd August 1930, at 3.30 p.m. at Mehmedabad, while he was observing how peaceful picketing was being done by the volunteers, and how the police behave with them, from a distance of

> some feet away from the liquor shop. . . . He wanted to observe picketing simply with a view to see that the pickets do not receive any inhuman treatment of beating at the hands of the police, as all the pickets of the previous day were severely belaboured. . . .

Mr. Chhaganlal Joshi, another co-worker of Bapa from Nadiad, giving information about the arrest, specified some police methods of ill-treatment of volunteers :

> 'For the last four days,' said he, 'every day, volunteers numbering between 11 to 18 were arrested in the day-time, and after they were removed to the police quarter, they were charged with lathis and mercilessly beaten. They were made to stand for ten hours. The vital parts of one of the volunteers were pressed.'

According to Mr. Joshi, Thakkar Bapa's arrest was for 'inciting people to picket liquor shop, i.e. to defy the recent Ordinance.'

The general expectation was that the hearing of the case would start on the day following the arrest, or the day after that. Actually, however, it did not start till August 7. The delay cannot be said to be just accidental. There is reason to believe that the authorities wanted time to try and see if Bapa could not be induced to give an undertaking not to engage in picketing any more, thus obtaining from Bapa a confession by inference that he had already engaged in picketing and had desired to continue that activity subsequently. If they ever entertained such a hope, it must be said they did not know Bapa. Even if he did not wish to take part in picketing he would never give up his right to do so if and when he liked. As expected, he gave a flat 'no' to all such suggestions. It was only when all hope of coming to a private understanding with Bapa had been lost that they decided to go ahead with the case. Here is Bapa's own account of the first day's hearing of the trial, as given in his letter of August 8:

> The case went on all right. Mr. xx, S.I., Police, was first examined by police prosecutor x x x. It was short. He introduced a bare-faced lie that he visited the liquor shop from between 12.0 and 12.15 on the 2nd inst. and saw me with 15 volunteers under the tree. I could not contain myself and told the magistrate that this was a bare-faced lie. . . . In the cross-examination, x x was made a fool of. He failed badly. . . . But to cover up that one lie he had to concoct others and also to say several inconsistent things. The proceedings closed after a little re-examination by x x.
>
> The case was taken up from 3 to 6 p.m., the time between 1 and 3 p.m. having been wasted in negotiations. The case is postponed to the 11th inst.

Of his treatment in jail during the trial, Bapa had the following to say :

> I am now transferred for good to Kheda jail, where I am treated right royally, and not like a prisoner, but like a state guest, of course guarded by a sentry, with fixed bayonet but out of my sight. . . . I am doing wonderfully well, specially by the change from Mehmedabad jail to Kheda jail, and having got the assistance of my Dohad clerk.
>
> I forgot to tell you that I was pressed by all friends and the magistrate to go on bail after signing a bond for a few rupees, but I thankfully refused. . . . The case is likely to take three to four weeks. . . .

After two or three hearings, having got fed up with the time-wasting judicial methods, Bapa made up his mind to offer no further defence. It would be wrong to suppose that saving of time was the only consideration that influenced his decision. The reader had better learn of all his reasons in his own words (see Annexure A).

This virtually brought the trial to a close. And if the Court was so minded, judgment in the case might have been delivered that very day. But the judgment was not given for another three days. It was delivered on Sept. 23 :

> ' Until that day,' says Bapa in his letter of Sept. 20 to Mr. Devadhar, ' the Magistrate was good enough to keep me free, and not to put me in the lock-up, though in spite of the notice to me and my clearly written reply thereto that I will not curtail my liberties voluntarily in the least, by abstaining from certain actions which he wished me to abstain from, he could have done so.'

The Magistrate's six-page judgment (Annexure B) ended with a sentence of six months' imprisonment for Bapa—the maximum allowed under the Ordinance. The judgment has only a historical interest at this distance of time, but nevertheless will repay perusal.

Bapa was in due course removed to Sabarmati jail and lodged there to serve out his sentence. Arrangements were in the meantime in progress for an appeal being filed. The preparations for the appeal occupied some time. It was eventually filed in the Court of the Sessions Judge of Kaira and Nadiad on Oct. 29, 1930 (Annexure C). Luckily, it was heard by the Judge that very day. The Sessions Judge held that the charge against Bapa was vague inasmuch as it did not specify who it was that was molested. Without, therefore, expressing any opinion on the evidence tendered in the lower court, he set aside the conviction and sentence and ordered a retrial (see Annexure D). This resulted in Bapa's immediate release, pending retrial.

It may not be out of place here to let the reader have some idea of Bapa's

jail life. In his first letter dated Oct. 3 from jail, written ten days after his admission, he made some reference to it:

> 'I am now ten days here,' said he, 'and got myself very well accommodated on the very first day. As you know, I am in B class ; and so I have many more friends and companions than if I were placed in A class. You know I rarely travel second. As a rule I travel third, and am happy when I am in the midst of a crowd. So I am happy in the larger company. In the A there are only 15 to 20 ; while we are 60 to 70, and form a large family. I am here, too, " grandpa," as I am wherever I go.'
>
> As for food, he said : 'I am perfectly happy. I am glad to partake of the food which millions of my fellows are taking daily without any variation or luxury. Perhaps you know that most of us are voluntarily taking the lowest kind of food. But that suits me so far very well. And unless I lose much in weight or get sick, I mean to stick to that sort. But I am sure I will prosper on it.'
>
> 'I go to bed at 9 p.m. and get up at 5 a.m. and have also siesta in the middle of the day. This regularity keeps me perfectly fit. And God has been good enough to give me a perfectly sound constitution, which I preserve by regular and good food.'

As will be noticed, Bapa's letter is silent as to the work that was assigned to him in the jail. But this deficiency is made good by his brother Dr. K. V. Thakkar, who saw him in jail a week after his incarceration. According to Dr. Thakkar, the only work given to him was the preparation of reels out of yarn made in the jail.

This is, however, by the way ; what we are immediately concerned with is the retrial. It was in due course fixed for Dec. 1, 1930, but actually turned out to be still born. The Ordinance under which Bapa stood charged had already expired on Nov. 29 with the natural consequence that all cases pending under it automatically lapsed. The prosecution against Bapa also similarly lapsed. And no more was heard of the retrial. Thus what threatened to be only temporary freedom for Bapa proved, by a fortuitous circumstance, to be his permanent release. Who would deny that this development, which was not of Bapa's seeking, was good from the point of view of his work ?

## ANNEXURE A

### STATEMENT BY MR. A. V. THAKKAR

At this stage of the proceedings of the case against me, I have requested my learned pleader Mr. Somabhai not to take any further trouble to defend me in the case. My reasons for this seemingly abrupt action are as follows :

1. In the first place, I was arrested for an action which was not only perfectly legal, but based on grounds of doing service, both to the Govern-

ment and the Satyagrahis who were picketing at Mehmedabad liquor shop, by observing things for myself and giving out the truth to the public. But, no, the Police Sub-Inspector considered it too outrageous for any outsider like myself to pry into his illegal methods, and he arrested me under the arbitrary powers laid in his hands by the recent ordinances.

2. In the second place, for over a month that I was out on bail, the Collector and the District Magistrate had objected to my criticising, during the period, any action of Government in the Press, also to my going to any area of possible disturbance for making any inquiry ; in other words, for the purpose of ascertaining truth and bringing it out. For this alleged offence of mine, a notice has been issued against me, asking me to explain why my personal bail-bond should not be cancelled.

My answer to this notice is, Sir, that you may, under the circumstances cancel my bail-bond and send me to the lock up, as I am unwilling to surrender any of my liberties voluntarily.

During the progress of the case, I have patiently heard a number of mean untruths related against me by so-called responsible Police and Excise Officers. The concocted narration of the Excise Sub-Inspector Mr. Munshi, who was not present at or near the liquor shop on that day of the alleged offence from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for a single minute, but who affirmed on oath that he was present there for about three hours continuously, was simply astounding. I do not wish to pitch myself against these untruthful persons and to convince the Court that they have lied. The prosecution has not brought forward a single independent witness, I mean from outside Government service, not even the drinkers whom I am said to have dissuaded, to prove that I picketed the liquor shops or that I incited others to picket, or that there were 15 picketers sitting by my side under the tree, as freely alleged.

3. From the very start of this case, I had my own doubts as to my getting pure justice from the Magistrate who was trying me, who is also an Executive Officer. But I succumbed to the persuasion of my friends and well-intentioned colleagues and offered to defend myself through the kind help of my friend and pleader Mr. Somabhai. But I am now fed up, firstly with the number of untruths told by the prosecution and secondly by the policy of the Government, as expressed through the mouth of the Prosecuting pleader, to suppress truth and to withhold publicity of the popular version of events in the so-called disturbed area ; and, as expressed by you, Sir, to the effect that I should not criticise Government (whose servant you are) adversely, in these days of high tension, I have therefore, come to the conclusion that I do not expect to get any justice from this Court. I, therefore, request the favour of your passing any judgment you please on me, based on the prosecution side

only and my statement submitted on the 15th August, and I am prepared to suffer the sentence very willingly.

4. In these days, Sir, why should one expect justice? When almost the whole nation is on a non-violent War with a mighty armed Government, a sympathiser like myself with the national liberty movement, cannot escape injustice and should not grumble if he does not. In times when non-official enquiry committees into the alleged misbehaviour of an ordinary Sub-Inspector of Police are not allowed to work or even to sit for work, and are put into prison for having the presumption to announce such enquiries, when National Flags are openly burnt by a District Magistrate in his very presence, when people are sent to prison for giving quarters to Satyagrahis, as if they were enemies of the State and the country of the most dangerous type, and when the sons of the soil are treated as 'undesirable foreigners' and deported and imprisoned, it would be foolish on my part to expect justice for myself, even though I may be doing my work *from a Social Point of View, and not as a Propagandist.*

I expect justice from a much higher quarter, who will judge you, Sir, and me, both in HIS TRUE Perspective.

May God teach truth to my untruthful prosecutors and may they REPENT over their MISDEEDS.

KAIRA, A. V. THAKKAR.
20*th September*, 1930.

ANNEXURE B

Copy applied for on 23-9-30
„ ready on 25-9-30
„ delivered on 25-9-30

(Sd.) V. B. PATEL,
*Addl. District Magistrate, Kaira.*

IN THE COURT OF VALI BAX PATEL
*Additional District Magistrate, Kaira*
Criminal Case No. 15 of 1930
*Imperator* versus *Mr. Amratlal V. Thakkar*

JUDGMENT

The P.S.I. Mehmedabad committed the accused for trial under section 117 I.P. Code and section 4 of the Ordinance No. V of 1930. The facts of the case are as follows :

Mr. Mohyudin S. Munshi, Excise Inspector, Mehmedabad, learnt at

10 a.m. on 2-8-1930 that the accused had come with 15 men to picket at the liquor shop and that he had gone to the Samiti Office. So he sent two excise peons at the shop and himself went there at 11.30 a.m. About 15 minutes after, the accused came there with 15 men. Mr. Munshi was inside the compound of the liquor shop. At a distance of 2 steps from the compound gate 2 men were posted after some consultation and the accused and the rest of the party went and sat on the otla round a banyan tree at a distance of 90 feet. About 25 other men came there and sat near the party below the tree. The two picketers molested two men who came for drink at the shop and so the Police arrested them. After some consultation two more picketers came and stood near the gate. They molested one drinker and so they were arrested by the Police. Again after some consultation two more picketers came there. They were arrested as they molested some drinkers. In this way till 2.45 p.m., 9 picketers were arrested. After this Mr. Munshi went to the P.S. Inspector and told him what had happened and said that there was no likelihood of the picketing being stopped and that it was not known how long it would continue. So the P.S. Inspector Mr. Pardeshi went to the shop with Mr. Munshi and arrested the accused along with 3 men who were sitting with him, took them to the Police Station and after inquiry committed the case against the accused.

2. Before the arrest began at 12 a.m. the P.S. Inspector had gone to the shop; had seen what was taking place and posted some Police constables there. When the molestation was begun the constable used to arrest the several batches of the picketers and take them to the Police Sub-Inspector in the Police Station.

3. The case was heard by Mr. Usafji and a charge under section 117 I.P. Code and section 4 of Ordinance No. V of 1930 was framed. But as he was transferred, the case was transferred to my court for trial. The accused was asked whether he wanted a *de novo* trial but he refused and so the case was begun from where it was left. Eventually the accused refused to further cross examine the witnesses and to enter into defence also and so the case was closed very abruptly.

4. The following points are to be decided, viz. :

(i) Whether the accused abetted 10 or more persons to commit the offence of molestation as defined under section 3 of Ordinance No. V of 1930 and thereby committed an offence under section 117 I.P. Code ; and

(ii) Whether the accused abetted the offence of molestation as defined in section 3 of Ordinance No. V of 1930.

My decision on point No. 1 is in the negative and on the 2nd point is in the affirmative for the following reasons :

5. As to the offence under section 117 I.P. Code, there is no evidence to

connect the 15 men with the accused. The P.S. Inspector admits he has made no inquiry when the 13 men were brought by the accused with him. Mr. Munshi also states that he simply heard it, but has made no inquiry. It is thus difficult to say that the accused had come with 15 men to Mehmedabad. Mr. Munshi states that the accused came to the shop with 15 men but this figure is also not found to be true. Before the accused was arrested only 9 men were arrested and 3 were arrested along with him and thus if the accused abetted some persons to commit the offence, he did so with respect to 9 men and not more ; the other 3 were arrested along with from below the tree while they were sitting with him and so the number of 10 men required by the section 117 I.P. Code is not made out to constitute the offence. Besides the Oudh Chief Court has, in the case of Inspector *versus* Mohanlal Saksena and others, recently held that where a special act is an offence under a specific law and such an offence can be tried and punished under that specific law only, that law and not the general law would apply ; under these circumstances I hold that no offence under section 117 I.P. Code has taken place.

6. As to the offence of molestation the three prosecution witnesses, viz., the P.S. Inspector Mr. Pardeshi, Mr. Munshi and Police Constable Abdullah depose that Mr. Pardeshi went to the shop at 12 a.m. He saw the accused sitting below the banyan tree with the volunteers. Mr. Munshi states that the accused came with the volunteers and posted 2 of them at the gate after consultation and the rest then went and sat below the tree. The Police Constable Abdullah also states so. Mr. Munshi states that when the first batch of picketers prevented one or two drinkers they were arrested by the police. In this way four batches of 2 and in the end one picketer was arrested. At each arrest there was some consultation between the accused and the picketers and then the picketers used to come to the gate to stand for picketing. He also states at the end of his statement that the accused was making a sign by his finger to a particular man and he was coming to the gate for picketing. Though Mr. Munshi states that the volunteers used to come to stand for picketing after consultation with the accused, he does not say what talk took place between them ; it is because Mr. Munshi was standing inside the compound at a distance of more than 90 feet from the tree and so it was not possible for him to hear the talk ; but the Police Constable Abdullah was standing between the picketers and the accused and so he was in a position to hear the talk. He states that the picketers were arrested when they prevented the drinkers and that they were sent by the accused to picket. When only 3 remained he sent a boy with a chit and said that only 3 had remained and more should be sent. The witness states that he heard the accused stating ' Mr. So-and-so, you now go and prevent those who come for a drink ; ' in the latter part of his

statement Abdullah states that the picketers used to preach to the drinkers not to drink liquor, that the whole money goes to the Government, and that some 4 drinkers were taken to the accused for advice. He states that they willingly went to the accused. Some were seized by the hand and taken to the accused. If it be so, there would be no molestation, but if his deposition is read as a whole it can be seen that he definitely is of opinion that the accused told the picketers to stop whoever came to drink and that he should not be allowed to drink.

7. The accused in his statement, Ex. No. 4, deposes that he did not come to Mehmedabad with 15 volunteers. On 30th, and 31st, and 1st August 1930, reports were received from the Mehmedabad Samiti Office in the Office of the Servants of India Society that the P.S. Inspector, Mehmedabad, was ill-treating the picketers in various ways and so he was directed by his office to inquire into the offence and get their grievances redressed. So he came to Mehmedabad on the morning of 2-8-1930 ; went to the Samiti Office and took the statements of those who were ill-treated. On the previous day and thereafter, went to the tree and sat there to see whether the picketers were ill-treated. One boy was sent from the Samiti Office with him. While he was there two men came from the Samiti Office to picket at the shop. As soon as they stood at the place they were arrested. The boy used to go to the Samiti Office and informed them, and two more came for picketing. Within one minute of their standing at the gate they were arrested by the Police ; in this way the other batches were arrested. Mr. Munshi was not present at the place at all and Mr. Pardeshi also did come to the place at 12 a.m. Some 5 or 6 men had come for drink and had returned with liquor. None of them was obstructed by the picketers and none was brought to him for advice. None of them was seized by them. The P.S. Inspector came at 3 p.m. and arrested him along with others.

8. If the facts are such as stated by him the Police had no cause to arrest an innocent man and that too of Mr. Thakkar's position and standing. The Police Sub-Inspector would not have dared to involve a man of his reputation in a false case. He stayed at Dohad. He received reports of ill-treatment of 30th, 31st July and 1st August. These reports must have been sent through post. If it is so, it is not possible that he can receive the report of 1st August at Dohad and come in the morning of 2nd August for the inquiry at about 10 a.m. at Mehmedabad. I have seen the scene of offence. The liquor shop is outside the city wall on the road to Sansoli and other villages. The Samiti Office is on the Station Road at least at a distance of more than half a mile from the shop. If the accused wanted to see whether the picketers were beaten by the Police or not, the operation of sending them from the Samiti Office for a distance

of more than half a mile would be very tardy and difficult to arrange and so naturally it was stated by all the prosecution witnesses the party would gather together below the banyan tree near the shop and begin their operation. Besides Mr. Thakkar states that only one gentleman Mr. Motiram had come and sat with him. There was none else. This cannot be believed in. When a man like the accused comes to see the picketing and the operation begins in the presence the fact would surely go out in the town and many people would certainly come to see what takes place. So I think the prosecution witnesses are right when they state that about 25 men over and above the accused and his party had assembled below the tree. In short the prosecution story of the offence is more probable than that of the defence. The accused was just near the offence and the offenders of the offence of picketing were sent by him after consultation and certain instructions and they committed the offence accordingly. Mr. Munshi clearly states that as soon as they came the accused posted 2 of them at the gate to picket. Abdullah supports him. I therefore hold that the offence of abetment is complete and a good case has been made out against the accused ; and therefore direct that the accused should suffer R.I. for six months section 4 of the Ordinance No. V of 1930.

KAIRA,
*23rd September*, 1930.

(Sd.) V. B. PATEL,
*Additional District Magistrate, Kaira.*

True Copy

## ANNEXURE C

### MR. THAKKAR'S APPEAL TO THE SESSIONS COURT

IN THE COURT OF SESSIONS AT NADIAD
*Criminal Appeal No.* 98 *of* 1930

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR :

The above appeal was being argued on merits by Counsel for the appellant. One of the principal contentions was that no case of molestation as defined by S. 3 of the Ordinance had been made out of the evidence led and facts proved by the prosecution and that even if the evidence be treated as reliable, it was not sufficient to justify the appellant's conviction under S. 4 for various reasons. The judgment of Madgaokar and Barlee J. in Lukmani's case, was also relied upon as being on facts almost identical.

In the course of the arguments an omission in the charge as framed to specify the particular persons intended to be molested was noticed.

The said omission in the charge being noticed, this Hon'ble Court suggested that the charge being vague, the conviction may be quashed and retrial may be ordered on that ground without going into merits.

The course proposed being prejudicial to the appellant as it involved a retrial which was unnecessary, appellant's counsel objected and submitted that in spite of the aforesaid omission he was prepared to and in fact wanted to argue the case fully on merits in order to show that the conviction was unsustainable on the evidence in either view of the charge and that he would deal with the case fully on either of the two ways in which alone the charge could be read. Counsel earnestly requested the court to be allowed to argue the case fully and to deal with the merits in order to show that the conviction was unsustainable and that no charge whatever could be preferred against him on the facts proved and submitted that the conviction should be quashed altogether without any retrial. The appellant was entitled to have this course adopted in view of S. 32 of Crl. Pro. Code.

The question as to the effect of the omission in the charge could not have arisen if on either of the two views of the charge the evidence was insufficient to sustain a charge under S. 4. The Court, however, was pleased to rule that in view of the omission in the charge referred to above, it would quash the conviction without going into the merits and in that view declined to allow the appellant's counsel to deal fully on the merits. The course proposed by the court is prejudicial to the appellant as it was the appellant's option to rely upon the omission as having prejudiced him and the appellant was entitled independently of the omission to show that no charge whatever could be preferred against the appellant in respect of the facts proved and that the conviction under S. 4 was otherwise wholly unsustainable.

At the time, this Hon'ble Court gave its ruling, appellant's counsel requested the court to put on record the facts showing that he was prevented from dealing with the merits and the court was kind enough to consent to do so. The present statement of facts is given in writing in order to keep a record of the facts as they had happened.

The appellant's submission has been that there should be no retrial as he has been already sufficiently harassed and been in jail for more than a month ; and, as a retrial would involve further harassment. If, however, the court is pleased to direct a retrial, definite orders may be passed regarding his being released on bail. This is particularly necessary in view of the delay that has taken place and in view of the fact that on the case as already made, there is no case established against the appellant under S. 4.

It is further submitted that the appellant having been already acquitted on a charge under S. 117, and there being no appeal against the said order,

it being in fact not competent to this court to set aside an order of acquittal, even if a retrial is ordered, it should be made clear that the order of acquittal under S. 117 stands.

*Dated 28th October*, 1930.
*Presented on 29th October*, 1930.

## ANNEXURE D

IN THE COURT OF THE SESSIONS JUDGE OF KAIRA AND NADIAD

*Criminal Appeal No. 98 of 1930*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Appellant .. | .. | .. AMRITLAL V. THAKKAR |
| Pleader for the Appellant | | .. Mr. SOMABHAI M. SHAH |
| Pleader for the Crown .. | | .. P. P. KAIRA |

The Appellant Amritlal V. Thakkar convicted on a trial held on the 23rd of September 1930, by V. B. Patel, Esquire, Additional District Magistrate in the District of Kaira, of offence under Section 4 of Ordinance No. V of 1930 and sentenced to six months' R. I.

### JUDGMENT

This is an appeal from conviction under Sec. 4 of Ordinance V of 1930.

In the course of his arguments the learned Counsel for appellant pointed out that the charge was vague in so far as it did not indicate as to who was molested. Further, so far as the judgment of the learned Magistrate is concerned, it gives an idea that the persons molested would be according to him the customers at the liquor shop. The learned Counsel therefore argued on the strength of the judgments of Their Lordships of the High Court in the case of Imperator *v.* Sakinabai (a certified copy of which has been produced before me) that on the evidence, conviction on the basis of the molestation or abetment thereof, of a customer, could not stand. If, on the other hand, the shopkeeper was intended to be molested, there is no such clear finding. This result to my mind is due to the charge not indicating who was intended to be molested. Without therefore expressing any opinion on the evidence, I would set aside the conviction and sentence and order a retrial after framing the charge in such a way as would clearly indicate the person or persons intended by the appellant to be molested.

The learned Counsel objected to this course but in view of what I have said above, I feel it highly desirable in the interest of justice that there should be trial after there is a clear charge. Conviction and sentence are therefore set aside and the papers sent back to the Magistrate for following the course indicated.

(Sd.) N. M. PATVARDHAN,
29-10-1930 *Sessions Judge.*

SECTION II

# BAPA THE GOOD AND THE GREAT



BAPA THE SERENE

## 1. REMINISCENCES

BY

DR. D. K. KARVE

THE invitation by the editors of the Thakkar Commemoration Volume to contribute my reminiscences gives me a welcome opportunity to bear testimony to the high nation-building value of the work in which Mr. Thakkar has been engaged for nearly half a century. My first contact with him was, I think, at Sangli. The cause of widow marriage used to occupy my undivided time and attention. Mr. Thakkar was a great sympathiser of widows, which circumstance naturally brought him and me closer together. The Indian Widows' Home at Hingne, which had already been brought into existence by me, also made a strong appeal to him. And the acquaintance then formed ripened into close personal friendship before very long.

Another tie soon came to be established between us. The work of the Indian Women's University which I espoused in 1915 used to take me occasionally to far-off Bhavnagar, where a brother-in-law of mine, by name Mr. Naraharpant Joshi, had settled down permanently. Apart from this, Bhavnagar had, I found, quite a large circle of friends and admirers of Mr. Thakkar, that being his place of birth. My introduction to this circle was made through Mr. P. V. Thakkar (Mr. Thakkar's elder brother) who took great interest in public activities. During my visits to Bhavnagar, as elsewhere, I used to avail myself of every opportunity of bringing the cause of the Indian Women's University to public notice with a view to placing it on a sound financial footing. And if my appeals evoked a generous response from the Bhavnagar public, it was largely due to Mr. Thakkar's silent influence and the ceaseless efforts of his brother. I can never forget this.

Mr. Thakkar's taking up the secretaryship of the Harijan Sevak Sangh which came into being after Mahatma Gandhi's historic fast in the Yeravada prison in 1932 forged another link between us. Till then, the Home at Hingne could not boast of any untouchable among its inmates. Not that the doors of the Home were deliberately or of set purpose closed to them. The fact simply was that no Harijan girls had sought admission to the Home. Nor had the authorities of the Home, for their part, ever gone out of their way to make the

existence of the Home known among what were then called the untouchables and to invite them to take advantage of the facilities offered by the Home. Mahatmaji's fast did not leave the Home uninfluenced. And the admission of Harijan girls to the Home soon followed, though not without some temporary excitement in the Home itself. I have no doubt the authorities of the Home were emboldened to take this somewhat radical step because of Mr. Thakkar's encouragement.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh, which is fortunate in still having Mr. Thakkar as its secretary, conducts at a place called Okhla, about eight miles from Delhi, a residential industrial school for Harijan girls. A right type of matron is a prerequisite for the success of such a residential institution. For a long time Mr. Thakkar's search for a matron bore no fruit. When he approached me with a request that we should assist the Okhla institution with a suitable matron, we were able to satisfy his need. And I have reason to believe that the matron deputed from Poona did give a good account of herself. It is a matter of great satisfaction to me that while we in Poona benefited frequently owing to our association with Mr. Thakkar, there is at least one instance in which we could, to some slight extent, repay our obligations.

I cannot help recalling in this connection a celebration organised in Bombay ten years ago, on Mr. Thakkar's seventieth birthday. A big open air public meeting was held on the Gowalia Tank maidan, which was addressed by illustrious leaders of all parties and by some of his co-workers in other fields. I remember I went to Bombay specially to take part in that meeting and to add my own tribute to the numerous ones paid to Mr. Thakkar's worth and work.

I may incidentally add here that, though our friendship started because of our association in public activities, it was not long before it developed into a close personal tie. So much so that there was hardly a visit of his to Poona during recent years when he went away without our meeting each other. Whenever he comes to Poona, information as to his arrival and duration of his stay is, as a matter of course, conveyed to me. And unless something extraordinary comes in the way, we invariably arrange to meet ; either he goes to my place or I go to the Servants of India Society. I must not forget to state that these meetings are no mere courtesy calls, lasting for a few minutes, but long heart-to-heart chats, in which much exchange of thought and comparing of notes are freely and without reserve indulged in. Nor does the talk begin and end with topics relating to public work and institutions with which both of us are connected. It not infrequently includes in its wide range even the doings of the members of my family. He knows that Mrs. Karve has been

my constant help-mate in my work. For her work, too, Mr. Thakkar has a soft corner in his heart. And he never lets slip any opportunity of finding out how it is progressing.

Let me conclude these reminiscences with a heart-felt prayer that Mr. Thakkar may be spared to us many more years to continue his valuable work for the uplift of the lowly and the downtrodden.

## 2. BAPA JAYANTI IN BOMBAY

BY

MAHADEV DESAI

(*From ' The Harijan ', December* 2, 1939)

ONLY a genuinely humble man like Thakkar Bapa could have survived the overwhelming tribute of appreciation for his services paid to him on the twenty-ninth in the city of Bombay. The purse to be given to him, which his associates had fixed at Rs. 7,000 and Gandhiji raised to 70,000, was greatly oversubscribed, thanks to the generous donations of many of the principal Hindu citizens of Bombay. But if the amount of one lakh seventeen thousand odd included big donations in four figures by the wealthy, it also included small donations from people from all parts of the country and those in smallest copper coins by hundreds of Bhils of Gujarat and scavengers of Bombay. Cheques were coming in whilst the meeting was proceeding, and the actual total is not yet available. But as Shri C. Rajagopalachari, who presided, said, money is no measure of Thakkar Bapa's services.. He has filled seventy years of life—years, months, days, with work which has borne fruit in the *uplifted* lives of millions of the downtrodden. Gandhiji sent a message which was as significant as it was brief : ' I should have been present at the seventieth birthday celebration of Thakkar Bapa, but I am physically unfit for such functions. It is my heartfelt hope that he may live a hundred years. Bapa was born only to serve the downtrodden, whether they be Untouchables or Bhils, Santhals or Khasis. Even the appreciation of his service means some little service of these downtrodden. His services have carried India considerably forward towards the goal.'

The tributes paid were unique in their richness and variety. Shri Hridayanath Kunzru came all the way from Allahabad, proudly to take part in the function in honour of one of his colleagues, and the veteran reformer Shri Karve came from Poona. Shri Kher used words from the Gita describing the attributes of a bhakta and applied them all to Thakkar Bapa ; and Shri Karve said that though, being a decade older and earlier in the field than Thakkar Bapa, he may have given him a tip or two, he in turn had learnt many lessons from him. Shri Elwin called him an angel who attends to things, a guru who had inspired many chelas among whom he counted himself an unworthy one, a worker brimming over with humour and all-embracing desire to help the

lowliest and the lost. But the finest tribute, if I may say so, was paid by Shri Jhinabhai Rathod, a Harijan, at present a sweeper under the Bombay Corporation. He recounted the story of his early contact with Thakkar Bapa and the whole story of the movement for removal of the blot on Hinduism, in his quaint, unlearned way which had a charm, naturalness and directness all its own ; and he hailed Thakkar Bapa as the deliverer of millions of the downtrodden.

As I have said, it would not be possible for an ordinary man to survive these overwhelming tributes. But even these and more could not have overwhelmed Thakkar Bapa, who in his utter humility and self-effacement has looked for appreciation from no mortal man but from God in whose work he regards himself as a humble labourer, and whilst he thanked everyone for the affection they had showered on him, he made an appeal to them to extend active sympathy still further by befriending the aborigines who were in even a worse plight than the Harijans. 'Even unto this last' would seem to sum up the message of his fruitful life.

## 3. A PERENNIAL SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

BY

K. G. MASHRUWALA

(*From* ' *The Hindustan Times*', *November* 29, 1939)

I DO not remember how exactly I first came to know Thakkar Bapa. My contact with the ' Servants of India Society ' dated from the establishment of its branch in Bombay, and so, very likely, I must have begun to know him not very long after he began to stay there. But it seems now, as if I had known and became attached to him almost as we know and become attached to relatives and friends whom we have known from our childhood. On account of this naturalness in our intimacy, it is not possible for me to say how and why Thakkar Bapa has always inspired me. I had often longed to work under him, and be trained by him. But I did not have any such opportunity. I have not lived with him night and day for more than ten or twelve days at a time, and that too only twice during all these years. I know that Thakkar Bapa does give a lot of training and lectures to his colleagues and assistants through correspondence, but he never conferred that honour on me. And yet I am unable to think of Thakkar Bapa without experiencing in me a feeling of inspiration and gratitude.

### FIRST VISIT TO GANDHIJI

I remember very well the day, or rather the night, when he led my brother and myself into the presence of Gandhiji, in the house of Sjt. Revashankar Mehta near Chowpatty (it was not the same as *Mani Bhawan* which later on became his residence). It was the day on which the citizens of Bombay had passed a resolution calling upon the Government of India to put a stop to the system of indentured labour by a certain date. I think this was in 1917. I was only a silent listener that day, and was not even formally introduced to Gandhiji. But I remember well the consultation that took place between Gandhiji and Thakkar Bapa and the consequent discussion between Gandhiji and Sjt. Shankarlal Banker, on the planning of houses for an ashram. Gandhiji wanted very cheap and simple huts. Thakkar Bapa, according to his then opinions, did not prefer cheapness to permanency and, if I remember well, he recommended buildings. Though the term Socialist had not become

current in India then, Sjt. Banker was in those days a sort of Socialist. He strongly argued for raising the standard of life of the nation. I think he said something like this : ' I want to live in a bungalow, because I want everyone to be provided with bungalows. I do not like this idea of living in huts.' Gandhiji gave the reply, which he has given ever since : ' I want to live in a hut, because I want to be one of the people ; and I do not think I have strength to provide a bungalow for everyone ; but I can hope to provide everyone with a decent hut.' That was the end of the conversation that day. Thakkar Bapa took Gandhiji's leave and with him we brothers too.

## Period of Wavering

That was a period in my life when I was wavering between inconsistent ideals. Before I had graduated, the late Shri G. K. Deodhar had fired me with the idea of devoting myself to the country's service. But the family circumstances were unfavourable, and so I took to Law. Then the family circumstances improved, so much so that my brother induced me to give up Law in order to join his business. I did this. But I found that that particular business did not suit either my temperament or my health. So I was thinking whether I should resume my practice, or now that the family did not need me as an earning member, take to national service. But I did not know where I should go for the latter purpose. Of course, the ' Servants of India Society ' was close to my house and very friendly to me ; but somehow I did not wish to be tied up there. While I was in this indecisive mood, one day I dropped in to see Thakkar Bapa. He had just received a letter from Gandhiji, asking for volunteers to work in Champaran (Bihar) under him for six months. He asked me whether I would go. I consented immediately, as I thought that for six months at least I would be free from the anxiety of deciding the course of my future life. I was despatched to Champaran in less than forty-eight hours.

But I was not destined to work in Champaran. No sooner had I reached Bettiah (Champaran) than Gandhiji received a letter from my brother, informing him that he was worried on account of my bad health, and requesting him to take proper care of me. Though Gandhiji became favourably impressed with me, evidently he did not want volunteers who themselves needed to be looked after. So, in less than 48 hours, I was sent back to Bombay as a rejected candidate. But he strongly advised me to go to Ahmedabad and join the National School in his Ashram as a teacher. After consulting my friends in Bombay, I consented to give this proposal a trial for one year. Thus my despatch to Champaran by Thakkar Bapa became the immediate deciding

factor of my life. But for that, I might have perhaps again taken to Law, and then, as a man is unable to change the course of his life very frequently, who knows, I might have stopped there.

But at the right moment, Providence employed Thakkar Bapa to become the controller of the line by which it desired my life to run. And for this, as for his personal exemplary life, I am grateful to him. My reverent respects to Thakkar Bapa. May he be blessed!

## 4. THE ANGEL WHO ATTENDS TO THINGS

BY

VERRIER ELWIN

(*From 'The Hindustan Times', November* 20, 1939)

WHEN I was a child, I read a fairy-story called 'The Angel Who Attends to Things'. It was about an Angel who did all the troublesome and messy and insignificant jobs that the more important angels, those with bigger haloes and more showy wings, wanted to avoid. By and by, he became so indispensable that every one was after him, but he steadfastly refused to be diverted from the needs of ordinary people, and the story ends with a Prime Minister sending him urgent messages to come and settle the affairs of State while he is fully occupied with a screaming baby whose mother has lost it, and says, 'I can't bother about your silly war till little Bobby has been comforted and taken home'.

The Angel who attends to Things ! There is Thakkar Bapa. You cannot tire him out, you cannot divert him from his purpose, you cannot shake his sense of values. And by Thakkar Bapa's standard of values an underpaid sweeper, a Bhil child caught by famine, an unemployed and hungry Chamar, are as important matters as the resignation of a Ministry or the declaration of war. Well, you say, we all know these things are important. Yes, but Thakkar Bapa attends to them.

Away he goes, endless, dusty, exhausting journeys in third class carriages; endless, dusty, bone-shaking journeys in motor-buses, swaying along country lanes, bumping over mountain roads, stuck in the mud, struggling across rivers while 'panting Time toils after him in vain'. He has got to attend to things. There he goes, enquiring, sympathizing, noting it all down, talking, listening and achieving. Wells, schools, hostels, industrial centres, libraries, committees, roads, bridges, spring up in his wake. He might take as his the oft-quoted motto of that squadron of the Royal Air Force: 'I spread my wings and I keep my promise'—but his promise is always and only of creation, love and life.

Do not run away with the impression that this Angel who attends to Things is a tiresome, nosey-parker of an Angel, a little too angelic to be true. Thakkar Bapa is delightful company, shrewd and witty; his humour is of the type described by George Meredith as 'a furry kitten which steals out now and

then for a roll-over '. He is not cut to a pattern, narrow and bigoted, as too many social workers are. He is generous to a fault, always ready to believe the best and the highest, a loyal friend. His knowledge is encyclopaedic, his mind supple and active, adaptable and sensitive. When he attends to things, he attends properly, with knowledge and judgment.

Thakkar Bapa has not only attended to the Harijan: his work for the shy, neglected, fascinating Bhumijan has been almost equally important. But indeed whenever ordinary men and women are in need, especially if they are neglected or despised, there goes this Angel who attends to Things whose hands have perhaps comforted more sorrows than have those of any other living man.

## 5. AN APPRECIATION

BY

AMRIT KAUR

I HAVE known Thakkar Bapa for more years than I can say and I have come into close contact with him ever since I became a member of Bapu's inner family circle, nearly 20 years ago. He is a servant of India in the best and truest sense of the term. He is hard working and relentless in the pursuit of the ideals for which he stands. The cause of the oppressed and the suppressed has always been nearest his heart. It required courage to take up the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh at a time when a large majority of us were steeped in the sin of untouchability. The work of this organisation which was one of the first creations of Gandhiji needs no recommendation. One has only to go to the institutions run by the Sangh to realise what yeoman service is being done for the cause of the removal of untouchability in every Province and State in India. Untouchability has been removed by legislation and its practice has been recognised as a crime punishable by law. But this is not enough for a great soul like Thakkar Bapa. He is pledged to root out this sin from the hearts of men as he has banished it from his own. Nowhere is he happier than among Harijan children and no one worships Thakkar Bapa more than this unfortunate and neglected section of our society, because apart from being their true servant he understands their psychology better than anyone else and therefore their needs also better than anyone else.

The same may be said about Thakkar Bapa so far as the Adibasis of India are concerned. When I was working for Bapu, hundreds of letters and complaints of varying nature used to come to him from Harijans and Adibasis from every corner of this vast country. I had orders always to refer them before reply to Thakkar Bapa. It used to amaze me how he was conversant with every one of these complaints and used to advise me in detail without any reference ever to any file or letter. The same is the case to-day when I go to him with any Harijan or Adibasi question. This is evidence, if evidence were needed, of this man's whole-hearted devotion to the cause of suffering humanity.

I would not be paying a full tribute to Thakkar Bapa if I did not mention in this brief note his love of Harijan and Adibasi women. He is a social reformer not in word but in deed, and no one has felt throughout the long years

of his service, more keenly than he, the injustices and disabilities that have hampered the advance of women in general and of women of the communities he has made his special care in particular. It was therefore only natural, when a fund was raised to celebrate his 70th birthday and he was asked as to what activity he would like that fund to be devoted, that he chose scholarships for Harijan girls to become nurses and teachers. He has worked for the Kasturba Memorial Trust ever since its inception. He accepted this extra burden simply because of his love for women. I have often heard him say how sad he is that education amongst Harijan and Adibasi girls has not progressed as quickly as it has amongst their boys.

Bapa may be old in years, but he is still young in mind and thereby is able to put into his work an amazing amount of enthusiasm and vigour which may well put to shame many men and women much younger than he. Prayers from the heart will go up from many in India who have been privileged to work with Bapa and who have benefited from his paternal love and care that God may spare him for service for many years to come.

## 6. THAKKAR BAPA

BY

SHRI SRIPRAKASA

IT is a matter of deep satisfaction to all lovers of their kind to be privileged to celebrate the eightieth birth anniversary of Shri Amritlal Thakkar, fondly and reverently known to all as Thakkar Bapa, the great servant of suffering humanity. Thankful as I am to be invited to contribute to the Volume that commemorates the great event, by his associates in his good work, my friends the editors, I must confess I know only too well my own limitations for the task in hand. I should like all the same to pay my sincere tribute of respect and admiration, of affection and gratitude, to Thakkar Bapa for the services he has rendered to the unfortunate, and for his dedication to the work he made his own early in life, and to which he adhered unflinchingly without fear or favour, throughout a long life of noble endeavour.

I had first the privilege of meeting Thakkar Bapa at Jamshedpur which I visited thirty years ago, in 1919, with my dear friend—that noble supporter of all good causes and the comrade of all good men—the late Shri Shivaprasad Gupta. We had gone to see that wonderful place whence so much of our iron and steel come and which has been noted for its great efficiency and utility as India's primary industry, begotten of the foresight and the enterprise of the famous house of the Tatas. There all unexpectedly came to our host's house, Thakkar Bapa who knew Shivaprasadji. That evening, he took us to a neighbouring village where the men and women—Gonds and Bhils—after their day's work in the factory, gave themselves up to a little dance and song for relaxation.

I remember Thakkar Bapa telling us with deep sorrow how large numbers of them die prematurely, because these children of the open fields, used to Nature's sun and air, could not stand the life of the factory which they took to for their livelihood and which thus sapped their life itself. Thakkar Bapa was doing social work among them at the time, and doing it most courageously against heavy odds. This is the great problem—the great challenge—that life presents wherever we might go. There is the seamy side to anything that otherwise looks grand and beautiful ; and philanthropists like Thakkar Bapa are hard put to the task of reconciling themselves to the existence of the two conflicting aspects of good and evil whichever side they turn. Thakkar Bapa

has done his best to find some solution of the difficulties that face us all : and all honour to him for it.

Curiously enough, I was not privileged to meet him personally again till 1934 when Mahatmaji undertook his whirlwind tour in the cause of the Harijans, and came to Benares, my home town. Thakkar Bapa also came with him on this occasion; and despite growing years, lived like any student, in the hostel of the Kashi Vidyapith. He made himself perfectly at home with all of us and was happy where he was. His enthusiasm and his energy were catching ; and the tour was certainly a great success.

Long years afterwards, I called on him at the Harijan Colony at Delhi. Agreeably he recognised me immediately ; and we had a very pleasant hour and more together, talking of many things and seeing the work of the Colony and enjoying his hospitality. He had aged ; but his heart was as young and vigorous, and his devotion to his work for the uplift of the humble was as great as ever before. A member of Mr. Gokhale's Servants of India Society, the famous Society founded by the great patriot for the training of political workers and national missionaries, Thakkar represented the social service side of the Society along with his guru Devadhar, and devoted himself to service of the distressed—of the forelorn and the forgotten—and did not worry himself with 'politics as such and as we understand it. That, however, did not mean that he was not prepared to stake his liberty and face the rigours of jail life, in case his legitimate work was interfered with by authority. His temperament and his heart's aspiration thus early drew him to Mahatma Gandhi who welcomed him as a valued colleague to the good work; and I have no doubt that Thakkar Bapa himself was greatly attracted by Gandhiji's methods of resisting wrong wherever he saw it.

There has never been any flashiness in Thakkar Bapa's life and work; and he has never cared for publicity or for cheap advertisement. He has always had solid work as his ideal; and solid work is his achievement as well. His purity of life, his affectionate nature, his knowledge of men and affairs, have all naturally gained for him the eminence to which he has reached without his seeking it. His simplicity of life, and the generosity of his disposition have brought a circle of fellow-workers around him, devoted both to him and to the causes so dear to him. It is a matter of deep thankfulness that he has lived to see the attainment of freedom by our country and to point to us that the realisation of the extreme need of amity can alone lead us to our destined goal, and that this can only come by willing service offered by the better placed to their humbler brethren—the eradication of artificial barriers between man and man; and the consolidation of Society in one harmonious whole wherein

all parts while fulfilling their differing duties, feel really one in a common endeavour for the common good.

Despite his age at which most men would like to rest, even if their lives had been far less strenuous, he continues untiring in his efforts to serve. I was indeed surprised when I received a letter from him soon after my appointment as Governor of Assam, in which he expressed his great concern at the continuing indifference of society towards the various tribes that inhabit our surrounding hills here. This shows how alert he is and how constantly he keeps in touch with all who can help. I was amazed to find a great deal of information about these tribes in the letter he wrote, for these tribes under the law, still continue as the Governor's personal responsibility. Thakkar Bapa had been, in his own way, organising help and relief to them through the workers he had deputed here long before, and at a time when tribal areas were sealed books to us, for European officers and European missionaries alone had practically the whole run of the place, and our people were almost prevented from entering what may almost be called prohibited areas. None can deny the good work that missionaries have done in the matter of affording educational and medical facilities to the people who had none of these. We need not deny either the value of work of the European officers who made friends with the people and tried to help them in their own way. It is remarkable that the hill tribes of Assam had attracted the sympathetic attention of Thakkar Bapa, though he himself belongs to Bombay, long before persons nearer home had thought of them; and I am personally thankful to him for having told me, in his own inimitable manner, of my own duty to them.

Thakkar Bapa's life has been one nobly spent in noble endeavours; and once more, before I close, I offer my heart's gratitude to him for the great example that he has set for us; and I hope that younger folks will take upon themselves the mantle of his great work and carry it on to the fulfilment that the grand old man had envisaged long years ago when as a youth he himself set his feet on the thorny path of human betterment. The one great lesson that we can all take from his life is that whatever may befall us, we must never be dispirited and disheartened; we must never feel frustrated or baffled. In the long life that Thakkar Bapa has been destined to live, it has been his misfortune—as it must be of all who live to the great age that he has done—to see many comrades and colleagues, many friends and relatives, fall before them. Such occasions are times of trial and put a man to a severe test; and so many of us surrender and give up in despair. Not so Thakkar Bapa; and though leader after leader from Gokhale to Gandhiji—all loved and loving friends and comrades—have gone before him, he still holds aloft the banner and will not let it down, come what may. May he still be spared long to us to be a

beacon light of noble effort, a shining example of simplicity, purity and industry! May we who are younger, learn from him what we so sorely need to learn, so that we may also help in our own humble way to achieve the noble end that he has in view, in the same true spirit of humility that he has shown, and adopt the same noble means for its achievement as he has done!

## 7. AMRITLAL THAKKAR

BY

H. N. KUNZRU

WHEN Shri Amritlal Thakkar or Thakkar Bapa as he is now known throughout the country joined the Servants of India Society in 1914, some of the members including myself doubted Mr. Gokhale's wisdom in admitting him into the Society at the age of 45. We were afraid that he might not be found physically fit for the active life that members of the Society were expected to lead. But experience soon set our fears at rest. We found that his capacity for hard outdoor work exceeded that of the younger members. His simplicity, devotion to duty and his absorption in his work won our whole-hearted admiration and made us regard him as an acquisition to the Society. Mr. Gokhale writing in 1914 to Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, who was not sure that the admission of Thakkar Bapa would be in the interest of the Servants of India Society, expressed his confidence that 'both (Dr. Deva and Thakkar) will live in the work of the Society'. Thakkar Bapa has fully justified Mr. Gokhale's confidence. He truly lives in the work of the Society.

His capacity for sustained work has been one of his distinguishing characteristics all his life. Hard work never tires him. He may spend a whole day in the study of uninspiring details and yet feel fresh and cheerful in the evening. It has been a source of wonder to me ever since I came to know him, that he needs no recreation. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, his work is 'his sole satisfaction and recreation'. A life of ceaseless activity is not merely a sacred duty but also a joy to him. Even now when his health has greatly deteriorated owing to his refusal to take rest, even after a prolonged illness, he works the whole day and undertakes pretty strenuous tours. Nothing makes him so uneasy as rest. He regards rest almost as a kind of self-indulgence. The monitor in him is an exceptionally stern taskmaster.

The secret of cheerfulness and energy seems to me to lie in his unwavering faith in the direction of the world by a Divine power. Though he never talks of his innermost beliefs he has a quiet but firm belief that we are all guided by a beneficent power. He has often said to his friends when they have reminded him that he is neither young nor strong and impressed on him the need for being more merciful to himself, that if God considered his work of any value he would give him the strength to continue it. He has often said this jocularly,

but I think that this is what he really believes and what makes him unmindful of the need for husbanding his strength.

Thakkar Bapa is a great optimist. He always looks at the bright side of things. He feels that honest work is bound to be rewarded with success. Though things may look dark for a while, he has no doubt that unless we lose faith in ourselves, victory is bound to attend our efforts. His God is a good God who will not allow honesty of purpose and perseverance to end in failure.

Thakkar Bapa has worked in many fields but generally speaking it can be said of him that the main object of his activities was to serve the humblest classes of our population. He has earned for himself a name as a great social worker throughout the country, but he is specially known for the part that he has played in connection with the movements for the removal of untouchability and the development and welfare of the aborigines. Few people have studied the problems relating to the Harijans and other backward classes, the tribal people and the criminal tribes as carefully and acquired such intimate practical knowledge of their needs as Thakkar Bapa. This enables him, perhaps, to take a wider view than others of the problems concerning the amelioration of the lot of the suppressed classes who have been suffering for centuries from injustice, neglect or ignorance. As General Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh he has rendered an inestimable service to the Harijan cause all over India during the last seventeen years. I doubt whether there is any part of India that he has not visited over and over again in connection with the discharge of his heavy responsibilities. His extensive tours lasting for weeks and sometimes for months during which he invariably travelled in the third class till he was nearly 76 years old, would have taxed the energy of much younger men, but his moral enthusiasm for the cause that he had taken up enabled him to bear the strain for a long time without any injury to his health. His aim has been not merely to promote the educational and material welfare of the depressed classes but also to make the higher castes conscious of the duty that they owe to those whom their callousness has reduced to a condition that is a standing disgrace to the country. Progress in such a task cannot be very rapid but he has done more than what one man can to rouse their conscience and make them realize how great an obstacle their attitude is to national unity.

Till the discussions in the London Round Table Conference revealed the importance of the Tribal problem and its bearing on our demand for national freedom, few people even among the educated Indians were aware of it. Perhaps even ten years ago not many educated persons knew either the nature or the extent of the problem. For years there have existed in the country associations established with the object of promoting the well-being of the Harijans, but till recently except for the foreign Christian



THE SERVANTS OF INDIA

*Mr. H. N. Kunzru is seen seated in the centre*

missions there was no association working for the moral and material welfare of the aborigines. The welcome change that has come over the country in this respect is mainly due to the work done during the last few years under Thakkar Bapa's leadership. He started the Bhil Seva Mandal at Dohad (Gujrat) as far back as 1923. He lived among them for ten years and showed by his magnificent work how their confidence could be gained and what methods should be followed to spread education among their youths and to build up their character.

Till the other day the view propagated by the missionary workers and accepted by the Provincial Governments was that their separate existence should be maintained almost for ever. It was thought that it would be a great injustice to them to make an active effort to change their customs and manners and that their evolution should not lead to a destruction of the distinctive features of Tribal Society. This view was vigorously combated by Thakkar Bapa who held that the aim of our Tribal policy should be to bring about their integration with the rest of the population. He did not want to force the pace of Tribal development and to introduce changes so rapidly as to bewilder the Tribal people and create a feeling of fear and despair among them. He was entirely in favour of bringing about changes gradually so that new ideas might become part of their inner lives. But he had no doubt that our ultimate object should be their complete assimilation to the more advanced people among whom they are living. That his view has come to prevail, is an achievement of which he might well be proud.

In every work undertaken by him Thakkar Bapa has shown an unusual ability to make use of the available resources. His zeal for his work and intense sympathy with those whom he tried to serve enabled him to discover local talent and utilise it to the fullest extent possible. Whether working for the depressed classes or the aborigines, it has been his policy to find men among them who would act as leaders among their own people. He has patiently trained his colleagues and by his genuine simplicity of heart and faith in his own work won their affection and inspired them with zeal for the service of the humble and the downtrodden brethren.

He is to-day a beacon light to social workers all over the country. He completed the Biblical span of life ten years ago but we rejoice that he is still young in spirit and an ardent ' servant of India '. He has earned the right to take rest but rest he never thinks of. He is as ready to shoulder new burdens and as eager to find new ways of serving those who are unable to look after themselves as he was thirty-five years ago. His colleagues and millions all over the country pray that he may be spared for many years to come to serve the great causes that he has made his own.

## 8. WORK, WORK, ALWAYS WORK

BY

JUGJIVAN RAM

GUJARAT has the proud privilege of having produced some of the greatest men of our time. Swami Dayanand Saraswati's and Mahatma Gandhi's names stand above all, no doubt, but there are others whose contribution to the service of the nation cannot be exaggerated. Shri Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar is one of them. He is known as Bapa in Gujarat and Thakkar Bapa throughout. It denotes the love and respect in which he is held by those who know him. Bapa means ' grandfather ' and inspires both love and respect. For more than sixty years he has been silently devoting his time to the service of that section of humanity which has long been a victim of religious prejudices and social injustice. As a member of the Servants of India Society he has been leading the life of a true ascetic.

Some 16 years ago, when, after the termination of the epic fast of Gandhiji, Thakkar Bapa was elected Secretary of the Anti-Untouchability League, which later on came to be known as the Harijan Sevak Sangh, to carry on the activities undertaken on behalf of the caste Hindus for eradicating untouchability, root and branch, he was making a whirlwind tour to organize branches of the League in the Provinces. It was at that time, in the year 1933, that I had the opportunity of meeting Thakkar Bapa. The Provincial Branch of the Anti-Untouchability League was formed, and at the instance of Dr. Rajendra Prasad I was asked to take up the responsibility of being its Joint Secretary. As such, I had to come in close contact with Thakkar Bapa. He is a versatile genius. His untiring zeal for the uplift of the submerged classes, be they Harijan or tribal, left an indelible imprint on me. I do not propose in the compass of this short article to deal in any great detail with the various aspects of his life and activities. I will quote simply one instance which in itself throws a flood of light on the man who, even at this advanced age, retains the energy and enthusiasm of youth and an unabated love for work.

It was probably in the year 1934, after the Bihar earthquakes. Thakkar Bapa was returning from his tour of Assam. I had some important consultations with him regarding the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and I had wired to him that I would like to meet him on his way back from Assam. I had received a telegram from him that it would not be possible for him to break



SNAPS TAKEN DURING THE FAMOUS
HARIJAN WHIRLWIND TOUR



his journey but I could see him in the train at Sonepur (O.T. Railway). The train by which Bapa was travelling was scheduled to reach Sonepur just after midnight. I went to Sonepur and was marking time in the waiting room—half asleep. It is generally a tedious job to wait half of the night in expectation of some person who presumably may be comfortably sleeping in the train. As a matter of fact, I had presumed that Thakkar Bapa would be travelling first class, or at the least second class. The train arrived. I first tried in all the first and second class compartments. Thakkar Bapa was not to be found. Then I tried the inter-class compartments, but there was no trace of him. I thought he had missed the train, but at the same time knowing how methodically Bapa worked, I thought that in that case he would certainly have informed me. So I made another round—this time in the crowded third class compartments. I found him in one of the very crowded compartments, neither sleeping nor resting. As a matter of fact, there was no room for anybody to stretch his legs, but many of the passengers were napping. Thakkar Bapa, squeezed in between two persons, was neither napping nor sitting idle. He was writing his diary. This very simple and small instance had a tremendous effect on me. Just imagine a person nearly 64 or 65 years of age, after travelling about a thousand miles in a crowded third class compartment, working at midnight. But that is the way of Thakkar Bapa. He knows no rest. Work, work and always work. That has always been the motto of his life, and that is the secret why and how he has made a success of anything that he has handled, howsoever baffling, difficult and arduous the task may be. That is why, where politicians and reformers of repute hesitated to undertake a work, Thakkar Bapa never shirked shouldering it. Whether a famine in some distant corner of Gujarat, or relief among the aboriginals, one always found Thakkar Bapa in the field, working silently, avoiding all sorts of publicity. His services to the Scheduled Castes and Aboriginals, as General Secretary of ' the Harijan Sevak Sangh ' and President of ' the Adimjati Seva Mandal ' have been such as beggar description. He has given these unfortunate brethren a new vision, a new hope and a mission of self-help and self-respect. His contribution to the reformation of Hindu Society, and thereby the nation, is invaluable. In every work he has shown that he possesses an inexhaustible store of energy and capacity to labour for love. His youthful energy and concentration on the work at all times—night and day—should be an example to the younger generation. I wish we could have the same strong will which motivates one to work for a noble cause even though the physical force may be failing. The work itself, not only compensates, but also recuperates. That is the lesson Thakkar Bapa gives us. Let us try to follow it to the best of our ability.

## 9. THAKKAR BAPA OF ORISSA

BY

HAREKRUSHNA MAHTAB

WE were then students, when large parts of the districts of Cuttack and Puri in Orissa were devastated by floods in the Mahanadi and the Brahmani in 1920. A Government relief party was sent out to Jenapur on the river Brahmani, and I was a volunteer along with some other students of the College. On our return from Jenapur we met Shri Thakkar who was returning from his tour in the district of Puri. A tall and sturdy figure, he looked more like a farmer than a leader of the conception of those days, almost bursting into tears while describing the woes and miseries of the flood-stricken people. 'Who is he?', was the question on everybody's lips at the Cuttack Railway Station. Pandit Gopabandhu was with him, and both of them were going to Calcutta to raise money for the relief of the distressed. Then, in 1921, when Gandhiji came on tour in Orissa, he said in meetings that he had known the poverty of Orissa from Shri Thakkar. How grateful we felt that Orissa had been able to secure a soft corner in Mahatmaji's heart on account of a person whose details we did not know even then. Our public life began, and when any distress occurred in Orissa, telegrams used to be sent to Shri Thakkar and he used to come. His energy and devotion to work were putting all of us to shame, and I am sure that a desire to render personal service to human beings in distress must have been kindled in the heart of many. It is Thakkar Bapa who set the ideal of service before the young men of Orissa in those days. But, with that, the matter does not end. Shri Thakkar adopted the province of Orissa as his own. In 1944, when the Government of India, smarting under the humiliation of their failure to prevent the Bengal famine, decided upon the development of the Damodar Valley, I, along with other members of the Congress Working Committee, was confined in the Ahmednagar Fort, and I felt restless that if only one famine could move the Government of India to undertake the huge project of Damodar, how was it that so many famines of Orissa did not raise the question of the Mahanadi Valley project? One afternoon, when I opened the *Times of India*, I came across a letter from Shri Thakkar vigorously pleading for the development of the Mahanadi Valley and giving facts and figures in support of the plea. As soon as I finished reading the letter, my head bent down in respectful gratitude before the imaginary figure of Shri Thakkar who appeared



BAPA AMONGST THE BHUIYA AND JUANG TRIBAL FOLK

*e is conversing with Shri R. Bose, Minister for the Welfare of Backward Classes. On the Minister's lap is seen seated a Bhuiya boy*



BAPA IN WREATHED SMILES

*Shri Harekrushna Mahtab, Premier of Orissa, an admirer and disciple of Bapa, receives him on his arrival at Cuttack on* 3-10-1948

(By courtesy of M. D. Dwivedi, Cuttack)

to my vision as standing with a smile on his face and saying firmly that he would see that the Mahanadi was not forgotten. The Mahanadi was not forgotten, and thanks are due to Shri Thakkar's vigilance.

In his old age he has toured thrice in Orissa to see the condition of the so-called aborigines. This unfortunate section of the society has drawn out a few drops of tears from his eyes which do not dry up with his age. His tears have spurred us to action. How I wish and pray that Thakkar Bapa should see for himself that the artificial distinction between the so-called Aryans and non-Aryans completely disappears, and the Indian population owes allegiance to one culture and one heritage.

The public life of Orissa is inextricably mixed up with the humanitarian activities of Shri Thakkar Bapa, and I hope and pray that public life in Orissa may never dissociate itself from humanitarian activities. That is the pledge which all public men of Orissa should take on the occasion of Thakkar Jayanti.

May God give him at least twenty-five years more, so that we in Orissa may have the satisfaction of showing him some results of the work which he has started and for which he has given us the inspiration

## 10. THAKKAR BAPA OF ASSAM

BY

GOPINATH BARDOLOI

ONE of the few personalities that stand out as a beacon-light of selfless sacrifice and self-effacing devotion to duty on the horizon of India to-day, is Shri A. V. Thakkar known to all of us as Thakkar Bapa. Thousands in the country will tell the story of this noble life of incessant work in so many fields. To me, however, it is left to speak a few words about his noble mission for the welfare of the Harijans and the tribal people of Assam.

In 1934 Mahatma Gandhi toured Assam in connection with Harijan Welfare Work and collected a considerable sum of money for welfare work among them. The great task of carrying out this responsibility was entrusted to Thakkar Bapa, Bapuji's trusted lieutenant and fellow-worker. Perhaps after discussion with Gandhiji, Thakkar Bapa set up an organisation to do this work in Assam. An honorary President and a paid Secretary were appointed and an Advisory Board of which I was a member was constituted to help in the work. It is in that connection that for the first time I came in contact with this noble missionary who has completely devoted his life for the uplift of the people who were suffering from social injustice and from the general apathy of our countrymen. For four long years he carried out this welfare work in the most interior Harijan villages of Assam and himself visited some of them in the course of his trying tours. The welfare work consisted in the establishment of primary schools, supply of pure drinking water by construction of wells in the Harijan villages, granting of scholarships to deserving Harijan students, and placing some of them under training in some craft or industries in the Welfare Home at the Harijan Sevak Sangh Headquarters in Delhi. He also organised establishment of Nāmghars (houses of prayer) in some of the Harijan villages. Naturally some work was done; but he could not go far enough with the limited funds at his disposal. What he did most was to rouse in the people a spirit of service for the uplift of the Harijans.

While working there, some new experience dawned in him. I think it is correct to say, and I believe Thakkar Bapa was also of the same opinion, that the Harijan problem was not so acute in Assam as in many other parts of India. It was never so before, nor is it such even to-day. The influence of Vaishnavism

which prevailed in Assam mitigated to a large extent the evils of untouchability in this province. But what must have impressed Thakkar Bapa was that the Plains Tribals of Assam not only suffered social disabilities from which the Harijan also suffered, but were completely uneducated, ignorant and very backward in every way. The attention of Congressmen in Assam was already given to the solution of their problems, and while they were busy in trying to further the uplift of these people a few local bodies, there were hardly any resources either in human material or in money to carry out any solid constructive work among them. It was just at this moment that Thakkar Bapa came to fulfil the long-felt need of welfare work among these people. He set up a centre for constructive work among the Plains Tribals in North Kamrup and chose as his worker Shri B. K. Bhandary, a young man who caught all the spirit of his master and established a Tribal Welfare Ashram at Baroma. The institution under Shri Bhandary's leadership undertook educational activities, gave medical aid, and organized training classes in agriculture and crafts in the Ashram. Today this centre has absorbed practically all the welfare work of this area, including a high school and the running of a good dispensary. Directed and guided by Thakkar Bapa, Bhandary is extending his activities also to other fields in Assam, particularly among the ex-tea garden labourers. I have some idea of the difficulty which Thakkar Bapa felt in raising the fund for the Ashram. It is a reflection on us that even to-day it is not having enough funds for the extension of the activities of the Baroma Tribal Welfare Centre; and even Government, on account of certain technical financial objections, have not been able to give the adequate share of help that is due to such a noble institution. But I am sure it has sufficiently revealed to the people of Assam, as well as to the benevolent donors outside, the noble work that is being done in this institution, under the guidance of Thakkar Bapa, by a worker like Shri B. K. Bhandary.

Thakkar Bapa's love for the tribals is not confined to Plains Tribals only. He was appointed a Member of the Advisory Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly set up to enquire into and report on the political, social and economic set-up to be accorded to the Hills people of Assam under the new constitution. Thakkar Bapa's love for the hill people can easily be imagined when one remembers that he undertook a journey to the Lushai Hills in summer which gets almost inaccessible during that period. His anxiety for their welfare, as of all the rest of the tribals of India, can be seen from the Report he has signed. He did not rest content till he could prevail on the constitution-makers and the Government of India to make the welfare of the tribals a charge on the consolidated fund of India. I divulge no secret when I say that he is

repeatedly telling me that I have not been able to do as much as I should have done for the welfare work of the tribals in the hills, in the matter of higher education particularly. In the Constituent Assembly he seemed to be almost in the midst of a controversy when he pleaded with some representatives from Bihar, that tribals with aboriginal religion alone should have the benefit of what the Constitution was proposing for the tribals. Some of the Christians seemed to be trying to accuse him of bringing about a division among the tribals—the Christians and the non-Christians. But those who could read the heart of dear old Thakkar Bapa could know that it was bleeding all the while for those who (unlike the Christian tribals) had none to look after them.[1]

Thakkar Bapa to-day is the real father of all the tribals of India. Few people have given as close and detailed attention to the wants and aspirations of these people as he. I feel oftentimes that he interprets them very much better than even their own tribal advocates do. But tribal welfare is only a part—may be an all-absorbing part—of his humanitarian faith and tendencies. His principal religion is service to humanity, and wherever there is distress and suffering he is always to be found. He was working side by side with Mahatma Gandhi at Noakhali. Towards the end of 1946 when I had gone to meet Gandhiji in Noakhali I found him shivering with fever in a camp where Gandhiji was staying. He was given charge of an independent area for work by himself; but Gandhiji called him to his side when he found him suffering for a long time from malaria.

The method of Thakkar Bapa's work deserves mention. Full of the milk of human kindness, his impatience for welfare work for people cannot but impress even a casual acquaintance of Thakkar Bapa. But when one comes to know the intensity and the methods of his work, one cannot but be filled with wonder at his immeasurable capacity for work. He can never spare himself nor his fellow workers when carrying out this duty of love and service. He always evolves simple and workable schemes of work and is fully conversant with almost every detail involved in such schemes. But his greatest talent as a worker lies in his innate capacity of knowing and

[1] That Bapa is very appreciative of missionary effort and feels grateful for it will be understood from the following quotation from his article 'Aborigines of Orissa' published in *The Modern Review* of September, 1938: 'Here I came across an educated Dom, who had recently been converted to Christianity. On my asking him the reason of the change of faith, he replied that in the midst of missionaries and their Christian congregation, he found a new world, and met persons of the status whom he could never hope to meet in Hindu society, and was welcomed like a brother. It was the love and the affection of the Christians which attracted him to their fold. True, we Hindus rarely show that love and sympathy to the depressed and the semi-wild people of our country, which one human being should show to another. On the other hand, we shun them and even hate them as if they were not creatures of God with the same feeling and passions as ourselves. Whose fault is it if such people find consolation, love and happiness amongst people of another religion, and so embrace it?'—EDS.

evaluating the workers under him. Even to-day, in spite of his age, he maintains the same vigour and vigilance for the work he has in hand, in all its multitudinous bearings. And yet he is doing this with entire forgetfulness of his self, and, it seems to me, with complete detachment. *Rishis* like him must be very few in this world. India to-day wants such *rishis* to live long with us and guide us. May Thakkar Bapa live long !

## 11. BAPA OF BAPU

BY

PYARELAL

'YOU are growing younger day by day. Beginning with Harijans you have progressively become Bapa to the Bhils, to the Assamese Tribals, and now to the Santhals. What earthly use can an ocean of philanthropy like you have for a droplet of my blessings. But since, little drops make the ocean, as the old adage says, you have my blessings which you can appropriate for what they might be worth,' wrote Gandhiji to Thakkar Bapa in 1941 on the occasion of the latter's seventy-second birthday. Gandhiji has had many distinguished lieutenants, some of whom became celebrated later in their own right in our national history, but he had only one Bapa—Shri Amritlal V. Thakkar, who by stepping into the order of India's distinguished octogenarians has rendered obsolete the Psalmist's allotted 'three score years and ten' and let us hope, will continue to do so for many more years to come.

For, India needs him and will need him, and he likes more and more to realize the contents of independence in terms of those for whom the Congress under Gandhiji's leadership struggled to win it, viz. the lowliest and the lost, without which the political independence that we have won must remain an empty mirage.

Thakkar Bapa is pre-eminently the champion of 'Lost causes'. Is there flood, famine or cyclone havoc, in Orissa, Assam, Bengal or Bombay or a struggle for the emancipation of women, Harijans or the Aborigines? Well, Thakkar Bapa is sure to be there in the thick of the melee. The causes which he has espoused and made his own would fill the normal span of a man's life many times over. And yet his greed knows no end. He still goes on adding more and more to the stupendous burden which he is already carrying. The only parallel to it that suggests itself to one is, perhaps, that of the late Deenabandhu Charlie Andrews. But Bapa has outrun C. F. Andrews in the race of years.

To his indefatigable and tireless industry and hard work he joins erudition, scientific method and a loving humanitarian heart, a rare combination in one who aspires to dedicate himself to the service of *Daridra Narayan*. Gandhiji, who prided himself on being the lynx-eyed fisher of men spotted these rare

BAPU AND BAPA

*The incomparable pair*





*They are both men of prayer*

*Among Gandhiji's 'Conscience Keepers' Thakkar Bapa held a place all his own*





(By courtesy of Shri Kanu Gandhi)

qualities in Thakkar Bapa early. He learnt soon to prize his regular methodical habits, the result of long training and rigorous discipline, strictly regulated life, and the qualities of meticulous exactness and precision which he himself embodied in his person to such an eminent degree and which he regarded as essential weapons in the armoury of truth and non-violence. But, what he prized in Bapa even more was his unassailable integrity, personal purity and the spirit of uttermost renunciation and self-dedication. The character of weapons depends upon the technique of the fight, and the revolutionary non-violent technique which Gandhiji had devised and sought to perfect called forth a new set of values and norms of action in national workers wholly different from what one had been familiar with before. The difference was best illustrated in his plan of the crusade against untouchability, following upon the Epic Fast, also known as the Yeravada Pact Fast which he launched from behind the prison walls. The issue was no less than complete eradication in law as well as in actual practice of the pernicious system of 'untouchability' that had its roots in centuries of unreasoning prejudice and caste-hardened orthodoxy masquerading as religion. To achieve that goal the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded—a body novel, revolutionary, and paradoxical in its theory, constitution, organisation and method of work. Success would depend upon successful kindling and harnessing of the spiritual resources of the people. And who could be worthier to be entrusted with the newly born Sangh as its Secretary than Thakkar Bapa? Thereafter his relationship with the Sangh and with Gandhiji became like that of a Hindu wife—life-long and indissoluble. Later when once he wanted to resign from it to be free to devote more of his time to the problem of the Aboriginal Tribes, Gandhiji in his inimitable style wrote to him :

> 'There is no limit to your greed. By all means satisfy it to the top of your bent. Your Secretaryship (of the Harijan Sevak Sangh) surely is no hindrance. You and Ghanshyamdasji have jointly undertaken responsibility for the Sangh. Now death alone can release you from it. He as well as I need your moral strength and self-dedication. Your Secretaryship symbolises it. You can give as much of your time as you like to the Adivasis while discharging your duty as Secretary of the Sangh. You do not mean to tell me that you will want to resign even after that latitude. Just for your sake I have detained.... Not that a substitute could be found. But the eradication of the sin of untouchability calls for the moral force of the pure in heart. Do not forget that the irreligion of untouchability is to-day being sanctified as religion. That is not so in the case of Adivasis.

I do not mind therefore your dedicating yourself to the service of the Adivasis, but it must not be at the cost of the Harijans.'

Bapa has stuck to the Sangh ever since.

When Gandhiji went to Noakhali on his 'Do or Die' mission of healing and mercy, Thakkar Bapa accompanied him there and distinguished himself as a soldier of non-violence in the truest sense of the term. Unarmed and unaided, disdaining the protection of the police and the military, he roamed at large in the riot-torn villages, infusing non-violent courage among the awe-stricken riot victims by the force of his personal example, and disseminating the message of good will and peace among the Hindus and Muslims alike. The local miscreants soon learnt to respect him and the Noakhali officials to make discretion the better part of their valour when confronted by his formidable array of facts and figures in a controversy.

Since the abolition of untouchability in law by the Indian Constituent Assembly, the struggle against untouchability, to Thakkar Bapa's mind, has broadened into the wider struggle for the uplift and emancipation of the so-called aboriginal and backward elements in India. To carry on the good fight he has helped to found the All India Adimjati Sevak Sangh and even sacrificed his cloistered peace by agreeing to go into the Constituent Assembly. 'The struggle must go on,' he told me the other day in answer to my question, 'till the goal of an egalitarian, casteless social order is realized'. He has no illusion that it will come in his lifetime, but that does not deter him or damp his ardour. For, he knows that the prize is in the process. He seeks no other consolation than to be able to alleviate the anguish of the sorrowing and the suffering which is its own reward.

Unlike the general run of social reformers whose record lacks the full stamp of authenticity owing to the absence of what Frank Harris called 'the decoration of the shadow of prison bars on their breast', Thakkar Bapa's reformist zeal and integrity have taken him into the temple of freedom—that prison under an unjust Government becomes.

Gandhiji was in the habit of surrounding himself with a body of what he used to call his 'conscience keepers'. Among them Thakkar Bapa held a place all his own, and on a memorable occasion, which is of too intimate and sacred a character to narrate here, was able to make him reverse a decision when all others had failed.

At four score years he is still going strong. Failing eyesight has not impaired his tempo. Every night before he retires to bed he dictates his diary and has the accounts of the institutions with which he is connected read out to him. For, he is always alert and anxious to render full account to his Task Master under whose eye he conscientiously and ceaselessly labours.

The secret of his perennial youth is his rare devotion to duty and abiding faith in humanity and God which enables him to be careful for nothing and to sing, as he once actually did at a prayer meeting at Gandhiji's instance, virtually with the zest and abandon of a youth in his teens in spite of the burden he is carrying. May he live long to inspire by his living example our youth to grow into worthy servants of the nation!

## 12. THE FORERUNNER

BY

SWAMI ANAND

IN response to the request to contribute to the Thakkar Bapa Commemoration Volume, I readily pay my humble tribute of respect and greetings to Shri Thakkar Bapa, the G.O.M. of social workers in India, on his completing 80 years.

Ten years back, Gandhiji honoured him on his completing the three score years and ten, by arranging for the holding of a public reception in Bombay and presenting him with a purse representing the mite of high and low in grateful appreciation of his great humanitarian services to the nation. The purse was oversubscribed and far exceeded the target. And, but for the fell assassin's bullets, the Father of the Nation would have perhaps presided over the grand ceremony of celebrating the 80th birthday of the great humanitarian.

The city scavanger, with whom he first came in contact in the course of his official rounds as an engineer, and whose cause he championed as no one else had done before, called him Bapa—Father—and the endearing epithet became current coin for the whole nation. No one—even Gandhiji—would refer to him save as Thakkar Bapa.

His cause was the cause of those who were in the lowest rung of the social ladder, or rather, nowhere at all. They were the untouchables, the despised outcastes. He raised, his voice against the great injustice. Like John the Baptist he was the forerunner of Gandhiji in calling upon his countrymen to repent for their sins against the lowly and pleading for kindness and consideration. Gandhiji took up his cause and made it not only his own but the nation's, till at last the stigma was removed and the community given a place of honour as *Harijans*, the favourites of God.

After tackling successfully the problem of removing untouchability, Gandhiji added to Bapa's burdens by entrusting to his care the great Kasturba Foundation for service in the cause of India's women and children. All this is recent history, too well known to bear repetition.

It was not so, during the early days of political and social beginnings in our country when political prejudices held the field and generated hateful partisanships. 'Politics or Social Reform?' was the poser in those early days, over which raged hot controversies. The political schools of the day carefully

injected among their followers a not too wholesome disdain of the social reformer, who put removal of social evils in the forefront of nation-building in preference to political emancipation, and was frankly dubbed a mediocre moderate who had no guts to face the dangers of revolutionary politics. Even that premier organisation of whole-time workers—the Servants of India Society, founded by Gokhale,—was maligned as a group of arm-chair moderates, a group of political mendicants who were ' enemies ' inasmuch as they discouraged the growth of a revolutionary spirit in the country and who even helped the alien rulers in suppressing it, by co-operating with them in passing repressive laws, etc.

A person who meekly sought membership of such a body and offered to work in the cause of social reform, had little to recommend himself to me, much less to command respect. My meagre contacts with Bapa in subsequent decades, too, I confess, left me unimpressed. But Gandhiji's unbounded love and respect for this servant of the lowly, and his implicit trust in him in the sphere of Harijan work, slowly disarmed me. Besides, Bapa's indefatigable labours on every occasion of natural calamity in any part of the country, such as famine, flood, earthquake or epidemic, and above all, the humanitarian appeal at the back of every one of his activities and projects throughout the years, were irresistible, and my prejudice wore away imperceptibly.

He has escaped the fate of John the Baptist, and on the contrary has witnessed the martyrdom of ' him who came after him '. This, as everybody who has known him is aware of, was the cruellest personal blow of Fate for him. But, with the fortitude that comes only of abiding faith in God and devotion to His work, he has borne it bravely and continued his labour of love with a detachment which partakes of sorrow equally with glad tidings.

Thakkar Bapa stands as the foremost humanitarian of our age in this country, and I pay him my humble tribute of gratefulness and respect for being alive and active like a sage at the ripe old age of 80. I wish him many happy returns of the day, years of well-earned rest, without ill-health or infirmities.

## 13. THAKKAR BAPA—A TRIBUTE

BY

S. G. VAZE

(*From* ' *The Hindustan Times* ', *December* 18, 1948)

ON November 29, Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar (or Thakkar Bapa as he is familiarly called) completed seventy-nine years of his life and entered upon his eightieth year.

The event happened to be celebrated in an unexpected way, and in a way moreover which even Bapa himself could not but have liked. For that day saw the legal extinction of untouchability from the face of our country, the Constituent Assembly having that day declared the imposition of any disabilities upon our Harijan brethren as an offence.

Bapa's mission in life is twofold: uplift of Harijans, and uplift of the Adivasis. How supremely happy he must have been to find that on his 79th birthday the national curse of untouchability was blotted out, so far at any rate as law can do it. This redemption of Harijans is due to Mahatmaji's inspiration and driving power, and the members of the Constituent Assembly were naturally full of gratitude to his memory when they passed article 8 of the Constitution giving the *coup de grace* to untouchability.

I asked Bapa, who has inherited this task directly from Gandhiji, why he did not join in paying tributes to the Mahatma in the Assembly, pointing out how much we owe to Mahatmaji for this biggest task of moral regeneration in the world. His answer was characteristic. ' Of course, I should have loved to do so,' he said. ' But if I had attempted it, I should have broken down in speaking of Mahatmaji's services in this field.'

He then narrated two events showing how deep an interest the Mahatma took in the Harijan question. He wrote almost casually to the Mahatma suggesting that he should undertake a country-wide tour preaching his anti-untouchability gospel to the people in places far and near. The suggestion was probably made in a mere post-card, to be followed later by more insistent requests, somehow to disengage himself from his manifold activities and devote himself for the space of one year to the exclusive task of effacement of untouchability. No immediate result was expected, but how great and agreeable was Bapa's surprise to receive by return mail a letter from Mahatmaji saying that he had made up his mind to put everything else aside for this Harijan tour

and asking Bapa to make out a year's detailed programme for him ! The hurricane tour that followed was immediately resolved upon by Gandhiji and quickly organized by Thakkar Bapa. That it would last for one whole year continuously was beyond Bapa's wildest expectations, but Mahatmaji thought it to be such a sacred duty that he was willing to postpone every other piece of work.

Although Bapa had suggested a twelve-month tour, he had left out of reckoning the three months of monsoon, during which such a terrific propaganda campaign as Gandhiji carried on was surely out of the question. And the tour was continued in every nook and corner of India for nine months, till, in Orissa, heavy showers of rain had actually broken upon the party. This shows, as probably nothing else does, Gandhiji's profoundest concern for the raising of the level of Harijans, or rather, for the casting out of the devil of untouchability from the hearts of 'touchables'. For, Gandhiji's conviction was that though both things were essential for the progress of the country, the second was even more essential than the first.

Out of this was born the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the responsibility for whose management fell upon the broad shoulders of Thakkar Bapa. He had already started, before this, a mission to the Bhils, but he had to leave the day-to-day work of this mission to his devoted associates in order to reserve himself for the service of Harijans.

Then came the second incident, which Bapa related to me. After this work had gone on for some time on a stable basis, the urge for returning to his old love, the Adivasis in all provinces, returned to him. He went to Gandhiji begging him to relieve him from the growing responsibilities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh so that he could give the rest of his life to the uplift of the Adivasis in whose interest none but Christian missionaries were till then labouring. He said that the Adivasis were his first care, and that he should be allowed to spend the few years that still remained to him in their cause.

But Gandhiji imposed his veto. While he did not in any way depreciate the service of the Adivasis, he thought that service of Harijans must have the first claim of all Hindus. He said : ' Our ancestors have sinned grievously by putting Harijans virtually out of the pale of Hindu society. It is our sacred duty to give them once again an honoured place amongst ourselves. The work is nothing less than that of reforming the current Hindu religion. No, Thakkar, while you and I live, that must be our primary duty. Everything else must come after, however important it may be in itself. All you can do is to leave a large part of the actual work to your colleagues and, confining yourself to general supervision, give as much time to the Adivasis as you can spare, but the responsibility for the Harijan Sevak Sangh will lie on you. Neither of us can divorce ourselves from that work.'

Bapa had no choice. He was free only to devote his spare time to the Adivasis, but what prodigious work he did during this spare time! The Harijan Sevak Sangh's expanding work is known to all. But little is known about the work he has been silently doing for the Adivasis.

From the time he went to Chota Nagpur about 1922 (I had the good fortune of accompanying him on the occasion) he has been constantly thinking of the Adivasis. He made a close study then of the condition of Oraous and Mundas, surveyed the work done by several Christian missions, and resolved to do something of the kind himself on however small a scale.

The Bhil Seva Mandal was the first outcome of that resolve. Bapa was able to inspire a number of young men of the finest spirit to be found anywhere to take up this work as their life mission. This was the first indigenous attempt to civilize the Adivasis of India. It was undertaken in a perfectly uncondescending manner, with due regard to the Adivasis' native culture.

Apart from the direct benefit the Adivasis receive from this uplift work, the great good it has done to the country consists in the fact that it has created a consciousness among our intelligentsia of the continuous neglect of which they have been guilty for generations in respect of these tribal people. But for the interest it has awakened among the general public, it would have been impossible to insert in the new constitution the many beneficent provisions it contains. The very existence of these provisions (and the general support they receive) is due in large measure to Bapa's unremitting labours on behalf of the Adivasis. He was chairman of the sub-committee that made recommendations in this respect for all provinces except Assam. That the recommendations emanated from him is to most people, enough guarantee that they are as necessary as desirable.

One is lost in bewilderment when one looks at the vast expanse of work performed by Thakkar Bapa for these two neglected and oppressed communities, commenced in the evening of life when most people think only of rest. This passion of consecrating all his talent to the cause of these communities and spending the last ounce of energy in their interest, he derived, before he had come into contact with Gandhiji, from four persons who by their example left an abiding stamp on his innate humanitarianism.

First of all his father, who, in the Great Famine of 1901, organized relief on a large scale for his community, viz. the Lohanas. Bapa had just then entered on his professional career as an engineer on the Uganda Railway which was being constructed at the time (the spirit of adventure has never left him since). When he heard of the yeoman service his father was doing for the famine-stricken, he took a vow to make such service of the afflicted people his life work.

Then the work of Maharshi Karve of Poona, which even at that early time evoked admiration among all people who can at all claim to have a feeling of sympathy for the lowly, made an indelible impression on his mind. How fortunate is the country to have Anna Karve (probably the biggest social worker of our time) still in our midst, quite hale and hearty and also yet active !

After him, the work of Karmaveer Vithalrao Shinde, who had the high honour of founding the first mission to the untouchables, made an appeal to him. Last came Gopal Krishna Devadhar, who not only inspired Thakkar Bapa to place his services, while yet engaged in earning his bread, at the disposal of the neglected elements of the population, but afforded him opportunities of doing so. Bapa was engaged at the time as a Bombay City Corporation engineer in supervising the work which untouchables were doing in loading the refuse of the city in trains. His experience of that period filled him with the desire to give himself up utterly to the service of the untouchables, and he left his lucrative job to undertake such work under the guidance of Devadhar as a member of the Servants of India Society, whose illustrious Vice-President he now is.

Mahatma Gandhi named Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor in the political field, and his mantle has now actually fallen on Panditji. But I have no doubt that if Mahatmaji were to have named his successor in the humanitarian field, which after all was the field of activities more in accordance with the bent of his mind, he would have named Thakkar Bapa. Bapa has achieved all that one could hope for in placing the future of Harijans and the Adivasis on a sure foundation of steady progress. May he be spared long, to see this foundation becoming still stronger, so that at no distant period will these communities which now, as it were, are not of us, will become wholly indistinguishable from all other communities, not only in point of legal rights but of broad human culture !

## 14. TWO PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS

BY

A. P. PATTANI

I HAVE a kind invitation to write something for the 'Thakkar Bapa 80th Birthday Commemoration Volume.' On such occasions personal recollections are natural and very pleasant, and I am thinking of two of my more recent ones.

Not long after retiring from Bhavnagar service I stayed a few days with Bapa at the Harijan Sevak Sangh on Kingsway in Delhi. It was pleasant and we had several talks. I particularly remember one of them. It was about a planned new village. When one thinks of village life on a basis of co-operation rather than competition, from education to old age, it naturally brings in questions of legislation to overcome difficulties of existing law. It also needs workers younger than myself, for it means work of several years. Bapa approached the subject with practical interest and asked several questions ; then he suddenly turned to me in his characteristic way and said : 'I hope you are not thinking of making a sudden great change in your life !'

The other occasion it is nice to think back upon is an earlier one when I was still in service. Bapa had come to Bhavnagar to obtain some more special treatment for Harijans than the State was already giving them. I saw that he had made up his mind not to accept a 'no' from me, because he knew that would not be my final word to him ; so he stated his demand, urged and won ! I then invited him to our Co-operative Credit Societies and Gramya Panchayats Sammelan that was shortly to take place at a village called Dhasa. He came, and the people were delighted to see him. Besides the resolutions that were passed, he was glad to see again the folk dances of his own province—the *garbas* and *dandia-ras* that are peculiar to Saurashtra. The *ras* reminds one of Shri Krishna and his Gowallias in Dwaraka. The words of one of the famous songs people love to sing in Sourashtra, and to dance while they sing it, run like this :

'Full of hope we came, and the dear Lord
'He danced with us. We, full of hope.
'It was the night of the full moon,
'And the moon was high in the sky. We, full of hope.
'Krishna, he played his lovely flute ;
'Mother Radha gave the rhythm of faith. Oh ! we, full of hope.'

The beauty and the *Taal* (rhythm) of the original folk songs cannot be translated into English. Equally true is it that the origin of these dances and the composers of the old songs that accompany them are unknown. They are something that has overflown from the joy in the hearts of the people.

In the same way, the affectionate name 'Thakkar Bapa' has overflown from the hearts of his countrymen. His life and work has brought light and hope to Harijans and aborigines who need them most in their poverty, ignorance and social injustice. So, it is with head bowed in affection that India will greet him on his 80th birthday.

## 15. THAKKAR BAPA

BY

P. KODANDA RAO

AFFECTIONATELY and appropriately we, in the Servants of India Society, call Thakkar Bapa the ' Chota Mahatma '. He is that to us. Mahatma Gandhi used to describe himself as the ' unofficial ' member of the Servants of India Society. Thakkar Bapa has been ' unofficial ' member of the Gandhi Ashram ! Like ' Charlie ' Andrews, who found it possible to be equally loyal to such divergent personalities as Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Thakkar Bapa has found it possible to be loyal to the Servants of India Society and Mahatma Gandhi, though there was much that divided them. Even as Charlie Andrews gave a second place to matters that divided the Mahatma and Tagore and held firmly to those more fundamental ideals and policies which were common to them, Thakkar Bapa subordinated the points that divided the Society and the Mahatma and emphasised those that were common to both. Indeed, when viewed in proper perspective, the things that divide people are of much smaller consequence than those which unite them. To put it another way, Thakkar Bapa's head was with the Servants of India Society and his heart with Mahatma Gandhi.

Social work has been the *forte* of Thakkar Bapa, as it was of the late Mr. G. K. Devadhar, one of the founding Fathers of the Servants of India Society. Between the two, they initiated and developed the social service aspect of the Society's work. With a heart which is tenderness itself, relief of suffering has been an instinct with Thakkar Bapa. Distress caused by floods, famines and pestilence found in him a ready, untiring and successful redeemer.

When Mahatma Gandhi started his anti-untouchability campaign from the Yeravada Jail, Poona, he naturally and rightly chose Thakkar Bapa as its General Secretary. Since then he has been its prime mover. Later on, he interested himself in the amelioration and uplift of the aborigines of India who had hitherto been neglected except by foreign Christian Missionaries. As chairman or member of several official and non-official committees, he raised the question of the uplift of the aborigines to the front and first rank, and has since founded the Adimjati Sevak Sangh. He is now a high and acknowledged authority on the subject, particularly in the Indian Constituent Assembly where he is heard with the utmost respect.

BAPA WITH PANDIT H. N. KUNZRU (PRESIDENT) AND MEMBERS OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, POONA



He has also been the Secretary of the Kasturba Memorial Fund for the uplift of the rural women of India. Many other activities engaged his earnest and unselfish attention, such as the cause of the subjects of the Indian States in the Pre-Independence era, Prohibition and the Poona Pact, to name only a few. On these and other aspects of his unique service as a Servant of India, others more competent than myself have written.

Towering far above his work, as disclosed in annual reports of associations and reports of committees and commissions, stands his great personality which can be felt and sensed but not described in words. If the Mahatma has been ' Bapu ' to millions, Thakkar has been ' Bapa ' to them. Age has not weakened his drive and energy, nor satiated his zeal for public service. He is still planning and piloting schemes with all the ardour of youth, inspiring and driving young men and women to greater devotion and achievement in the service of renascent India. It is good fortune to know him ; it is greater good fortune to have been his colleague in the Servants of India Society.

If I may strike a personal note, I deem myself exceptionally fortunate in my personal relations with Thakkar Bapa. He loves me read to him from the Pickwick Papers and recite the poem, ' The King's Ring '. He gives me his confidence to a degree. I can never be too grateful to him.

Mrs. Rao and I recall with pleasure his several visits to our home, his tender solicitude for our welfare and his embarrassingly lavish appreciation of our little personal services to him. Every visit of his is a blessing to us. We love him and adore him.

Perhaps he is that to everybody ; but we would like to believe that we are among the ' chosen '.

## 16. THAKKAR BAPA—AS I KNOW HIM

BY

N. R. MALKANI

I HAVE known Thakkar Bapa since 1923 when I first visited his Ashram for Bhils in Dohad (Gujarat). It was for me a liking at first sight. A tall, well-built figure, a face full of manly modelling; a manner that was dignified and paternal. He smiled when he cared, and the smile was quite winsome. In fact the appearance and demeanour of Thakkar Bapa would win attention in any gathering of men. Since then, age has only added a certain ripeness to that appearance. The face is more pinched than before, but has achieved a few lumps and lines that behove a more firm character. His eyes have lost their lustre, but I think his smile has become more paternal. There has appeared a wee bit of a stoop in his carriage that gives more dignity to the aged figure. He was formerly Thakkar Bapa to Bhils and his immediate circle of workers. He has since become Thakkar Bapa to all the depressed, the suppressed, the distressed and the lowly. And for me he is now simply ' Bapa ' as Gandhiji was simply and sweetly ' Bapu '—my adopted fathers in spirit, in succession.

In personal habits Thakkar Bapa is extremely simple. For food he prefers Gujarati but is quite satisfied with Madrasi food. In fact he drinks coffee when as a Gujarati he should be drinking only tea. He likes fruits and even sweets at his age, provided you give these to him. But he will not buy them for himself. His appetite needs no whetting but he will never over-eat. He was never worried about his digestion because he treats his stomach as a gentleman should treat a good servant, and the servant is well-behaved and obedient. His clothes are clean and home-washed. They could be whiter if dhobi-washed. But he is not exercised if they are a shade less white or even carry a patch stitched at home. He has no love for finery or fine things. Perhaps he has no eye or ear or taste for fine or superfine things that appear to him as superfluities wasting men's time and money, if not sense. Thakkar Bapa is extremely simple in his physical, mental and emotional make-up. He carries no unnecessary load of these on his body or mind.

Thakkar Bapa, in fact, has no habits, good or bad, except one, and that to a remarkable extent—the habit of work. You may call it a good or a bad habit according to your taste or age or make-up. He works incessantly and indefatigably in the literal sense. He sleeps or he works. He never rests. You

A PICTURE OF 1940





*With Bapa are seen Shri Chhaganlal Joshi and Shri B G Mehta Harijan Sevaks of Kathiawar*

*With Prof N R. Malkani*



may think he rests when he eats or drinks. That may or may not be true of you. But it is not true of Thakkar Bapa. While he eats he likes someone to read something to him; while he takes his cup of coffee he likes someone near him to read the morning paper to him. The word ' idle ' does not exist in his dictionary, nor the word ' rest '. He has perhaps lost the faculty for both. The most over-worked of his organs was the pair of eyes, until their excessive ill-treatment lost him their use. The most over-worked of his organs now are the pair of his ears. Fortunately these are less sensitive or more docile. His tongue is one of the least exercised, in public or in private. He talks very little, extremely little, and to the point. He says what he wants to say, no more and no less. He says that clearly, emphatically, and if necessary bluntly. There are hardly any nuances and shades and suggestions or insinuations about his speech. His words do not bear more than one meaning, for they are simple and direct. I don't think he has ever told a lie or that he can tell a lie. He speaks nothing but the truth, God's own truth and with God's own firmness.

What is that which impels him to work like a machine without waiting for repairs or resting for replacement of parts? I think he does not work because it is a dedication to God, where work is worship. He does not work because it is an adventure for seizing power. He never worked for money and so he has received public money by the crore, which he spends rupee by rupee, or if you will pice by pice, like a true Kathiawadi Bania. But he works because he loves the poor and the destitute. I have not seen a complete ' humanitarian ' in the flesh, except in Thakkar Bapa. He wants to serve the lowly and the poor because they are lowly and poor. And in this service, it can be truly said that he has transcended all bars of caste, creed, colour or community. He would serve anybody anywhere who stands in need of service. He is the true father of the fatherless. This is his path of duty, his swadharma which he observes to perfection. This is his nobility and his claim to real greatness.

And he goes about the service of the poor as a business man would go about his business. He is systematic, punctual, thorough and exacting to a fault. I could write a number of anecdotes about each one of these traits that go to form his unbending character. He prefers to work in his office rather than in his home, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of office. He indulges in files, preserves cuttings, dotes on Government reports, dictates his daily diary punctiliously every night. His diaries are a veritable bequest of fact, big or small, that is true and accurate. They are a mirror of his mind—simple, direct and utterly factual. His correspondence is short but regular and relevant. His files and account books are well-kept, properly pinned and bound. He is the servant of his watch to a minute and if he could to a second. If

you are late by 5 minutes for an engagement he almost charges you with the crime of breaking it. If he is late by 5 minutes, take it that someone or something has interfered with him and his affairs. If he does not attend a meeting take it that Fate itself has intervened and made him ill or absent. If he attends any meeting, he is the first to attend and almost the last to go. And he sits firm and immobile as though he is interested in everything that is happening. It is the law of duty working inexorably and almost mechanically through him. While he is the means for some end, of which he may be unconscious.

In these days when you search for men of character and often in vain, the sight and touch of Thakkar Bapa does your heart, if not head, a great good. He is character personified, a character that is simple, bold and strong, and writ large on his fine features. God in his mercy has spared him for the celebration of his 80th birthday and in his mercy will yet spare him for more such celebrations. My loves and respects for him.

## 17. PIONEER WORKER IN THE SERVICE OF ABORIGINES

BY

V. N. BARVE

REVERED Thakkar Bapa completes his eightieth year on 29th November 1949. The people of India, particularly the Aborigines and Harijans, must be congratulated on having Thakkar Bapa on the threshold of his eighty-first year and still guiding the work of serving the Aborigines and the Harijans in the whole of India.

The Aborigines and the Harijans (Scheduled Castes) are among the most ancient inhabitants of India. As such, it was the special responsibility of the ' High Caste ' Hindus to give them a helping hand and to enable them to come abreast with the advanced classes. But for the last two thousand years, if not more, the only policy of the ' High Caste ' Hindus had been to suppress or to neglect in a systematic and studied manner, all the Backward Classes in the country. The Backward Classes comprise three categories, viz. (1) the Harijans or Scheduled Castes—heretofore treated as Untouchables, (2) the Aborigines and Hill Tribes and (3) other Backward Castes, such as Pardhis, Kaikadis, Laman Vanjaries, Thelaries, Berads or Ramoshis, Bhamtas and many others, who are even more backward in economic, cultural and educational matters, but who do not come within the first two categories. In fact, it was the very essence of Varnavyawastha to enthrone for all time, the ' high ' in their heights and to throw down the 'low' in their depths. There is no evidence in history to show that either the priestly castes who claimed to be the repositories of all knowledge and fountains of all religious teaching, or the ruling castes who claimed to be the 'Avatars' of God Vishnu, ever thought it to be their duty to raise the Sudras or toiling masses or Adi-Sudras (now called Harijans) or the Aborigines (now called Adivasis) or other backward tribes. Not until the British established their rule in India and the Christian Missionaries began to serve these suppressed and depressed classes by opening schools and dispensaries for them and giving them some religious instruction, that the conscience of the Hindu Community gradually began to be stirred. The Christian Missionaries carried on proselytising activities and threatened further to reduce the numerical strength of the Hindus ; but for many years, the reaction of the Hindu Community expressed itself only in opposing proselytisation and in showing that the

Christian beliefs and practices were as absurd as those of the Hindus, which the missionaries made it a point assiduously to ridicule. There was little that was constructive, and it was left to Thakkar Bapa to start systematic work of serving the Aboriginal Classes and later the Harijans and others also. The Aboriginal Classes have been the first and the abiding love of Thakkar Bapa for the last 30 years. It was because Mahatma Gandhi asked Thakkar Bapa to accept the responsibility of the post of the General Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh that Thakkar Bapa undertook to perform this additional task. I do not think that left to himself he would have taken upon himself the Harijan work as the work for aboriginals has been vast enough to draw to itself all the stupendous energy or organising ability of Thakkar Bapa and other workers.

It was in 1914 that Thakkar Bapa, after resigning the post of the Bombay Municipal Engineer, joined the Servants of India Society founded by Hon'ble G. K. Gokhale in 1905 and easily proved himself a past master in organising Flood and Famine Relief in various Provinces of India, under the auspices of the Society. In 1920 and 1921 there was a great famine in Gujarat and Thakkar Bapa was entrusted with the work of organising relief in that region. While doing relief work, Thakkar Bapa realised that temporary relief was not enough, but that a scheme of constructive work on a permanent basis of serving the Aborigines, viz. the Bhils in Dohadand Jalhod Talukas should be organized; and he, therefore, founded in 1922 and thereafter, Students' Ashrams at Mirakhedim, Zalod and Dohad and the Bhil Seva Mandal of Gujarat came into being. In this work he had the devoted and willing services of workers like Shri Dayabhai Naik and Shri Laxmidas Shrikant. Hundreds of wells have been constructed and more than a hundred co-operative societies have been organised for the Bhil agriculturists in that area. Thakkar Bapa made Dohad his headquarters for about 10 years till 1932, when Mahatma Gandhi called upon him to undertake the work of organising the All India Anti-Untouchability League (afterwards named Harijan Sevak Sangh). But before 1932, as well as after, Thakkar Bapa continued to promote the work of the service of the Aborigines in other Provinces of India, such as Assam, Bihar, Malabar, Maharashtra, etc. His services and expert knowledge attracted the notice of various Provincial Governments and they persuaded him to accept the Chairmanship of various Provincial Committees to prepare schemes for the betterment of the living conditions of the Aborigines and sweepers, etc. Thakkar Bapa is perhaps the most-travelled man in India. There is no part of India inhabited by the Aborigines which he has not visited. Assam which requires at least 4 days' journey to reach from Delhi, by rail, road and river, has been visited by him more than half a dozen times. He has also undertaken various tours for Harijan work in the company of Shrimati Rameshwari

BAPA JOTS DOWN POINTS AFTER HIS INSPECTION OF A KATKARI HAMLET ON THE TOP OF A HILLOCK IN RATNAGIRI DISTRICT

*With him are Appasahib Patwardhan and V. N. Barve*



AN EARLY MORNING VISIT TO THE KATKARIS

(*Katkaris are aboriginal tribes who live away from ordinary villages*)



*A Katkari Hut*



Nehru, as in Travancore and Rajputana. With all the weight of years, he is still being entrusted with new responsibilities such as that of the Secretaryship of Kasturba Memorial Trust, membership of the Constituent Assembly (to represent the new Sourashtra Union) and the work of Rehabilitation of Harijan Refugees.

Thakkar Bapa is equal to all this heavy work. His usually uncomplaining health, regular habits, his meticulous punctuality and his capacity to dispose of large correspondence and to maintain contact with scores of Institutions and scores of workers all over India, are simply amazing, and make younger workers feel ashamed when they find that they are unable to keep pace with him. Thakkar Bapa has been for many years writing, and in recent years getting written in English a regular diary of his work and movements. It contains a fund of information, and though it may not have the literary elegance of Mahadeo Bhai's well-known diary of Mahatma Gandhi's movements, tours and conversations, it will be an asset of great national value and requires to be carefully preserved and studied. It will enable a future historian to write an illuminating story of the growth of social service work in respect of the Aborigines and Harijans during the last 30 years.

The work of service of the Aborigines and work for the service of Harijans progressed in opposite directions. With respect to Harijan work, the All India Harijan Body was formed first, and its branches for Provinces, districts and cities were started afterwards. But in the case of the Adivasi work, various independent institutions sprang up in different parts of the country, mostly with the advice and guidance of Thakkar Bapa and his ambition of evolving a federation of these institutions was fulfilled last year, when the Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh was formed with Dr. Rajendra Prasad as President. His alertness in attending to the phenomenon of mass conversions in Bidar and in taking steps for the organisation of Harijan work in that district very recently, is a good testimony of his watchfulness. He will not spare himself or spare others. Though exacting, he is very kind at heart.

But years after all do tell. Thakkar Bapa's eyesight has become weak and the overworked physical organ of his heart has begun to complain. It is time that Thakkar Bapa is persuaded to give up long journeys and all strain of work, and capable young men are found who will work willingly to take up and share among themselves the stupendous burden of work which Thakkar Bapa has been carrying on his broad shoulders for many years.

Thakkar Bapa and Mahatma Gandhi were practically of the same age, but they do not seem to have come into contact with each other till Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1914. So it is clear that Thakkar Bapa's spirit of service and discipline are his own. Mahatma Gandhi was a

political, social and religious personality of world fame. Thakkar Bapa did not involve himself in political or religious work. He did not give many discourses or lectures, and did not write many essays. But he has been a Prince among Social Workers and he has been a great apostle of the Religion of Humanity. Thakkar Bapa has a greatness of his own. India has not produced another giant social worker of his stature. He never had any personal ambition of wealth or fame. A towering personality, he has added lustre to the illustrious Servants of India Society.

May he enjoy good health and be spared for many long years, to direct and guide the still incomplete work of the uplift of Aborigines, Harijans and other Backward Classes in the country, so that the goal of reaching the happy stage, when there will be no Backward Castes in the country, will come appreciably nearer.

## 18. BAPU AND BAPA

BY

SHRI G. RAMACHANDRAN

THIS is a daring title. I am likely to be accused for being audacious. I shall plead guilty. Bapa will be angry at my comparing him with Bapu. Bapu himself might have had a good laugh. What I wish to do is nothing less and nothing more than to indulge in a study of comparison and contrast.

Bapa is a tall and gaunt figure. He has now grown very thin. Time was, however, when he was not only tall but big and in his long coat of khadi he then looked like a German Field-Marshal. Years ago, Bapu was on a tour of South India for the Harijan cause. Bapu and Bapa sat near each other in a big Master Buick which tore distance to shreds as it roared its way through district after district in Tamil Nad. Some of us were in another car behind and one of us was Miss Muriel Lester. At several sharp turns of the road we could see the car in front speeding onward with Bapu and Bapa in the back seat. It was then that Miss Lester once shook me and asked ' Does not Thakkar Bapa look like some German Field-Marshal ? Look at his height and his profile.' Bapu was physically a pigmy in comparison. The contrast does not end there. Bapa has a grim look about him and those who do not know him will be awed by his big and stern presence. Bapu, on the other hand, had the gift of smile and delicate refinement. Bapu always quietened and calmed visitors by his graciousness. Bapa is not much of a conversationalist, while Bapu was a splendid one. Even Bapa's jokes would be grim. Bapu could handle anyone, but Bapa knows none of the arts of even innocent diplomacy. Bapa never has any ambiguity, but Bapu could make a fellow stand on his head, when he chose, with perplexity. Bapu was many-sided, touching life at numerous points vividly and colourfully at the same time. Bapa is like a train moving on rails. His direction is single, his impulse unilateral. Bapa looks grim, but is very gentle and is even sentimental at heart. Bapu would look gracious and yet could keep his heart like rock when he wanted. Bapu understood, analysed and went forward by some supreme genius of instinct and intuition. Bapa is a glorious plodder, moving from point to point laboriously, industriously and with single-minded interest. Bapu knew when to be hard like rock and when to be gentle like a mother. Bapu had a mother's heart but Bapa has always a father's heart. Bapa suspects intellect and cleverness

and fights shy of them. Bapu caught up intellectuals and clever people and made them do his work. Once I gave Bapa a copy of a book I had written. I was then a Provincial Harijan Sevak Sangh Secretary under him. Bapa received the book, turned over the pages slowly and said, 'I am afraid when people become clever authors, they then run away from Harijan work and such other work.' Nothing mattered to him except this work. Bapa prefers steady, slow, reliable plodders to clever, able and otherwise excellent workers. Years later I gave Bapu another book I had written. He received it with his unfailing smile and said to me, 'Agatha Harrison told me about your book. She liked it very much. But this is in English. Is there a Tamil or Malayalam version? You must ask Kaka to get a Hindi translation.' That was how Bapa and Bapu received books I had written. Bapa is very fond of coffee and you can melt his hardest moods with a real South-Indian-made cup of that beverage. Bapa has no fads in food. One remembers how strict Bapu was in his food. Bapa is not at all a politician. He hates politics. We know how Bapu was a great constructive genius and at the same time a most astonishingly clever politician. Bapu made politics his instrument for constructive work. Bapa takes up constructive work and runs away from politics as from the plague. Bapu was a great point of unity in life and work. Bapa has the steadfastness of direction and the glory of single-mindedness.

And yet how much they resemble each other. Both achieved preeminence in constructive work. Both have loved the Harijan cause better than any other. Both have been ascetics of a high order. Both have worked harder than any one else in the uplift of the poor and the downtrodden, hard in work and harder on the demands they have made on workers and yet most tender-hearted in their personal relations with workers. Both have been wonderful examples of loyalty to co-workers. Once, at a Harijan work centre in South India, when Bapa heard the story from the mouth of a humble worker, of how he was giving away two rupees a month to a Harijan girl in school out of his salary of Rs. 12 per month, I saw him weeping with the utter abandon of simple admiration. He came home and wrote a love letter to that worker enclosing Rs. 20 as a personal gift. In the same way, how deeply Bapu could be moved by the spirit of service in humble workers. Bapu had a heart as big as the world in his little body. Bapa has as big a heart in his giant frame. Bapu was extremely shrewd with his splendid and searching intellect. Bapa is equally shrewd with a keen horse sense in him. Neither could be deceived nor taken in easily by anyone. Both were more or less of the same age together and age did not weaken the iron will of either to serve unceasingly. Bapu was a tremendous worker and yet he could say of Bapa that he was one of the very few people in the world who could render a good account of every minute of

his life to his Maker. Both have been great fighters for the poor and the oppressed. Both have been stubborn and unyielding in the work they have done for those in suffering. Both have believed with a burning faith in God and His justice. Bapu worked on a more universal canvas and pattern than Bapa. But the spirit in which they have worked has been the same, one of dedication to God in the service of man. Both have held up the noble ideals of conduct in regard to women. Both have always shown a high sense of chivalry and understanding of women. Bapa was chosen not only as the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh but also as the Secretary of the Kasturba National Memorial Trust. Both have contributed greatly to the awakening of women and in their service. Both have been *pucca* Banias in the care with which they have administered public funds. The truthfulness of both have already become legends in our country. Bapu did his work and God took him away. Bapa is still doing his work on the other side of eighty, under Providence. I remember Bapu once saying that Bapa and himself were so constituted that they must go on working till they drop down and die. Bapu was so made and he worked in such a way that he invited the tremendous and noble end which overtook him. Bapa, on the other hand, is so made and does his work in such a way that he will literally go on working till age and weakness make him drop down in harness. The end of both would be thus in the field of action. Both have been great exemplars of Karma Yoga in this Karma Bhumi of ours. India can be proud of Bapa as it will be eternally proud of Bapu. Bapu has been called the Father of the Nation. Bapa can well be called the father of the socially downtrodden. 'Bapu' and 'Bapa' both mean father. How apt that is ! Let all of us pray that Bapa, our greatest, constructive worker, after Bapu, the world's greatest constructive worker may yet live to carry on the lamp of service for many more years to come ! Bapa has really become the greatest Gandhian without being a Gandhian at all. Is not that a miracle ?

## 19. THAKKAR BAPA AND FAMINE RELIEF

BY

DINKER DESAI

RELIEF work is one of the more important activities through which Thakkar Bapa has served suffering humanity. No description of his qualities can bring before us a real picture of the great social worker. It can give us no adequate idea of those qualities which endeared him to the people who knew him through his relief work. The following cursory account of his relief work is written only as a humble tribute and not as an exhaustive survey of his great work.

Thakkar Bapa joined the Servants of India Society in 1914. The organisation of relief in times of distress and calamity such as famines and floods has always been one of the important items in the programme of the Servants of India Society. In 1918-19, that is, only four years after Thakkar Bapa joined the Society, there was an unprecedented scarcity of food grains all over the country which pushed up prices to a level never known before. Famine prevailed in several areas. The distress was most severe in Bombay Province where several members of the Servants of India Society, including Thakkar Bapa, were engaged in organising relief to the people.

From February to June 1919, Bapa organised relief operations in the district of Panch Mahals, the home of the Bhils. It is interesting to note that Bapa took the help of college students from Gujarat in his relief work. A cattle camp and several cheap grain shops were opened in the Bhil area. What is still more interesting is the fact that social life was organised among the labourers working on Government famine relief works. It is this famine relief work which brought Thakkar Bapa into intimate contact for the first time with the Bhils of Panch Mahals and which subsequently induced him to found the famous Bhil Seva Mandal. It can thus be said that the Bhil Seva Mandal was a by-product of Thakkar Bapa's famine relief work.

The very next year, i.e. in 1920, we find Thakkar Bapa engaged in famine relief work in the District of Puri in Orissa. It is recorded that Thakkar Bapa, with the active help and co-operation of local pleaders and other workers, was able to collect over Rs. 1,25,000 for relief work. This sum may not look a stupendous one in these days of devaluation of our rupee, but it was undoubtedly a very big amount to be collected for relief work in those days.

Thakkar Bapa worked as one of the Secretaries of the Famine Relief Committee, which gave gratuitous relief to thousands of starving people. The fact that Thakkar Bapa, a social worker from Gujarat, was made one of the Secretaries of a relief committee in distant Orissa shows the esteem and affection in which he was held even in his earlier days by the people of provinces to which he did not belong.

In 1927 floods caused great devastation in Gujarat and Sind. Thakkar Bapa immediately went to the rescue of the sufferers and was engaged in relief work for about a whole year. It is of special interest to note that he attended to the work of reconstruction and repairs of dharmashalas, schools, wells for depressed classes and also common wells in villages. The Bombay Central Famine Relief Committee placed at his disposal a total sum of Rs. 2,25,000 for this purpose. This fact bears eloquent testimony to the great confidence that was placed in him by the public of Bombay. Thakkar Bapa is so much interested in relief work that he would not neglect even a comparatively small calamity confined to a small area. In 1931, for instance, we find him in the Nasik District touring some villages on flood relief work.

In 1933, Thakkar Bapa organised relief for the Bhils of Gujarat who were reduced to extreme helplessness due to famine conditions. We are told that nearly 30,000 people were afforded relief through the Bhil Seva Mandal of which Thakkar Bapa was the Founder-President. This work he did from March to August. In October, we find him in the distant Punjab issuing an appeal for funds for the relief of the flood-stricken people of Rohtak District. This is another instance to show how Thakkar Bapa was ready to move from one corner of the country to another for helping people in distress.

Coming to recent years, Thakkar Bapa did yeoman service to the people of Bijapur District in Bombay Province in the year 1943 when famine was declared in that area. Thakkar Bapa formed a Committee in Bombay for giving relief to the famine-stricken people. He was not only the President of this Committee but also its friend, philosopher and guide. In fact, he was the life and soul of this Committee which collected more than Rs. 8 lakhs and distributed relief throughout the district.

The Committee, under the direction of Thakkar Bapa, organised relief in various forms. With a view to feeding the infirm, the aged and the children, who were incapable of performing their task on Government relief works, the Committee opened a number of free kitchens. The monthly average number of persons fed at these kitchens often went up to nearly 8,000. About 75 per cent of these were children. With a view to helping respectable families, who would not seek employment on relief works or who would not attend free kitchens, relief was administered in the form of grain-doles. The ragged

condition of the famine-stricken people showed how necessary it was to provide them with clothing. Thakkar Bapa, therefore, asked the Committee to clothe the people properly. At his instance, cotton yarn was secured from textile mills and was distributed to hand-loom weavers in the famine area for getting it woven into cloth. This also helped the hand-loom weavers who were badly in need of employment on account of famine. The Committee distributed more than 110,000 garments among the population. In fact, the total number of persons who received clothes came to over 84,000. The Committee also promoted hand-spinning as a special form of relief.

With a view to assisting poor cultivators in their agricultural operations, free plough centres were opened. Needy cultivators, who had no means of purchasing seeds, were supplied with seed grains free of charge. Cattle feeding centres were opened in adequate numbers all over the district. Besides, there were cattle camps where cattle belonging to poor cultivators were maintained by the Committee throughout the famine period. With a view to encouraging cultivators to grow fodder, they were given subsidies. Medicines were distributed, particularly among the labourers on Government relief works. Be it noted that this list does not exhaust all the forms of relief undertaken by the Committee. All this work was possible largely due to the fact that Thakkar Bapa was the President of the Famine Relief Committee.

In addition to the work of organising unofficial relief, Thakkar Bapa took active interest in Government relief measures also. He would visit almost every Government relief work, inspect the arrangements made in the minutest details, would write exhaustive notes and urge the authorities to remove the defects. In fact, he was practically a non-official Inspector-General of Government Famine Relief Works. It was he who goaded the Government of Bombay to extend their relief organisation on an adequate scale during the last Bijapur famine.

It may be interesting to note, in this connection, what he once wrote to the Chief Engineer and Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Public Works Department, on the question of Government relief work in Bijapur. In his letter dated 18th April, 1943, Thakkar Bapa wrote: 'As far as I know the situation, all the officers concerned, especially the Executive Engineer, neglected their obligations to the people and the administration. No famine programmes, no plans, no tools, no additional staff (superior or subordinate)—that was the rule up to March, though famine was declared in December and January last.' This is how he wrote to Government officials. His sincerity was so great that Government officials respected his views.

I had the privilege of working under Thakkar Bapa as one of the Secretaries of the Bijapur Famine Relief Committee. Thus, I had an oppor-

tunity of knowing how careful he was to find out every detail regarding relief measures. His enquiries were not confined either to one place or to one particular item. He would tour almost every part of the affected area. He used to take special care to get his information verified by personal inspection if possible or by information collected by others He was never satisfied by general statements, but always wanted accurate statistical data. In fact, he was the master of every detail.

Even when he was in a distant place like Delhi, he would not forget his obligations to the famine-stricken people though they might be at a great distance. The manner in which he would write careful notes on every aspect of famine relief can be seen from the following quotation from one of his letters addressed to me. He wrote : 'I find that the wages paid on the following works were quite inadequate, roughly coming to less than Re. 1 per head per week of six days, or a little over in one case only—there may be some reason in each case why such low average wages were received. But before sending these reports, you yourself have to scrutinise these tables and find out the specific cases where wages are very low and find out the reasons.' This is how he worked and wanted others also to work.

In another letter he made the following observations : 'I note that out of the 17 gangs, only 4 got above the minimum and 13 under the minimum. This was even if the wages were paid according to the enhanced rates proposed by Paisley (Executive Engineer) which you say have come into practice already. This is so, because you say that the task allowed in the Famine Code as per tables A, B, C, is too high and Paisley has recommended reducing them by 25 per cent, and bringing the new tables in a line with Madras Famine Relief Code. So your trip to Bellary was very useful.' This quotation shows his great knowledge of the Famine Relief Code. It is also a sample demonstrating as to how he used to behave like a schoolmaster in explaining things to his co-workers.

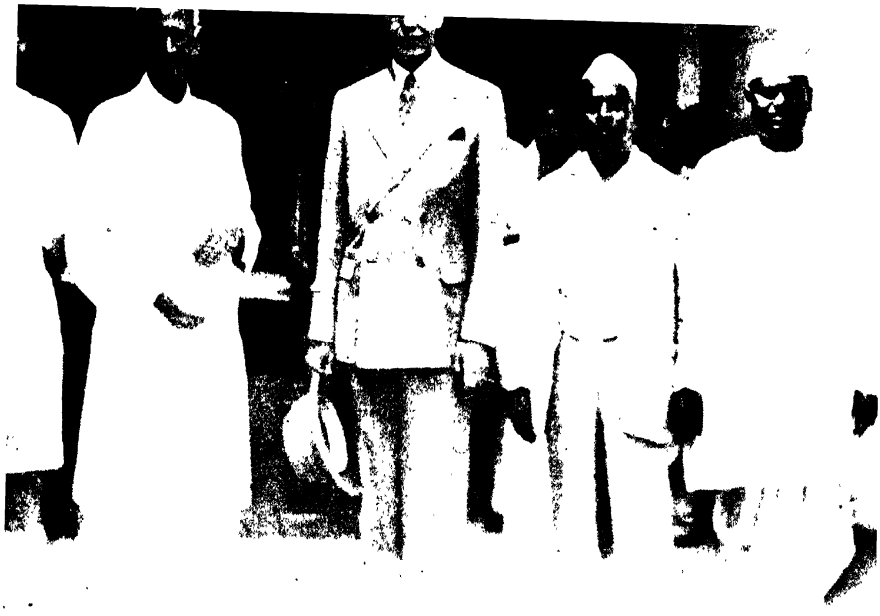
Thakkar Bapa is an Engineer, and his knowledge of civil engineering was of great value in the task of inspecting famine relief works. His impatience to know the details of the progress of work from day to day was limitless. For instance, he demanded that he should get telegrams sent to him from Bijapur to Delhi, giving the actual number of men working on various Government famine relief works from week to week. He wrote saying that the work of sending him weekly returns 'must be done with religious regularity'. He wanted the telegrams to reach him on a particular day of the week. In the absence of the receipt of the telegram on the fixed day, he would be restless.

Thakkar Bapa would often rebuke famine relief workers even for small

mistakes. But nobody misunderstood him because everybody knew that there was a great loving soul hidden behind these reprimands. In fact, these rebukes were the product of his great sincerity and devotion to the cause of suffering humanity. I have seen him often working continuously for nearly 20 hours a day without adequate rest and sleep. And this was at the ripe age of 74. Even young people used to feel ashamed in his presence because they could not come anywhere near him in the matter of putting in hard work.

During the last Bengal famine and food crisis in 1943, the Servants of India Society organised relief in Bengal. Relief work was also undertaken by the Society in North Bihar in 1944 and in Orissa during the same year. In addition, the Society also started relief measures in the Vizagapatam District in Madras Province during the same period. Thakkar Bapa, as the Society's Vice-President, was largely responsible in directing the relief operations undertaken by the Society in all these areas.

This account, though sketchy and cursory, amply shows the greatness of Thakkar Bapa as an ideal organizer of famine relief work. His achievements in this field of social activity are of a very high order. In fact, it can be said that Thakkar Bapa is one of the greatest humanitarians that modern India has produced. Addressing Thakkar Bapa on his 70th birthday, the Right Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri wrote : 'I yield to none in admiration of your unequalled work for the lowly and the suffering classes or in homage for the singleness of purpose and the high consecration that have marked all your undertakings.' This tribute finds its echo to-day in every heart that has had the privilege of knowing Thakkar Bapa through his work. It can be said that Thakkar Bapa is the real Father of India's suffering millions. I bow my head in deep veneration on this occasion of his 80th birthday.



*With Mr. Phillips, Personal Envoy of President Roosevelt*

*With Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru*



## 20. IN HOMAGE TO BAPA

BY

RAMESHWARI NEHRU

SHRI A. V. THAKKAR, affectionately called Thakkar Bapa throughout India by his followers and co-workers, is one of the most venerated persons in the country. It is difficult to recount all his services to the nation. He has spent most of his long, useful life in serving the poor and the downtrodden. First the Adibasis, then the Harijans, and lastly the poor, ignorant village women have received his attention. He rushes to the spot to the people who are crushed under the heels of exploiters or are victims of nature and circumstances and presses his great organisational powers to their service. He has done permanent constructive work, as well as temporary relief work during periods of emergency. Whenever and wherever a famine or a flood occurred, he was invariably found on the spot with his band of devoted workers, organising relief, providing shelter, giving rations, and what is more, giving his unbounded love and sympathy to the afflicted and the stricken.

He can truly be called the Father of the Tribal Backward Classes and the Harijans. Articles giving detailed information of some of the organisations he has founded and the Sanghas he has served are, I believe, published elsewhere in this volume. These articles will show the magnitude of his activities and the extent of his achievements. He has worked on many fronts, and everywhere he has given of his best.

Gandhiji entrusted the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to him and made him its first Secretary, which he continues to be to the present day. Gandhiji and Bapa were increasingly knit in bonds of love and trust, and Bapa became Gandhiji's great and indispensable ally for promoting the social side of national activities. When Gandhiji took up the work of the Kasturba Trust, he insisted that Thakkar Bapa should take up its Secretaryship. This work, also, he still continues to do. Owing to old age and growing weakness, he was thinking of retiring from active service, but ever since Gandhiji has gone he is giving himself to the work Gandhiji loved, with redoubled energy. 'It is the work he has left half done, and I must do whatever I can to accomplish it.' Such is the devotion he has for him.

When Gandhiji undertook his walking tour in the villages of Noakhali,

Bapa flew to his side, embedded himself in a village with a large Harijan population, and worked for the rehabilitation of the Hindu population, and the advancement of Hindu-Muslim unity. He told me once that it had become a sort of an article of faith with him to do Gandhiji's biddings. 'Whatever he would want me to do, I shall do regardless of its merits,' he once remarked and so he did while Gandhiji lived, and so he does even when Gandhiji has gone.

He carries in his mind a complete picture of the whole of India, from the Adibasi and the Harijan point of view. He knows the exact position in every province and all areas and remote corners of this vast country. He can tell you exactly what their varied problems are, how their conditions differ from one area to another, what their needs are, what their difficulties are, and how they can be removed. He knows workers in this field of service all over the country, and has them under his command. In some provinces he has helped the Governments in the preparation of schemes for Harijan advancement and well-being. There is no one else who commands the same wide view and possesses the same knowledge and information in this sphere.

His capacity for work is unrivalled. He can work incessantly, and even at this age he is putting in several hours' work daily. He has travelled extensively and continues to do so even now. Birlaji once remarked affectionately that Thakkar Bapa is not happy unless he is travelling in a third class railway compartment, eating the coarse food of the station restaurants and undergoing all the inconveniences of travel. So, in spite of increasing old age, Thakkar Bapa goes on following the path of duty, regardless of personal comforts.

I owe a personal debt of gratitude to Thakkar Bapa. He brought me into a new world about which I knew nothing. He showed the path of service. In his own gentle and wise way he guided me and helped me. My first Harijan tours were in company with him. These tours and my work amongst the Harijans gave me eyes to see the real state of affairs of submerged humanity. Through association with him I realised the extent to which we of the so-called upper class and higher castes were responsible for the miseries of the poor, and I saw with my own eyes the depths of degradation and destitution in which these poor Harijans lived. With a sting in my heart, I felt how cruel we have been in our ignorance, and how, through our complacency and inactivity, we failed in doing our duty. Ever since my contact with him I have been trying to do my little bit to give relief to these poor people and to undo the great wrong we have done them. If I have succeeded in any measure, the credit goes to Thakkar Bapa and not to me.

Elsewhere, the reader will see an article by me on the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and the Harijan movement. Most of the organisational work described in those pages was done by Thakkar Bapa. After Bapu, he has been the life and the spirit of this great movement. Verily, he has been both the servant and the father of the poor people. May he live long to show us the way, to guide us and inspire us to higher and greater service !

# २१. पुण्यश्लोक बापा

(ले०—साहित्य-वाचस्पति श्री वियोगीहरि)

"बापा, इधर आप काफी दुर्बल दीखते हैं, कितने कमजोर हो गये हैं! कृपाकर अब यह बाहर बहुत घूमना छोड़ दीजिए, अब तो आप यहीं पर आराम कीजिए। बैठे-बैठे यहीं से कार्यकर्त्ताओं को प्रेरणा और आदेश देते रहिए"—लम्बी यात्रा से थके हुए जर्जरित काय ठक्करबापा को जब इस तरह विश्राम लेने की सलाह दी जाती है, तब वे कमर सीधी करके, सीना तानकर सदा यही उत्तर देते हैं—"अगर आपकी यह सलाह मैं मान लूँ, तो जल्दी मर जाऊँगा। विश्राम तो मरण है। मैं तो काम करते-करते ही मरना चाहता हूँ, खटिया पर पड़े-पड़े नहीं। शरीर क्षीण हो गया यह तो जराधर्म है, पर मेरा मन कहाँ दुर्बल हुआ है।"

अस्सी वर्ष के इस उत्साही नौजवान को फिर और अधिक नेक सलाह देने की हिम्मत नहीं पड़ती। आँखें करीब-करीब जवाब दे चुकी हैं। हृद्रोग तीन-चार बार आक्रमण कर चुका है। आहार बहुत कम हो गया है! किन्तु कार्यशक्ति घटी नहीं, बल्कि कुछ बढ़ी ही है। इधर कई नये-नये काम हाथ में ले लिये हैं। जब से ठक्करबापा विधान-सभा के सदस्य चुने गये, तब से तो उनकी कार्यशक्ति और भी सतेज और सबल हो गई है। नित्य नियम से समय पर सभा-भवन में पहुँच जाना, सभा को समाप्ति तक वहाँ उपस्थित रहना और एक-एक धारा, उपधारा और संशोधन को पढ़वाकर ध्यान से सुनना तथा विचार करना यह उनका रोज का धन्धा बन गया है। हरिजन-सेवक-संघ के तथा आदिमजाति-सेवा-संघ के प्रिय कार्य को तो कैसे छोड़ा जा सकता है? बीच-बीच में शरणार्थियों को ऋण दिलानेवाली कमेटी की बैठकों में तो जाना ही चाहिए। और कस्तूरबा-ट्रस्ट के कार्य से भी विरत अभी कहाँ हुए। फिर गांधी-स्मारक-निधि में भी तो रस लेना ही चाहिए। हाँ, बुन्देलखण्ड-लोकसेवक-मण्डल नाम की भी एक संस्था अभी हाल में स्थापित की है। दलितों और पिछड़ी हुई जातियों की

सेवा-सहायता करने का और भी कोई भार सिर पर आ पड़े, तो बापा ना करनेवाले नहीं। इस कर्मयोगी की तृष्णा का कोई पार!

हम साथ रहनेवाले बापा की शुष्क दिनचर्या को देखकर कभी-कभी सोचने लगते हैं, कि भला यह भी कोई जीवन क्रम है! सुबह साढ़े ६ बजे से रात के १० बजे तक दिनभर वही चक्की चलती रहती है। जागृत अवस्था में इस कर्मठ पुरुष का एक क्षण भी तो व्यर्थ नहीं जाता। कभी तो कोई दफ़्तर के कागज़, रोकड़बही या अखबार पढ़कर सुना रहा है, तो कभी आप कागज-पत्रों के जवाब लिखा रहे हैं। क्या मज़ाल कि किसी पत्र का जवाब लिखाना दूसरे दिन पर छोड़ दिया जाये। लेखा-जोखा रोज़ का रोज़ पूरा करना, यह बापा का स्वभाव बन गया है। डायरी लिखाना तो वे कभी चूकते ही नहीं। जो कुछ भी लिखते थे, या अब लिखाते हैं उसमें तथ्यों और अंकों के चौकसपने का पूरा ध्यान रखते हैं। इसमें उनको सत्योपासना का यथार्थ दर्शन होता है। बापा की जो दिनचर्या हमें ऊपर से शुष्क या नीरस दिखाई देती है, उनकी दृष्टि में वह अत्यन्त मधुर और सरस है, क्योंकि उसमें उनका जीवन एकाकार हो गया है। शिक्षणकाल को छोड़कर शायद ही कभी उन्होंने ललित साहित्य पढ़ा होगा। जन-गणना की बड़ी-बड़ी जिल्दें, कमेटियों या कमीशनों की रिपोर्टें, और दफ़्तर की सिर खपानेवाली फाइलें यही उनका प्रिय साहित्य है।

पर इसका यह ग़लत अर्थ न लगाया जाये कि बापा का हृदय सर्वथा शुष्क है। नहीं, उनके स्फटिक-जैसे हृदय में करुणा और भक्ति की शुभ्र धारा बहती हुई मैंने देखी है। पवित्र करुणा से ही उनके अंतर में लोकसेवा की भक्ति-भावना उद्भूत हुई है। बापा कभी-कभी अपने रस में जब, "मन मेरा लागा यार फकीरी में" अथवा "मो सम कौन कुटिल खल कामी" यह भक्ति-रसपूर्ण पंक्तियाँ गा उठते हैं, तब कौन उन्हें शुष्कहृदय कहने का साहस करेगा?

असल बात तो यह है कि जिसने अपने अंतर को स्वार्थपूर्ण सुख-दुख से खाली कर दिया हो और उसे लोक-वेदना और लोक-सेवा से आकंठ भर लिया हो, उसके जीवन-रस का दर्शन वे लोग भला कैसे पा सकते हैं, जो ऐहिक सुखों में ही रस-लाभ करने के अभ्यस्त हैं?

बापा ने भी, पूज्य बापूजी की ही भाँति, करुण-साधना में संपूर्ण जीवन-रस को

शोधा है। करुणाकुल दृष्टि से ही हम बापा के जीवन-रस का दर्शन-लाभ कर सकते हैं। स्वभावतः वे अपने ही रंग में सबको रंग लेना चाहते हैं। मेरा परिचय देते हुए बापा कैसे पुलकित होकर कहा करते हैं—"इन्होंने क्या अच्छा किया, जो साहित्य का आराधन छोड़कर उद्योगशाला का काम हाथ में ले लिया।" मेरे कई मित्र बापा की इस कद्रदानी, या कहिए, नीरसता पर खीज उठते हैं। पर वे नहीं जानते कि बापा का अपना साधना-साहित्य कितना रसपूर्ण है और उनका सरस हृदय कितना करुण-विगलित है। मैं तो अपना परिचय सुनकर लज्जित हो जाता हूँ, कि न तो मैं अपने मित्रों के अर्थ में 'साहित्यिक जीव' बन पाया और न बापा की मनोभिलाषा का 'जन-सेवक' हो। "दो में एकहु तो न भई।"

एक बार गान्धीजी ने एक पत्र में बापा को लिखा था—"जहाँ-जहाँ भीड़ पड़ती है, तहाँ, बापा, तुम गरुड़वेग (अथवा, पवनवेग) से दौड़ जाते हो," इस वाक्य में बापा के सारे जीवनोद्देश्य का निचोड़ आ जाता है। देश का एक कोना भी तो नहीं छोड़ा उन्होंने। जनसेवा की प्यास से व्यथित ऐसे-ऐसे बीहड़ स्थानों में बापा गये, जहाँ शायद ही कभी कोई लोकनेता गया हो। इस कल्याण-मार्ग के यात्री से देश का केवल एक भाग छूट गया था, और वह था बुन्देलखण्ड। गत वर्ष मुझे एक यात्रा के बीच से पत्र लिखा—"तुमने कितनी ही बार बुन्देलखण्ड की गरीबी और दुरवस्था का वर्णन मुझसे किया है। मरने से पहले भारत के उस अँधेरे हिस्से को भी मैं देख लेना चाहता हूँ। तुम्हें साथ चलना होगा।"

पिछली गर्मियों में बुन्देलखण्ड की यात्रा का प्रोग्राम बना। १३ दिन के भीतर हमें खास-खास स्थान घूम लेने थे। छतरपुर के अच्छे जन-सेवक पं० रामसहाय तिवारी ने हमारा यात्राक्रम तैयार किया। नगरों में तो हम गये ही, दूर-दूर के देहातों में भी, आग उगलने-वाली लुओं में, ऊबड़-खाबड़ रास्तों से हम बापा को ले गये। सबेरे से लेकर साँझ तक, दोपहरी के दो-तीन घंटे विश्राम के छोड़कर, जीपगाड़ी में हमारी लम्बी-लम्बी यात्रा रोज़ होती थी। जर्जरित शरीर, जीप की सवारी, तेज़ लू और कंटकाकीर्ण पथरीला दुर्गम मार्ग। भगवान् को हम नित्य मनाते थे कि इस वृद्ध लोक-कल्याण-यात्री को कहीं कुछ हो न जाये। बुन्देलखण्ड की वह सब गरीबी और असहाय अवस्था जगह-जगह बापा ने अपनी आँखों से देखी—नंग-धड़ंग अधपेट बूढ़ों और बच्चों को देखा; इस महँगाई के ज़माने में भी पाँच-पाँच, सात-सात आने, और सड़कों पर दस-दस, चौदह-चौदह आने सरकारी दरों की

मज़दूरी पर, स्त्री-पुरुषों को काम करते देखा; महुए की डुबरी, बिरचुन और कोदों-बसारा की रोटियाँ खाते हुए देखा।

रेल से ८० मील दूर के एक जंगली गाँव में कुछ चमारों से जब बापा ने पूछा कि, 'तुम अपने बच्चों को स्कूल में भेजते हो या नहीं,' तो उनमें से एक अधेड़ चमार बड़े ज़ोर से हँस पड़ा पीठ से लगे हुए अपने खाली पेट को दिखाता हुआ। उसके अट्टहास्य में प्रताड़ना थी, अवहेलनापूर्ण व्यंग था और हमारे अज्ञान पर रोष था। बोला, "हमाये मोंड़ा भूखन मर रये, और जे डुकरबाबा पढ़बे की बातें पूँछन आये।" उसकी भीषण हँसी का कारण तो बापा समझ ही गये थे। मैंने जब उसके बुन्देलखण्डी शब्दों का आशय समझाया, तो बापा के नवनीत-जैसे हृदय को भारी चोट लगी। उन्होंने कहा, "सचमुच मेरा ऐसा पूछना असंगत था। इस अत्यंत पिछड़े और गरीब भू-भाग को देखकर बापा का हृदय रो उठा। यात्रा के अंत में 'बुन्देलखण्ड-लोकसेवक-मण्डल' बनाने का उन्होंने संकल्प किया और इस सेवा-कार्य का अल्पारंभ भी कर दिया। अपने एक लेख में उन्होंने लिखा कि, "जब हरिजो बुन्देलखण्ड की गरीबी का वर्णन किया करते थे, तो उसमें मुझे कुछ अतिशयोक्ति-सी मालूम देती थी। पर मैंने अपनी आँखों से वहाँ जो देखा वह तो उस वर्णन से भी अधिक भयंकर था।" बुन्देलखण्ड के भोले-भाले कृतज्ञ निवासियों ने अपने भाग्य को सराहा और पुलकित होकर बापा के चरणों पर अपनी श्रद्धांजलि चढ़ाई। बापा की पवित्र करुणाधारा से भारत का यह अत्यंत पिछड़ा भूभाग भी अछूता न रहा। और, बापा का राष्ट्रभाषा-प्रेम। जब से मैं बापा के संपर्क में आया, अर्थात् १९३२ के साल से, तभी से उनके समाने भी और पीठपीछे भी उनके अँग्रेज़ी-प्रेम का कठोर आलोचक रहा। हरिजन-सेवक-संघ के दफ़्तर में अँग्रेज़ियत को देख-देखकर मेरा दम घुटता रहा। यद्यपि यह मैं जानता हूँ कि बुढ़ापे में हिन्दी सीखकर दफ्तर का सारा काम-काज चलाना बापा के लिए बड़ा कठिन है। मगर हिन्दी का कभी बापा ने विरोध नहीं किया। लेकिन पिछले दिनों तो उनका अनुपम हिन्दी-पक्ष देखकर मेरा मस्तक श्रद्धा से झुक गया। विधान-परिषद ने जहाँ बहुत बुरी तरह से राष्ट्रभाषा हिन्दी के प्रश्न को टालते रहने और विकृत करने का दुराग्रहपूर्वक प्रयत्न किया, तहाँ बापा ने उस कर्दम से अपने आपको सर्वथा निर्लिप्त रखा। हिन्दी के अच्छे-अच्छे सेवक भी भँवर में जा फँसे। पर बापा ने टंडनजी का बराबर साथ दिया। हिन्दी-संसार भी आज इस तपोधन ऋषि के चरणों पर अपनी श्रद्धांजलि चढ़ाये।

आज १७ बरस से मैं पूज्य बापा के साथ रह रहा हूँ। पहले-पहले जब आया, तब बहुत डरता था, क्योंकि सुन रखा था कि वे स्वभाव के बड़े कड़े हैं। और बहुत हद तक यह सही भी है। पर मैंने तो उनका स्वभाव सदा कोमल और सरल ही पाया। उनका स्नेहभाजन बनते मुझे देर नहीं लगी। उनका अंतर मैंने स्फटिक-सा पाया। मैं तो अपना अहोभाग्य समझता हूँ, जो इतने वर्षों से पुण्यश्लोक बापा के चरणों के निकट बैठने का मुझे मंगल अवसर मिल रहा है।

बापा दीर्घायु हों—यश तो उनका जगत् में अजर अमर हो ही चुका है।

## 22. A FEW REMINISCENCES

BY

KRISHNALAL M. JHAVERI

I HAVE known him from his childhood. He has completed 80, so have I; I will shortly complete 81. He belongs to Bhavnagar and I happened to be studying there, in the Alfred High School, along with his late brother Parmanand, and a few other relatives of his, all of the Lohana community. One of them in later life became a Theosophist and Sanatani, and was instrumental in opening a Sanatani High School in Bhavnagar. Another went over to Paris and opened a prosperous jewellers' business there. His family members have made their mark in public life. His brother Parmanand's wife Monghi Behen took to social work and acquired a name. His other brother Dr. Keshavlal is easily the leading figure in the Municipal life of Bhavnagar. His nephews are also doing useful work. It was thus that I happened to come in contact with his family years ago in 1882-83.

Amritlal studied for his Civil Engineering Degree and became an L.C.E. He took up service with the Bombay Municipality and we thus met again, in Bombay. Even at that early age, he had persuaded himself that he was more fitted for social uplift and reform work than any other kind of service, and he tried to do whatever he could in that direction in a way which would not interfere with Service rules and discipline. I happened to be a Judge of the Presidency Court of Small Causes then. This Court has mostly to deal with money-lenders' cases; poor, needy persons borrowing from money-lenders—chiefly Marwaris and Pathans—at exorbitant rates of interest and on promissory notes showing a much larger amount than that actually lent. Most of the street sweepers of Bombay came from Kathiawar (Saurashtra), and amongst them a large number from Bhavnagar. As I was supposed to be familiar with the ways of money-lenders and could carry some influence as a Judge, he asked for my co-operation in releasing the poor sweepers from the clutches of the money-lenders. As it was social and humanitarian work, I agreed. Matharpakhady Street in Mazagaon was the locality where these sweepers resided. We used to go there at night and carry on propaganda against this pernicious system of borrowing. In addition, we called upon the money-lenders, through their Vakils, to come out with their books and arrive at a reasonable compromise and be paid off then and there. We succeeded

to some extent, but in the sequel we lost. I inquired as to why it was like that; and the needy men told me that as they were unable to save anything they had no reserves to fall back upon. And in case of emergency, such as sudden illness in the family or death at midnight, if they knocked at the door of the Marwari, he would get up and accommodate them. After this, Amritlal left Municipal service and joined Gokhale's Servants of India Society; he has himself in a letter to his family set out the reasons why he deliberately did so. Though the good work done by Amritlal was not forgotten, the sweepers, as said above, relapsed into their old habits. I have mentioned this incident of the sweepers to show what was the bent of his mind, even in those days. The seed, the urge, was there; it only required development, and development came through various influences, his Gurus: Gokhale's and Gandhiji's.

The late Sir Lallubhai Samaldas, a social worker, was a great friend of Gokhale's. Sir Lallubhai belonged to Bhavnagar too, and Amritlal was also helped by Sir Lallubhai in fulfilling his heart's desire.

His work for the aborigines of Panch Mahals—the Bhils,—attracted Shri Lakshmidas Shrikant, the scion of a wealthy family of Bombay, who has now worthily succeeded Amritlal and made his home with the Bhils.

The last time I worked with him was a few years ago, on the eve of his going to Vellore, for cure of his eye trouble. I took him with me, along with his Sikh attendant, as Chairman of the Committee concerned, from Bombay to Khar, a suburb of Bombay, to address the very poor and socially backward and illiterate inhabitants of Kherwadi, a colony of Marwari leather-workers, whom the present Premier of Bombay, the Hon. Mr. Kher has after strenuous work and unflagging zeal converted into enlightened members of society by providing for them schools, dispensaries and other amenities. Amritlal addressed them most feelingly and eloquently.

As an old comrade I am praying for Thakkar Bapa's long life and further success in his self-imposed humanitarian work.



BAPA WITH THE STUDENTS OF THE KODAMBAKKAM HARIJAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

*Now called The Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya*

## 23. A TRIBUTE

BY

V. BHASHYAM AIYANGAR

I CONSIDER it a great privilege to be allowed to join in the tribute of affection, regard and good wishes offered to our Thakkar Bapa, the foremost social worker and Servant of India, by his numerous friends and admirers on the happy and auspicious occasion of his completing the venerable age of 80 years.

I need not attempt to recount either the remarkable events of his long life or the splendid services rendered by him, through a period of more than a generation, in the cause of the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden and the primitive sections of our Society. They will be found described elsewhere in this volume.

What are the main qualities of the head and heart of this revered leader, which have drawn me to him and instilled an ever-increasing degree of regard and respect for him, in the long period of nearly 15 years during which I have had the inestimable advantage and honour of close association and contact with him ? I shall try to answer this question here, as briefly as I can.

In the first place, *his ideal of life*. A few months ago, during one of his visits to Madras, he had come to my house, when my son, a practising doctor who, by the way, is one of his ardent admirers, put him the question, on the spur of the moment, what, according to him, was the value of life. The answer came at once through the following well-known couplet, which that other venerable social leader of recent memory, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, had adopted for his guidance :—

नत्वहं कामये राज्यं नस्वर्गं नापुनर्भवं ।
कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनां आर्तिनाशनं ॥

I crave not for Kingdom, Swarga,
or freedom from future birth.
The alleviation of distress of
the suffering humanity is all I long for.

This is a true and accurate reflection of the spring of Bapa's noble life and action, the unselfish and entire dedication of himself and his all for the alleviation of the suffering and distress of the afflicted humanity.

And this dedication, in the case of Bapa, is not based on any unstable conceptions like social justice, policy or utility, but on the deeper foundation of an unshakable faith in the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent Ruler of the Universe and of an organic tie of brotherhood among the beings created by Him. Service to humanity is, therefore, the truest Service to God.

Bapa is a pure soul. It is said in the Mahabharata that the purity of a person lies in his attitude towards *artha* or wealth. Bapa's purity in this respect is unsurpassed. He has numerous friends and co-workers, many of them having been intimately associated with him for long periods. But no degree of regard or friendship will induce Bapa to swerve from the straight path, even by a hair's breadth, in matters of public money. It is impossible to speak too highly of his absolute rectitude in dealing with any money or fund entrusted to his care. He will not allow even a pie to be mis-spent and in this respect, he is as strict on himself as with others.

Then, his devotion to duty, his regularity and punctuality, his meticulous care of details, his wonderful memory of men and things, his watchfulness of events and opportunities, his diligence, all these mark him out as one of the most high-souled leaders of our Society. No wonder, he commanded the unbounded love, confidence and respect of the late Father of our Nation.

May our Bapa be blessed with many more years of useful and happy life !

## 24. THAKKAR BAPA—A TRUE 'KHUDAI KHIDMATGAR'

BY

SUMANT MEHTA

I CLAIM to know Thakkar Bapa well. I met him first, soon after he joined the great patriot, Mr. Gokhale. During the long interval of thirty-five years we have had many occasions to co-operate with each other. The uplift of the Harijans, and the service of the backward hill tribes are matters of common interest to both of us. It was at his suggestion that I took up the problem of the Raniparaj of the Surat district, for whom I have worked since 1922. Thakkar Bapa's first love was the Harijans of the Bombay Municipality, but he was given his pet name in the jungles of the Panch Mahals, where he organised social work amongst the Bhils. Thakkar Bapa is an extremely frank, honest man. He is devoted to his work. He has a single-track mind. He gives his all to the work in hand. He is a simple man, very hard-working. He is not an intellectual. He has no side-activities. He is not worried about ideologies. He has no frustrations. However interested he may be in political reconstruction, he has not given it much of his time. He concentrates all his energies on the questions which he has made his own. Throughout Gujarat he is very much loved and respected. Even at the age of eighty, with failing eyesight, he is hard at work. To this noble soul I pay my whole-hearted homage.

## 25. THE FIRST DHARSAN

BY

P. G. VANIKAR

IT was in the December of 1922. I do not remember the exact date. I was restlessly moving on the railway platform of Dadar. The jostling crowd was pushing me up and down the length of platform. And in my mind were jostling the thoughts that disturbed the political worker in those days.

The great national awakening inspired by Gandhiji had drawn hundreds of youths all over the country into the political field. I was then working as Secretary, District Congress Committee, in Bombay. What was the programme before us in those days? Mostly it was to enroll Congress members, to collect Tilak Swaraj Fund, to organise public meetings, to run Charkha Classes, to collect foreign clothes and make bonfires of them. Though in the beginning this programme was very attractive, in due course it lost its glamour for youths like me. Then slowly various questions began to rise in the minds of workers. A process of self-analysing started. I began to think within myself whether the programme which we were working out was of any lasting value? Whether we were really rendering true services to our mother-land by doing these acts? Such were the questions which were confusing our minds and made us restless.

It was Gandhiji who first broke this restlessness, and opened a new way for the workers. It was he who discovered the true India. Beyond the great cities and the big towns lay the real India, the India of the honest tillers of the soils, true sons of the mother—ignorant, downtrodden and forgotten. It was towards this India that Gandhiji directed us. This was the reason why I felt restless with the routine programme and wanted to go to the villages. I had already taken three months practical training as village worker and propagandist under the able guidance of Acharya Shri Keshavraoji Deshpande at Sadhakashram, Andheri, and was very much anxious to make a beginning. In this state of mind I saw an article written by Pujya Thakkar Bapa in *Yugadharm*, a Gujarathi Nationalistic Magazine edited by Shri Indulal Yagnik. In that article, Bapa made an appeal to the young workers to come forward and serve for at least three years the famine-stricken Bhils of Panchmahal District in Gujarat. This was the call which went straight to my heart.

This was, I thought, an opportunity which I should not miss. I discussed the whole thing with my friend Shri Laximidas Shrikant, who was then working as Hony. Treasurer of the Girgaon Congress Committee. He was also anxious to go to the villages and work among the masses. Soon after our discussions, fortunately Shri Shrikantji happened to go to the Punjab to meet Thakkar Bapa, who was also touring the area at that time. As a result of his talk with Bapa a meeting was arranged between him and me. He then telegraphed to me to see Bapa on G.I.P. Dadar Station. That was the reason which brought me that day on the Dadar platform.

I had never seen him before. My curiosity was making so many pictures in my mind. How shall I recognise him? What shall I say to him? How will he take me? What would be his idea regarding my proposal to work with him? Will he lead me to my goal? Such were the anxious thoughts, as I searched among the moving faces to catch a glimpse of Bapa that day. While I was thus looking at the faces, I passed by a bench a few steps away, when all of a sudden a voice came enquiring whether I was Vanikar. I at once turned back and beheld him with wonderment. There he was. I instinctively folded my hands and bowed in reverence before that magnificent personality.

He at once made room for me on the bench and began the talk about the subject. He asked me whether I was willing to go to Dohad to work among the Bhils of Panchmahal for at least three years. Naturally I was not prepared to work for such a long duration. I told him that at least I would be able to work for three months so that I may get some practical experience in this field. Upon this he plainly told me that considering the immensity of the work, three months' period would be very small and if not for three years I should at least work there for one year. He had a grace of manners and spoke in a voice which was all sincerity. I told him that it would be impossible to say anything definitely regarding the period of my working at that stage until I see the tract, the people and the scope of work there.

While we were discussing the point the train entered the platform. Bapa rose to take his seat in the compartment. The shrill whistle of the guard told us that there was no time left for us to come to any definite conclusion on this point. Bapa then asked me to see him at Dohad when he would acquaint me with the details of the work. The train steamed off, leaving an eager and bewildered youth behind.

On my way back I tried to recollect the whole picture of the incident. There arose a clear figure of the tall, fair man, clad in white khadi, his serene features aglow with a kindness. In every nerve he was a man of action, indefatigable determination and dogged perseverance. All idealism existed

for him not beyond the horizon but in the stark reality of the famine-stricken aboriginals. It was the reality of hunger, disease, squalor and ignorance. His voice again and again resounded in my ears. Little did I think that I had turned round a new corner in my life and was to follow this path of service in the wake of that vision which I saw that day on the platform.



RELAXING IN A GARDEN



BAPA SMILES
*but his friend, the Tribesman, is bewildered by the company he keeps*

## 26. THE LESS KNOWN ASPECTS OF THAKKAR BAPA

BY

L. N. RAO

BAPA'S life is one long epic of hard work. Prof. N. R. Malkani, one of the lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi in the constructive field and a pioneer in the Harijan movement, while sending a message at the time of the celebration of Thakkar Bapa's 70th birthday in November 1939, remarked that while most people could teach Thakkar Bapa how to rest, none could teach him how to work. Every one who has seen Bapa even for a day will bear witness to the truth of this statement. Bapa often reminds me of Browning's Grammarian:

> ' Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head;
> *Calculus* racked him ;
> Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead;
> *Tussis* attacked him.
> " Now, Master, take a little rest ! "—not he!
>
> ' Not a whit troubled,
> Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
> Fierce as a dragon
> He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst),
> Sucked at the flagon.'

Bapa's ' book ' is practical service to suffering humanity.

The other day when I went to see him in Delhi, I found the grand old man listening to his assistants reading out all the entries of the day in the cash books of the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh and Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, at 10 p.m.! I thought he would retire after his accountants finished reading out the cash book entries, but to my astonishment I found that Bapa's programme of work for the day was not over. A *Shastri* was called, who read out a full chapter from the Gita, while Bapa sat on his wooden bed-stead upright and listened intently and devoutly to the recitation of the *slokas*. Of course, as usual with him, Bapa was correcting the pronunciation of the *Shastri* when the latter went wrong! The figure of Bapa as he sat there listening to the recitation of the Gita reminded me of the Buddha.

It was a rainy morning, some time in 1939. We were in Sambalpur, in Orissa. After breakfast, he handed me a telegram which he had received the

previous evening, when I was not in his company, and which had brought the news of the death of his eldest brother whom he respected and loved. Strangely enough, he had not shown any emotion and had not even mentioned the news to me, though I was so close to him, for several hours. This would picture him as a stoic; but in contrast to this is another incident. After the death of his eldest brother, only two out of the six brothers were left—Bapa and Dr. Keshavlal Thakkar, younger to him by twelve years, who lives in Bhavnagar. Bapa writes to Dr. Thakkar frequently and is very fond of him. But he rarely meets him. At the most they meet once in two or three years. It was some time in 1941, and we were touring in Assam. Somehow, Dr. Thakkar's letters failed to reach Bapa. He was so much worried about his brother that he sent a telegram enquiring about his health. Not till the reply telegram came was Bapa free from anxiety. Again, one more instance of his childlike affection for this brother. It was probably in 1943, and Dr. Thakkar was in detention as he was connected with the Prajamandal of Bhavnagar State. It was severe winter in Delhi and Bapa suddenly took ill. Somehow Bapa felt that he might not survive that illness. So he at once wrote, I believe in his own handwriting in spite of his illness, a letter to Mr. Pattani, the Dewan, requesting him to release his brother at once so that he could have the pleasure of seeing his brother before he died. Fortunately for all, Bapa survived that illness and had also the pleasure of meeting his brother who was instantly released from jail.

I used to notice that the operation theatre in any hospital he visited gave Bapa a shock. Once he explained to me, with bedewed eyes, that he lost a brother of his, in the prime of life, on the operation table.

We had to travel between Poona and Bombay very often. The Servants of India Society's building in Bombay, situated on Sandhurst Road near Prarthana Samaj, is almost equidistant from Byculla Station and Victoria Terminus. By getting down at Byculla, we can reach the Society's building 15 minutes earlier, without spending any extra amount for conveyance, than if we alight at Victoria Terminus. After knowing Bombay a little, I had always an aversion to alighting at Byculla and would persuade Bapa to alight at Victoria Terminus because from Byculla to the Society's building one had to pass through the glaring 'red light district' of Bombay City where hundreds of prostitutes ply their trade. On one occasion Bapa asked me why I always avoided getting down at Byculla, and I gave him the reason for my dislike. Bapa's reply was, 'Oh, is that so? After all, they are our sisters. As a Municipal Engineer in this city, I have stood for long hours on those very roads.' This is characteristic of Bapa and his life.

Great and famous as he has grown to be, he never forgets the humble and suffering among his relations and friends. He would go much out of his way

if necessary to bring solace to a person in distress. I am reminded of his visit to a relation of his in Ahmedabad. That relation had lost almost everything in business, had been reduced to poverty, and evidently was undergoing lots of difficulties. The meeting of Bapa with that once very prosperous man, in a small crowded and poor-looking room, was very touching. The relation, with tears in his eyes, remarked that it was a great solace for him, that of all people Bapa could go to his humble house and see him in those unfortunate circumstances. The relation was at that time worried about arranging for the wedding of his daughter. Bapa took some interest in it and was very happy when that young lady was, later on, well settled in life.

Dealing with lacs and lacs of public funds, he is ever vigilant about money. And he would not tolerate any kind of irregularity in maintaining accounts, and certainly much less in spending the money. His secretary or personal servant must maintain the accounts of his own kitchen expenses, however small they may be, and Bapa must examine this account occasionally, however honest the keeper of the account may be.

One cold December evening in 1939, in Delhi, I had packed up our travelling kit, and the *tonga* was ready at the gate to take us to the Railway Station. We were to go on famine relief work to Hissar in Punjab, where a severe famine was raging at that time. I said it was time to board the *tonga*. He replied, ' Wait ', went to the cashkeeper, opened the safe and checked up the cash amounting to some hundreds! Nobody would have thought that there was any necessity at such a time to verify the cash balance in the office of the Harijan Sevak Sangh!

Another instance. I was still fresh from the college and very deficient in business-like habits. So, naturally, I was still a raw apprentice under him, or as he would introduce me to his friends, ' a new colt '. I was also not familiar with his methods. After a busy day's programme in Allahabad, we boarded a third class compartment on a train. I was just relaxing when he pulled me up to verify the cash balance. Always the Secretary carried the money. Bapa was not satisfied till even the postage stamps, cards and envelopes were counted and checked. It was discovered that I had a few rupees more with me, my personal money. Naturally I had not shown that in the account. Where was the necessity, I thought. Bapa's reply was, ' Why not you put that also in the account ? ' From that time onwards I did so, and have been benefited by that practice of keeping even personal accounts in a clean way.

Bapa's love for children and their love for him is remarkable. Though he inspires awe in elders and is often considered a lion in the office and in field work, he is like a kind-hearted mother to children. No child in the Harijan colony is afraid of him. When one saw Bapa in the company of several

children in the Harijan colony playing on the premises, one wondered whether he was that merciless disciplinarian that was sitting in the office. The children not only loved him but played pranks with him. One child of the colony was the same to him as any other child. When Shri Devadas Gandhi was living as a neighbour in the Harijan colony in 1938 and 1939, his daughter Tara and his son Mohan often kept company with Bapa in the evenings. But other children too were equally attached to him and loved by him. In fact they would all be ready by 5 p.m. near the office to drag the old man out for a walk. The first time that I met him was in the company of children. One of the sons of Bapa's able lieutenant, Mr. Shyamlal, was sitting on Bapa's lap and pointing to the photographs hung on the walls in Bapa's room. The little fellow remarked, ' There are two Bapas on the wall '. Bapa burst out into laughter which was contagious. There were several other visitors along with me in that room of his, where he generally squats on the floor on a mattress and does his work, reading or writing, on a small desk, sitting bolt upright. The whole room shook with laughter. Five years later, my elder brother came from the South to live with me in Delhi. We kept the house of Bapa. My brother's second child was very sickly and dark-looking, aged two at that time. Bapa loved that child with the same affection with which he fondled the children of Shri Devadas Gandhi. He would often carry that sickly dark-complexioned niece of mine to the Prayer Hall in the Colony, and as the prayer was in progress, invariably the child would go to sleep and the grand old man would carry the sleeping child back on his shoulder. It was a touching sight.

Bapa is ascetic to a degree, but he is very human too. How many people would believe if I say that I have seen him enjoying a film or two ? So far as my knowledge goes, he witnessed three films. I kept company with him for two of them, the late Rt. Hon'ble Sri V. S. Srinivasa Sastri took him to another. He took Bapa to witness a film called *Ninotchka* in which the famous actress Greta Garbo appeared as a Soviet-bred Russian girl caught in the capitalist society of Paris. The picture was running to crowded houses in Poona in those days. Later, when the picture was discussed at the dinner table in the Servants of India Society, and Bapa's opinion was sought by a clever junior member, he replied, ' There was too much of kissing! ' What would have been Bapa's reactions if he had seen one of the *popular* Indian pictures ! The other two were Indian pictures. I forget the name of one of them, but it was a Marathi picture in which Lalita Pawar appeared, and the theme was about the relationship between landlords and tenants. As I sat beside Bapa, he occasionally translated the Marathi sentences for me. The other picture witnessed by Bapa in Bombay was *Mali*, a film depicting the idea that work

is worship. I believe he enjoyed this film very much. On all these three occasions, it was some friend of his who pressed him to go to the picture. He himself never expressed any desire to go to the pictures.

Once, at Bezwada, he had to reprimand a Harijan Sevak for gross neglect of duty and irregularity in work. This was in private. But later it was discovered that the Harijan Sevak, an old man, had a number of difficulties and hence had been irregular in his work. However, as he was known to be a pioneer in the Harijan field and really a good man at heart, Bapa apologised at a public meeting in Guntur the very next evening.

On another occasion, we were travelling to Madras by a passenger train in the morning from Bezwada. Lunch tickets had been bought at Bezwada itself, and as desired by him, I had given the tickets to be kept by him. We were to lunch at Ongole station. When we got down there, he asked for the tickets. Though I remembered that they were with him, I searched for them in my pockets when he demanded them. He was furious when I could not find them in my pockets. When I mildly suggested that he might kindly search for them in his own pockets, he did so in haste and could not find them. Then I too thought I might have lost them, and felt very sorry. He chastised me for carelessness. But a few minutes later, he again searched his own pockets and discovered the tickets there. The very next moment he apologised to me while I stood bewildered and touched by his affectionate words.

I think it was one of the earliest long tours on which he took me as his assistant, and I used to be very nervous and diffident about myself. On the way to Allahabad, I dropped the railway tickets on the platform when taking out my purse. Later, when a ticket examiner came, it was discovered that our tickets were missing. I was frightened as to what Bapa would say, and was deeply touched when I found that he did not say even one angry word on that day to me. It was a great relief to me. Fortunately for me, it so happened that the tickets had been found out by some railway official on the platform, and telegrams had been sent to all the stations ahead of us by the railway authorities themselves! So we did not have to pay anything extra.

During the time I worked as his personal assistant, he kept always two rupees with him in cash in his pocket. When he spent it, he would give me an account of it and then ask me to make up the sum of rupees two. His wants were very few and simple. He would religiously avoid costly fruits or luxurious dishes at his dinner table in Delhi in those days. He would often say, 'A poor man like me should not eat fruits.' While travelling, he bought *puris* and vegetable from the vendors on the platform, and that was all his meal. Once when an elderly member of the Gandhi Seva Sangh saw Bapa eating these *puris* bought from a vendor on the platform, he exclaimed

in astonishment, 'How do you eat these *puris*? They may not have been fried in good ghee.' Bapa replied, 'Oh, it is all right for me.'

On another occasion, a worker of the *Go Seva Sangh* was pleading with him not to take any food which was cooked in oil or buffaloe-ghee, and to take a vow to use only cow's milk and its by-products as the members of the *Go Seva Sangh* do. Bapa only smiled and said that it was not possible for him to take such vows.

I have never seen him applying oil to his body or looking into a mirror.

Whenever there was a balance in his personal account, out of the maintenance allowance given to him by the Servants of India Society, he would ask his assistants, 'Why have you kept so much balance? Give it away, give it away.' He often helped from this balance the widow and children of a poor relation of his in Bombay. In those years, whenever he visited Bombay he would make it a point to enquire about the welfare of these people.

I believe he himself is not a faddist, though he befriends faddists and works in association with them. He wears khaddar and has worked for the spread of hand-spinning. But sometimes I have seen devotees of khaddar remarking on the fact that the mattress on which he sleeps is not of khaddar. Invariably he only smiled at such remarks. Once we visited a big technical institution in Bareilly in the U.P. A Naidu gentleman from the South was the Superintendent of the institution. At the time of leaving the institution the Superintendent, evidently bewildered at the sight of his khadi dress, remarked, 'You were once a liberal.' Probably the khadi dress made him think that Bapa had changed into a Congressman! Bapa replied at once, 'I am still not illiberal!'



*Picture taken on the occasion of the Convocation of the Harijan Udyogshala held on May 24, 1949*
*The Hon'ble Shyama Prasad Mukerjee is seen delivering the Convocation Address*

## 27. BAPA'S WORK FOR THE MURIAS AND MARIAS OF BASTAR DISTRICT, C.P. AND BERAR

BY

S. P. SHRIVASTAVA

ON 1-1-1948 Bastar State merged with Central Provinces and Berar. Bastar and Kanker States formed one district, covering an area of nearly 15,000 sq. miles. Probably this is the biggest district in the whole of India. Bastar itself is equal to Belgium in area, and if Kanker is added to it, it becomes equal to Holland. The population of the district is about six lacs, and nearly 90% of the total population consists of aboriginals, who are of the most primitive type. The Abujhmar area of the district, which is about 3,000 sq. miles in area and has been till lately a forbidden land, is inhabited by Marias. The people there being very primitive, still use barks and leaves to cover their body.

It was four months after the merger and the formation of the new district, that Bapa visited it. The summer had started, and one must have very strong nerves to undertake a tedious journey of 184 miles to reach Jagdalpur, the headquarters of the district, from Raipur. This is more remarkable when we think of Bapa's age.

On the way from Raipur to Jagdalpur he halted at several important places, contacted the aboriginals and the students of various schools. He addressed them at several places, advised them, instructed them, and also sympathised with them.

I will never forget his address at a public meeting at the Jagdalpur Public Library. Bapa described to the audience what he saw and felt about the Murias and Marias. Who could have doubted his sincerity? While describing the conditions of these downtrodden sons of the soil, Bapa's eyes brimmed with tears. Who else would have wept for these people? He came as their Messiah.

It was at this meeting that he made an announcement of scholarships to aboriginal girls who attended the Primary Schools. The rate of scholarship was Re. 1 per month for girls who attended classes I and II, and Rs. 2 for those who attended classes III and IV. He had seen some of the schools, and found that the attendance of the girls was meagre. For progress and the spread of education, it is very essential to educate girls—the future mothers.

This important declaration of Bapa had a tremendous effect on the educational progress of the new district. In May, 1948, the schools closed for the summer vacation, and in July when they opened, the enrolment of aboriginal girls increased by nearly one thousand. In some schools I had to open special sections for girls in class I, and extra teachers had to be provided. The aboriginals purchased books, slates and also saris for their daughters, and thought that something was being done for them. This had also its indirect effect upon boys' education. When the girls began to come to schools, the boys had to come.

The net result to-day, i.e. nearly after 1½ years, is that the number of recognized schools in the district is nearly three times what it was at the time of the merger, leaving out of our calculation, many an independent village school which has been started here and there and is run by the aboriginals themselves. The love for education in the aboriginals is also seen by their willing contribution in constructing *Katcha* sheds for school buildings and at places for teachers' quarters also. Bapa struck the right chord and at the right time. It is now our duty to carry the work further.

Bapa's visit luckily coincided with the occasion when we were going to launch the scheme of Social Education, that is to say, when we were laying the foundation for the education of the aboriginal adults, male and female. The scheme of Social Education had been conceived by the Home Minister of the Province and it was to be introduced in this new district. I thought it to be a most difficult task, considering the backwardness of the people and also of the district. However, two centres, one for males and another for females, in Jagdalpur town, were opened by Bapa on 1-5-1948. He gave his blessings and the first word taught in his presence in each of these centres was the most beloved word of the Hindus, i.e. ' Ram '.

Again, the backward adult women caught the imagination of Bapa. At Gangamunda centre, Bapa promised them that he would give Rs. 5 each to all women of the district who would obtain the Social Education Certificate. In the first summer camp, 182 female adults came out successful and got from Bapa their promised reward.

With his blessings, we went into the work. The gradual response we got from the aboriginals in this respect has been very encouraging. From June 1948 to June 1949, we have run four seasonal Social Education courses in various centres of the district. The total number of men and women who have obtained Social Education Certificates is 432 and 1,587 respectively. Satisfactory remarks of some of the distinguished visitors, such as the Burmese Delegation, who went round a few Social Education centres, gave us further

encouragement. But the blessings of Bapa and his inspiration gave impetus to this difficult task.

On several occasions while inspecting a far-off school in the interior, I spoke to the guardians of the aboriginal girls about Bapa. When they were told that there was one person who was anxious about them and their children's education and that he was sending the scholarship money from Delhi for their daughters, their eyes shone. Bapa,—on the occasion of your eightieth birthday, you have the best wishes of all these honest, simple and unsophisticated people—the so-called Adivasis, Murias and Marias of Bastar, whose cause is so dear to you.

May you live long !

## 28. A DISCIPLE'S TRIBUTE

BY

SHRI AMBALAL VYAS

THE revered Sankaracharya in one of his famous verses has said that even one moment's contact with a selfless saint or holy man changes the course of a man's life and equips him for crossing the sorrowful ocean of the world. Thakkar Bapa is a grand old man belonging to the category of such saints, and he has transformed and moulded the lives of innumerable humble social workers like myself. I owe my development and my present position to his kind and considerate guidance and supervision.

When I joined as a life member of the Bhil Seva Mandal, started by him in 1922-23 for the amelioration of Bhils, I was deplorably ill-equipped for any practical social service. Though I had non-co-operated from Government college and was a graduate of the national university started by Gandhiji, and though my book-learning was not of a mean order, I happened to be lacking in all essential things. All my noble ideas and aspirations were lying dormant and were waiting to be transformed into concrete shape and form by the diligent hands of a master craftsman. Imperfect as I was, Bapa kindly initiated me into social service, and by example and precept, patiently moulded me into a social worker of some usefulness. He remained our direct friend, philosopher and guide for nearly ten years, and after that period, in spite of his multifarious activities, directed and guided us from afar and periodically supervised our work.

It is said and seen that the best of preceptors work wonders by their silence which ultimately proves more potent and eloquent than the verbose speeches of other lesser men. Bapa is a silent worker, but his silent, selfless and efficient service of the downtrodden has attracted wide attention, and he has never lacked necessary funds for the various noble causes he has espoused during his memorable, long, unbroken public career.

Bapa is always methodical and business-like in his undertakings. He pays more personal and detailed attention to his work than a trader or business man would to his own trade or business. Many of our other public servants no doubt perform their respective duties, but they frequently lack method and vigilance. They are sometimes even careless and wasteful in spending public money. But Bapa takes care of every single pie entrusted to him. Frequently

midnight oil is burnt to verify and correct the accounts submitted to him by his co-workers. Carelessness or indifference in maintaining proper accounts of public funds spoils the fair name of many workers and organisations. If all our public workers take an example from Bapa's life and scrupulously develop this trait of character in their lives, our public life would be above reproach, and no good cause would suffer for want of funds.

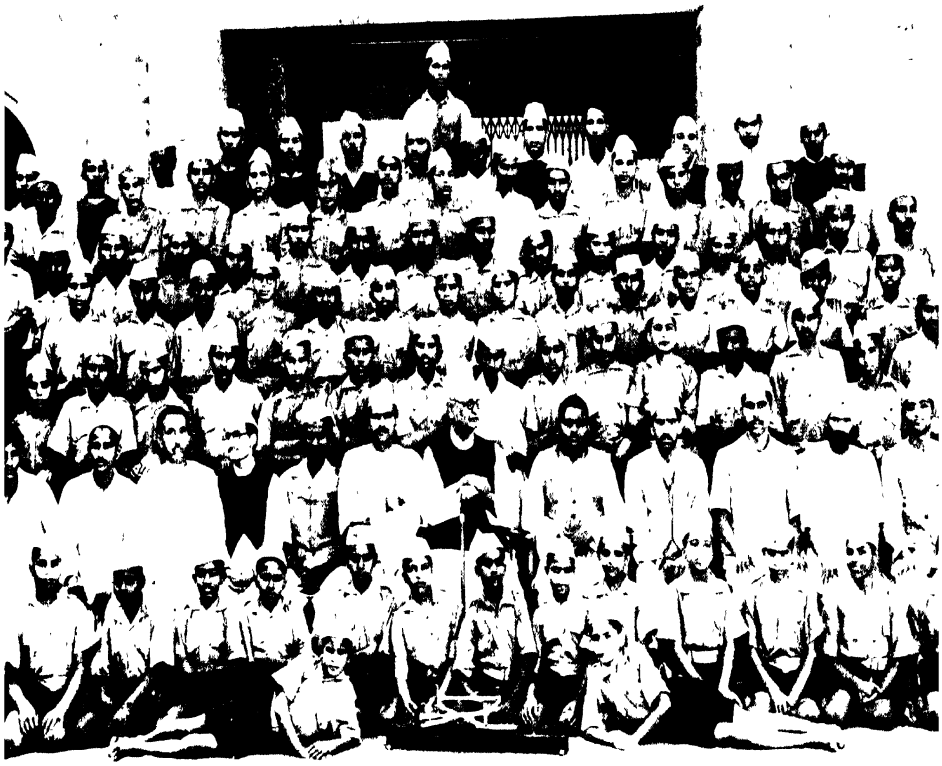
Bapa's frugality and simplicity are proverbial. Up to his seventieth year he always insisted on travelling in third class compartments. Now he uses second class when the journey is very long and rest is absolutely required. He has been using Khaddar of the coarse variety and he never keeps more than a pair of extra clothes with him. He takes very simple vegetarian food, without any condiments, and he never insists on any particular type or variety.

His punctuality and regularity deserves to be copied by all our public men. He always works according to a pre-arranged programme and never goes to bed without writing or dictating a short diary recording all the activities of the day. As a nation we are deficient in these qualities. Even many of our prominent leaders do not care to adhere strictly to their fixed programme. We have copied many unessential habits from our foreign masters, but we have neglected to acquire from them this important characteristic of theirs, so very essential to our public and private life.

Bapa has been a real father to all his co-workers, colleagues and servants. He not only inquires about their personal health and well-being, but he takes a fatherly interest in their families also. When thousands of workers like myself courted imprisonment during national movements, it was Bapa who took care of their family members, and through some of his rich friends and admirers managed to send them some money for their maintenance. He remained loyal to his political creed, but was liberal beyond limit to all of us who, out of conviction and enthusiasm, left our posts of silent, social service, and at times irritated and displeased him by our political activities. Like all true saints he is harder than steel where principles are concerned, but becomes softer than the most delicate flower when occasion so requires.

He was, so to say, the first Hindu missionary to start welfare work among the Adivasis. The work has been progressing and some of the workers trained by him have been carrying on welfare work amongst the Adivasis in various parts of India. Central and Provincial Governments have also been awakened to their duties and responsibilities towards these people who had been neglected by us for centuries.

Bapa's faith in God is absolute. He is a true ' Karmayogi ', carrying on his work, believing in God and the moral law within. May God grant him long life, health and energy to continue his multifarious welfare activities, and by his personal example, to inspire and guide other social workers for many years to come.



HARIJAN UDYOGSHALA, DELHI

# २९. दीनबन्धु ठक्करबापा

एक श्रद्धांजलि

दीनहि सबको लखत हैं, दीनहि लखत न कोय।
जो रहीम दीनहि लखत, दीनबन्धु सम होय॥

"मैं दिल्ली से एक्सप्रेस से ता० ४ नवम्बर की रात को पटना के लिए रवाना हूँगा। गाड़ी मुगलसराय स्टेशन पर दूसरे दिन ३-१८ पर पहुँचती है और २५ मिनट खड़ी रहती है। आप मुझसे वहाँ मिलें। इतनी देर में अच्छी तरह बात हो सकती है। मैं तीसरे दर्जे या इन्टर क्लास में सफ़र करूँगा और आप ६० वर्ष से ऊपर के एक अधेड़ खादीधारी व्यक्ति को गांधी टोपी लगाये, तलाश कर पहिचान लें।"

१९३२ का नवम्बर का महीना। गांधीजी के यरवदा उपवास के बाद मालवीयजी की अध्यक्षता में जो परिषद् हुई थी, उसके निश्चयानुसार अखिल भारतीय अस्पृश्यता निवारण संघ (बाद में हरिजन सेवक संघ) का संगठन हुआ था। उसके अध्यक्ष श्री घनश्यामदास बिड़ला और प्रधान मंत्री श्री अमृतलाल वि. ठक्कर (बापा) नियुक्त किये गए थे। श्री घनश्यामदास बिड़ला से मेरा परिचय पहले से हो था और उन्हींके साथ मेरा पत्र-व्यवहार संघ के प्रधान कार्यालय में शामिल होने के लिए चल रहा था। वेतन वगैरह करीब-करीब निश्चित हो गया था। उन्होंने मेरे बारे में ठक्करबापा से कहा था और उसीके फलस्वरूप बापा ने उपरोक्त पत्र मुझे लिखा था।

ठक्करबापा से मेरा कोई व्यक्तिगत परिचय न था। हाँ, कुछ वर्ष पूर्व अजमेर की 'त्यागभूमि' में श्री रंगीलदास कापड़िया का लिखा एक लेख उनके बारे में पढ़ चुका था, जिसमें उनकी कर्मण्यता, उनकी व्यवस्था-शक्ति आदि के बारे में पता चल चुका था। पर मैंने कोई सार्वजनिक कार्य अभी तक नहीं किया था। हाँ, राजनैतिक नेताओं को बहुत देख और सुन चुका था। मन में कितने ही तरह के विचार लेकर मुगलसराय पहुँचा और गाड़ी का इंतज़ार करने लगा। गाड़ी आई। ठक्करबापा ने अपनी हुलिया इतनी स्पष्ट दी थी कि उन्हें खोजने में देर न लगी। एक इन्टर दर्जे के बेंच पर वह बैठे थे—उनके सामने

हो दूसरे बेंच पर उनके सहायक कुछ टाइप कर रहे थे। दफ्तर फैला हुआ था। बापा के सामने भी फाइलें तथा कागज़-पत्र पड़े थे। मैंने जाकर नमस्कार किया और उन्होंने उसका उत्तर देते हुए मुझे अपने पास बैठने का आदेश दिया। बातचीत शुरू हुई।

"एम. ए. कब पास किया?"

"गत वर्ष १९३१ में।"

"तब से क्या किया?"

"कानून पढ़ रहा हूँ।"

"मेरे पास काम करना चाहते हो?"

"जी हाँ।"

"कुछ व्यवस्था-कार्य का पूर्व अनुभव है?"

"जी नहीं।"

"एम. ए. में पढ़ने के लिए कितनी फ़ीस देते थे?"

"१४ रु. मासिक।" (उस समय फ़ीस बहुत कम थी)।

"एम. ए. में पढ़ने के लिए १४ रु. मासिक फ़ीस देते थे तो यदि मैं दफ़्तर तथा व्यवस्था-सम्बन्धी काम सिखाऊँ तो कितना मासिक दोगे?" मैं घबड़ा-सा गया, क्योंकि जैसा कि मैंने ऊपर लिखा है, संघ के अध्यक्ष श्री घनश्यामदास बिड़ला के साथ वेतन आदि के बारे में मेरा सब कुछ निश्चय हो गया था।

"बोलो, जल्दी बोलो, समय नष्ट न करो।" उन्होंने गम्भीर स्वर में कहा।

"भला मैं क्या दे सकता हूँ। मेरी आर्थिक स्थिति ऐसी नहीं कि कुछ दे सकूँ और वेतन के बारे में तो सब कुछ निश्चय हो चुका है।"

"पर तुम्हें काम का कुछ अनुभव नहीं है। उसके लिए मुझे तुम्हें तैयार करना होगा, इसलिए तुम्हें कुछ खर्च करना चाहिए।" मैं चुप रहा। बाद में उन्होंने कहा, "अच्छा, तुम तीन महीने तक मेरे पास परीक्षण के तौर पर रहो—काम सीखो—यदि तीन मास के भीतर मैं तुम्हारे काम से सन्तुष्ट हुआ तो जो वेतन श्री बिड़लाजी ने तुम्हें देने का वादा किया है, वह मिलेगा। इधर इस बीच तुम्हें आधी रकम मिलेगी। बोलो, स्वीकार है? जल्द जवाब दो। मैं अभी नियुक्ति-पत्र देता हूँ।"

मैं हक्का-बक्का-सा रह गया, पर कह दिया कि मुझे स्वीकार है। उन्होंने श्री शिवम्जी को नियुक्ति-पत्र लिखवाया, उसकी नक़ल करवाई और मुझे नियुक्ति-पत्र दे दिया।

गाड़ी चलने की घंटी बज चुकी थी। मैंने नमस्कार किया। उन्होंने कहा, "आनन्दशंकर ध्रुव को मेरा नमस्कार कहना।"

घर पर आकर मैंने सब बातें अपने हितैषी स्वर्गीय श्री जयशंकर 'प्रसाद' को बतलाईं। उन्हें लगा कि एक बार वेतन के बारे में निश्चय हो जाने पर ठक्करबापा को इसमें कमी नहीं करनी चाहिये थी। मेरे अग्रज की भी यही राय हुई। मैंने ठक्करबापा को कलकत्ता के पते पर पत्र लिखा कि वह वेतन के बारे में अपने निर्णय पर विचार करें और मुझे तार देवें।

उत्तर-पत्र से आया—

"तुम असम्भव व्यक्ति हो। तुम्हें पता नहीं कि इस तरह की अनिश्चितता से तुम मेरा कितना हर्ज कर रहे हो। जो शर्तें मैं दे चुका हूँ, उनमें रत्तीभर भी फ़र्क नहीं कर सकता। तुम चाहते हो कि मुझे जो कुछ कहना है वह तार से तुम्हें लिखूँ। मुझे खेद है कि मैं इस तरह से सार्वजनिक रुपयों का दुरुपयोग नहीं कर सकता। यदि तुम्हें मेरी शर्त स्वीकार हो तो फ़ौरन दिल्ली जाओ, नहीं तो मैं किसी दूसरे व्यक्ति को तुम्हारे बदले में नियुक्त करता हूँ। यहाँ और दिल्ली उत्तर दो।"

* * *

व्यक्तिगत जीवन के बीते हुए अध्याय को इतने विस्तार के साथ देने के कारण लोग मुझपर आत्मवंचना का दोष लगा सकते हैं, पर ऊपर की घटनाएँ केवल इस दृष्टि से दी गई हैं कि उनके भीतर ठक्करबापा की कार्यप्रणाली का रहस्य छिपा हुआ है।

ठक्करबापा की किसी भी बात में असंदिग्धता नहीं रहती। वे जानते थे कि मैं पहले कभी उनसे नहीं मिला था, इसलिए मुझे उन्हें गाड़ी में ढूँढ़ने या पहिचानने में असुविधा न हो, उन्होंने अपनी हुलिया दे दी थी। बापा जिसको भी कभी कुछ लिखेंगे या आदेश देंगे, वे स्पष्ट रूप से—उसमें असंदिग्धता या दोहरे अर्थ की कोई गुंजाइश नहीं रह सकती। यदि हरिजन सेवक संघ या आदिम जाति सेवक मंडल से किसी संस्था या व्यक्ति को—मानो उन्होंने १ अक्टूबर से ६ माह की सहायता दी तो वे अपने पत्र में लिख देंगे कि सहायता केवल १ अक्टूबर से ३१ मार्च तक के लिए है—अर्थात् १ अप्रैल से कोई सहायता नहीं मिलेगी। स्पष्ट भाषा या मुद्दे की बातें न करनेवालों से उन्हें बड़ी खीझ लगती है।

दूसरी बात जिसपर बापा आग्रह रखते हैं, वह है सार्वजनिक कार्यकर्ता को व्यवस्था-सम्बन्धी तालीम की ज़रूरत। वह मानते हैं कि जिस तरह स्कूलों और कालेजों की शिक्षा होती है, उसी तरह किसी कार्यकर्ता को कोई जिम्मेदारी या पद देने के पहिले व्यवस्था और हिसाब-सम्बन्धी तालीम पाना आवश्यक है। आज हमारा दुर्भाग्य है कि स्कूल और कालेजों में इस तरह की तालीम का अभाव है। हमारे हज़ारों कार्यकर्ताओं में त्याग है, लगन है, पर व्यवस्था-सम्बन्धी गुणों का अभाव है। उसीका एक यह भी नतीजा है कि आज जब हमारे कितने ही कार्यकर्ता जनपदों, म्युनिसिपलिटियों, पंचायतों तथा सरकारों में पदारूढ़ हुए हैं तो अधिकांश, व्यवस्था-सम्बन्धी अनुभव तथा ज्ञान से रहित होने के कारण, अयोग्य (Misfit) साबित हो रहे हैं।

यह दुःख की बात है कि आज का पढ़ा-लिखा तरुण-समाज, सार्वजनिक जीवन में प्रवेश पाने के लिए जो ज़रूरी परीक्षण और तालीम का समय (Period of apprenticeship) है, उसके लिए तैयार नहीं है। बिना पूर्व तैयारी के ही युवक-समाज सेवा के क्षेत्र में आने के लिए अधीर है। आज मुझे बापा के मातहत काम करते हुए १८ वर्ष हो चले। इस बीच में उन्होंने कितने ही युवकों को अपने मातहत तालीम दी है। पर बापा कठोर नियामक हैं। जो यह निश्चय कर लें कि उन्हें तो बापा से सीखना है और कोई काम छोटा नहीं है, वही उनके पास टिक सकते हैं।

१९३२ में जब मैं उनके पास आया तो उन्होंने मुझे १५ दिनों तक केवल अख़बार पढ़कर हरिजन-समस्या-सम्बन्धी समाचारों को एक रजिस्टर में नोट करने का काम दिया। उसके बाद डिस्पैच (पत्रों को भेजने) का काम दिया। फिर रोकड़, फिर हिसाब-किताब, फिर पत्र-व्यवहार और अन्त में दफ़्तर की पूरी ज़िम्मेदारी। मुझे शुरू में बहुत बुरा लगता था। सोचता था कि क्या इन्हीं छोटे-छोटे कामों के लिए मैंने विश्वविद्यालय की ऊँची शिक्षा प्राप्त की; पर नहीं, वह बापा का संस्था-संचालन सिखलाने का तरीका था। आज बापा अपनी आँखों से लाचार हैं, वृद्धावस्था तो है ही, अन्यथा संस्था-संचालन की तालीम देने में उनसे बढ़कर कोई गुरु नहीं मिल सकता।

तीसरी बात जो ऊपर की घटनाओं से निकलती है, वह है उनको सार्वजनिक फ़ंड के प्रति ज़िम्मेदारी की भावना। जो सार्वजनिक फ़ंड उनके मातहत हो या जिससे उनका सम्बन्ध हो, उनका दुरुपयोग या अपव्यय वे ज़रा भी सहन नहीं कर सकते। उनका पारा

गरम हो जाता है। मुझे खयाल है कि हरिजन सेवक संघ में दो बार ऐसी घटनाएँ हुईं जब कि हरिजन फंड की दो छोटी-छोटी रकमों का दुरुपयोग किया गया था। एक में बेईमानी थी; पर दूसरे में हरिजन-कार्य के लिए ही, एक नामांकित फंड से दूसरे मद में कुछ रकम खर्च कर दी गई थी। सम्बन्धित व्यक्ति दिल्ली में बापू के सामने बुलाये गए। दोनों ने अपनी-अपनी परिस्थितियाँ बापू को समझाईं। बापा तो मौजूद थे ही—बापू उन दोनों की बातें बड़े ध्यान से सुन रहे थे और उनके दृष्टिकोण को समझने की कोशिश कर रहे थे। दोनों पुराने कार्यकर्ता थे। पर बापा में इतना धैर्य कहाँ! एकदम बापू पर बरस पड़े, "आप क्यों इतना समय नष्ट कर रहे हैं। इनके साथ सहानुभूति का व्यवहार बिल्कुल नहीं करना चाहिये, इन्हें तो एकदम जेल भेज देना चाहिये।"

सार्वजनिक पैसे के सदुपयोग और हिसाब-किताब के सम्बन्ध में बापू खुद भी जागरूक थे; पर वे भी इस सम्बन्ध में ठक्करबापा के कायल थे। १९३३ के जून का महीना था। पूना में हरिजन सेवक संघ की बैठक हो रही थी। बापू अपने २१ दिन के उपवास के बाद 'पर्णकुटी' में स्वास्थ्य-लाभ कर रहे थे। एक रोज़ संघ की बैठक बापू के पास हुई। संघ का आय-व्यय का हिसाब पेश किया गया। बापू ने कहा, "ठक्करबापा का मंत्रित्व ही हरिजन फंड के सदुपयोग और सुरक्षा के लिए काफ़ी है। मुझे हिसाब देखने की ज़रूरत नहीं।"

एक बार अपने ऊपर तथा उनके नाम से सार्वजनिक फंड से किये गए आतिथ्य की फ़िज़ूलखर्ची की जानकारी प्राप्त होने पर स्थानिक कार्यकर्ताओं को जो ताड़ना उन्होंने दी थी, वह शायद उन कार्यकर्ताओं को आजन्म याद रहेगा। सार्वजनिक फंड में खर्च की वह रकम तो जमा करनी ही पड़ी, पर ठक्करबापा ने मुझे आदेश दिया कि आगे से प्रधान कार्यालय की ओर से जब भी कोई.....जावें तो वहाँ का आतिथ्य स्वीकार न करें, अपनी स्वतंत्र व्यवस्था कर लें।

कुछ लोग सार्वजनिक फंड का सदुपयोग करते हैं, पर हिसाब-किताब ठीक नहीं रखते। कुछ ऐसे हैं, जो हिसाब-किताब तो रखते हैं, पर सार्वजनिक पैसों का सदुपयोग नहीं करते; पर ठक्करबापा उन बिरले लोगों में हैं, जो सार्वजनिक रुपयों का सदुपयोग भी करते हैं और हिसाब भी ठीक रखते हैं। वे मानते हैं कि सार्वजनिक पैसे के मामले में Caesar's wife must not only be pure, she must be above suspicion

(सीज़र की पत्नी केवल पवित्र ही न हो, बल्कि शंका से परे भी हो)। काकासाहब कालेलकर ने उनकी सत्तरवीं वर्ष-गाँठ पर कितना ही अच्छा कहा था, "मुर्दार रुपये में यदि जान डालनी हो तो उसे ठक्करबापा को सौंप देना चाहिये।"

उनकी हिसाब-सम्बन्धी कठोर व्यवस्था से कितने छुई-मुई कार्यकर्ता (Sensitive workers) घबड़ा कर नाराज़ हो जाते हैं। आज नाम गिनाना उचित नहीं, पर उनके हिसाबी डंडे के प्रहार के नीचे देश के कुछ चोटी के नेता भी आ चुके हैं। बापा प्रत्येक कार्यकर्ता के लिए हिसाब का ज्ञान लाज़िमी मानते हैं। हरिजन सेवक संघ तथा अपने से सम्बन्धित संस्थाओं के कितने ही कार्यकर्ताओं को उन्होंने अपनी प्रत्यक्ष देखरेख में रोकड़, खाता-बही आदि का ज्ञान कराया होगा। १९३३ के संघ के खाता-बही के कई अंश उनके हाथों से लिखे मिलेंगे।

बापा के बारे में यह कहा जाता है कि वे अपने से सम्बन्धित दफ़्तरों में सब काम अपने हाथ में केन्द्रित रखते हैं, पर यह धारणा उनकी कार्य-प्रणाली को ग़लत समझने के कारण है। जब कोई कार्यकर्ता या पदाधिकारी नया-नया होता है तो उसे काम सिखाने और मार्ग-दर्शन के लिए सब काम केन्द्रित करना ही पड़ता है, पर जब कार्यकर्ता पूरी तरह से काम की प्रणाली समझ जाता है और उन्हें इसका विश्वास हो जाता है, तब वे काफ़ी छूट देते हैं। १९३२ से १९३९ तक हरिजन सेवक संघ के दफ़्तर से, प्रान्तों से हिसाब आने पर जो पत्र उत्तर में सहायता के साथ जाते थे, उनके मसविदे (Drafts) उन्हें प्रवास में भेजे जाते थे। वह वहाँ से उन मसविदों को मंजूर या संशोधन करके दफ़्तर को वापस करते थे, फिर उन्हें टाइप कर प्रान्तों को भेजा जाता था। वह सिलसिला करीब ३ वर्ष तक चला। धीरे-धीरे जब कार्यकर्ताओं ने हिसाब-किताब तथा कार्य-पद्धति से पूरी जानकारी प्राप्त कर ली, तब दफ़्तर से ही स्वतंत्र रूप से सहायता जाने लगी।

मेरा ऐसा ख्याल है कि पूज्य बापूजी भी इसी तरह नई संस्था खुलने पर बहुत तफ़सील में जाते थे। पर जब उन्हें विश्वास हो जाता था कि काम ठीक तरह से चल रहा है, तब तफ़सील की बातों को कार्यकर्ताओं के ऊपर छोड़ देते थे।

शुरू में कस्तूरबा निधि की जितनी बैठकें होती थीं, उनकी लिखित कार्रवाई ट्रस्टियों को भेजने के पहिले बापू स्वयं पूरी तरह से देख लेते थे, परिपत्रों को भेजने के

पहिले उनका मसविदा देख लेते थे—यहाँ तक कि कभी-कभी दफ़्तर से जाने वाले खास पत्रों का मसविदा खुद तैयार कर देते थे।

बापा कठोर नियामक हैं, पर बादाम की तरह-ऊपर से तो कठोर पर भीतर से सरल और निश्छल हैं। वे आजकल के सुसंस्कृत समाज (Polished Society) की लाग-लपेट वाली सभ्यता से कोसों दूर हैं। उन्हें जो कुछ विचार आता है, उसे फ़ौरन कह देते हैं। मन में कपट और बाहर से मीठी-मीठी बातें, यह उनके स्वभाव के विपरीत है।

उनकी प्रवास करने की शक्ति, भोजन और रहन-सहन की सादगी आदि की बातें कार्यकर्ताओं के बीच कथा की वस्तु बन गई हैं। उनके पुराने सहयोगी प्रो० नारायणदास मलकानी मज़ाक में कहा करते थे कि जहाँ सिन्ध के रेगिस्तान में गदहा और ऊंट भी थक जाता है, वहाँ पर यह बुड्ढा चला जाता है।

वे कभी तेल नहीं लगाते, कभी मालिश नहीं करते। आज करीब ३० वर्ष से वे नियमित रूप से अपनी दिनचर्या लिखते हैं। छोटी-छोटी बातों में भी वे सब को व्यवस्थित देखना चाहते हैं। सभा, सोसायटी, घरों आदि में जहाँ भी जाते हैं, वहाँ दरवाज़े में घुसने के पहिले उनकी निगाह बाहर अस्त-व्यस्त तरीकों से उतारे गये जूतों और चप्पलों पर पड़ती है। उन्हें वे ठीक तरह से एक-एक जोड़े के साथ रखकर ही भीतर जाते हैं। आज तो अपनी आँखों की रोशनी कम होने के कारण अपने इस कर्तव्य को पूरा करने से कभी-कभी वंचित रह जाते हैं।

* * *

यह सम्भव है कि ऊपर के वर्णित गुणों का संमिश्रण कितने ही व्यक्तियों में हो, किन्तु उन गुणों के साथ 'दीनबन्धुत्व' की भावना कितनों में है? उनके बारे में यह अक्षरशः कहा जा सकता है कि वे अपनी जाग्रत अवस्था में पीड़ित मानवता का ही ध्यान करते हैं और अपने करतार को २४ घंटे का ठीक-ठीक हिसाब दे सकते हैं। ग़रीबों और पददलितों की सेवा के लिए वे कहीं भी जाने को तैयार रहते हैं। जहाँ विधान परिषद् में राजनैतिक और सत्ता की दृष्टि से लोग सोचते, विचारते और आचरते हैं, वहाँ बापा को केवल आदिवासी, हरिजन तथा पिछड़ी हुई रियासती प्रजा की ही चिन्ता रहती है।

आदिवासी, हरिजन, शरणार्थी, स्त्री-समाज, रियासती प्रजा, बाढ़ तथा अकाल-पीड़ित जनता, राजबन्दी आदि सबकी समस्याओं को वे एक मानवतावादी की दृष्टि से देखते

हैं—उसे पीड़ित मनुष्यता का प्रश्न मानते हैं। मेरा ऐसा विचार है कि हरिजन-समस्या को पूज्य बापूजी जिस धार्मिक दृष्टि से देखते थे, उस दृष्टि से बापा नहीं देखते। बहुत-सी बातों में उनका दृष्टिकोण बापू से भिन्न रहा है। वह गांधीवादी नहीं कहे जा सकते, गोकि बापू के भारत लौटने के बाद से ही उनका और बापा का अनन्य सम्बन्ध रहा है। बापा के 'गांधीवादी' न होने का कारण प्रधानतः यह है कि जहाँ देश के सभी बड़े-बड़े रचनात्मक कार्यकर्ताओं ने, १९२० के आसपास तथा बाद में बापू से प्रेरणा पाई तथा आदर्श ग्रहण किया, वहाँ ठक्करबापा इसके पहिले ही से सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में आकर अपने जीवन का कार्यक्रम बना चुके थे। उन्हें मानव-सेवा की प्रेरणा स्वर्गीय श्री विट्ठलरामजी शिंदे, श्री गोपालकृष्ण देवधर तथा श्री अण्णासाहब कर्वे से मिली थी।

श्री देवधर बापा से उम्र में छोटे थे, पर तब भी बापा उन्हें गुरु-तुल्य मानते थे। बापूजी का सम्पर्क पाकर बापा का सेवा-क्षेत्र विशाल बनता गया और उनकी उपयोगिता भी बढ़ती गई। बापूजी के जीवन की दो बड़ी घटनाएँ भी ठक्करबापा से सम्बन्धित हैं।

कोचरब में आश्रम स्थापित करने के बाद बापू की पहिली परीक्षा की घड़ी एक हरिजन-परिवार और उसकी कन्या लक्ष्मी के प्रवेश पर आई। उसके सम्बन्ध में बापू ने स्वयं ही अपनी आत्मकथा में 'एक कसौटी' अध्याय में लिखा है। उसका कुछ अंश इस प्रकार है:—

"आश्रम को स्थापना को अभी कुछ ही महीने हुए कि इतने में हमारी एक ऐसी कसौटी हो गई, जिसकी आशा हमने नहीं की थी। एक दिन हमें भाई अमृतलाल ठक्कर का पत्र मिला कि एक गरीब और ईमानदार अन्त्यज कुटुम्ब की इच्छा आपके आश्रम में आकर रहने की है। क्या आप उसे अपने आश्रम में रख सकेंगे?"

चिट्ठी पढ़कर मैं चौंका तो; क्योंकि मैंने यह बिल्कुल आशा नहीं की थी कि ठक्करबापा जैसों की सिफ़ारिश लेकर कोई अंत्यज कुटुम्ब इतनी जल्दी आ जायेगा। मैंने साथियों को वह चिट्ठी दिखाई। उन लोगों ने उसका स्वागत किया। हमने अमृतलाल-भाई को लिखा कि यदि वह आश्रम के नियमों का पालन करने को तैयार हो तो हम उसे लेने के लिए तैयार हैं।

बस, दूधाभाई, उनकी पत्नी दानीबहन और दुधमुँही लक्ष्मी सब आश्रम में आ गये। दूधाभाई बम्बई में शिक्षक थे। वह आश्रम के नियमों का पालन करने के लिए तैयार थे, इसलिए वह आश्रम में ले लिये गए।

"पर इससे सहायक मित्र-मंडल में बड़ी खलबली मची। जिस कुंए में बंगले के मालिक का भाग था, उसमें से पानी भरने में दिक्कत आने लगी। चरस हांकनेवाले को भी यदि हमारे पानी के छींटे लग जाते तो उसे छूत लगती। उसने हमें गालियाँ देना शुरू किया। दूधाभाई को भी वह सताने लगा। मैंने सबसे कह रखा था कि गालियाँ सह लेना चाहिये और दृढ़तापूर्वक पानी भरते रहना चाहिये। हमको चुपचाप गालियाँ सुनते देखकर चरसवाला शर्मिंदा हुआ और उसने हमारा पिंड छोड़ दिया; परन्तु इससे आर्थिक सहायता मिलना बंद हो गया। जिन भाइयों ने पहिले से ही उन अछूतों के प्रवेश पर भी, जो आश्रम के नियमों का पालन करते हों, शंका खड़ी की थी, उन्हें तो आशा ही नहीं थी कि कोई अंत्यज आ जायगा। इधर आर्थिक सहायता बंद हुई, उधर हम लोगों के बहिष्कार की अफ़वाह मेरे कान पर आने लगी। मैंने अपने साथियों के साथ यह विचार रखा था कि यदि हमारा बहिष्कार हो जाय और हमें कहीं से सहायता न मिले तो भी हमें अहमदाबाद न छोड़ना चाहिये। हम अछूतों के मुहल्ले में जाकर बस जावेंगे और जो कुछ मिल जायेगा, उसपर अथवा मज़दूरी करके गुजर कर लेंगे।"

बापू का उत्कल तथा उसके आदिवासियों का प्रेम मशहूर है। बापू मानते थे कि उत्कल देश का सबसे दुखी, ग़रीब और पीड़ित प्रदेश है, पर उस उत्कल की अवस्था का बापू को ज्ञान करानेवाले ठक्करबापा ही हैं। बापू बराबर कहा करते थे कि उत्कल को मैं ठक्करबापा के मार्फ़त ही जानता हूँ। आज उत्कल की दुखी जनता जितनी ठक्कर बापा की कृतज्ञ है, उतनी देश के किसी अन्य कार्यकर्ता की नहीं। वहाँ के कितने ही कार्यकर्ता, जिनमें वहाँ के वर्तमान प्रधान मंत्री श्री हरेकृष्ण मेहताब भी हैं, बापा से प्रेरणा पाकर सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में आये। मुझे ख्याल है कि १९४३—४४ में जब ठक्करबापा उत्कल के अकालपीड़ितों की सेवा करते थे—उस समय उन्होंने वहाँ के तत्कालीन प्रान्तीय शासन की, जिसके प्रधान मंत्री महाराज पारलाकीमेड़ी थे, लापरवाही की कड़ी आलोचना की थी। उसके उत्तर में प्रधान मंत्री ने एक वक्तव्य में कहा था कि "बाहर के लोग आकर वहाँ असन्तोष फैलाते हैं।" उत्कल प्रान्त बनने तक पारलाकीमेड़ी के महाराज मद्रास प्रान्त के नागरिक थे। उनके ऊपर के वक्तव्य के उत्तर में देश के एक बड़े नेता ने कहा था कि "महाराज पारलाकीमेड़ी को जानना चाहिये कि जब वे उत्कल के नागरिक भी

नहीं थे और उन्हें अपने को उड़िया कहने का अधिकार नहीं था, उसके कितने ही वर्षों पूर्व से ठक्करबापा उत्कल की पीड़ित मानवता की सेवा कर रहे हैं।"

* * *

दुखी प्रजा की पुकार सुनकर वे उसकी सान्त्वना के लिए पहुँच जाते हैं। जब वे बम्बई नगरपालिका की नौकरी में थे तब भी अपना फ़ुरसत का समय भंगियों की सेवा में बिताते थे। अपने मातहत काम करनेवाले कुलियों और मज़दूरों से उनका एक साथी की भांति सम्पर्क था। वहाँ से इस्तीफ़ा देते हुए जो पत्र उन्होंने २९ जनवरी १९१४ को अपने भाइयों के नाम लिखा था, उसमें वह स्वयं ही कहते हैं—"अपनी नौकरी के सिलसिले में अपने संरक्षण में काम करनेवाले कार्यकरों के साथ मैं मज़बूत स्नेहशृंखला से बंध गया हूँ। इतना ही नहीं, जो सड़कें और रास्ते मेरी मातहती में हैं, उनसे भी मेरा प्रेम हो गया है, यद्यपि वे निर्जीव हैं।" भंगियों को कर्ज से मुक्त करने के लिए भारतवर्ष में उन्होंने सबसे पहिले १९१४—१५ के करीब सहकारी समितियाँ खोलीं। १९१४ में भारत सेवक समाज में सम्मिलित होते ही वे सबसे पहिले मथुरा के अकाल-पीड़ितों में काम करने गये। बाढ़ और अकाल के सिलसिले में उन्होंने मथुरा, कच्छ, उत्कल, गुजरात, सिन्ध, आसाम, बंगाल आदि प्रान्तों में कार्य किया और राहत पहुंचाई है। रियासतों की त्रस्त प्रजा के लिए उन्होंने सौराष्ट्र, उत्कल, पटियाला आदि में काम किया। मज़दूरों की सेवा के लिए वे जमशेदपुर में रहे। राजनैतिक बन्दियों की सहायता के लिए १९४२ से १९४४ तक सहायता-निधि का संगठन किया। शरणार्थियों के लिए जो कुछ होता है, करते ही रहते हैं। आदिवासियों, हरिजनों तथा कस्तूरबा-निधि के मार्फत स्त्रियों की सेवा अब इतिहास की बात हो गई है।

मैंने लिखा है कि ठक्करबापा इन सब प्रश्नों को पीड़ित मानवता का प्रश्न मानकर ही सेवा करते हैं, उन्हें कोरे तात्त्विक विवेचनों से नफ़रत है। कभी-कभी वे इस तरह के कोरे बकवाद से चिढ़ जाते हैं। तात्त्विक विवेचन यदि कार्य के साथ हो तो उन्हें सन्तोष होगा। कहनी से करनी में वे अधिक विश्वास करते हैं। दुखी मानवता की सेवा में उनके सहयोगी की ओर से ज़रा भी गफ़लत हुई कि उन्होंने उसकी खबर लेनी शुरू की, चाहे वह सहयोगी कितना ही बड़ा या पदवाला क्यों न हो। और जितना ही प्रिय उनका साथी होगा, उतने ही उसके प्रति वे कठोर भी होंगे। जब बीजापुर में १९३८ के आस-पास दुष्काल हुआ, तब उन्होंने स्वर्गीय श्री हनुमन्तराव कौजलगी को बीजापुर में राहत-कार्य

संगठित करने के लिए लिखा। श्री हनुमन्तराव कर्नाटक के प्रिय कार्यकर्ता थे और ठक्करबापा उन्हें बहुत मानते थे। हनुमन्तरावजी पर कर्नाटक चरखा संघ की भी ज़िम्मेदारी थी, इससे बापा का आज्ञापालन करने में कुछ देर हुई।

बापा एकदम कठोर हो गये और श्री हनुमन्तरावजी को लिखा कि पिछले चुनाव की असफलता ने तुम्हें निराश और निरुत्साहित कर दिया है। १९४१ के व्यक्तिगत सत्याग्रह के दिनों में बम्बई के प्रधान मंत्री श्री बालासाहब खेर जेल चले गये थे। उनकी इच्छानुसार ठाणा आदिवासी सेवा मंडल का कार्य श्री ठक्करबापा की देखरेख में चलता था। भील सेवा मंडल के एक प्रमुख कार्यकर्ता को ठाणा जिले का कार्यभार संभालने के लिए बापा ने भेजा था। वह कभी-कभी बम्बई आकर अपने एक आदरणीय मित्र के घर, श्रीभवन में ठहरते थे। बापा ने एकदम उन्हें लिखा—"तुम्हें ख्याल होना चाहिये कि आदिवासी सन्डहर्स्ट रोड में नहीं रहते—वे तो ठाणा जिले के जंगलों में रहते हैं, जहाँ तुम्हारा उचित स्थान है।"

किसी कार्य की सुन्दरता, असुन्दरता, औचित्य आदि की उनकी एक ही कसौटी है—इससे ग़रीबों का कितना लाभ होता है।

जयपुर सुन्दरता में भारत का पेरिस माना जाता है। बापा जयपुर के भंगियों की नारकीय बस्ती देखकर घबड़ा गये—कहाँ जयपुर की सुन्दरता का इतना बखान और कहाँ उसके ग़रीब निवासियों की यह दुर्दशा! ग़रीबों की इस तरह उपेक्षा करने पर उन्होंने जयपुर-शासन के ख़िलाफ़ एक कड़ा लेख लिखा। बापा ने तो जहांगीर बादशाह की काश्मीरवाली कहावत को बदलकर यहां तक संकेत कर दिया कि अगर पृथ्वी पर कहीं नर्क है तो यहाँ है।

ग्वालियर राज्य में शिवपुरी बड़ा ही सुन्दर तथा रमणीय स्थान माना जाता है। वहाँ की संगमरमर की छत्री तथा उद्यान देखने के लिए कहाँ-कहाँ से यात्री आते हैं। बापा वहाँ गये। उनका हृदय रो उठा—"जिस ग्वालियर राज्य के हरिजनों की इतनी बुरी दशा है, वहाँ पर ग़रीब प्रजा के पसीने की कमाई से लाखों रुपये बरबाद कर मनोरंजन का यह आयोजन!" उनका मन उद्विग्न हो उठा। इसी तरह से हरिजन-कार्य के सिलसिले में बापा नाथद्वारा गये। वहाँ का राजसी वैभव देखकर वे बड़े ही दुखी हुए। बापू को एक लम्बे पत्र में अपनी वेदना लिख भेजी। हिसाब लगाया कि मंदिर की वार्षिक आमदनी से कितने सौ निःशुल्क प्राथमिक पाठशालाएँ ग़रीबों के लिए चल सकती हैं। केवल बापू

को ही लिखकर उन्हें सन्तोष नहीं हुआ। उन्होंने 'हरिजन' में भी एक लेख इसी आशय का लिखा।

जैसा मैं ऊपर लिख चुका हूँ, किसी भी सरकारी या गैरसरकारी कार्य से ग़रीबों का कितना हित होता है, यही ठक्करबापा का मापदंड है। ताजमहल, मैसूर का वृन्दावन, ग्वालियर की शिवपुरी और बड़े-बड़े वैभवशाली राजसी ठाट-बाट के मन्दिर उनकी दृष्टि में ग़रीबों का उपहास करते हैं और हमारे लिए शर्म की चीजें हैं। अपने एक आत्मीय स्नेही का विदेश-प्रवास से पत्र पाकर उन्होंने लिखा, "तुम लन्दन के वैभवशाली स्थानों को देखने में व्यस्त हो और मैं यहाँ हरिजन बस्तियों को देखने में व्यस्त हूँ। हमारी और तुम्हारी पसन्दगी और रुचि अलग-अलग प्रकार की हैं।"

अच्छा खाना, स्वास्थ्य-लाभ के लिए कभी पहाड़ों पर जाना आदि वे एक सार्वजनिक कार्यकर्ता के लिए वर्जित समझते हैं। उनकी राय में एक समाज-सेवक को इन सब बातों को इच्छा नहीं करनी चाहिये। एक बार आज से करीब दो-ढ़ाई वर्ष पहले बापू ने उन्हें पहाड़ पर जाने की सलाह दी, तो बापा ने लिखा (Your suggestion is shocking to me)—"आपका प्रस्ताव मुझे आघात पहुँचानेवाला है।" जब कोई कार्यकर्ता कहता है कि वर्षों के सतत काम करने से अब उसे आराम की ज़रूरत है तो उन्हें ताज्जुब होता है। सेवक को दिन भर के परिश्रम के बाद रात को ठीक से नींद आती है तो उसे लम्बे विश्राम की क्या ज़रूरत। उसे तो सतत सेवा-व्रत-पालन करना है। तभी तो जब उनकी ७० वीं वर्षगांठ पर बम्बई की सभा में अनेक नेताओं ने १०० वर्ष जीने की शुभ-कामना प्रकट की तो उन्होंने कहा, "मुझे आप लोग यह आशीर्वाद न देवें कि मैं १०० वर्ष जीऊँ। मुझे तो यह आशीर्वाद दीजिये कि जितने दिन ज़िन्दा रहूँ, ग़रीबों की सेवा में कर्ममय जीवन व्यतीत कर सकूँ। आख़िर अपाहिज की तरह सौ वर्ष तक जीने से क्या लाभ!" उन्हें एक क्षण भी बीमारी की अवस्था में अकर्मण्यमय जीवन व्यतीत करना पसन्द नहीं है।

अभी पिछले जुलाई मास में जब वे हृदय-रोग के दूसरी बार शिकार हुए तो डाक्टरों ने आराम के लिए उन्हें कमरे के भीतर ही रहने का आदेश दिया। उस समय कुछ मित्रों को उन्होंने एक गश्ती पत्र में लिखा, "मैं कमरे के ही भीतर डाक्टरों के आदेश से पड़ा रहता हूँ, इसलिए नहीं कि मुझे कोई खास शिकायत है, बल्कि इसलिए कि डाक्टरों की ऐसी ही मर्ज़ी है।"

बापू ने आज से करीब २२ वर्ष पूर्व लिखा था, "भील इत्यादि जातियों के साथ हमारा जो भ्रातृत्व का सम्बन्ध है, उसे अगर हम सिद्ध करना चाहें तो ठक्करबापा से हमें गुरु-मंत्र लेना चाहिये। उन्हें तो लूले-लंगड़ों के साथ रहने में ही आनन्द आता है। उनके बिना ठक्करबापा को चैन नहीं पड़ता। उनके पीछे यहाँ-वहाँ भटकने में ही उन्हें विश्रांति मिलती है—यही उनका देवदर्शन है—यही उनका आहार है।"

उनकी सत्तरवीं जयंती पर सौराष्ट्र के बगसरा नामक स्थान में एक मेले का आयोजन किया गया था। बापा से सन्देश मांगा गया। उन्होंने जो सन्देश अपने २७ नवम्बर सन् १९३९ के पत्र में भेजा था, वह उनके जीवन-दर्शन को बड़े सुन्दर शब्दों में प्रकट करता है :

"२९वीं तारीख को बगसरा में मेले का आयोजन कर रहे हो, यह जाना। बड़ी खुशी की बात है कि उसमें २०—२५ गाँवों से हरिजन आयेंगे। हरिजनों को उनका एक सेवक क्या सन्देश दे।

हरिना जन तो मुक्ति ना मागे
मागे जनमोजनम अवतार रे।
नित्य सेवा नित्य कीर्तन ओच्छव
निरखवा नन्द कुमार रे॥ *

"सदा सेवा करने का मौका मिले, प्रभु सुबुद्धि दे, मनुष्य-अवतार दे, संसार से मुक्ति न दे, सेवक इतना ही चाहता है। हमारे नन्दकुमारों की यानी ढेड़-भंगी के नंग-धड़ंग बालकों की सेवा करके, उन्हें पढ़ा, लिखा, होशियार बना। हम उन्हें अपने भाई समझें। अगर हम इतना कर सकें तो अपने किये हुए पापों से मुक्ति पा सकेंगे।" बापा के जीवन का सार इसमें छिपा हुआ है।

इस महान् मानव-सेवी के लिए ही मानो कवि ने कहा हो:—

मैं ढूँढ़ता तुझे था जब कुंज और बन में।
तू खोजता मुझे था तब दीन के वतन में॥

---

*हरि के जन मुक्ति नहीं मांगते। वे तो संसार में नित्य सेवा, प्रभुभजन और कीर्तन और नन्दकुमार के दर्शन करने के लिए बार-बार मनुष्य-अवतार मांगते हैं।

तू आह बन किसीकी मुझको पुकारता था ।
मैं था तुझे बुलाता संगीत में, भजन में ॥

मेरे लिए खड़ा था दुखियों के द्वार पर तू ।
मैं बाट जोहता था तेरी किसी चमन में ॥

बनकर किसीके आँसू मेरे लिए बहा तू ।
आँखें लगी थीं मेरी तब मान और धन में ॥

बाजे बजा-बजा के मैं था तुझे रिझाता ।
तब तू लगा हुआ था पतितों के संगठन में ॥

बेबस गिरे हुओं के तू बीच में खड़ा था ।
मैं स्वर्ग देखता था झुकता कहाँ चरण में ॥

दीनबन्धु बापा को शत-शत प्रणाम ।

# ठक्कर बापा की विशेषतायें

## लेखक : रामगोपालत्यागी, साहित्यरत्न

ठक्कर बापा की कार्यशैली से बड़े से बड़ा व्यक्ति सीख सकता है। वे जिस कार्य को लेते हैं उस में अपना हृदय उड़ेल देते हैं। प्रत्येक छोटी से छोटी बारीकी में वे गहराई के साथ जाते हैं और उस में परिश्रम कितना करना पड़ेगा इसकी लेशमात्र भी चिन्ता नहीं करते। यही कारण है कि उन के सब कार्य व्यवस्थित होते हैं। रात या दिन में जो कुछ भी काम याद आता है वे नोट करते जाते हैं। उनकी सूची में छोटी और बड़ी सब बातें होती हैं, जैसे :—

१. गांधी स्मारक निधि को हरिजन सेवक संघ की सहायता के लिए पत्र लिखना।

२. पं. जवाहरलाल नेहरू को पिछड़ी जातियों की सूची बनवाने के सम्बन्ध में पत्र लिखना।

३. कोट और धोती को मरम्मत करवाना।

४. त्यागी को अतिथियों के स्वागतार्थ स्टेशन भेजना, इत्यादि

यों देखने में उक्त एक दो काम बड़े साधारण से प्रतीत होते हैं परन्तु यह उनका स्वभाव ही बन गया है। जिस कार्य को करते जाते हैं उसे काटते जाते हैं। आजकल उनको कम दिखाई देता है परन्तु फिर भी बिना आलस्य किये रात्रि के मध्य में भी बड़े बड़े अक्षरों में अपने आप ही उठकर कागज़ पर घसीट लेते हैं और प्रातः उठते ही किसी से स्पष्ट लिखा लेते हैं। हमें यह बातें छोटी लगती हैं परन्तु इसी में बापा की सफलता का रहस्य छिपा है। काम को टालना तो वे जानते ही नहीं।

कोई कोई उनपर यह दोष लगाते हैं कि वे काम निर्दयतापूर्वक लेते हैं। परन्तु ऐसा कहना उनके प्रति अन्याय करना है। वे स्वयं भी इस ८० वर्ष की अवस्था में बड़े परिश्रम से कार्य करते हैं। प्रातः ६ बजे से रात के १०—११ बजे तक आप उनको कार्यव्यस्त देखेंगे। हृदय की बीमारी के बाद दोपहर को एकाध घंटे को विश्राम लेते हैं परन्तु कभी कभी वह भी नहीं लेते अर्थात् अब भी उनका औसत काम १५—१६

घंटे निरन्तर चलता है। खाते समय भी उनका कार्य नहीं रुकता। खाना खाते जाते हैं और सहायकों को पत्र लिखाते जाते हैं। नाश्ता करते समय भी उनका यही क्रम चलता है। यही कारण है कि सहायकों को अधिक कार्य की शिकायत ही कहाँ है? वे सोचते हैं कि जब ८० वर्ष का वृद्ध इतना कार्य कर सकता है तो नवयुवकों को तो कुछ कहने का अवसर ही नहीं है? प्रातः से सायंकाल तक कई सहायक बदल जाते हैं बापा उसी गति से जमे रहते हैं। आश्चर्य होता है कि इस व्यक्ति मे कितनी शक्ति है। लगता है कि ईश्वर ने उन्हें कितना बल दिया है अथवा उन्होंने अपनी शक्ति को संयत करके सुरक्षित रक्खा है।

यही नहीं बीमारी में भी उनको कार्य की उसी प्रकार सूझती है जिस प्रकार एक बीमार बच्चा चोरी से कुपथ्य करना चाहता है। जुलाई १९४९ में जब बापा हृदय रोग से बीमार पड़े तो ऐसा ही अवसर आ पहुँचा। उन्हें कार्य से रोकने के लिये पं. कुंजरू चौकीदार बने क्योंकि अन्य किसी के नियंत्रण में वे कब रह सकते थे। डाक्टरों ने हिदायत की थी कि यदि चारपाई पर मौन रहकर विश्राम नहीं किया तो उनका जीवन संकट से खाली नहीं। दुर्भाग्य से एक दिन कुंजरूजी न आ सके। फिर क्या था? बन्दी के बन्दीगृह के द्वार खुले। शिवम् और त्यागी पर फ़रमान पहुँचा कि डाक लेकर आ जाओ। कुछ ही पत्र लिखा पाए थे कि मोटर की आवाज़ आई। ज्ञात हुआ कि हार्ट विशेषज्ञ डा. चौधरी आ गए हैं। बस बापा एक दम चारपाई पर लम्बे लेट गए और चादर ओढ़कर कहा, "शिवम् सब कागज़ दबाकर रख दो और त्यागी को बाहर भेज दो। डाक्टर देखने न पाए।" इसीसे पाठक उनकी, कार्य करने की इस शिष्ट चोरी का अनुमान लगा सकते हैं। अन्य लोग काम न करने की चोरी करते हैं जब कि यह कर्मयोगी अधिक काम करने के लिये चोरी करता है। सेवा में इतने तन्मय हो जाते हैं कि उन्हें उसमें आनन्द आता है। कभी कभी वह अपने सहयोगियों को लिखा भी करते हैं कि निष्काम सेवा में जो आनन्द है वह राजनीति में कहाँ? वह तो अनुभव ही किया जा सकता है—वर्णनातीत है। वास्तव में निष्काम कर्म करनेवाले की तन्मयता समाधी के दरज़े की होती है। उसे अपने तन मन की सुध नहीं रहती। इसीसे बापा आराम की आवश्यकता होने पर भी भूल जाते हैं कि उन्हें आराम चाहिए।

जब कभी उनके भारी काम का जिक्र आता है तो लोग कहने लगते हैं कि साहब

उनको खूराक भी तो बढ़िया मिलती होगी। कितना मोसम्मी रस पीते होंगे तथा मेवे कितने? बापा से अनजान ऐसे व्यक्तियों के अज्ञान पर दया आती है। वास्तव में बापा का आहार बहुत ही रूखा सूखा होता है। घी को तो उन्होंने एक प्रकार से तिलांजलि ही दे दी है। खाना एक समय ही खाते हैं। शाम को केवल दूध या हल्की सब्ज़ी लेते हैं। प्रवास में जहां भी जैसा भोजन मिल जाता है वे काम चला लेते हैं। बिहार व बंगाल में महीनों तक वे केवल चावल पर रहते देखे गये हैं। सिर में तेल कभी नहीं लगाते परन्तु उनका तेजपुंज मस्तक शीशे की भांति चमकता है। आजकल के नवयुवक तेल और क्रीम लगाते नहीं थकते परन्तु चहरे पर धूल सी उड़ी रहती है। बापा अपने ऊपर इतना कम खर्च करते हैं कि उसे कंजूसी की सीमा में लाया जा सकता है। उनको जो निर्वाह व्यय सरवेन्टस् आफ इन्डिया सोसाइटी से मिलता है उसमें भी कृपणता करके ऐसे असहायों की सहायता कर देते हैं जिनको सार्वजनिक निधि में से नहीं दिया जा सकता। दो धोती, दो कुरते, दो कोट और टोपी से अधिक तब तक नहीं बनवाते जब तक वे जरजर नहीं हो जाते। धोतियों को एक बार बीच में सिलवाकर अवश्य पहनते हैं। जब उनसे पुराना फटा कपड़ा फेंककर नया बनवाने को कहा जाता है तो उत्तर मिलता है कि "मैं भी पुराना हो गया हूं। मुझे भी फेंक दो।" कपड़े का पिन्ड तब ही छोड़ते हैं जब वह बिलकुल जवाब दे देता है। प्रत्येक सवारी उनको अनुकूल पडती है—रेल, मोटर, पालकी, नाव, बैलगाड़ी, घोड़ा, हाथी, ऊंट तक पर उन्होंने सैकड़ों मील की यात्रा सिन्ध व राजपूताना में की है। १९४६ में रांची (बिहार) से जाजपुर रोड (उडीसा) २३५ मील तक एक साथ वे एक ऐसा बस से गये थे जिस में केवल लकड़ी के तख्ते की सीट थी। अवसर आने पर वे पैदल भी धोती चढ़ा कर चल पड़ते हैं। हवाई जहाज में उनकी प्रथम यात्रा अप्रेल १९४७ में हुई थी।

प्रवास में उन का मन बहुत लगता है। संकट आने पर पवन वेग से दौड़ जाते हैं। बापू ने भी एक बार आसाम प्रवास के समय बापा को लिखा था कि "तुम संकट आने पर पवन वेग से दौड़ जाते हो।" यदि आप को धुमक्कड़ जिपसी कहा जाय तो अतिशयोक्ति नहीं। उन का प्रवास भी ऊबड़ खाबड़ स्थानों पर और दुर्गम जंगली क्षेत्रों में होता है जहां पर जीप भी कभी कभी अटक जाती है।

बेगार लेने में बापा सिद्धहस्त हैं। कितना ही बड़े से बड़ा व्यक्ति उनको

बेगार देता है परन्तु वह बेगार प्रेम-बल की होती है पशु-बल की नहीं। दादा मावलंकर, महादेवभाई, राजेन्द्र बाबू का भी बेगार देते देखे गये हैं। क्योंकि आंखों से बापा को कम दीखने लगा है और इस कारण वे स्वयं पढ़ने लिखने में असमर्थ हैं और जो भी व्यक्ति उपलब्ध मिलता है उससे पढ़ने लिखने में सहायता निःसंकोच लेते हैं।

बड़े आदमियों के सम्बन्ध में कहा जाता है कि वे वज्रादपि कठोराणि मृदूनि कुसुमादपि होते हैं। परन्तु बापा के लिये तो यह अक्षरशः सही है। कभी प्रसंग आने पर वे कठोरता को भी लज्जित कर देते हैं। एक बार एक तपे हुये कर्मठ रचनात्मक कार्यकर्ता ने हरिजन सेवक संघ के कुछ रुपये हरिजन कुआं न खुदवाकर किसी अन्य सार्वजनिक कार्य में लगा दिये कि बाद में चन्दा इकट्ठा करके कुआं बनवा दिया जावेगा। बात बापा को ज्ञात हुई तो आग बबूला हो गए और एक कठोर पत्र लिख मारा। दैवयोग से उन्हीं दिनों हरिजन निवास में बापू विराजमान थे। उन्होंने बापा से उस रचनात्मक कार्यकर्ता की सिफारिश की। इस पर तो बापा का सब क्रोध बापू पर उतर पड़ा उनकी वह क्रुद्ध आकृति क्रोध को भी युद्ध में ललकारती दृष्टिगोचर हुई। बापू हँसते रहे पर बापा आवेश में आकर चल पड़े। दूसरी ओर हम देखते हैं कि हरिजन कोलोनी, दिल्ली के बच्चों को लेकर जब बापा कभी कभी शाम को निकलते हैं तो स्वयं बच्चे बन जाते हैं। कभी कभी बच्चों की भाँति हो नाचते और मुंह बनाते हैं और उन्हें अपने ऊपर चढ़ा लेते हैं। उस समय बच्चों के भाग्य पर सहसा जलन होता है कि उनका वाहन बापा बने हैं।

सार्वजनिक व व्यक्तिगत हिसाब में बापा एक पाई की भूल भी सहन नहीं कर सकते। जब तक व्यय के बिल की पूर्ण रूपेण जांच नहीं कर लेते वे कभी पास नहीं करेंगे चाहे कितना ही विश्वासपात्र व्यक्ति हो। एक बार पं. कुंजरू का प्रवास बिल इसी कारण वापस कर दिया था, क्योंकि उस में आवश्यक विगत व वाउचर संलग्न नहीं थे।

कार्यकर्ताओं को ट्रेनिंग देने के वे विशेषज्ञ माने जाते हैं। उन्होंने हरिजन वा आदिवासी कार्य के लिये अनेकों कार्यकर्ता तैयार किये हैं। कई संस्थाओं के वे जन्मदाता हैं। अयोग्य से अयोग्य आदमी को काम सिखाने में बापा का परिश्रम व सहनशीलता अनुकरणीय है। १९३७ में जब लोकप्रिय मंत्रिमंडल बनने लगे तो बापा कहा

करते थे कि प्रत्येक मंत्री को आफिस कार्य की ट्रेनिंग कम से कम तीन मास की देनी चाहिए। पर राजनीति के दुर्ग में इस सेनानी की कौन सुनने वाला था।

जब कोई कार्यकर्ता बीमार पड़ जाता है तो बापा को ऐसा लगता है मानो उनका पुत्र ही बीमार पड़ गया हो। दो दो तीन तीन बार जाकर देखते हैं। डाक्टर या वैद्य से शीघ्र ही ठीक करने को बार बार चेतावनी देते हैं तथा उत्सुकता के साथ पूछते हैं। कभी कभी तो रोगी को अपना चिर साथी मोटा बेंत का डंडा दिखाते हैं कि "देखो, कल तक ठीक नहीं हुये तो इससे तुम्हारी खबर लूंगा।" इसके पश्चात प्रायः ऐसा देखा गया है कि अगले दिन वह निरोग हो जाता है मानो रोगी को डंडा दिखाने का अर्थ रोग ने अपने लिये समझा हो और वह भाग खड़ा होता है। अपने सहयोगियों व सहायकों का वे बड़ा ध्यान रखते हैं। प्रवास में वे अपने साथ खिलाते, पिलाते और सुलाते हैं। उस समय उनका व्यवहार वात्सल्य से भरा होता है। बीमार हो जाने पर किसी न किसी प्रकार आर्थिक सहायता भी देते हैं। उनके बच्चों की शिक्षा की सुविधा के लिये भी सहायक हो जाते हैं। संक्षेप में हम कह सकते हैं कि वे अपने कार्यकर्ताओं से आत्मीय सम्बन्ध स्थापित कर लेते हैं और वैसा ही उनसे व्यवहार रखते हैं व काम लेते हैं। जैसे घर का प्रमुख कभी डराता है, कभी धमकाता है, कभी विनती करता है और कभी डंडा भी लगा देता है। उसी प्रकार बापा का बर्ताव रहता है। यही कारण है कि ऊपर से कठोर प्रतीत होने वाले बापा से, उनके सहायक प्रसन्न ही नहीं रहते वरन् एक आत्मीयता का नाता मानते हैं और सहज श्रद्धा की दृष्टि उनपर रखते हैं। परन्तु बापा की त्रिकाल सहृदयता तथा महानता समझने के लिये कुछ समझ और समय की आवश्यकता है। नये शिकारी के बस का यह काम नहीं। बिरला सूर ही उनके साथ ठहरता है और वही इस दिव्य पुरुष के सच्चे दर्शन करता है। यही कारण है कि भारत के लोह पुरुष माननीय सरदार पटेल बापा के तीव्र (अथवा उग्र भी कह सकते हैं) स्वभाव को जानते हुये भी उनकी लम्बी और निष्काम समाज सेवा की दृष्टि में रखकर कहते हैं कि "वह गुजरात का अनमोल हीरा है"। गांधीजी ने उन्हें स्वयं-संस्था व हरिजनों का पिता" कहा था और उनके समान लम्बी निष्काम सेवा करने की इच्छा प्रकट की थी। अखिल भारत वर्ष में कौन ऐसा व्यक्ति है जो इस ८० वर्षीय युवक से तुलना कर सके और जिसकी सेवाएं हरिजनों और आदिवासियों के लिये इतनी लंबी

और अनूठी हो। स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात तो उनका उत्साह कई गुना बढ़ गया है। वे प्रायः पत्र-व्यवहार में लिखा करते हैं कि "अब मैं सेवा कार्य के लिये जवान होने लगा हूं, ऐसा लगता है"।

बापा का नश्वर शरीर भले ही चला जावे परन्तु बापू की भांति उनका काम व नाम सदैव जीवित रहेगा और वृद्ध युवकों को इस युवक वृद्ध से प्रेरणा मिलती रहेगी। प्रभु से प्रार्थना है कि बापा हमारे बीच अधिक से अधिक समय तक रहे जिससे बापू के अभाव की आंशिक पूर्ति हो।

## SECTION III

# DEDICATED TO BAPA

## 1. INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER

BY

RALPH RICHARD KEITHAN

WHEN I think of that grand old man, Thakkar Bapa, I think at once of one who has attained unto an integrity of character which might well be an example for all readers of this brief tribute to him who not only has made his own profound contribution to the New India but continues to carry on that work with unusual vigor and insight. One needs but mention the name of this Pioneer, who has done so much for the exploited, and one instinctly prays that we might have thousands like him to implement the work that has been begun and the lead that has been given.

Am I not right that our greatest need to-day is the need of men and women who are *true* citizens of Free India? Political freedom has arrived gloriously. The realities of that freedom have still to be realised in our daily living, in our villages—yes, throughout our social fabric. It is only when we have men and women with integrity of character that we can carry our task to a happy conclusion. And I am convinced I strike at one of our most important weaknesses. But a few weeks ago I took a village patient to a nearby Government Hospital. As often happens in such cases I started talking with the doctor, expressing my concern that as yet not a single doctor had offered his or her services to the health work which needs to be done in the villages surrounding Gandhigram. The immediate reply of the young doctor was, 'You must give an attractive salary!' My emotional reply was, 'But men and women like you and me have had thousands of rupees put into our education by the State. Much of that taxation has been levied upon the very poor who have no schools, who have no hospitals, who have practically nothing of those amenities of life, which you and I count necessary. Do you not think then that it is our duty to go and serve those with no cost whatsoever, who have made our privileges possible? They certainly will feed us and care for us if we do our work well. But our duty is to serve. That is the least we can do in gratitude for what they have done for us.' My young friend did not quite know what to say to that blast! 'But we have our own obligations also,' he finally said. I added, 'But even if we do as you say, which we have done, no one comes! We have offered the equivalent of the Government salary. Even the Government has suggested to some of their doctors that they come to serve the villages and

continue to have Government security. But until this day not a one of you has been ready to come and serve the needy !' It is that situation that I count one of the most serious in Free India. Educated men and women, on the whole, are not ready to come to the villages. Many of us have come from the villages. We should know the dire needs there. But our education has weaned us away from the village. We are not ready to take the responsibilities of citizenship. And where are we at if we do not do that much !

## THE THREAT OF FASCISM

Only yesterday, a highly trained man, one who prizes the freedom of a democracy, said as we were talking about these urgent village problems, 'we need a man with a good whip !' As a young man I remembered a similar statement on the part of a minister friend, with whom I was working. He had been a chaplain in the army. Thus he knew the advantages of autocratic rule. He also felt that we needed something of a dictatorship in America that we might get necessary things done. But I wonder if such men and women truly mean what they say. Are we ready to give up the precious privileges of a democracy ? Are we ready to accept a Hitler, a Mussolini, yes, even a Stalin, with precious freedoms limited—and we a tool of the State ? I do not think most of us in a democracy are ready to do so. But the only other alternative is not to rest on our haunches. Rather, we must voluntarily assume the tremendous obligations of citizenship in a free state and work hard at the job. Gandhiji rightly stressed the importance of *duties* in man's life. Our rights came only as we did our duties well. This, most of us have yet to realise. May I also say that our present educational system, our present teaching staff, very largely promotes lazy living, privileged living, the living of exploiters. Even in our homes we pamper our children. Religion tends to stress the easy life and not the hardships of pioneers. The home, the school, the temple must completely revolutionize their present institutions, programmes and outlook if we are develop the citizenship which these times demand.

## THE DEMANDS OF PRESENT-DAY CITIZENSHIP

How we need character in India to-day—vital, creative, pioneering character ! There must be a readiness to sacrifice leisure, comforts and even that we may consider necessary amenities for our own. I am constantly reminding my Christian friends that the second commandment of Jesus was to love one's neighbour as oneself. The neighbour, as described in the parable of the Good

Samaritan, is the man in need. Caste, creed, class or any other consideration is not even mentioned. That means that the children in the village are to be loved even as much as my own children. I am to take all as my own. 'An impossible ideal!' you immediately reply. But 'we are our brother's keeper!' We do recognise the integrity of character expressed by a Buddha, who said, I am told, 'Let me not go to heaven until every man and woman is there.' That is the height of character attainment that we must strive for constantly. I see no other way to solve the dire problems of India unless we are ready, by the thousands, to tread this way of thrilling adventure. Men like Thakkar Bapa have set us the pace!

## Character Development in the Home

A few years ago I visited often the home of a friend in which there was a growing family. I had deep admiration for that family. But it pained me to see Thambi or another member of the family calling a servant to pump up their cycle tyres and to do other small things which the children ought to have been taught to do. We are ridding ourselves of Zamindars, but we have yet to rid ourselves of that mentality. Most of us have it. We want our own way in the home—even at the mother's breast. And we get it! Indiscipline and the spirit of the parasite are bred at the mother's breast and all too often on the insistence of the father! When our boy was small we were at Devakottai, in the midst of parasites! Often we went walking in the evening, the children walking with us. How often people would ask us to carry the children, especially the little boy, saying, 'Pāvam'! (What a pity!) It was no pity! How are children to learn to stand on their own feet, to carry their own and due load in the world, unless they begin in the home! We called it 'chores'! But we all had them when I was a boy. It was my job to see that the woodbox was full; to see that the drinking water bucket was not empty if father was not present. It was my job to wash the dishes and to care for my younger brothers and sisters when mother was busy. Later it was my job to help my father with caring for the animals of the farm, morning and night, while he worked in the fields. Even when I went to high school, 7 miles away, I was expected to milk my cows, and do the other things assigned to me, before I left in the morning. Again, at night, it was expected of me that I should be home on time and do the 'chores'. No football or any other sport for me! I do not boast nor do I complain. But I maintain that we are living in such days when it is necessary for us to be at the job of nation-building night and day. These are days of urgency.

For example, the problem of caste and division in the villages is most

serious. Thousands of us ought to be at the job of making our humble contribution to the solution of this problem that holds back the nation's growth. Again, the problem of sanitation is undermining the health of the nation. Thousands of us ought to be 'cleaning up' every morning. We ought to be helping in teaching the nation how to keep clean, how to save its manure wastes for the fields; how to use night-soil safely on the fields where manure is so badly needed. These are not days for sleeping; these are days for strenuous work. We should learn this at home and school. Basic education is giving us a lead on this point and it ought to be encouraged with enthusiasm by all educated people. General Bradley has recently written of the people of America and its school system. His condemnation applies even more to the people of India: 'Their shocking apathy to the sterility of their school curricula is responsible even to-day for the political immaturity, the economic ignorance, the philosophical indifference and the spiritual insolvency of so many youths.' How our school system needs immediate and complete change! But we are lazy; we are not at the job!

## RELIGION THAT WORKS

When we were working at Merom, Indiana, in the U.S.A. a few years ago, a number of religious ministers had gathered for study and conference. My wife was helping in the kitchen. One day she said, 'I have never seen such a group of over-fed men before. What waist-lines they have!' Too many religious people are over-fed, if we take as our plumbline the hunger of the villager of India. And most of our people are hungry! Our waist-lines are too big—I am speaking now of the religious leaders of India: the Asaris, the priests, the moulvis, the ministers. It is good we have plenty to eat. Who can work hard without a minimum of food? But when we have enough to eat we ought to be working *hard.*

We put too much money into huge structures of stone and masonry, while the ordinary man goes hungry. I remember saying something like this a few years ago in a very beautiful memorial chapel in Mysore. Those who had something to do with the memorial were naturally hurt; rather than trying to understand my point. We are not as sensitive to the hunger of the people as religious people as we ought to be. Did not Jesus picture the final judgment we would have to face, as one of whether we had fed the hungry, had visited those in prison, etc.? Jesus did feed the 5,000 when they were hungry, as well as preach to them! When I think of the crores of rupees tied up in the jewels and other stagnant wealth of the temples of India, and at the same time think of the dire need of India's villages, I sometimes sympathise

wholly with the heartless condemnation of religion on the part of the Marxist.

Religion must get into the fields and produce more food. Religious men must express their religious idealism in village scavenging, in well-digging, in healing the sick, in bringing something of life's realities to the villages. Dr. A. E. Morgan, great village builder of America, said recently in India that most of our villages are unfit to live in. I think he is largely right. We must make them fit to live in. Unless the great potential spiritual resources of India help us at this job, I am convinced that we shall never complete the job. Only complete religious dedication is sufficient for the job that even a Dr. Morgan felt was impossible.

## SELFLESS SERVICE, NOT HEARTLESS EXPLOITATION, OUR GOAL

Some of us may naturally wonder why a Thakkar Bapa roams tirelessly up and down the nation, especially at his age, giving of his best for the lowliest of the low. It is because he is a true citizen of India ; it is because he wants India to be truly free. Our tribute to this grand servant of humanity is no tribute unless we make his great ideals, his manner of living, our own.

This is no day for exploiters. Away with the mentality that we should seek money and more money, and with as little effort as possible! Away, with routine living ; with inefficient labour. Let us get rid of the irresponsible student mentality and live creatively. Let us weave the threads of honesty throughout our national fabric. Let us be true citizens of India.

This demands fearless, courageous, thought-filled pioneering. We must insist on justice for the Harijans, the hill dwellers, the Aborigines. We must struggle for justice for the peasant and especially for landless labour. My heart growingly suffers with the serfs who live about me—almost slaves to the so-called ' respectable ' people of the community. Industrial labour must have justice. It is not getting it to-day because they find it difficult to work efficiently for exploiters. Thousands of us must get at the job of building up the agriculture of the country and the agro-industries along with it. Lakhs of nation-builders must be trained. We are at that job in our own humble way here, at Gandhigram. But how much more needs to be done ! How many more such training centres are needed! Most of us have yet to appreciate the importance of a *trained* worker. Not least of all, we must reconstruct our whole educational system until it is creative and lays the basis for true nationhood. What a job we have on our hands! Such as Thakkar Bapa are at the job. But thousands of such are needed. They also deserve to be relieved. Are we the citizens we ought to be ? Are we ready to take up the heavy load

of citizenship? Is the integrity of our character sound? God help us and humanity if it is not so. India has come forward for such days as these. All the world needs the gift India can give, if she will work hard; and needs that gift now and urgently. Gandhiji has given us the lead. Many grand old men have been and are ours. We, younger men, may we live up to the glory of the past, the need of the present, and the glorious future which faces us!



BAPA PLANTS A TREE IN HARIJAN COLONY, CUTTACK



BAPA INSPECTS A GUARD OF HONOUR PRESENTED BY THE CHILDREN OF CHANDIKHAL SABARA VIDYALAYA

(By courtesy of M. D. Dwivedi, Cuttack)

as an institution for providing needs and amenities, such as good water-supply, good roads, lighting, drainage, and also primary education. But what matters most is the spirit with which, and the manner in which, provision for these needs and amenities is made. The municipality has in its charge the moulding and development of the bodies and minds of the citizens residing within its jurisdiction. It has to deal with questions of public health, sanitation, and conveniences which cater for the bodies of its citizens; and the educational branch of its activities gives it an opportunity of preparing the future citizens to shoulder the responsibilities of the independence and self-governance of the country. If we only realise the vast influence the municipality exercises through these two main branches of its activities, and the potentialities thereof, we shall begin to look upon municipal work as a fundamental one in our programme of nation-building.

There is one further aspect of municipal self-government. The municipality comes in direct contact with the day-to-day life and the hour-to-hour needs of the citizen. Its constitution is democratic, as the municipal council is generally composed of the elected representatives of the people. It is truly described as local self-government, and herein lies its vital importance in relation to the government of the country.

I entered the Ahmedabad Municipality in 1919. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the leader of our municipal group, and the outlook and inspiration in respect of municipal administration on the right lines was obtained by us from Mahatma Gandhi, sometime before I entered the municipality. Mr. Montagu (the then Secretary of State for India) was expected to visit India (1917-18), and the British were thinking of granting India some measure of self-government. Mahatma Gandhi was President, I was Secretary, and Sardar was a member of the Governing Body of a political association called the Gujarat Sabha; and discussion turned one day as to the form of representation to be made by the Sabha to Mr. Montagu on the question of responsible government for India. The Mahatma put a very illuminating question to us :

> 'You are talking about taking into your hands the government of the entire country or the province. That is good so far as it goes. But may I know whether you have ever given any attention to the government of your own town with which you are daily concerned, and in which you have ample scope for work?'

This suggested a new line of thought and a new way of looking at municipal administration, far different from the orthodox one. The municipality came to be looked upon by us as a body with a soul.

Though we used to call the municipality as 'Local Self-Government', in practice we hardly thought it so. We felt concerned only with water, roads,

drainage, lighting, and many other major or minor things. It dawned on us only when Bapu questioned as above, that the municipality was in essence a self-governing institution, and as such, had all the essentials of self-government in the same measure as the government of a Province or the Government of India had, and required of us the same outlook and effort as for the Provincial or Central Government. It was a miniature of what we wished to have in respect of the whole country or the Province.

This new line of thought changed entirely our outlook and method of work. The municipality became to us, first, an institution possessing the soul of Swaraj, and the provision of needs and amenities was not, in itself, the end, but a necessary consequence of its being local Swaraj.

Some few and yet momentous consequent changes in the administration followed, therefore, in due course :

(*a*) We considered it essential that all our proceedings, our resolutions, our records, etc., must be in the language of the people and not in the English language.

(*b*) We must strictly adhere to the principle and practice of Swadeshi and must not be guided, in the matter of municipal purchases, by the test of cheapness *in terms of money.*

(*c*) We must make an effort to conduct our own affairs through the elected representatives of the people, to justify our claim of being fit for a democratic form of self-government. We had therefore made it a point, whenever we were in a majority, to have as office-bearers or Chairmen or as members of the Executive Committees, only the elected members of the municipality, to the exlcusion of the members nominated by government. It is well worth mentioning here, that, when the Simon Commission visited this country in 1927-28, they had asked for reports from Provincial Governments as to how far Indians were capable of shouldering the responsibilities of self-government. The Government of Bombay (in no sense friendly to the Congress or to the Ahmedabad Municipality) reported that, considering the efficient administration of the Ahmedabad Municipality through the elected representatives of the people under the Swarajist leader Sjt. V. J. Patel (Sardar came to be known as such after the Bardoli struggle in 1928), the Government had no hesitation to state that Indians were capable of conducting Swaraj in an efficient manner.

(*d*) The municipal government being Swaraj in essence, it should be a pattern of the government that we wished for the country. We felt, therefore, bound to follow the lead of the Indian National Congress in all matters, whether political, economical, educational or otherwise, and play our part as a municipality in the national struggle for independence. The history

of the struggle of the Ahmedabad municipality with the foreign rulers, in the national fight for freedom, is a very brilliant and inspiring one. The temptation to go into it is great, but I must be within the limits of the present article.

(*e*) The municipal government must have a living contact with the people and must be conducted on a human basis. The administration was, therefore, to have a soul, and was not merely to enforce the rules and regulations made from time to time. It was always kept in view that rules and regulations were intended for the public benefit and convenience, which were the chief objective. The chief drawback of any government on a large scale is that its administrative machinery being huge, any direct control of or guidance to individual public servants becomes impossible ; and as it has to work through a large number of officials, they have to be guided by rules and regulations. This is natural, and to some extent necessary. The greatest shortcoming of such highly centralised administration is that it becomes a machine and loses all human touch in its working. The municipality is comparatively a smaller administration and it becomes possible to have some kind of human element in the administration.

(*f*) The outlook of the administration must necessarily become the Swarajist outlook. Our ideal of Swaraj visualises the happiness of each individual, which means supplying the moral and material needs of each one of the three hundred millions. Our economics of khadi, our social programme consisting of removal of untouchability, etc., are illustrative of what we visualise as Swaraj. The municipality, necessarily, therefore, adopted the same outlook; and its programme of work, as also its economics, had an impress of that outlook.

I may just illustrate the point by an example.

The municipality had to make certain asphalt roads. For a couple of years after the resignation of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in 1928, the municipal administration was in the hands of those who differed from us. Contracts for road-making were given to a very big firm, which executed the work on a large scale by employing costly machinery. When the charge came to me, I abandoned this line of work. I got a few municipal employees trained by that very firm in the art of mixing of asphalt, and I ordered a few small machines which could do the mixing of asphalt and stone by hands. The roads subsequently taken up for asphalting were done by means of hand-labour, with the result that, not only was it possible for the municipality to give employment to a large number of people crowding in Ahmedabad from the rural areas round about, but the municipality saved a few lakhs by the time it completed its programme of asphalting. Indirectly, this helped the

question of maintaining sanitation and reducing unemployment, and therefore crime also in the city. It is obvious that our working was on, what I may call, the economics of khadi.

It is therefore, that I have advisedly said before, that it is not only the provision of amenities but also the way and the manner in which they are provided, that means and makes an amount of difference. I resorted to this method because the economics of our Swaraj for the country has to be based on decentralised economy. It is thus the outlook as to the purpose of Swaraj, which made the difference in the manner of execution of municipal works. I need not multiply instances.

On the purely political side, we rejected the slogan that the municipality should have nothing to do with politics. Of course, we did not actively take to any political propaganda; but, in all our administration, we had always the political background and the political colour of Swaraj of our vision. We had adopted the Tri-Colour Flag. We resisted the interference of government in the administration of our primary schools. We refused to give addresses to Governors, Ministers, or even Viceroys. On the other hand, we gave addresses of welcome to national leaders; and we did so many other things. At the same time, we did all we could on the civic front also, to cater to the conveniences and needs of the people. All along, ours was an attempt to conduct the municipal government as far as possible on the pattern that we wished for our national government, and to do our best to help the national struggle for freedom.

I trust it will be clear from the foregoing that our local self-governing institutions have an importance, and that they have to play a vital role in the government of the country. The work in provincial as well as central governments of the country does not come into direct contact with the day-to-day life of the people. It works indirectly, and many a time so indirectly that the ordinary citizen does not realise that the distant governments at the headquarters of the province and the country are really essential for him and that they render service which leads to make him happy. On the contrary, in these days of various controls, he feels their administration as unwelcome and is unable to appreciate what freedom has brought for him. It is not so with municipal government. If, therefore, the municipal government is carried on with justice and efficiency, its taxation is equitably and properly imposed, its expenditure is incurred with due economy, the man in the street comes to appreciate what self-government really means, and he stands for Swaraj (self-government) even at a sacrifice. It is not possible to command the backing of the entire nation, so necessary for efficient and progressive democracy, only by slogans as to the ideals of Swaraj. It is necessary that the

people feel the urge for it, and feel it so much that they get prepared to sacrifice for it.

A good municipal administration is thus a great education to the people, as also to administrators, in the direction of appraising the value as well as the mode of conducting Swaraj. It is a school where we can train our future administrators of the country, a school from which we shall be able ultimately to recruit the ranks of the provincial and central ministers, who will be in office with the necessary experience of not only routine administration, but with an outlook, vision and method which can be said to be the soul of popular Swaraj. Though we want machinery of administration for the governance of the country, there is every danger of our being lost in the machine itself, unless we have people who have imbibed the spirit and the soul of Swaraj, who know the approach to it on a human and popular basis, and who are strong enough to make the administrative machinery bend, if need be, to serve the democracy. Such personnel can be trained and prepared through local self-governing bodies, and therein lies the true importance of municipal governments to the national Governments in the Provinces and the Centre. I may mention Sardar Patel as the best and the most outstanding instance in support of the point I make.

## 3. 'PUBLIC LIFE MUST BE SPIRITUALIZED' —G. K. GOKHALE

BY

D. V. GUNDAPPA

RELIGION, taken in a broad sense, expresses itself in two different forms : love of God, and care for His work. They are, however, not mutually exclusive, but complementary.

Love of God manifests itself in theological doctrine, ritual, prayer, meditation, worship and other ways of devotional approach. These forms of faith and devotion vary from man to man according to varieties of temperament, education, environment, and experience of life. They thus constitute what may be termed the subjective or private aspect of religion—the aspect which in its details is particular to each individual separately. God is invisible,—beyond the reach of man's senses and faculties; the approach to Him can therefore be only in accordance with each individual's own capacity and temperament.

The general or public aspect is the expression of man's care for the work of God. Of that work, the consummation is in Life—the Life of the Universe. Concern for Life and its Good takes the form of charity, social service, public spirit, patriotism and philanthropy. These are activities in which the individual has need of association with his fellows, and which thus are objective in scope and method. God's work is visible and accessible to our sense-organs ; and its service must therefore be public and suited to the needs of the public. Public life is this service.

It is easy to see that the second ingredient of religion flows from the first. But what is more important is that the first cannot be regarded as complete without the second. The anchorite who chooses to live all his days in solitude, avoiding contact with the world around, does not live religion in its full sense. If one would acquire a true insight into the nature of man's relation to God, one should give oneself the benefit of both lines of approach.

We have examples of great men, in all countries and in all ages, who sought the fulfilment of religion in practical benevolence. A number of great names leap to our minds at once. Buddha and Jesus,—true men of religion, if ever there were any,—lived lives of incessant compassion and service to the

poor and the lowly around them. Healing the wounds of those afflicted with leprosy was the practical fulfilment of religion for St. Francis. To Joseph Mazzini, the religious life would not have been complete unless he threw himself into the movement to liberate Italy and establish democratic citizenship. 'God and the People' was the motto he inscribed on the banner he gave Italy—a motto expressive of his inmost faith. Politics was to him nothing but religion in action. Here are his own words :

> 'God, the Father and Educator of humanity, reveals His Law to humanity through time and space. We are to interrogate the tradition of humanity,—which is the council of our brother-men,—not in the restricted circle of an age or sect, but in all ages and in the majority of mankind, past and present. Wheresoever that consent of humanity corresponds with the teachings of your own conscience, you are certain of the truth,—certain, that is, of having read one line of the Law of God. The question is not that mankind should be wellgoverned, but that they should learn to govern themselves well. . . . The Sovereign Power is in God alone : and the sign of legitimate power on earth is the interpretation and fulfilment of His law.'
>
> 'Our fellow-men are sacred; for God lives in all the men by whom the earth is peopled. The Universe is His Temple. The image of God is disfigured in the immortal souls of our fellow-men. . . . You are all soldiers in one army; an army which is advancing by different paths and divided into different corps, to the conquest of one sole aim. . . . God alone has the plan of battle and He at length will unite you in a single camp, beneath a single banner. . . . We must ascend to the conception of humanity in order to ascertain the secret rule and law of life of the individual, of man. Hence the necessity of a general co-operation, of harmony of effort,—in a word, of association, in order to fulfil the work of all.'

Such is the foundation of the twin-doctrines of Nationality and Democracy for which Mazzini stood,—Nationality as a method of organising the various peoples of the earth for mutually serviceable internationalism, and Democracy as the way of 'the progress of all, through the co-operation of all, under the leadership of the best and wisest'. That foundation is clearly religion—as conceived by Mazzini.

Politics, after all, is one of the many forms which one's concern for the good of one's fellow creatures may take. There are many other kinds of public service. Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883) was an English economist whose talents and character had won him, before he was thirty, the affection and respect of his seniors, and ranked him among the choicest spirits of his time. But his life's interest was primarily in religion; and incidentally it may be remarked

that he was one of those who regarded Mazzini as the teacher for the present age to listen to. What is it that induced him to take up the study of economics? Here is the explanation, in the words of his friend Lord Milner :

> 'When Toynbee came to Oxford, his mind was absorbed in thoughts of religion, but the later years of his life were devoted to the study and teaching of economics. . . . Profoundly religious, indeed, he always remained. Incredulous of miracle and indifferent to dogma, he was yet intensely conscious of the all-pervading presence of the Divine,—"the Eternal not-ourselves that makes for righteousness". . . . But the more transcendental his faith, the greater seemed to him the necessity for a life of active usefulness. . . . Idealism such as his, he always felt, could only justify its existence by energetic devotion to the good of mankind. . . . But the service of man required something more than zeal and devotion. . . . Toynbee's sympathy was always with the aspirations of the working class. . . . What was needed for them was guidance ; and guidance could only come from those who had studied the laws governing the production and distribution of wealth and knew how and how far the blind forces of competition and self-interest might be utilized by corporate action for the common good. It was from this point of view that Toynbee approached the study of Political Economy. For the sake of religion, he had to become a social reformer; for the sake of social reform, he became an economist.'

Abraham Lincoln of America, who emancipated the slaves and re-united the United States, is another example of a man whose political inspirations flowed from his religion. Many were the occasions on which he looked to the Divine Light for guidance out of a perplexing situation. On one such occasion he said :

> 'I know that there is a God and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming. And I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me,—and I think He has,—I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it and Christ is God.'

Again thus :

> 'With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in ; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.'

Such is the way of a man to whom God is the loving father of the Universe and the world is the altar for the worship of God. It is impossible for him to think of God except in relation to His creation, or of the creation except as the garden of God, or of himself except as the labourer appointed to tend the plants in that ever-old and ever-fresh garden.

Instances are not rare in our country of great social and political workers who derived inspiration for their public work from religion. Indeed, working for the maintenance of the social order and for the promotion of the well-being of all around,—which indeed are the twin duties of citizenship,—is an integral part of the Hindu 'Law of Living' or *Dharma*, coming down from time immemorial. The *Isha Upanishad* says: 'This world entire is the dwelling of the Lord. Make use of it as given by Him. Seek happiness from it through the renouncing of it. Doing deeds according to your capacity and station in life, make up your mind to live for a hundred years. That (desire-free performance of social duty) is the way for you. So living, you will not be touched by sin or sorrow.'

Normally, even the man who wishes to renounce the world and go into solitude in order to practise religious devotions and attain spiritual peace can do so only after having served his period as a house-holder (*Grihastha*) and an active member of society. The *Sastra* does not permit anyone to discard any of the duties he owes (*Rina*) to society, even in the name of pursuit of salvation. For the true seeker of the vision of the Spirit, intelligent participation in the life of his fellow-beings is a process of discipline obligatorily prescribed.

We learn from our epics that sages like Vasishta and Vyasa, Bhishma and Drona, played an active part in the politics of their times. According to the religion of the Vedanta, the highest felicity for man on earth is to attain to a full and steadfast vision of the spirit of the Universe (*Brahman*). He should wear out the narrow blinkers of his ordinary individual self and get his soul to expand and transcend the seen and the unseen worlds. He must shed the inborn egoism; and the way to do it is by the constant practice of selfless altruism. Identifying oneself with the State or the community, even like identifying oneself with the family and the clan, is a process of education for the soul in the restraining of the lower self and the enlarging of the higher self. Citizenship is a moral discipline, besides being a material privilege; it teaches us habits of thinking and feeling in terms of the lives of the many, whom, but for the bond of the State, we may not count as our own. The State, like the family, is a school to impart lessons in self-abnegation and to purge the soul of its native passions—thus to prepare it for communion with the Supreme Spirit of all Being, all Activity and all Joy. The 14th-century statesman-sage,

Vidyaranya, founder-minister of Vijayanagar and high pontiff of Sringeri, summed up the view of the Vedanta thus :

ज्ञानिना चरितुं शक्यम् सम्याग्राज्यादि लौकिकम् ।

'Jnāninā charitum shakyam samyāk rājyādi laukikam.'

The *Jnani*—the seer, the man of the highest spiritual wisdom, one who in his own life has realized the vision of the Soul of the Universe in its fulness, —is competent to engage well in political and social activities. It is he who can perform those tasks as they should be performed. For he is above all the temptations of the earth and all the passions of the flesh, and has an integrated and complete vision of living reality ever present before his mind's eye. Selfishness is impossible in him; and his is the sure discernment of what is truly good—and good for each and all.

Such is the practical or the applied side of the Vedanta. The *Gita* and a hundred other scriptures inculcate this doctrine of God-minded activity, in and for the world. Hinduism has a tradition of religion sublimated into active benevolence towards country and humanity, which Plato, if he could have known of it, would surely have been glad to bless; for, was it not Plato's idea that, if we would have an ideal State, we should get sages not attached to possession and enjoyment to rule over us?

Let us look at some great men of modern India. Our first great social and political reformer, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was also the founder of the religious Brahmo Samaj,—the religion of the Vedanta being the fountain-head of his patriotic zeal. Dadabhai Naoroji, the apostle of Swaraj, was a man of deep religious faith and so was Anand Mohan Bose, another early builder of the National Congress. Mahadev Govind Ranade, whose life was a continuous unfolding of a sense of mission for the social, economic, political and cultural uplift of the motherland, drew sustenance for that life of self-dedication from the lives and teachings of saints Jnanadev and Tukaram. Working for the country, was applied religion to Ranade.

It was this tradition that Gokhale inherited. If the degree of a man's enthusiasm for religion is to be judged by the degree of his acceptance of standards prescribed by the orthodox as regards the externals of life such as dress and manners, then Gokhale was not conspicuous among conformists. His outward mode of life marked him out as a modern and a rationalist. But deep down in his nature lay that which is the core of all true religion—a sense of the mystery that life is, of the supernatural power that pervades and envelopes all life, of the supremacy of the spirit over the mundane and the material. It was this hidden and unostentatious, and yet real and active mysticism that animated Gokhale in all his ceaseless strivings in the service of

the motherland. We find his testament of faith incorporated in the prospectus he drew up for the Servants of India Society :

> ' One essential condition of success in our work for the motherland is that a sufficient number of our countrymen must now come forward to devote themselves to the cause *in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken. Public life must be spiritualized.* Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a dauntless heart which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, *a deep faith in the purpose of Providence* which nothing can shake,—equipped with these, the worker must start on this mission and reverently seek the joy which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country.'

Patriotic service, in other words, is only the translation of religion from the terms of the temple and the mutt into the terms of the legislature and the government.

It is this religious *ethos* of Gokhale, the politician, that drew Gandhiji to him. People in whom insight into the spiritual nature of life has not kept pace with their zeal for manipulating the machinery of politics, have expressed themselves as puzzled by the mixture of saint and politician that Gandhiji was to them. A deeper understanding of the true nature of religion would convince them that in reality there is no antithesis between the practising of religion and the practising of politics, and that, in any case, there should be no antithesis; and that religion and politics are indeed not two distinct and unrelated things, but integral and inter-connected parts of one and the same vast enterprise—the enterprise of elevating and improving the lot of man. Here are Gandhiji's own words :

> ' What I want to achieve, what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years, is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *moksha.* All that I do by way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end.' (*Autobiography*, pp. 4-5.)

> ' To see Gokhale at work was as much a joy as an education. He never wasted a minute. His private relations and friendships were all for public good. All his talks had reference only to the good of the country and were absolutely free from any trace of untruth or insincerity. India's poverty and subjection were matters of constant and intense concern to him. Various people sought to interest him in different things. But he gave every one of them the same reply : ' You do that thing yourself. Let me do my own work. What I want is freedom for my country.' After that is won, we can think of other things. To-day that one thing is enough to engage

all my time and energy.' (p. 286, Gandhiji's *Autobiography*, Edn. 1948.)

That is the spirit of a *Tapasvi*. And that is an illustration of a public man's life spiritualized,—of a political mission performed as though it were a religious vow.

Let me cite another case of the practical implication of the sense of religion—this from Gandhiji's own life. Gandhiji writes :

> 'To me the Gita became an infallible guide of conduct. . . . Words like *Aparigraha* (non-possession) and *Samabhava* (equability) gripped me. . . . Was I to give up all I had and follow Him? Straight came the answer : I could not follow Him unless I gave up all I had. My study of English Law came to my help. Snell's discussion of the maxims of equity came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of the Gita teaching the implication of the word " trustee ". My regard for jurisprudence increased. I discovered it in religion. I understood the Gita teaching of non-possession to mean that those who desired salvation should act like the trustee who, though, having control over great possessions, regards not an iota of them as his own.' (pp. 323-24, *ibid.*)
>
> 'As I recuperated (after a surgical operation) my desire to live revived, especially because *God had kept work in store for me.*' (p. 558, *ibid.*)

It is thus clear, firstly, that duty towards country and community is implicit in the Hindu conception of *Dharma*; and secondly, that, if one would engage in political and social activities, one should first divest oneself of all forms of selfish and egocentric calculation. Religion and citizenship so practised are parts of each other; they bless both the man and the community of which he is a member. This is the authentic tradition of public life, coming down from ancient India to the modern. Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak has illustrated it in his life, as well as in his erudite exposition of the Gita.

It is a joy and a privilege to point to the great servant of India, to whom this volume is dedicated, as another exponent of the Indian tradition in public life. Bapa Thakkar is to those who know him a living proof of the existence of an Infinite Reservoir of Love and Compassion somewhere beyond the reach of mortal eye—but everywhere to those who have their inner eye opened—to succour life and to sustain all. If Gandhiji is a witness to the Truth that God is, Thakkar Bapa is a witness to the Goodness that God is.

## 4. THE INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY AT WORK

BY

SARDAR BAHADUR BALWANT SINGH PURI

*Secretary-General, Indian Red Cross Society*

[*The humanitarian ideals of the Red Cross have an undefined affinity with welfare workers all over the world. The following article on the Indian Red Cross is, therefore, presented as a tribute to Shri Thakkar Bapa's services and sacrifices which, even though not directly connected with the Red Cross, entitle him to be revered as a great Samaritan of our country.*]

THE greatest humanitarian institution of the world, known as the Red Cross, hardly needs any introduction. Its fundamental characteristic of political, racial and religious neutrality makes it unique among all human associations, and it would be no exaggeration to say that if modern civilisation can boast of phenomenal scientific advances, political progress, and economic regeneration, it has every reason to be proud of the Red Cross as being its greatest gift to humanity in distress. The Red Cross dates back to 1864, when the Geneva convention was signed, but its more spectacular demonstration began in May 1919 when the League of Red Cross Societies came into being as the federation of all existing National Red Cross Societies.

The ideals of the Red Cross are summed up in a few words, viz.: ' the promotion of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering.' Simple as these may appear to be, in actual practice they embrace an enormous field of social endeavour and human needs. Their implementation has resulted in the setting up of numerous welfare agencies under the aegis of the Red Cross, all over the world.

The Indian Red Cross Society was constituted under Act XV of 1920 of the Indian Legislature. It is based on the Geneva Convention, to which the Government of India is a signatory. Like other sister societies, the Indian Red Cross is a full-fledged member of the International Red Cross family of sixty-six nations recognised by the International Red Cross Committee and federated with the League of Red Cross Societies. Under the Presidentship of His Excellency the Governor-General, the work of the Indian Red Cross is conducted by a Managing Body composed of a Chairman and 25 members, partly nominated by the President and Provincial and State Branches, and partly

elected at the annual general meeting. The Society's executive head is the Secretary-General. Since the partition of the country, and consequently of the Society, there now remain 325 provincial, state and district branches. All the provincial and state branches receive annual subsidies from headquarters to supplement their local resources.

Closely allied with the Red Cross, is the St. John Ambulance Association, which is also a voluntary charitable organisation based on the sense of human sympathy. Its primary function is to disseminate systematic knowledge of First Aid, Home Nursing and allied subjects. In order to encourage a more effective application of such knowledge for the greatest good of the greatest number, St. John Ambulance Brigades are set up wherever sufficient number of trained personnel are available. The Indian Council of the Association was organised in 1910, and its present composition includes His Excellency the Governor-General as President, the Commander-in-Chief as Chairman, India's Health Minister, the Hon'ble Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who is Chairman of the Executive Committee, and the Chief Commissioner of the Brigade.

The Association, which is regarded as the ambulance department of the Red Cross, has been training year after year thousands of persons in First Aid, Home Nursing, hygiene, sanitation and mother-craft. It has already issued as many as 730,000 certificates and other proficiency awards. The Brigade has 362 Ambulance, 55 Nursing, 89 Cadet Ambulance and 28 Cadet Nursing Divisions, with a membership strength of over 11,700. The activities of the Brigade include provision of First Aid service at all public occasions, and its ambulance personnel have helped in national emergencies such as floods, fires, famines, earthquakes, etc. The Nursing Divisions have carried on regular nursing duties in Civil and Military Hospitals.

The primary financial obligation of the Society is ' to assist in the relief of sickness, suffering or distress caused by operations of war in India or in any other country in which expeditionary forces from India may, from time to time, be employed, and for purposes cognate to that object, and in maintaining Red Cross depots for military purposes.' That is the reason why, during the last World War, there was such a vast expansion of Red Cross work conducted by the Joint War Organisation of the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance Association. An idea of its services may be gathered from the fact that from 1939 till the end of the war in 1945 it spent several crores of rupees raised through special funds for the sick and wounded and the prisoners of war of the Indian forces scattered in different lands. Hospital supplies and comforts provided, consisted of over 400 items of clothing, furniture, invalid foods, surgical instruments, toilets, games, radios, etc. Indian prisoners of war in Europe were supplied every week with parcels of Indian food and warm clothing at an expense

of about a lakh and a half of rupees per week. The Joint War Organisation had also organised an Indian Red Cross Welfare Service, a Red Cross Radio Service for Indian Prisoners of War in the Far East, and a Postal Message and Cable Service which enabled persons in India to correspond with their kith and kin in enemy-occupied territories. The comfort and happiness thus provided by the Red Cross to thousands of countrymen imprisoned or stranded in far-off corners of the world may be imagined better than described. But for the Red Cross, their welfare or very existence would have been at the mercy of governments who were themselves tottering under the avalanche of a terrific global war.

The end of hostilities could not, however, mean a sudden termination of Red Cross war work, for even now there are large numbers of ex-servicemen who contracted chronic illness or disability during the war, whose treatment and after-care continues to be a Red Cross responsibility. A special Medical After-Care Fund, set up in 1942, has since been maintained by the Society. This work has now naturally become a part of the permanent peacetime activities of the Society.

The other main projects into which the work may be classified are Popular Health Propaganda, Maternity and Child Welfare, Junior Red Cross, and Emergency Relief. Under health propaganda may be mentioned production and circulation of health propaganda material through a depot which caters to the demands of all Red Cross branches, Government and Municipal departments, welfare bodies, etc. The Society's film circulating library produces, loans, and distributes Red Cross films and magic lantern slides. Health Weeks, Baby Weeks and Exhibitions are arranged by our branches from time to time, for the benefit of the masses.

The Society's Maternity and Child Welfare Bureau acts as a Central Organisation for advice and information in the establishment and maintenance of services for the benefit of the mother and the child, and supervises Health Schools, Maternity and Child Welfare Centres, and the training of *dais*. Being interested in the promotion of, nursing profession, the Society recently helped the Government of India in the establishment of a College of Nursing in New Delhi, and is giving six scholarships to its students. The shortage of nurses in the country is as acute as that of doctors, and the Society looks forward to augmenting Government and public effort in meeting this shortage.

In order to strengthen the future of Red Cross Service, and to minimise the conditions that call for such service, a juvenile branch of the Society, namely, the Junior Red Cross, has been in operation as an integral part of the Society in India, and practically all over the world. The Junior Red Cross movement has been fostered in the country for the last two decades, and over 5 lakhs of

boys and girls in twelve thousand schools are being actively guided into the three-fold ideal of health, service and international fellowship. The movement enjoys the active support of the Education departments and offers a valuable medium of training the younger generation in democratic Red Cross ideals.

Another vital aspect of our work is emergency relief, which claims the highest priority. In the event of floods, earthquakes, railway accidents, civil disturbances and other emergencies, first aid, ambulance and transport services are immediately arranged through the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Monetary assistance and medical supplies, where necessary, are provided by the Society and its branches. An important instance of relief work is furnished by what was done by the Society for famine relief during 1943-46 in Bengal, Mysore, Madras, Cochin, Travancore, and other famine and food scarcity areas, for the most vulnerable cross-section of the population, i.e. children, and nursing and expectant mothers, who were regularly supplied with milk, multivitamin tablets and other protective foods. Altogether, over seven thousand tons of powdered milk was thus distributed to millions of beneficiaries.

The Society's relief work is not confined to the frontiers of the country, but in times of emergency all possible help is extended to sister Societies in need. During the period of the last war, and since, no less than ten lakhs of rupees have been donated to the Red Cross Societies of China, Russia, France, Greece, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Yugoslavia, Italy and others, towards ameliorative measures for the victims of war. In 1947-48 the Society was able to send to Indonesia, with the co-operation of the Government of India, a consignment of 11,000 lbs. of various medical supplies including penicillin, under the charge of a small medical mission. This friendly gesture was warmly appreciated by the Indonesian Red Cross.

During the disasters which followed the declaration of Indian independence on August 15, 1947, the Society mobilised its resources for the benefit of refugees, and provided enormous quantities of drugs, hospital requisites, clothing, blankets, milk powder, etc., besides rendering other welfare services. The tribal incursion into Jammu and Kashmir State also called for a great deal of Red Cross help, and plane-loads of Red Cross supplies were rushed at short notice, and supplies of drugs, clothing and other articles are being constantly sent to meet urgent needs. With the help of the Friends' Service Unit and the International Red Cross Committee, the Society helped in evacuating several thousand people from isolated pockets in the so-called 'Azad Kashmir territory'. The Ambulance Section of the Red Cross, i.e. the St. John Ambulance Brigade, made available 500 trained men and women for duty in hospitals, refugee camps, railway stations, airfields and other places. These

brave volunteers rendered first-aid to over 100,000, gave cholera inoculations to over 66,000, and vaccinated about an equal number of persons.

To sum up, the comprehensive humanitarian character of the Red Cross is discernible from the fact that its service begins with maternity and child welfare work, which aims at ensuring that the expectant mother is fit and healthy enough to bring forth a robust specimen of humanity. Pre-natal care is followed by post-natal attention so that the infant has the fullest opportunities of normal physical and mental growth. Our Red Cross infant is then ushered into a nursery where specially trained nurses cater to its growing needs. As soon as the toddler develops into a child, he finds itself within the protecting arms of the Junior Red Cross, a movement which stands for the purpose of cultivating in the minds of children the right attitude to health with all its social implications, the ideals of service, charity and chivalry, and the ultimate goal of promoting international brotherhood in the human race. The Red Cross has not yet abandoned the adolescent youth when he leaves the school, nor should he find it possible to forsake the institution which has endeavoured to make a world citizen out of him. Naturally, the youth would come forward to associate himself with the activities of the adult Red Cross. Thus, fundamentally, the Red Cross, unlike any other social organization, is a complete institution which if perfected to its logical conclusion is capable of largely eliminating the brute in man and bringing about the kingdom of God on earth.

## 5. SOLVING THE FOOD PROBLEM

BY

R. K. PATIL

I HAVE been asked by the compilers of this volume to contribute an article on food production in India, and thus offer my respectful homage to a person for whose dedicated life of service I have the most profound regard, and who, besides, has also been responsible for inducing in me a desire to serve though in a very small degree. I feel that this is the greatest tribute I can pay to Shri Thakkar Bapa. The quality of a great man has been defined very aptly in a Marathi saying—

आपुल्यासरीखे करिती तात्काल नाहीं काळवेक्ष तथालागीं ।

'The presence of a great man makes one feel that one should be like him.' It is our human weakness, which we cannot overcome, that prevents us from being like him ; but our inner consciousness and our conscience, both, indicate that this is the man and this is the life that we should follow. Thakkar Bapa has, in a life of long, silent service, served India in many spheres. In fact, he can be called the 'Relief Man'. Wherever there is any necessity for relief, Thakkar Bapa is there. It may be flood relief, it may be famine relief, it may be the heart-rending disabilities of the Harijans which have to be removed, or the extreme backwardness of our brother Adibasis, Thakkar Bapa is there to do his best to ease their suffering. Has it not been well said that 'the nobler the soul, the more the objects of compassion it hath!'? That is our Thakkar Bapa.

### THE FOOD PROBLEM IN INDIA

We have been so long used to consider ourselves as an agricultural country, that many laymen cannot believe that there is a food problem in India. In fact, there is a section of our people who feel that the food problem has been deliberately and artificially created, firstly by the British Government during the War years, for their own ends, and secondly, by the Food Department itself for fear of losing jobs which have been conveniently got. Let us exclude the mockery part of this statement from consideration. Yet, it is a fact that

we are spending not less than 5 crores of rupees annually in the whole of India on the Food Department itself. The total money we spend in any particular area in subsidising the supply of foreign costlier food is to the tune of Rs. 30 crores. On an average, for the last 2-3 years, we had to utilise from 110 to 130 crores of foreign exchange for buying our food. It is certainly a matter for consideration whether, by abolishing the Food Department and taking away the subsidy and trying to import additional food for about 35 crores of rupees, food prices in India could not be brought down. Such an expedient will do away with black market, hoarding, controls, rationing and all our present ills, consequent on the rationing introduced by the Food Department. It will of course involve more money in foreign exchange, temporarily, but that loss would be offset by a fair reduction in our present cost of living, which itself may help us to earn more foreign exchange, and, in the mean time, our progress towards being self-sufficient in food can go on unhampered.

Let us not forget that, in one sense, self-sufficiency and high prices are inseparably interlinked. It will be years before we achieve a stage at which we would have so much food that internal prices would decline by its very abundance and we would be forced to consider measures of keeping up agricultural prices, so that they remain remunerative to the producer. Such a position prevails to-day in America ; it is unlikely that we will be in that position for a large number of years.

How then are we going to achieve self-sufficiency by 1951 ? Now, this self-sufficiency is wrongly styled as self-sufficiency in food. It is only a self-sufficiency in our cereal requirements. Even after 1951, we would be grossly deficient in our supplies of other foods, like fats, vegetables, fruits, milk, etc., almost to the same extent as now, and these deficiencies are variously estimated at from 100 to 300 per cent. We would require an over-all development over a period of many years before we can hope to be self-sufficient in respect of all foods. Self-sufficiency in cereals only means that by the end of 1951 we will increase our internal agricultural production to a level which will render it unnecessary for us to depend on foreign supplies of cereal foods. At present, as everybody knows, we are not only so dependent but we are losing a lot of money in importing these supplies.

But the question is again asked : Are we really deficit ? Statistics are produced to show that we are not so. The determination of the question whether we are deficit or not depends on a set of assumptions for which there are no statistics, and in respect of which even estimates can vary from individual to individual. And while this is so, such statistics as we have cannot also be called very reliable, because the agency which collects them has not that degree of awareness of the great importance of its duty, which alone

can result in our obtaining correct statistics. In a large country like India, if the agency of collection is inefficient, a small mistake by each of the persons concerned would lead to a very wide variation from reality, when the mistake of each person is totalled up, as must be done in any system of statistics. Thus, our figures for crop production depend on—

(*a*) an estimation of the area under crop,

(*b*) an estimation of the average out-turn of that crop, and

(*c*) an estimation of the amount that is kept back ordinarily by the cultivator for his seed and other requirements.

Our estimates of crop consumption depend on estimating correctly the total population of the country at a given time, and also on determining what amount of food is consumed, not only by each cross-section of the population considered by age groups but also by a cross-section of the population considered according to occupation. A small child will not eat as much as an adult; a person following an intellectual pursuit will eat much less than a person doing hard, manual labour. We have thus to find out, at a given time, how many persons there are below a particular age, in respect of whom it may be reasonably assumed that they consume less than an adult, and then there will be divergence of views as to the less quantity they consume, and so on. The whole thing involves so many assumptions that every person who attempts any estimate of our deficit will arrive at a different conclusion.

Therefore, while we can make such estimates, no reliance can be placed on them. It is better to look to the actual circumstances for determining whether we are really in deficit or not. Now, it is an accepted fact that from about 10 years before the last war started, we were every year importing from about 10 to 20 lakh tons of food-grains, mostly rice, from our Eastern neighbour, Burma, depending on the nature of our harvest. This was a net import, and it is reasonable to argue that had we really not been in deficit in food-grains, there was not only no necessity of this import but we would otherwise have been a net exporting country. I feel that this is a complete and a convincing reply to all those who have any doubts about our food shortage.

In recent years, this shortage has been accentuated by various factors. During the course of the war, our stocks of food-grains, which it was the habit of the Indian cultivators to build up as an insurance against lean years, have been drawn upon, and today we have not those accumulations to stabilise our prices. Our population is also increasing at the estimated rate of 4 million a year, and, in production, we are not keeping pace with our increasing needs. Considering all these factors, it is estimated that if we can

succeed in increasing our food production by only 10 per cent by 1951, we would then not be required to import food from outside.

But we would even then be just self-sufficient and if we do not import food from outside, and we are just self-sufficient in food-grains, there is certainly going to be no substantial reduction in the present prices of food-grains. With no prospects of imports from outside, and with Indian production being just sufficient for its needs, prices are bound to rule high. Hence my statement at the beginning, that from one angle, self-sufficiency and high prices are interlinked. Our internal prices can only be reduced if we are able to import cheap food from outside or to produce such an abundance of food that internal prices would automatically go down. In spite of all this talk of reducing food-grain prices, so long as the Government of India's declaration stands, cultivators in India may rest assured that their food prices are not likely to register a substantial fall.

What steps are we going to take to produce this additional food? Everybody knows that if we use good seed and more manure, and have a larger area under irrigation, the yield can be increased. This is known as intensive cultivation. Another way is to increase the area under cultivation. With our depleted bullock power, this is not an easy matter. In fact, the complaint is that we have not sufficient bullock power to cultivate efficiently even the existing cultivated area. While, therefore, extension of cultivation is an item in our programme, we have to depend on modern mechanised instruments for bringing additional land under cultivation. Our experience hitherto has been that if we break up additional land by tractors, then the existing bullock power can be extended to cover that area also, to a great extent. We are importing about 375 heavy tractors from America on the strength of a loan sanctioned to us by the International Bank, and thereby we hope to bring under crop about 8.9 lakh acres of new land by the end of 1951. This will give us an increased production of about 3 lakh tons. But our main reliance for increased production is on intensive cultivation. This means the use of better seed, more manure and better irrigation. It is, however, not quite easy to produce pure seed to be supplied to all our cultivators in such a short time. The Agricultural Departments in the Provinces have got improved strains, which they are multiplying and trying to give to the cultivators, but they can reach only a small fraction of the needy. Therefore, each cultivator has to be shown the way to make his own seed selection. It is estimated that if he selects his seed in the improved way, he can increase his yield by about 10 per cent. When the crop is standing in the field, he is required to select such plants, as under the average conditions prevailing in the field, show a more vigorous growth than the rest. It is these that had a more virile parentage and,

therefore, are superior to the rest. If he can select such individual plants and use them as seed for the next crop, his yield will certainly be more than that in the previous year. The problem in this respect is to spread this knowledge among our cultivators and make them act upon it.

Nearly the same is the case with our manures. Manures are of two kinds—organic and inorganic. Organic manures are derived from organic sources like man, cattle, trees, grasses, bone-meal, etc., and inorganic manures are chemical fertilisers, ammonium sulphate, etc. Our potentiality for producing organic manures is immense, but we are not producing even a small fraction of that today. If we can fully develop and utilise all our organic manurial resources alone, we would not only be able to wipe out this deficit but we should be a net exporting country in cereals. This, however, involves an alteration in our present habits. At the present moment, all the cattle urine is allowed to flow away. It is either absorbed by uncultivated land or washed away into the sea. If we can absorb this urine and convert it into organic manure, we would be adding very considerably to our manurial resources. The evil of burning cow-dung cakes is there ; there is certainly a greater realisation of the importance of cow-dung as manure today, and this source of manure can be increased in the proportion in which we are able to provide the cultivator with an alternative source of fuel. This is partly a reason for the Grow More Trees Campaign also. At the present moment, we are practically wasting all our human excretions, which can provide us with manure of very great importance. In the urban areas we are now trying to compost as much night soil as is collected by the sweepers. It is thrown into trenches and composted with alternate layers of refuse. In those areas where there is a drainage system we are trying to utilise the sewage. This is a very costly matter and involves a lot of initial outlay. Progress in this direction must, therefore, be necessarily slow, but nearly 80 per cent of our population lives in the villages, and all their excreta and urine is going to waste. It has been stated that one important reason why yields in the Eastern countries like China and Japan are nearly three times as high as those in India is that they use manure produced from human excreta and urine. We are trying to devise a community latrine for use in the villages ; but again this is a process which will take time. In the meantime, till such latrines are brought into use in the villages, it is necessary for the villagers not only to ease themselves in fields, that is, on cultivated land only, but also to cover their excreta with earth, so that the manurial value of it would be saved to a much larger extent. If the villager makes a little excavation and eases himself in it and then covers it up, this will be still better, and the fly nuisance will be reduced. This is what Gandhiji had asked us to do, many years ago,

but we, in our indolence, have not yet done so. Even greater is the importance of urine. It is estimated that every individual voids in the course of the day 2.5 lbs. of urine which contains a much larger percentage of nitrogen than the excreta. It is suggested that in each household in a village, a small pit should be dug, which should be filled in with alternate layers of earth and leaves. If this is utilised for urination by the members of the household, in the course of a year the cultivator would not only possess more manure but would also have a very productive source of manure at no cost at all. It will thus be seen that if we can only change our habits, we can achieve a great deal.

The production of chemical fertilizers is still in its infancy, and at the moment the indigenous output is estimated at approximately 60,000 tons per year. Sindri, the new Government Fertilizer Factory, will be operating next year, and when in full production will give us an additional 350,000 tons of sulphate of ammonia. The Travancore factory will shortly be stepping up production and this should yield an additional 20 to 30,000 tons annually. To meet our pressing, immediate needs 1 to 2 lakhs of tons of chemical fertilizers have been imported yearly, but this is only a fraction of our requirements for food-crop production. It has been estimated that India can consume anything up to 1 million tons of sulphate of ammonia or its equivalent ; the demand is great, the advantages are known to the cultivator, and the sooner we are in a position to supply these pressing demands the earlier will we be in a satisfactory position as regards food.

Throughout the world it is an accepted and established fact that humus is required to maintain a satisfactory physical soil structure. This can easily be obtained by the concentrated efforts of cultivators in conserving and preparing organic matter for addition to the soil by collecting waste matter such as straw, leaves, town-sweepings, cattle urine, farmyard manure, etc., and composting them to conserve this valuable source of organic matter. Organic matter is the basis of all successful agricultural production, and is essential for the building up of suitable soil fertility. The judicious use of chemical fertilizers is the surest and quickest way of augmenting food production, and where these are used in conjunction with available supplies of organic matter we can be sure of increasing our food production substantially.

There are many plantation industries such as tea, coffee, sugarcane, etc. which can by virtue of their nature consume large quantities of chemical fertilizers without the addition of organic matter, but the interest of the cultivator should be to utilize his resources of organic matter, to stimulate his own production and improve the general food position of the country.

Then there is the question of minor irrigation. Government is financing by loans the construction of wells and the construction and repair of existing tanks and bunds on small rivulets. In a sense, the utilisation of more water is individually the best and the most lasting scheme for increasing food production. In the old days the prosperity of Indian agriculture was ascribed to a large number of such small works which studded the countryside. They have gradually gone into disuse and disrepair. The idea is to repair as many of them as possible in the short time available to us. It may be mentioned in this connection that there is also a proposal to dig 3,000 tube-wells in the three provinces of the East Punjab, the U.P. and Bihar where ground-water is known to exist in ample measure.

These are some of the ways in which we propose to achieve increased production in India before the end of 1951. The target for this is about 42 lakh tons, split up as follows :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Land reclamation | .. .. | 3.0 lakh tons. |
| Intensive cultivation | .. .. | 39.0 ,, ,, |

In addition, there will be some additional production from tube-wells and fertilizers, for which targets have yet to be finalized.

It is clear that to achieve this huge production a large amount of financial and aministrative mobilisation will be necessary. The administraive mobilisation has already taken place in the new set-up that has been provided for increased food production in the provinces. At the base, namely, the village, where ultimately effort must be concentrated, there is a Village Production Committee. Its functions are to see what immediate steps can be taken in the village to increase production; how much waste land can be brought under cultivation and by whom; how many wells can be dug in the village, etc. Above the Village Committee is the Tehsil Committee for each tehsil, and then there is the District Committee and the Provincial Committee. In charge of all the grow-more-food schemes in the province is the Director of Food Production, responsible to a high-powered Sub-Committee of the Cabinet working in full collaboration with the Commissioner for Food Production in India at the Centre. This is the administrative chain stretching from New Delhi to the village.

The question now is whether we will be able to provide the necessary finances and import all the materials that we require for pushing through this programme. If we are able to do so, well and good; if not, is there any way by which we can still carry on without foreign imports? There is such a way. Food imports in India are caused more by the necessity to meet our rationing commitments than to meet any calculated shortage. If therefore in some

manner we are able to reduce our rationing commitments, we may do away with the necessity of importing food. Statistically (and here again, a note of caution must be sounded against relying too much on statistics), our cereal production is just enough to provide bare sustenance at the rate of 14 ozs. per head of the population. The difficulty comes in actually providing these 14 ozs. to each head of the population. Ordinarily, in a free trade economy, the rich would be likely to have more at the expense of the poor, and therefore controls have been devised to prevent the rich from getting more and to allow the poor to get enough at specified rates. Even now, we are rationing about one-third of the total Indian population, and if we were able to reduce these commitments to a degree just enough to be covered by our procurement we would succeed in stopping our imports almost immediately. In the meantime, the steps detailed above for increased food production can go on and progressively alleviate the situation.

## 6. THE HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH AND ITS WORK

BY

RAMESHWARI NEHRU

'HARIJAN' is a new and generic name which Mahatma Gandhi gave to the community of the untouchables. As a matter of fact, there is no compact community which may be termed as such. It is a group of several Hindu communities or castes, loosely knit together, suffering from common disabilities. They were called Achuts, or untouchables, till Mahatma Gandhi found for them this innocent name, indicating their nearness to God. This has now successfully replaced the former offensive designation.

The dictionary meaning of the word 'Harijan' is 'Man of God'. Mahatma Gandhi gave them this name because he believed that, though they are despised on earth, they are near to God and loved by Him. The name is now well established, and is recognised, even in Government documents.

It is practically impossible to give a complete list of the castes which are considered as untouchables, owing to their being so numerous. But the approximate number is supposed to be about 250. Moreover, there is hardly any certainty about them. There are castes treated as untouchables in one province or in one locality, which are absolutely free from any disability in another province or locality. For practical purposes, therefore, all the castes classed as scheduled castes by the Governments in different provinces are accepted as Harijans.

A great controversy, particularly in Bengal, arose on this question at the time of the introduction of the 1935 Constitution, when as a consequence of the Poona Pact and the Communal Award, special political privileges were given to the Harijans. Certain castes which were included in the scheduled lists were not untouchables in practice, and others, which happened to be left out of the lists suffered from the disability. There is, therefore, no absolute certainty with regard to the castes, with some exceptions which may definitely be classed as Harijans.

In addition to the difficulties already mentioned, there is also no certainty about their numbers. Different Government reports have given different figures. But if we go by the last census report of 1941, their number in the whole of India is 48,729,000. In actual fact, there may be a little difference, but this figure may be taken to be approximately the right figure. They

are to be found in all provinces and the newly formed unions of India. Their number is largest in the U.P., where they form 23 per cent. of the population. Taking the Hindus separately, they form a little over one-fifth of the whole Hindu population of India. The proportion between the numbers of the Caste Hindus and the Harijans might have undergone some change since the partition of India and the exchange of population, particularly because a large number of Harijans were unable to cross the border, as many of them were forcibly kept back by the Pakistan Government under the Essential Services Ordinances.

The extent and the manner of the observance of untouchability differs from place to place. Before the Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore in 1935, and the consequent opening of the temples, Kerala and Tamil Nad were supposed to be the worst, where even unapproachability and unvisibility were observed. It was in these areas that certain public roads and localities were prohibited to the Harijans.

## TERRIBLE STORIES

The terrible stories of those days, recounting cruel injustice perpetrated on these unfortunate beings, are on the lips of people in the whole of India even today. But those, who still relate those stories are not aware of the great change that has come over the minds of men in those parts, where untouchability has lost much of its sting. Today they form the most forward block in this direction throughout the whole of India, inasmuch as in those parts exist the largest number of temples, which in actual practice are open to the Harijans. To my knowledge, it is now some of the area formerly covered by the Indian States which could easily be considered to be the most backward.

The movement of the removal of untouchability has considerably advanced. The educated section of the community is now more or less free from this prejudice. It, however, still persists in the case of the sweepers whose touch is still avoided even by this advanced class of society.

A few years ago, certain disabilities like non-admission, to temples, public wells, and public schools, and residential segregation were common throughout the whole of India with slight territorial differences in intensity. They still exist but the *rigour* has gone. The general atmosphere is favourable and public opinion sympathetic.

There yet exist some places, where they are refused the use of public buses and other vehicles. In some parts of Rajputana and in hilly and other backward areas Caste Hindu prejudice against them has gone so far as to interfere in their ordinary human rights of eating good articles of food, wearing costly

clothes and jewellery and various other matters of that nature. Most of these disabilities are not legal, but based only on custom and social prejudice.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh has fought many a battle against several such prejudices in different parts of the country. In the North, in the hilly tract of Garhwal the caste Hindus objected to the Harijans taking out their brides in dola palki and their bridegrooms on horseback in their marriage processions. They forced the bridegroom to dismount the pony and the bride to come out of the palki whenever the procession passed through their lands or along their house-fronts. The Harijans resisted, and the Harijan Sevak Sangh helped. After long tedious battles fought many times over, with the law on the side of the Harijans and the ready co-operation of the Government, the caste Hindus were made to see sense and the just demand of the Harijans was conceded.

In the South in the Tamil Nad region, the Nattar-Harijan question engaged the attention and energy of the Harijan Sevak Sangh for some time. The Nattars were denying to the Harijans certain human rights, like riding a cycle or pony, wearing certain apparel like shirts and coats. The wearing of gold jewellery and good clothes by their women was objected to, and several fights ensued as a result. That question also is settled now.

In Rajputana, the Harijans were refused the right of using the route along which the caste Hindus took out their gods on festival days. This gave rise to much clash. There, also, the victory belonged to the Harijans, similarly the use of refined sugar and pure ghee by the Harijans was objected to in many places. These practices are still followed in some places. But though not entirely gone they are dying out everywhere.

## Their Poverty

Most of the Harijans are poverty-stricken. Previous to my association with Harijan work I had never seen such poverty. The majority of them possess no land. Their housing conditions are appalling. Their remuneration in all branches of work is very small. In towns, as well as in villages, they generally occupy segregated areas, far away from the caste Hindu quarters. Generally the locality they live in is situated in the dirtiest part of the town or village. In certain areas, owing to their disability of not being able to use the public wells, they generally suffer for want of water. This need is particularly great in the villages where, in many places, it is difficult for them to get clean water, sufficient even for drinking purposes.

Even so, one should not be carried away by the idea that there is no wealthy individual among them. Stray individuals may always be found,

who have managed to accumulate wealth. Most of these people have done so by charging exorbitant interest from their own caste people.

Out of the smouldering ashes of untouchability which is slowly dying out, a hard economic struggle is emerging. It has been pointed out that most of the village Harijans are landless. They eke out their scanty living by working on the lands of Zamindars, who are used to taking work out of them without wages or without adequate wages. Removal of carcass everywhere is the duty of the Harijans. With the awakening amongst them they are now refusing to give any *begar*, viz. work without adequate wages or to remove carcass. This has given rise to a very acute strife. The Zamindars are ousting these poor people from their lands, are refusing to give them work, or passage through their lands and grazing ground for their cattle. Shop-keepers refuse to sell necessities of life-like grains, salt, gur and kerosene oil to them. This is causing them great hardship. In fact, untouchability in its worst form was never so excruciating as this social boycott. It is not difficult to conceive how life becomes intolerable under these circumstances. This trouble has taken a very acute form in Delhi and East Punjab Provinces.

By giving up carcass removal, the Harijans are suffering a heavy economic loss. It has been pointed out to them that they are hurting their own economic interests by giving up this occupation. But they are adamant in their determination. They hold the opinion that this occupation has been the cause of their being dubbed untouchables. Some of them told me that they could keep it up only on condition that the caste Hindus took to that occupation along with them.

To me it seems that this is the last citadel where the dying Rakshasa of untouchability is trying his gigantic strength. The attack is venomous and desperate and therefore inflicts deep and mortal wounds. The Harijans have to go through its excruciating pain, but the ultimate victory will be theirs. The fact that untouchability is destined to die is self-evident.

In education, Harijans are behind all other communities, their literacy figures throughout India being 2.35 per cent. One of the reasons for their educational backwardness is their disability to attend common schools, and this disability up till lately has been very common in some parts. But the great obstacle in their way has been poverty, and it still persists. To supplement the family income, their children have to be engaged in occupations which bring them some economic return. They are not in a position to spend on books, either. That is the reason why most of them cannot take advantage of the schools which now are open to them. In spite of this, however, a few highly educated Harijans are to be found in all parts of India, some of whom occupy high positions.

Their occupations are many and varied. The majority of them, of course, work on the land, mostly as labourers. All the so-called 'dirty work' is entrusted to them by society. They remove dead cattle, prepare articles made of leather, weave cloth and mats, make ropes, baskets, brooms and other sundry articles of everyday use. Some of them are masons but most are workers on roads or fields on paltry daily wages.

They are undoubtedly the most useful members of society, on whose labours society rests. Its whole edifice would come down with a crash, if their work was withdrawn for even a short time. Yet Hindu society has failed to recognise their services, and for centuries they have been terrible victims of prejudice.

More or less such injustices prevail in all countries and in all societies, but untouchability is a form of prejudice peculiar to India. I do not think its equivalent can be found anywhere else in the world.

### No Light as to the Beginning of Untouchability

History throws no light as to the beginning and cause of this abominable custom. Many secular theories have been launched, but none of them are convincing. The popular mind, backed by a few orthodox pandits, associate the custom with religion. But a large number of very learned Brahmins, whose number is growing daily, have proved it to the hilt that this evil practice has no sanction in the Shastras. On the contrary, the teachings of all the Hindu Shastras lay great stress on the cultivation of the practice of treating all human beings as equals, regarding them as the manifestations of one and the same God, from Whom all draw their sustenance.

By ignoring this great truth Hindu Society has done indescribable harm to its religion. This damage has not been confined to religion alone, but has spread out to other fields, and has stunted the growth of the whole nation.

## II

Work for the removal of untouchability and the emancipation of the Harijans is by no means of recent growth. In some form or other, it has existed for centuries. Practically all the Hindu religious reformers belonging to all parts of India are known to have paid special attention to the removal of this evil custom. Beginning from Bhagwan, Buddha and Mahavir, down to the present day of Mahatma Gandhi, a series of illustrious saints can be recalled, who have regularly striven to befriend the Harijans.

Chaitanya, Tukaram, Gyaneshwar, Nanak, Kabir and Dayanand Saraswati may be mentioned as examples. But, barring the last-named, their efforts were confined to bringing about a change of ideology. By steady and persistent preaching and precept, they hoped to change the practice.

Maharishi Dayànand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was the first in recent years to draw the attenion of his followers to the desirability of undertaking practical work. As a result of that much good has been done through the agency of the Arya Samaj, particularly in the Punjab.

In Maharashtra, Shri V. R. Shinde's work through his mission has been noteworthy. In the South and in the Punjab, Christian missionaries have worked among the Harijans, but their work cannot be called the work of Harijan emancipation, because almost invariably, they converted them to Christianity, thereby preventing their assimilation to the general fold. Other agencies like Depressed Classses Mission, Nandnar Math, and others have also contributed to this work. But an all India organization of the size and status of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, as started by Mahatma Gandhi, was never undertaken before.

Gandhiji's whole life was a dedication to the Harijans. He loved them most and served them most. In a way he started the struggle for the removal of untouchability early in life beginning with his own mother. Obedient to his mother and regardful of her behests and sentiments, the one thing in which he disobeyed her was her injunction to observe untouchability. He argued with her, with his wife and orthodox relatives and friends and at the cost of their displeasure befriended the Harijans. During the latter part of his life he lived in Harijan Bastis and not by preaching alone but by actual practice led the way to the removal of untouchability. He was not satisfied with the abolition of untouchability in the sphere of touch, eating and drinking, but advised and encouraged inter-marriage. Latterly he refused to take part in any marriage ceremony except that of a caste Hindu with a Harijan.

He was once addressing in Wardha, members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh on how he expected them to discharge their duties by the Harijans. One of our Brahmin members, highly respected in the Board for his excellent services to the Harijans, asked the question what he expected them to do besides what they were doing already. Prompt came the counter question 'Are you married'? On the member's replying in the affirmative, Gandhiji's face brightened up, and with great force he declared ' Well then, you should get your son married to a Harijan girl. Do you now understand what more I expect you to do?' I remember the scene well, for it was so impressive. Such was the identification he wanted with the Harijans. His ideal was a complete merger of the two communities, with nothing left whatever to distinguish one from the other. Such

was the dream which led him to start the great organisation of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

It was in the year 1932, in the month of September, at a public meeting held in Bombay, that the foundations of the Harijan Sevak Sangh were laid. It came out of the travail of Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast, which he had undertaken to protest against the Communal Award of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald relating to the representation of the Harijans in the Constitution of 1935. It is well known that his fast succeeded in getting the Award revised and replaced later by what is called the Poona Pact.[1]

## HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH, AN INDEPENDENT NON-POLITICAL BODY

Gandhiji's service to the Harijans was not only through the Harijan Sevak Sangh. From the time he took control of the Congress organization, he made it a necessary item of the constructive work of the Congress. The Harijan Sevak Sangh, however, is not an organisation of the Congress. It is an independent non-political body, whose activities are strictly confined to the removal of untouchability. But it is an allied organization to the Congress inasmuch as many workers are common to both, though Shri G. D. Birla and Shri A. V. Thakkar, the President and Secretary of the Sangh respectively are both non-Congressmen.

In 1933 and 1934, Mahatma Gandhi along with Thakkar Bapa toured throughout India to collect funds for the Sangh, and to arouse public opinion against untouchability. The tour drew the attention of the whole country to this important problem, and centres of work were established in all provinces

[1] Gandhiji said at the Round Table Conference that he would resist with his life the grant of separate electorates for the depressed classes. He meant it literally. On his return to India, he was interned. He could not therefore carry on the propaganda against the proposal, which he had contemplated. Not willing to take Government by surprise, he wrote as early as the 11th of March 1932 from Yerravada prison to Sir Samuel Hoare : 'So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorates would simply vivisect and disrupt it . . . I therefore respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorates for the depressed classes, I must fast unto death.' On the 18th of August, 1932, the day after the publication of the communal decision, Gandhiji caused a letter to be cabled to Ramsay MacDonald. He said, 'I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind, save water with or without salt and soda.' The Prime Minister cabled back a long argumentative reply defending the Government's action. The Mahatma, true to his word, commenced his fast on the announced date, 20th September, 1932. Followers and critics alike were thrown into dismay that the Mahatma should have entered upon an ordeal of stupendous and tragic implications. Events moved fast. Persons and parties acted with celerity. The Government assisted. Ultimately a system of primary elections for the 'Harijans' (a name soon after the Poona Pact given by Gandhiji to the depressed classes) to be followed by joint elections for both sections of the Hindus was evolved, and the famous Poona Pact came into being. The supreme significance of these events and the anxiety and the final relief of the nation will be clear from the following telegram which Shri Srinivasa Sastri sent to Mahatma Gandhi on the 25th of September, 1932 : 'Million homes rejoice and bless your superb service performed in your superb style. I confess I trembled in doubt, but the result vindicates and establishes you indisputably the foremost "Untouchable" and "Unapproachable".'—EDS.

and many Indian States. The All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, with a Board having 42 members from all parts of India, is responsible for the carrying out of all work. It has its head office in Delhi.

The Board meets only once a year, but there is an executive committee which meets more frequently, and to which is entrusted the day to day work of the Sangh. There are 23 Provincial and State Boards, with hundreds of District Committees working under them. All these centres of work have a two-fold mission—that of converting the hearts of the caste Hindus, and that of bettering the social, economic and educational conditions of the Harijans. More stress is laid on giving social service to the Harijans than on doing propaganda, on which a very limited portion, namely 5 per cent of the expenditure, is incurred.[1]

The work of the Sangh has made steady progress ever since its inception. Its expenditure and utility has been expanding from year to year. Its work excepting in the field of temple entry has been undemonstrative but solid and constructive. It is done on many planes.

## HARIJAN SCHOOLS

The greatest stress is laid on education. At one time, the Sangh was running as many as 1,298 preparatory schools, of which 37,089 Harijan children were taking advantage. Such separate schools were necessary in the early stages. In those days, Harijan children were not taken into the ordinary schools, and even if they were, owing to their depressed mental condition, they were not in a position to take advantage of them. As conditions have improved, and a fair number of these children are being admitted into public schools, the number of schools run by the Sangh has now been considerably reduced. Hostels

[1] In a letter written to Thakkar Bapa on 19th March 1933 from Yerravada Central Prison Gandhiji writes :

'This brings me to the last part of your letter,—overhead charges. Both you and I have been life-long workers and connected with numerous organizations. I really regard myself as an expert economist and organizer in my own way. We shall deserve the curses of posterity, if not also of the present generation, if we do not show that we have put the bulk of our collections into Harijan pockets. 10 per cent overhead charges, therefore, I regard as a liberal estimate. Propaganda we must have, and plenty of it, both among Harijans and caste-men. But we have to make the propaganda practically self-supporting, especially amongst caste-men. In my opinion, the best propaganda is constructive work amongst Harijans. It will tell not only upon the latter but also upon caste-men. For the present you may have two collections, one for constructive work, that is, for putting directly into Harijan pockets, and the other for propaganda. As a matter of fact, *propaganda work ought to be paid for out of the sale proceeds of our weeklies and the sale of our other literature*, so that the monies we may actually collect otherwise would all find their way into Harijan pockets. Our caste Hindu workers should *therefore be volunteers*, or *receiving just maintenance money*, and we should find out every *available Harijan worker whom we would pay fairly well*. He may not give just now very efficient work ; I would not worry, but would teach him to do the work. All this can be done only if we have *workers religiously-minded*, treating this movement as an essentially religious one and approaching it in the religious spirit.'—EDS.

for girls and boys are run by the Sangh. For bringing a change in the lives of the children these hostels are more effective than the schools. The lessons of cleanliness, unselfishness and discipline, which the children learn there, are likely to revolutionize not only their individual lives, but the life of the whole community.

There are two big residential vocational schools, one in Delhi and another in Madras, where over 280 boys are being trained in different handicrafts. Another big centre is being run in Allahabad. Similar other smaller institutions exist in other parts of India.

One residential school for girls in Ishwarnagar, Okhla, near Delhi, with 55 girls, and another in Sabarmati with 80 girls, are doing very good work. Spinning, tailoring, embroidery, gardening and household work are taught, besides literary education. In the Kasturba Balika Ashram, Okhla, girls are prepared for the Prayag Vidyapith examinations. Several girls after passing the above examination with credit have left the school. By the Central Board alone, scholarships to the value of Rs. 15,000 a year are given to college boys and girls. School girls are given scholarships from the Thakkar Jayanti Fund and other Funds up to the value of Rs. 10,000 every year. The provincial boards and district committees provide their own scholarships, and this raises considerably the number and value of scholarships given. Large sums are spent annually on providing reading material and examination fees, etc., for the children.

## Medical Aid

Medical aid is given by dispensaries near the Harijan quarters. At present such regular dispensaries are working and thousands take advantage of them daily. Over and above regular dispensaries, provision for medical aid is made in most centres. It is one of the most popular of the Sangh's activities.

## Other Work

Much relief is given to the Harijans by providing wells for them. The Sangh has an ear-marked *pani* fund for this purpose, and till now over a lakh of rupees have been spent on the construction and repairs of wells by the central office only.

On the cultural side, Harikirtans and Katha recitals (the reading of the sacred books) are held in their quarters. Caste Hindus are induced to join them on these occasions and on festival days.

Panchayats are strengthened, sweepers' unions are formed, co-operative credit societies are started wherever possible. In several places, housing societies and colonies have been started through the instrumentality of the Sangh. The giving up of drink and carrion eating, and better and frugal living, is encouraged. In the South, as well as in some parts of Central and Western India, some workers are living in Harijan quarters in remote villages. All this has a very salutary effect on the lives of the Harijans, who are advancing very rapidly. But the problem is so vast that all this effort is like a drop in the ocean, and only serves to show how much more remains to be done.

When a vast population of 48,729,000 souls is concerned, work among a few thousands cannot take us far. The need for workers is very great and a whole army is required. The Central Sangh has started a corps of workers who have pledged themselves to the service of the Harijans for five years. They are called Harijan Sevaks and are working in different parts of the country. A very large part of the achievements of the Sangh is due to the selfless service of these devoted workers.

## III

### GOVERNMENT WORK

The acceptance of office by the Congress in July, 1937, marked a definite advance in the path of Harijan progress. Its commitment to the removal of untouchability and the Poona Pact (to which Gandhiji was a party), which was its great moral obligation, made it incumbent on the Congress Governments to do their utmost to restore the Harijans to their lost status in society. During their short stay in power, they have exerted themselves in a variety of ways to fulfil their obligations.

The very first act of these Governments in 1937 was to share their newly acquired power and responsibility with their Harijan brethren, by giving them ministerial and secretarial offices. Since 1937, with a break of a few years, this policy has continued and after the resumption of power in 1946 and since the achievement of independence in August 1947, most provinces have continued to appoint Harijan Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries and other officials in high positions. In the Central Cabinet alone, there are two ministers at the present time. They have discharged their duties most efficiently.

The appointment of so many men belonging to a community condemned to untouchability by a large section of the people was bound to have a tremendous psychological effect. It perforce taught the people to respect those whom they were in the habit of despising. It also put hope and inspiration into the

hearts of the Harijans, who were given a practical demonstration of the fact that henceforth there did not exist any bar against their achieving the highest positions in the land. That was a great step forward, but there were many other ways in which the interests of the Harijans were promoted.

The measures undertaken could be classed under the headings of (*a*) legislative, (*b*) administrative and (*c*) educative measures. Bombay and Madras were foremost with regard to the first, viz. legislation. Bombay was the first to pass the Bombay Harijan Temple Worship (Removal of Disabilities) Act, which is a permissive measure, enabling the trustee or trustees of temples, if they so desired, to admit, Harijans into the temples, notwithstanding the prevailing custom, or the instrument of trust, or the terms of dedication, or anything else debarring the Harijans from entering the temples.

## Legal Affairs

Later on, the same Government passed the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act, which as the name indicates, removes all legal disabilities, placing the Harijans in full possession of their civic rights of the use of all roads, wells, schools, conveyances, etc., on equal terms with others. Similarly, Madras has to its credit the Malabar Temple Entry Act and the Removal of Disabilities Act with the same objective in view as the above-mentioned Bombay Acts. But while the Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Worship Act applies to the whole of Bombay Presidency, the Madras Act applies only to the western portion of Madras, called Malabar. There is another big difference. The Malabar Temple Entry Act is much more broad-based than the Bombay one. According to this Act, the fundamental authority is the ordinary temple worshipper, who is required to give his own decision. Each big temple in every big taluka has to take a referendum. It is only on the result of the referendum being favourable that the doors of the temple can be thrown open to the Harijans. Likewise, the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act establishes the legal right of the Harijans to the use of all social amenities maintained by public funds.

The C.P. and other Provincial Governments have also passed similar Acts with the same purpose. In the new Constitution passed by the Constituent Assembly, which will be put into operation on 26th January 1950, it has been clearly laid down that the Harijans will have the same civic rights in all details as other citizens of the Union. Accordingly, as far as law goes, they have now got equal statutory rights with the rest of the Indian people. In no corner of the Indian Union, no matter how backward it might be, including the former Indian States, can their right to the enjoyment of amenities provided by public

funds be challenged. This no doubt removes the legal bar, if it ever existed, but it cannot be said that by having this provision in the Constitution the object is achieved. Much remains yet to be done.

## A Great Weapon in the Hands of the Reformer

It is impossible to eradicate an established social evil of centuries which has so deeply sunk into the life and customs of the people, by mere enactments. But the above-mentioned Acts placed a great weapon in the hands of the reformer, who used them for his own purpose. One must not imagine that these Acts brought about an immediate revolution. The life of an average Harijan continues to be the same hard life beset with difficulties and hardships. Complaints that in most areas the Acts were inoperative were common, but a beginning was made which has now culminated in the inclusion of the equalitarian provision in the new Constitution.

All depends on how the Constitution will be worked by future Governments. Judging by what the old Congress Governments have done in the short time at their disposal, we may hope for the best.

With the aid of the few Acts passed by themselves, the Provincial Governments have attempted much by means of the administrative machinery to which efforts have been made to give an equalitarian orientation.

Thus, copious instructions have been issued to various departments, mostly in Madras and Bombay, not to tolerate caste distinction in any respect. Revenue and police officers have been specially instructed to see that the Government policy of the removal of civil disabilities is fully implemented. Authorities controlling public hospitals, wells, schools, dispensaries and 'dharamshalas' have been impressed with the desirability of giving equal treatment to all. Government pressure has been brought on proprietors of public entertainment and public service conveyances to disallow all distinctions of caste. This has created a wholesome effect, and injustices which were taken for granted a few years ago, are resented, brought to public notice and rectified where possible. Breaches of law and Government orders are punished by the Government and law courts. Justice is often sought through the courts of law and obtained.

## Every Province has done its Bit

So far, Madras and Bombay have been foremost in using the administration for this purpose, but other Provinces have also done their bit by following their lead in issuing instructions to the same effect. Both Madras and

Bombay created machinery to look after the interests of the backward and depressed classes long before the year 1937, when the Congress Governments first came in power. It is the same machinery that has now been consolidated and enlarged and brought more in touch with the public workers. In both these Provinces, boards and committees have been established, composed of officials and non-officials in most districts to further the education and the general well-being of the Harijans. The U.P. also has a special officer in charge of the education of the depressed classes. The duties of these committees and boards and officers range from finding out grievances and needs of the communities in their charge, and suggesting ways and means of removing them, to looking after their education and securing them their rights.

Big steps have been taken by all Provinces in the sphere of education. In spite of financial stringency, they have ear-marked sums of money for Harijan education, much in excess of what the previous Governments did. The Central Government also has made a provision of Rs. 10 lakhs for the award of scholarships to backward classes including Harijans.

## FREE EDUCATION

More has been accomplished by other means than by the actual sums spent on education, which under the circumstances had to be limited. Thus, in the C.P. and Berar, all education from the primary class to the University degree has been made free for the Harijans. Even examination fees are not levied. Likewise the Bihar, Madras and Bombay Governments have issued orders making all college education free for them. U.P. has also done the same with regard to Government schools and colleges. Free hostels have been started in many places. In provinces where education has not been made absolutely free, exemption from payment of fees is granted on a generous scale, both in schools and colleges. In addition to all these facilities, separate schools for Harijan children are run by the Government, where reading, and writing materials are supplied free. Scholarships are everywhere given for all classes of education. In Madras and Bombay, the Governments refuse recognition and aid to schools where any distinction of caste is observed. It is the duty of local board teachers to show the actual attendance of scheduled class pupils, before their schools are entitled to any grant from the Government.

Relief work has been done practically in all Provinces by constructing wells for Harijans, for which particular sums are ear-marked annually. Land for sweepers' colonies has been granted in some. Co-operative credit societies have been started. In the case of appointments, preference is given to scheduled class candidates, where other qualifications are the same. In

some places reservations are made for them and facilities are provided by giving them age and other exemptions.

### In Close Co-operation with Harijan Sevak Sangh

Most of this work has been started and accomplished in close co-operation with the Harijan Sevak Sangh. In the C.P., U.P., Bihar, Bombay Presidency, Orissa and Madras Presidency, the Governments even give financial aid to the Sangh Committees in different districts. Bihar, Assam and Orissa requisitioned the services of the General Secretary of the Sangh to frame schemes for the promotion of Harijan welfare. Madras recently entrusted the planning of a 5-year scheme for Harijan welfare, for which a large sum was earmarked.

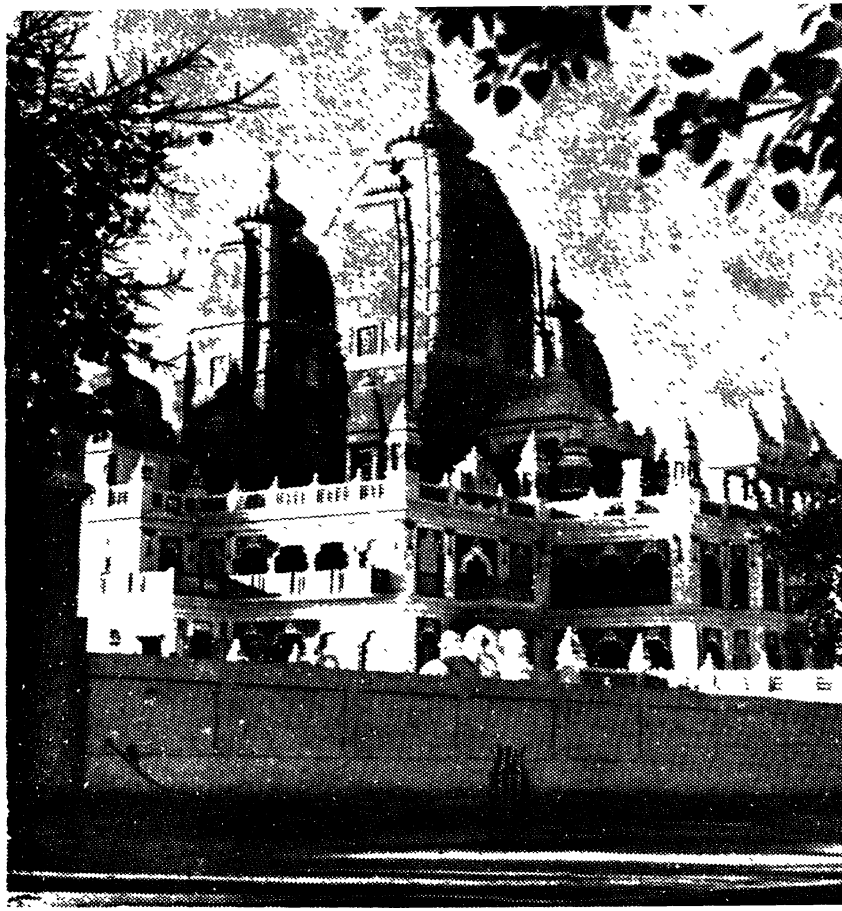
The deplorable service and living conditions of the employees of the municipal committees all over the country have attracted the attention of the Sangh for some time. But no appreciable work was done on any large scale by Provinces in this connection. Under the Presidentship of the General Secretary of the Sangh, the C.P. Government appointed a committee to make recommendations for the betterment of this class of public servants. A start has been made, and everywhere the Municipal Committees are doing whatever they can within the limited finances at their disposal.

This, in brief, is the story of the work of the Congress Governments for Harijans in the different Provinces. Though the work is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, their good intentions and earnest efforts are transparently clear from what has been done. A start has been made. I am sure the work will continue, and very soon the time will come when Harijans will enjoy an equal status in actual practice in day-to-day life with the rest of the people in all ways.

## IV

### Temple Entry

It has often been said by the leaders of the Harijan movement that temple entry by the Harijans is the crux of the whole movement. This assertion has been hotly contested by another section, who think that the real problem is economic, with an educational and social side to it. They maintain that, if Harijans had education and their economic conditions were good, untouchability would disappear by itself, and even if it did not, it would not matter much.



LAKSHMINARAYAN TEMPLE, DELHI

There is difference of opinion among the Harijans themselves. There are men of faith among them, in very large numbers, who are keen on entering the temples, whose joy is boundless when they are admitted into them and allowed darshan and worship. There is another section consisting of young men, many of whom are affected by Western ideas, in whose eyes the right of temple entry has no value. Often enough, these men put us the question—why we, the Harijan Sevaks, waste our energy in getting the temples open for them—temples in which young men and women of education are fast losing faith?

There are a few who even impute motives, and allege that, as the number of caste Hindu worshippers of the temples is diminishing, Harijans are being forced into the temples to replace them. But the number of those who hold the latter view, among Harijans as well as non-Harijans, is very small. Much the larger portion is of those who consider temple entry the acid test by which the removal of untouchability can be measured.

Untouchability, in its wider aspect of high and low, exists in all countries and societies. It is a curse of civilization, which has come in with the civilization of mankind. But physical untouchability is a phenomenon which is peculiar to India, and which is commonly believed to have its sanctions in religion. It is this most deep-rooted aspect of untouchability which gives importance to temple entry. To destroy it root and branch, it has to be killed at its very source of origin. All other work of education and economic emancipation, however intensive, cannot take the place of temple entry, futile though it may appear to the few who are lacking in faith.

India's vast masses are still full of faith. Their lives are woven around the temples and the numerous sacred places of pilgrimage. Sacred days of festivals are still like lighthouses in the otherwise dark and dreary ocean of their existence. It is, therefore, very important that in these places of worship, and on these occasions of festivals, men and women of common faith should meet each other on terms of equality, forgetting the prejudices which have kept them divided for centuries. Any other course would be like destroying the branches while manuring the roots.

Work on this behalf began long ago. It was in the year 1924 that the first organised satyagraha was started for this purpose in Kerala, though the object was very limited—opening of roads leading to Vaikom temple, the most orthodox spot in the whole of India. Since then the work of propaganda has continued, entailing another satyagraha in 1932, culminating in Shri Kelappan's fast unto death, which was suspended at Gandhiji's intervention. From Guruvayur the movement spread to other areas. Madura and Srirangam in Madras took it up later, taking a referendum on the subject. The results of

this referendum were very encouraging, as many as 80 per cent of the temple-going population declaring themselves in favour of temple entry.

Mahatma Gandhi's fast in September 1932, his Harijan tour in 1933-34, and the setting up of the Harijan Sevak Sangh gave great momentum to the movement. During Mahatma Gandhi's fast in 1932, several temples in odd corners of India were opened, but as this was done in the heat of the moment, without much previous preparation, in most cases this opening was temporary. The first real success achieved in this connection was the opening of the Travancore temples by a Royal Proclamation of H.H. the Maharaja of Travancore in the year 1935. It was a complete transformation, which Mahatma Gandhi called a miracle, as in Travancore even the shadow of a Harijan was considered to bring pollution to a caste Hindu.

Great and intensive work, with which I was closely associated, preceded the proclamation. In May 1935, six months before the proclamation, I toured the whole State and was privileged to address scores of meetings attended by thousands of people. During that tour, practically the whole Hindu population of the State declared themselves to be in favour of temple entry, and with one voice requisitioned the Maharaja, in whom the power was vested, to open the temples for the Harijans. It was in response to this powerful public opinion that the proclamation was issued, and that was the reason why it was so spontaneously acted upon. To-day, Harijans worship at the temples on the same terms as the caste Hindus and the old distinction has practically gone.

This deep and genuine reform in the most orthodox centre, touched the whole of India. Stray temples in different parts continued voluntarily to open. Several were opened in the Bombay Presidency after the Temple Entry Act of 1938. The Maharaja Holkar followed the footsteps of Travancore and opened all State temples by a proclamation. Public opinion in the State not being ready for the reform, the implementation of the proclamation was postponed and took place by a fresh order of the State in March 1939. Some other minor States such as Lathi, Aundh, Sandur, Dewas and others also opened their temples.

By far the greatest achievement was the opening in the year 1939, of the ancient temple of Meenakshi-Sundareshwar at Madura, and along with it, of several others in Tanjore, Kuttalam, etc., in Tamilnad. The most significant feature of this event was that it was accomplished peacefully without the pressure of law or police or authority. Sri Rajagopalachariar, the then Prime Minister, who gave his whole-hearted support to the cause, was very keen that temples should be opened without the aid of law by the voluntary free will of the people. Consequently, a similar campaign to the Travancore one was organised

by the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Scores of meetings, which were attended by thousands, were held all over Tamilnad. I had the honour of presiding at most of these meetings, where I beheld the joyful spectacle of all kind of people vying with each other in giving their support. Among them were men and women who in their thoughts and way of living were otherwise orthodox. With full faith in the Shastras, on the basis of which temple entry was denied to Harijans, they fervently supported the cause, declaring it to be absolutely in conformity with the dictates of their religion. No one can deny that in Tamilnad, as in Travancore, temples were opened in deference to a strongly expressed public opinion.

Of course, an act was passed by the Government of Sri Rajagopalachariar, later on, after the entry of the Harijans into the temples was already an accomplished fact, indemnifying and safeguarding against legal prosecution all those who took part in the reform. An ordinance by the Governor was also issued for the interim period with the same purpose.

There are yet a few who oppose the movement. At one time they were very active in their opposition. They still take their stand on the Shastras. But their numbers are constantly dwindling and they are fast losing ground. There are learned Pandits among them, well versed in the Shastras, who are still debating the point. But the reformists claim an increasing number of learned people, who have spared no pains in proving that the ancient Shastras have no sanction for Untouchability. Books, pamphlets, articles and leaflets are being constantly issued propagating that view. I have no doubt that, with the growing volume of public opinion on our side, the few resisters will soon be convinced of the justice of our cause. Even now most of them have adopted the cause of passive inactivity. With untouchability living, Hinduism was in great danger. Under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, a great wave of purification has been set in motion. It will wash off the accumulated toxins of centuries in the old body of Sanatan Dharma, and give it a new life and vigour. It will release forces of love, goodwill, equality and freedom, which have great potential value in curing a great many ills of the world. Who knows, this apparently small and comparatively insignificant reform may be the precursor of some great movement destined to bring peace to an aching world ?

# 7. THE HARIJAN MOVEMENT

BY

S. R. VENKATARAMAN

## UNTOUCHABILITY—A BLOT ON HINDUISM

UNTOUCHABILITY is an exotic growth in Hinduism.

Our Scriptures proclaim that there is no untouchability ; our men of wisdom and learning had by their way of life demonstrated that untouchability was non-existent in ancient days and that no particular community as a whole was branded as untouchable and put outside the pale of Hindu Society. Those who had strayed away from their path of Dharma were alone called Chandalas or people outside the pale of Hindu Society, but even they could shed their Chandala character by undergoing certain penances and purificatory ceremonies. But the ignorant, superstitious and the powerful among the people have perpetually condemned a certain class of people as untouchables for life with the consequent deprivation of their freedom and legitimate social, civic and economic rights. When the so-called untouchables were reduced to the position of mere dumb driven cattle, the finer and nobler spirits among Hindus revolted against such iniquities and worked in their own way to secure for the untouchables their legitimate rights as a human beings. The galaxy of saints, seers and reformers who laboured ceaselessly and long to remove this cancer from the body politic is formidable. Like Slavery and Sati, untouchability was a pernicious socio-economic evil which they felt had to be removed root and branch. But their voice and influence did not reach a wider circle in the very nature of things then existing. It was left to Mahatma Gandhi in our own times to give the movement for the removal of untouchability that nation-wide drive which resulted in the miracle we have witnessed in our own life-time, namely the universal acceptance by the whole country that untouchability is a thing of the past. The great and difficult task of canalising the force thus released by the Mahatma into constructive channels was entrusted to that great social Engineer and Servant of India, Thakkar Bapa, whose apostolic fervour and unremitting labour led to the consummation of the cherished ambition of Gandhiji, namely to see the demon of untouchability buried seven fathoms deep, in his own life-time. The pre-Gandhian efforts to remove untouchability though sponsored by our best men were not destined to lead to any lasting

nation-wide results. However it may be appropriate to refer briefly to the endeavours of Gandhiji's forerunners in this field of social reform.

## Early Pioneers in the Harijan Cause

Our great religious leaders and saints had always befriended the poor untouchables. Sri Rama befriended Guha the boatman, Savari, the Bhil woman, Hanuman the monkey and Vibhishana the brother of the Rakshasa, Ravana. Likewise, Krishna, Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Sankaradeva of Assam have all befriended the untouchable, the lowliest and the last and revered them as sparks of the one and only effulgent Divine Being. Chaitanya, Tukaram, Ramanand, Guru Nanak, Kabir, Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Ranade and others have blazed a trail in this respect which is in accord with the highest truths of Hinduism, namely that there is nothing like untouchability in Hinduism.

## Later Pioneers

The Hindu reformists belonging to the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and other reformist movements in the land took the lead in the matter of starting schools for the untouchables and organising other welfare activities.

The first school for Panchamas in Bombay was started in 1855 though it was shortlived. In 1870 the Prarthana Samaj started two schools for the Panchamas on the suggestion of Keshub Chunder Sen. A third school was started in 1891 by one Damodar Shukda Walla. In South India Kudumal Ranga Rao was a pioneer in the field of Harijan uplift. He organised the Depressed Classes Mission in Mangalore in 1897 and started under its auspices several schools for the Panchama children. A little later, V. R. Shinde of Bombay started the Depressed Classes Mission in Poona and wanted to organise it on an all-India basis. He started a branch of his mission in Madras as well. A. C. Mazumdar, a high class Brahmin lawyer and President of the Congress, was a pioneer in this field in Faridpur District in Bengal. He organised 25 schools with 1,200 pupils in 1911. Sasipada Banerji, another great Bengali and a man of God, organised several schools in his own native town of Baranagar for the benefit of the Panchamas, as far back as 1866. There must be several other sincere patriots and reformers less known and silent who must go unnoticed in this brief sketch, like the unknown warrior. But one thing is clear. Whether these reformers were big men or small men they had an uphill task in the work they had undertaken. They had to face every kind of

obstacle and abuse from the orthodox section but their faith in the purpose of providence made them go forward with their allotted task with courage and confidence.

## Leaders' Views on Untouchability

While these persons were men of action engaged in the dull routine of collecting funds and running institutions and carrying on propaganda in favour of their work in their own narrow sphere of life, there were leaders of all India eminence drawn from different walks of life who not only supported the need for such welfare activities among the untouchables but also influenced public opinion in favour of such welfare activities, and the removal of untouchability. Among these was the Gaekwar of Baroda who took great interest in the elevation of the Depressed Classes. The present Law Member of the Government of India, Dr. Ambedkar, our Modern Manu, is one whom the Gaekwar helped in his higher and foreign education. The Gaekwar warned that ' when one-sixth of the people are in a chronically depressed and ignorant condition, no Government can afford to ignore the urgent necessity of doing what it can for their elevation.' Lajpat Rai, the leader of the Arya Samaj, declared that the so-called untouchables ' must come up and occupy their proper place in the social hierarchy before we can with perfect truth call ourselves a nation'. Gokhale, the Founder of the Servants of India Society and the most outstanding patriot of our country, in speaking at the Dharwar Social Conference asked ' How can we possibly realise our national aspirations, how can our country ever hope to take her place among the nations of the world if we allow large numbers of our country-men to remain sunken in ignorance, barbarism and degradation? Unless these men are gradually raised to a higher level morally and intellectually, how can they possibly understand our thoughts or share our hopes or co-operate with us in our efforts?' N. G. Chandavarkar a judge of the Bombay High Court advocated the removal of untouchability as a measure of enlightened self-interest. He said, 'this movement for the elevation of the Depressed Classes rightly conducted and sympathetically directed with patience must elevate us all whether we be high caste or low caste. So long as we have the untouchables among us we shall bring on ourselves the contamination of untouchableness. He who tries to lower and degrade others, and treat them as cast-aways, ends in the long run by lowering and degrading himself.' V. Krishnaswami Iyer, one of our far-sighted statesmen, able lawyer, judge and administrator, appeals to people 'to grant to the Panchamas their legal right, by recognising all the rights which the law has conferred upon the Depressed Classes and not bringing social

pressure upon them in order to induce them to desist from exercising the rights which are their own.' Mr. T. V. Seshagiri Iyer who rose to be a judge of the High Court asserted that 'more important than the reformation of our social customs is the necessity for conciliatory and humane treatment of the lower classes of Society. Their reclamation and the necessity for attaching them to us by bonds of love and affection should claim the attention of the best among us.' P. R. Sundara Iyer, another judge of the High Court, was surprised 'that in a country where infinite compassion is the first lesson taught by religion the Panchama and other classes should have so long been treated in the way in which they have been, is a matter which is one of surprise to those who know the real qualities of people.'

## Nine Tests of Untouchability

Though public opinion was mobilised in favour of the removal of untouchability and social workers were trying to bring benefits of education to them, no attempt was made to enumerate the taboos which constituted untouchability. The following were the nine tests enumerated in the 1931 Census report :

(1) Whether the caste or class in question can be served by clean Brahmins or not.

(2) Whether the caste or class in question can be served by barbers, water-carriers, tailors, etc., who serve the Caste Hindus.

(3) Whether the caste in question pollutes a high caste Hindu by contact or proximity.

(4) Whether the caste or class in question is one from whose hands a Caste Hindu can take water.

(5) Whether the caste or class in question is debarred from using public conveniences such as roads, ferries, wells or schools.

(6) Whether the caste or class in question is debarred from the use of Hindu temples.

(7) Whether in ordinary social intercourse a well-educated member of the caste or class in question will be treated as an equal by high caste men of the same educational qualifications.

(8) Whether the caste or class in question is merely depressed on account of its own ignorance, illiteracy or poverty and but for them would be subject to no social disability.

(9) Whether it is depressed on account of the occupation followed and whether but for that occupation it would be subject to no social disability.

## GANDHIJI'S EARLY WORK FOR HARIJAN UPLIFT

When Gandhiji returned from South Africa he found that the South African problem was the measure of our problem of the untouchables. Even while in South Africa he was faced with this problem. It was no wonder therefore that it claimed his first attention and when he started his ashram at Sabarmati he readily admitted a Harijan couple sent from Bombay by Thakkar Bapa as members of the Ashram on terms of equality. On this score he had to meet not only with orthodox opposition but also financial difficulty. But Gandhiji never wavered. Side by side with political work Gandhiji carried on his Harijan work as well and his interest in Harijan uplift work gave a fillip to the Harijan movement all over the country.

## THE BRITISH HELP THE MOVEMENT—THE POONA PACT

The Harijan movement thus started by Gandhiji would not have gained the prominence and the tempo had it not been for the action of the then Premier of England, Ramsay MacDonald. Perhaps it may be said without any fear of contradiction that if Mr. Ramsay MacDonald had not given his Communal Award the whole aspect of the Harijan problem would have changed and taken a different turn.

After the three Round Table Conferences that were held in London to settle the political problems of India, the British cabinet decided to keep out Harijans (the Hindu Depressed Classes) outside the Hindu fold by giving them a separate political existence through a system of separate electorates. The British cabinet was again at its game of divide and rule. This was tantamount to dividing the Hindu Community into two to the great detriment of its solidarity and homogeneity. When Mahatma Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress he had warned the British Cabinet that he would resist with his life any attempt on the part of Britain to separate the Harijans from the Hindus. The British Cabinet did not fully understand the implications of Gandhiji's statement. They thought it was only a threat which would never be executed. But the British Cabinet was reckoning without its host. Gandhiji, who was clapped in jail soon after his return from England carried on a fruitless correspondence with Sir Samuel Hoare and Ramsay MacDonald the then Secretary of State for India and the British Premier respectively, protesting against the Communal Award, the reign of terrorism and the rule by ordinances and giving them an ultimatum of his decision to go on a fast unto death if the Communal Award was not withdrawn. On the 20th September Mahatma Gandhi began his epic

fast which convulsed the entire country and the civilised world with anxiety and misgivings. Meanwhile Caste Hindus and Harijans in India got together and on the 24th September the Poona Pact was signed by Caste Hindus and Harijans to which among others the late Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. Ambedkar were signatories. On the basis of this Pact Harijans were prepared to forego their special electorates. As against 71 seats provided for Harijans in the separate electorates under the Communal Award, under the Pact Harijans secured 77 more seats making a total of 148 seats in the Legislatures of India. This was a distinct gain as far as the Harijans went. Besides, the Pact also conceded the right of Harijans to stand for election from the general seats in the provinces. After this agreement between the Caste Hindus and Harijans the British Cabinet had no other go but to accept the Poona Pact and withdraw the Communal Award.

## HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH STARTED

But Gandhiji was not satisfied with the Poona Pact as such. He was anxious that erelong the distinction between Harijan and Caste Hindu should cease and efforts should be made to organise welfare work among Harijans and propaganda among Caste Hindus to abolish untouchability altogether from this land as it was repugnant to accepted Hindu tenets. At a meeting of the Caste Hindus held in Bombay on the 30th September under the chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya the Harijan Sevak Sangh was formed with Shri G. D. Birla as the President and Shri A. V. Thakkar as the General Secretary of the Sangh. The Sangh is not a political body and is in no way connected with or guided by the Congress or any other political party. The aims and objects of the 'Sangh shall be the eradication, by truthful and non-violent means, of untouchability in Hindu Society with all its incidental evils and disabilities suffered by the so-called untouchables, hereafter described as Harijans, in all walks of life and to secure for them absolute equality of status with the rest of the Hindus.'

'In furtherance of its objects the Harijan Sevak Sangh will seek to establish contact with Caste Hindus throughout India and show them that untouchability as it is practised in Hindu Society is repugnant to the fundamental principles of Hinduism and to the best instincts of humanity and it will also seek to serve Harijans so as to promote their moral, social and material welfare.' At the same Bombay meeting the following important resolution was unanimously passed: 'This Conference resolves that henceforth amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in

regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions. This right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest Acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.'

'It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes including the bar in respect of admission to temples.'

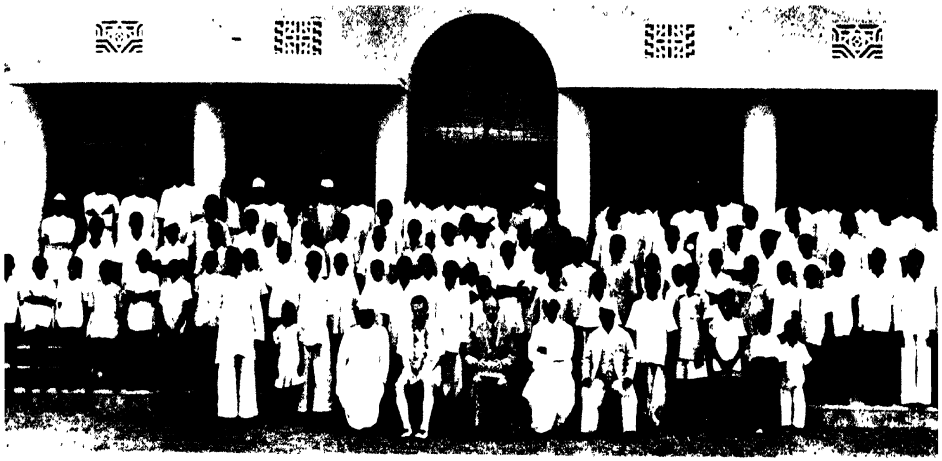
## WHY THE NAME HARIJAN WAS CHOSEN?

There was some controversy about the choice of the name Harijan by Gandhiji. During his visit to Madras in December 1933 when the Harijan leaders met Gandhiji and told him that they resented the word Harijan, Gandhiji replied to them as follows :

> 'You say that the Depressed Classes were not consulted. They consulted me. That is the point. I have visited all parts of India. "Why are we called Harijans?" I am asked. Why should they not have a better name? That is the generality of the feeling. "For heaven's sake do not call us coolies," they pleaded. At one time this word had a particular significance. A whole race was called by that name. If it was not now used, it does not mean there has come about a change of heart. *The offence to the ear has been moved.* That is what the new name has achieved. It is not as I said, my coining. An untouchable pleaded with me not to be known by any expression of eternal reproach. "Depressed" or "suppressed" reminds them of slavery, he very rightly said. "I have no name to suggest; will you suggest?" I asked. Then the man suggested "Harijan". He quoted in support from Narasimha Mehta, the Gujarati poet, who had used it in his works. I jumped at it. I knew also the Tamil saying "Thikkatravanukku Deivamay Thunai". Is not "Harijan" a paraphrase of it? They are God's chosen who are outcastes. That is what "Harijan" signifies as applied to suppressed classes.'

## GANDHIJI'S HARIJAN TOUR

After the founding of the Sangh, the Mahatma toured the entire country in 1933 and 1934 to collect funds for the Sangh and to do propaganda for the removal of untouchability. In his country-wide tour the Mahatma impressed on the caste Hindus the urgent need for exorcizing the demon of untouchability from the Hindu Society. He observed 'Unless and until we befriend the Harijan, unless and until we treat him as our own brother we cannot treat



*With Mr William Phillips, Personal Envoy of President Roosevelt*



*In Delhi during the Annual Meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh*



humanity as one brotherhood. The whole movement for the removal of untouchability is a movement for the establishment of Universal Brotherhood and nothing else.' During all these tours it may be mentioned that Thakkar Bapa was a member of Gandhiji's entourage and helped in the organisation of several provincial and district boards of the Sangh for carrying on intensive work against untouchability in the country.

## The Work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh

In his Harijan tour in the year 1933-34 Mahatma Gandhi collected a sum of Rs. 8¼ lakhs. With this initial sum the Sangh has been carrying on its Harijan welfare work on several fronts. Propaganda among Caste Hindus to convince them that untouchability was un-Hindu, that it was a blot on Hinduism and the greatest social evil which was eating into the vitals of the Hindu Society and therefore required to be removed was the mission on which the Sangh concentrated its attention. The task of bringing about a change of heart in the minds of the Hindus, steeped in age-long tradition and orthodoxy, was not an easy matter. Yet the Harijan Sevak Sangh carried on its work with such persistence and steadiness that the old prejudice against the removal of untouchability has almost now become a thing of the past. In removing untouchability not only had the Sangh to face the orthodox opposition but had to contend against the fury of the orthodox resulting in assault and other kinds of insult and injury to the Caste Hindu Harijan Sevaks and the Harijans themselves.

## Caste Hindu Persecution

This was particularly the case in rural and outlying parts of the country where the landed classes and the general masses of the people are superstitious and ignorant, where the tribal and feudal loyalties are strong and where the economic interests of the privileged classes are intimately and inextricably connected with Harijans. Opposition to Harijan uplift has been the strongest in these parts. Harijans and the Caste Hindu Harijan Sevaks were harassed, boycotted, penalised, assaulted and killed in some cases, in trying to assert their right to use public roads, wells, tanks, schools, etc. To this must be added the unhelpful attitude in some cases adopted by the various provincial Governments. The pages of the volumes of the *Harijan* are replete with instances illustrating the several ways in which Harijans were harassed and persecuted by the Caste Hindus. Admitting Harijan children into public schools, the use of public roads, wells and tanks, the wearing of ornaments, clothes, sandals and the use of umbrella, celebration of marriage feasts, and other festivals

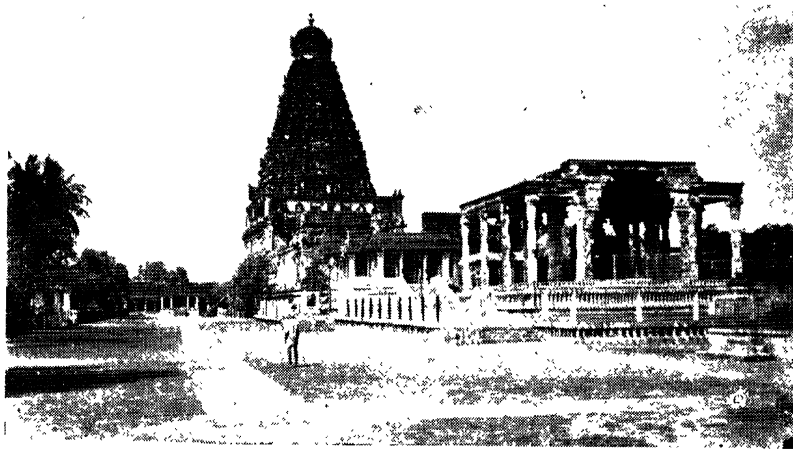
with sweets prepared out of ghee and sugar, the carrying of bride and bridegroom in procession with music on horsebacks and in Dola Pallkies and generally the desire on the part of Harijans to lead a more enlightened and civilised life ; all these were stoutly resisted by the Caste Hindus, resulting in untold hardships and sufferings to Harijans. They were assaulted, their houses were burnt, crops were damaged and looted. Perhaps these were common under the old order of things and were looked upon as a normal thing in the life of any Harijan who aspired for a better life in the village. But the enlightened public opinion among the Caste Hindus and the spirit of the times demanded that such wrongs should not continue any longer. Credit in this connection must be given to the Caste Hindu Harijan Sevaks, mostly drawn from the so-called higher classes for their courage and patriotism in bringing such injustices to the notice of the public. By pleading, by mutual discussion and persuasion, they restored peace and harmony between the Harijans and the Caste Hindus in some places. In this heroic work of attenuating the age-long superstition and prejudice, even the top ranking leadersof the Harijan Sevak Sangh had to face the fury of the orthodox. When Shri Thakkar Bapa, the General Secretary and Shrimathi Rameshwari Nehru, the Vice-President of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, visited Dwaraka and wanted to worship in the temple after bathing in the tank, they had to face the opposition and threat of violence from the orthodox Hindus of the place.

## Christian and Muslim Missionaries

Taking advantage of the so-called dissensions in Hindu Society, Christian and Muslim organisations were busy coercing the Harijans to embrace their faith, by threat and with other temptations. In the year 1937 an organised effort was made in the Nizam's State by some of the leaders of the Muslim party to convert Harijans to Islam. In the south in a village called Nadukuppam near Wandiwash, the Roman Catholic priests fined the Harijans on some pretext with the ulterior object of forcing them by threat and otherwise to embrace Christianity. Catholic Priests had to refund the fine to the Harijans on the intervention of the Secretary of the Madras City Harijan Sevak Sangh. Many such instances probably are taking place, and have to be brought to the notice of the public so that the innocent Harijans may not be exploited.

## Legislation on Temple Entry and Civic Disabilities

The next important aspect of the work of the H. S. Sangh relates to the removal of the civic and social disabilities of the Harijans. Their right to use



TANJORE TEMPLE

MATHURAI MINAKSHI TEMPLE ON THE OCCASION OF TEMPLE ENTRY



public roads, tanks, and wells, etc., had to be secured by legislation, as well as the right of temple entry.

## THE LEAD GIVEN BY TRAVANCORE

Travancore had a succession of enlightened Maharanis and Maharajahs, Dewans and Advisers. Long before Slavery was abolished in the West in 1863 it was completely abolished in 1855 in the State of Travancore. Similarly Maharani Parvathi Bai, permitted ' members of the communities low in the social scale' to use ornaments of gold and silver without paying the Attiara (payments to kings for the privilege). This was about 150 years ago. The poll-tax levied on Ezuvas, Vannans and Chetties was abolished. The trend of legislation in Travancore about 150 years ago was in the direction of doing away with all social and civic disabilities of the depressed so far as it was possible at that time.

Thus Travancore from early times was noted for the liberal policy pursued by the State in respect of the removal of the disabilities of Harijans. Compared to the other parts of the country, Harijans in Travancore are far advanced in education and social standing. Swami Narayana Guru, the great leader of the *Thiyas*, was responsible for bringing about this welcome change among the *Ezhuvas* and Thiyas of Travancore. They were also demanding temple entry for Harijans in the State for a long time. So, when the question of Temple Entry for Harijans was mooted in the country, the Sangh thought that the best place where this vexed question could be satisfactorily solved was Travancore, as conditions there were very favourable for propaganda in favour of temple entry. The Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi, therefore, organised a vigorous campaign advocating temple entry in Travancore and Srimathi Rameshwari Nehru, Shri G. D. Birla and Shri A. V. Thakkar visited Travancore in connection with the campaign.

The Maharajah of Travancore under the able and wise guidance of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the then Dewan of Travancore, rose to the occasion and promulgated the Temple Entry proclamation on the 12th November, 1936. It stated thus :

> ' Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on an all—comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has, throughout the centuries adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of Our Hindu subjects should by reason of birth or caste or community, be denied the consolation and solace of the Hindu Faith, We have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by

Us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at the temples controlled by Us and Our Government ! '

The Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation had its repercussion all over the country. Opinion everywhere was veering round in its favour. Many temples in the land were thrown open to Harijans voluntarily.

## THE MADURA MIRACLE

The opening of the Sri Minakshi Temple to Harijans was the next important land-mark in the Temple Entry movement. The efforts of Srimathi Rameshwari Nehru who presided over the Temple Entry Conference in Madura and the efforts of Mr. A. Vaidyanatha Iyer, President of the Tamilnad Harijan Sevak Sangh, was responsible for this *Madura Miracle.* Without the aid of any legislation, quietly and peacefully, a batch of Harijans entered the Sri Minakshi Temple in Madura on the 8th July 1939. It is not necessary to enumerate here the circumstances under which several temples, big and small, were thrown open to Harijans after the Travancore and Madura Miracles. Suffice it to say that the prejudice against temple entry was completely removed by the Travancore—Madura examples. Thereafter it was an easy matter for the various legislatures in the country to pass measures enforcing temple entry for Harijans, the Madras Legislature under Rajaji's leadership being the first in the field. The result to-day is that no public temple in the land is closed to the Harijans however low and uneducated they may be.

## WELFARE WORK

The Sangh has not been indifferent to the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the Harijans. The Head Office at Delhi and the Provincial Branches gave scholarships, started Schools and Hostels, and provided other facilities for Harijan boys and girls so that they may get themselves educated just as any body else.

Large sums of money were spent on this account by the Sangh. To enumerate, various kinds of scholarships such as The Gandhi Scholarships for College boys and girls, Vocational Scholarships for boys and girls, and Srimathi Sumitra Devi Birla Harijan Girls' Scholarships for girls studying in the Middle and High School classes and Thakkar Bapa Jayanti Occasional Scholarships and others have been given to hundreds of Harijan boys and girls to enable them to receive the benefits of education. The Sangh has also been



PALNI TEMPLE



MATHURAI MINAKSHI TEMPLE
ON THE OCCASION OF ITS
BEING THROWN TO HARIJANS

directly running under its auspices as many as 48 Educational Institutions, general, technical and vocational, and Hostels for Harijan boys and girls, in the provinces and at Delhi.

The Educational activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh have been fruitful in that they have produced several leaders of public opinion from among the Harijans themselves. Several of them have been and are members of the Central and Provincial cabinets, legislatures and other statutory bodies. This is a result about which the Sangh can justly be proud.

The Sangh has been providing medical aid, wells, house sites, and giving relief to Harijans in distress. This includes the rehabilitation of the several thousands of the displaced Harijans from Pakistan. Side by side with the above activities the Sangh has been promoting social intercourse between the members of the Harijan community and Caste Hindus. Joint celebration of Hindu festivals by Caste Hindus and Harijans inter-dining, and Caste Hindus inviting Harijans to their homes on festival occasions are some of the ways by which the social barrier is sought to be broken. In fact the Harijan Sevak Sangh can claim to have broken the barrier already.

## Fundamental Rights

In the Fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution recently passed by the Constituent Assembly, Section 9, clause (2) deals with *untouchability*. It says, ' Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.' This provision in the Constitution is a fitting finale to the difficult, heroic, nonetheless onerous responsibility that the Harijan Sevak Sangh has been trying to discharge since about 17 years, namely that of integrating the Hindu Society by removing untouchability.

## Provincial Governments' Part

In this great task of improving the lot of Harijans the various Provincial Governments have played their part as well. The Madras Government for nearly 30 years has been doing commendable work for the social and economic advancement of the Harijans. The Madras Government have recently provided for a crore of rupees to be spent on Harijan Uplift and other welfare work. Mostly the sum will be utilized in providing Harijans with house-sites in rural areas. Good housing is one of the essential needs for the peace and happiness of the individual. Other Provincial Governments are also equally zealous in promoting the welfare of Harijans, more or less on identical lines.

## Amounts Spent

The Harijan Sevak Sanghs, all over India, have been spending on an average a sum of about 4 to 5 lakhs of rupees every year, on welfare work among the Harijans. This does not include the grant in aid received by the Sanghs from the Governments and the amount spent by the various provincial governments. Thus during the last 17 years the Sangh, it may be said has, spent about 90 lakhs of rupees on Harijan Welfare work. The Provincial Governments must have spent several times that amount. The Government of Madras had budgeted to spend Rs. 38 lakhs on Harijan Welfare in the province in the year 1947-48.

Reviewing the last 17 years' work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh one must conclude that it has done remarkably well and has succeeded in attaining its object, namely, the removal of untouchability root and branch

## Conclusion

Before I conclude, there are certain aspects of the Harijan problem that require to be considered. Though the economic and social disabilities have been and are being removed by legislation and the welfare activities of the Sangh, the integration of Harijans with the culture of the country is a matter that has not received the attention that it deserves. Attempts should be made to foster among them a desire for the study of our religion, philosophy and literature and art through the medium of Sanskrit. Already, in some places, students drawn from the Harijan community have been admitted into Sanskrit chools. It is all for the good. The torch bearers of our culture such as our Bhagavathars, Musicians, preachers of religion, philosophers, poets and writers should be drawn from this community as well, who by their high attainments in their respective fields of art and culture would be able to command the homage and respect of the Hindu community as a whole. That is a matter to which Harijans and Caste Hindus interested in the integration of the Hindu Society must give their earnest attention.

There is a growing tendency among the Harijans that the concessions shown to them both by the Harijan Sevak Sangh and the Governments of the Provinces, especially in respect of scholarships, grant of lands for house sites, etc. should be continued for all time to come, that there must be no whittling down of the special concessions. Even the reservation of seats for Harijans have been continued only for another period of ten years, after which the Harijans will have to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Hindus. On the same analogy, these concessions may at best be continued for only that period and no longer. For already the clamour from the depressed Christians and Moslems

and in the so-called higher castes in the Hindu-fold is insistent that the privileges and concessions extended to Harijans should be extended to them also. Our Government, being secular Government, should look upon all its subjects alike and whoever is poor and needy must be helped by the state without any consideration of the caste and creed or class and community to which he or she belongs. It is necessary for Harijans themselves to realise the justice of the claims of the other communities and support them.

One other feeling noticeable among a certain section of the caste Hindus is that the Harijan work has been overdone and that Harijans have become very vocal and that unless we cry halt to this pampering of the Harijan community particularly, the basis of our agricultural and industrial economy will be at stake. This is a counsel of despair against which we have to guard ourselves. Much of this feeling has been the outcome of the rather unreasonable, narrow, selfish attitude adopted both by the landlords and the Harijan tenants and their leaders. It is well for the landlords, employers and the Harijans to realise that all of them are partners in a common endeavour and it would not pay them or the community or the country to indulge in any propaganda of hate against each other. The caste Hindus in villages must develop a spirit of tolerance, sympathy and understanding towards the Harijans, and the Harijans themselves must feel that their prosperity lies in living in peace and amity with all concerned. Neither the caste Hindus nor the Harijans should allow themselves to become easy preys to extreme political or economic doctrines promising a heaven on earth immediately by people who do not understand what they are talking about. India has attained Independence. We have several problems awaiting solution and they tax the best brains in the country and all the available resources of the land. Let us try to understand the great problems that lie before us and try in our humble way to second the effort of our great leaders and patriots, to utilise the freedom that we have won for creating a strong, happy, prosperous and peace-loving India. This is possible of achievement only with the whole-hearted and enthusiastic co-operation of both the Caste Hindus and Harijans.

The future for the country and the Harijans is, however, very bright. There is no doubt about it. Thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, the Prophet and Thakkar Bapa the Architect, the Harijan community has now come into its own. It has been now provided with an opportunity to play its decisive part in making the hard won freedom of the country productive of the greatest good of the largest number in the land.

Long Live Thakkar Bapa!

*Jai Hind.*

# ८. चरखा संघ, खादी और उसका विकास

[मंत्री, अ. भा. चरखा संघ, सेवाग्राम]

## कल्पना का मूल

हिन्दुस्तान के राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में खादी का स्थान विशेष महत्व-पूर्ण है। खादी के द्वारा हमारी राष्ट्रीयता को एक नया रूप मिला है और उसका असर हिन्दुस्तान के राजकीय, आर्थिक तथा सामाजिक जीवन पर अंकित हो गया है।

खादी भावना का प्रारंभ स्वदेशी आंदोलन से होता है। हम देखते हैं कि काँग्रेस की स्थापना के पूर्व से ही स्वदेशी भावना का उदय देश के नेताओं के अंदर हो चुका था। दादाभाई नौरोजी, न्यायमूर्ति रानाडे आदि नेताओं के ध्यान में यह बात आ चुकी थी कि देश को गुलामी और गरीबी को दूर करने के लिये देश के उद्योग-धंधों को जिलाने की कोशिश करनी चाहिये। स्वदेशी की यह भावना बंग-भंग के वक्त विशेष जोरदार हो उठी। बंग-भंग के कारण ब्रिटिशों के खिलाफ़ लोकमत बहुत प्रबल हो गया था और फलतः १९०५ की कलकत्ता काँग्रेस में ब्रिटिश-माल का बहिष्कार करने और स्वदेशी-माल को उत्तेजन देने का प्रस्ताव पास हुआ। ब्रिटिश-माल के बहिष्कार की भावना का आधार मिलते ही स्वदेशी-आंदोलन देश में चारों ओर फैल गया। और देश में बनी चीजें इस्तेमाल करने की ओर लोगों की प्रवृत्ति बढ़ी।

कपड़ा रोज़मर्रा की सब चीजों से ज्यादा महत्व का होने के कारण और सबसे ज्यादा ब्रिटेन से उसी की आयात होने के कारण ब्रिटिश-माल के बहिष्कार का प्रधान लक्ष्य ब्रिटिश-कपड़ा ही हुआ। देश में स्वदेशी कपड़ा तैयार करने की ओर लोगों का ध्यान विशेष-रूप से आकृष्ट हुआ तथा उसके लिये हाथ-करघे के धंधे को पुनरुज्जीवित करने का भी प्रयत्न होने लगा। स्वदेशी-भावना का लक्ष्य उस समय देश के बड़े-बड़े कारखाने खोलने व यांत्रिक औद्योगीकरण करने की ओर ही विशेष रूप से था। लेकिन दूसरी ओर ग्रामोद्योग-उद्योग धंधों को तथा हस्त-कला को पुनरुज्जीवित करने की दृष्टि

भी कुछ लोगों में जागृत हुई थी। लेकिन कल-कारखानों के सहचारी-भाव क्या होते हैं, उस में देश की क्या हानि है, उसका स्पष्ट-चित्र तो अकेले गांधीजी के पास ही था। गरीब हिन्दुस्तान तो स्वतंत्र हो सकेगा, परंतु कल-कारखानों की बाढ़ से चरित्र खोकर पैसेदार बना हुवा हिन्दुस्तान कभी स्वतंत्र नहीं हो सकता। यह विचार गांधीजी ने दक्षिण आफ्रीका में लिखी अपनी हिन्द-स्वराज्य नामक किताब में आज से ३८ साल पहिले ईसवी सन् १९०८ में प्रगट किया था। और आगे चलकर चरखे का ज़िक्र भी इसी सिलसिले में आया है।

## चरखे का उदय

मज़े की बात तो यह रही कि चरखे का जिक्र जिस वक्त गांधीजी ने किया उस वक्त गांधीजी के सामने चित्र था करघे का और दक्षिण आफ्रिका से हिन्दुस्थान मे लौटने पर गांधीजी ने जब गुजरात में अहमदाबाद के पास कोचरब में आश्रम चालू किया तब आश्रम में करघे ही दाखिल किये गये। करघे के लिये सूत तो मिल का ही था। इससे गांधीजी एक ओर बुनकरों के तथा दूसरी ओर व्यवस्थापकों के संपर्क में आ गये। हाथ का निर्माण करने की फिक्र में वे कैसे और क्यों पड़े, इसका रोचक-वर्णन आत्मकथा में, 'खादी का जन्म' तथा 'चरखा आखिर मिल गया' शीर्षकवाले दो अध्यायों में स्वयं गांधीजी ने दिया है। 'वाचमर्थोनुधावति' चरितार्थ हुआ। चरखे आश्रम में दाखिल होने पर सूत कातने, रूई धुनने, पूनी बनाने आदि की क्रियायें आश्रम-वासियों ने एक-एक करके सीख ली और उन में सुधार करने की ओर गांधीजी खुद ध्यान देने लगे। हाथ-कताई और हाथ-बुनाई के सुधार संशोधन में मगनलाल गांधी, गांधीजी के दहिने हाथ रहे और उनके परिश्रम से खादी की क्रियाओं में तथा चरखा आदि औजारों में काफी प्रगति हुई। उस समय गांधीजी का आश्रम खादी की एक प्रयोग शाला बना हुआ था।

## विकास

सन्. १९२० तक खादी का यह काम गांधीजी के आश्रम तक ही मर्यादित था। अपने लेखों और भाषणों द्वारा गांधीजी खादी का प्रचार देश में भी थोड़ा बहुत कर रहे थे, लेकिन १९२० के बाद ही गांधीजी ने खादी आंदोलन को देश-व्यापी बना दिया।

खादी को उत्तेजन देने का प्रस्ताव कांग्रेस ने पहले पहल सन् १९१९ की अमृतसर की बैठक में स्वीकृत किया। अमृतसर कांग्रेस के समय से ही अखिल भारत के राजकीय आंदोलन की बागडोर गांधीजी के हाथ में आयी और चरखा और खादी देश का कार्यक्रम बन गया। असहयोग के वे दिन जबरदस्त हलचल के थे। लोगों में विलक्षण उत्साह था। गाँव-गाँव में कांग्रेस कमेटियों द्वारा खादी का प्रचार होने लगा। कांग्रेस ने एक करोड़ रुपया तिलक फंड में जमा किया और उसका एक चौथाई हिस्सा खादी-काम में लगाना तथा एक वर्ष के अंदर देश में २० लाख चरखे चालू करना तय हुआ। कांग्रेस की सदस्यता का चंदा सूत के रूप में लेने का भी कांग्रेस ने प्रस्ताव किया। कांग्रेस के इस निर्णय के अनुसार देश भर में कांग्रेस कमेटियों द्वारा चरखे चालू किये गये। खादी तैयार हुई और उसकी बिक्री आदि का भी काम चालू हुआ। स्वराज्य प्राप्ति के आंदोलन का खादी एक महत्वपूर्ण अंग बन गयी तथा राष्ट्रीय-झंडे पर चरखे का चित्र अंकित करके चरखे को स्वातंत्र्य के प्रतीक के रूप में देश ने स्वीकार किया। कांग्रेस के अधिवेशनों में खादी को लोक-प्रिय बनाने और उसकी जानकारी देने की दृष्टि से प्रदर्शिनी का आयोजन भी उसी वक्त से शुरू हुआ।

१९२१ में देशभर में राष्ट्रीय-शिक्षण के विद्या पीठ, विद्यालय तथा आश्रम कायम हुए। इन सब शिक्षण-संस्थाओं ने अपने विद्यार्थियों को खादी की शिक्षा दी और खादी का कार्य जाननेवाले नवयुवक तैयार किये जिन्होंने आगे चलकर खादी का प्रचार और खादी-उत्पत्ति को संगठित करने में बड़ा काम किया।

## अखिल भारतीय खद्दर बोर्ड

१९२० से १९२३ तक खादी का काम काँग्रेस कमेटियों द्वारा होता रहा। इसी बीच १९२२ में गाँधीजी गिरफ्तार हुए, और उनके पश्चात् देश में पक्ष-भेद खड़े हुए। इसका विपरीत असर खादी के काम पर होने लगा। इसलिये खादी का काम चलाने के लिये एक अलग समिति की जरूरत महसूस होने लगी। खादी-कार्य की यह प्रारंभिक अवस्था थी। लोगों को काम का अनुभव नहीं था। इसलिये खादी-प्रचार तथा लोकप्रियता की दृष्टि से खूब काम होने पर भी खादी में टैकनीक और प्रबंध की दृष्टि से विशेष प्रगति नहीं हो सकी। चरखे बनाने आदि में काफी पैसा खर्च हुआ लेकिन उसके अनुपात ..

उत्पत्ति नहीं हुई। खादी मोटी और कमज़ोर बनती थी, उसके पोत में भी विशेष सुधार नहीं हुआ था। उसी तरह खादी का काम बहुत बढ़ जाने से कांग्रेस-कमेटियों को उसका संचालन करना भी मुश्किल हो रहा था। इन सभी दृष्टियों से १९२३ दिसम्बर में कोकोनाड़ा कांग्रेस ने अखिल भारतीय-खद्दर बोर्ड स्थापित किया और उसके जिम्मे खादी का सारा काम दिया।

बोर्ड ने खादी-काम को संगठित रूप देने का काम शुरू किया। बोर्ड द्वारा खादी-उत्पत्ति-केन्द्र और खादी भंडार जगह जगह चालू हुए। वस्त्र-स्वावलंबी होने की दिशा में लोगों को उत्तेजन दिया गया तथा खादी-साहित्य के प्रकाशन का काम भी शुरू किया गया। बोर्ड ने खादी काम में पहिले ही वर्ष करीब आठ लाख रुपये की पूंजी लगायी और बोर्ड की ओर से तथा अन्य संस्थाओं द्वारा देशभर में कोई १३ लाख रुपये की खादी तैयार हुई और बिकी।

## अखिल भारतीय चरखा संघ

अगले ही वर्ष १९२९ में गांधीजी जेल से मुक्त हुए। गांधीजी ने देखा कि बोर्ड का स्वरूप कांग्रेस की एक समिति जैसा होने से कांग्रेस की दलबंदी का असर उसपर भी होता रहेगा और इसलिये खादी की प्रगति में हमेशा रुकावट आती रहेगी। इसलिये दलबंदी से दूर खादी का टेकनीक जाननेवाले विशेषज्ञ व्यक्तियों के ही आधीन खादी का संचालन रखना उन्हें जरूरी लगा। इसलिये गांधीजी की सलाह के अनुसार अखिल भारत कांग्रेस कमेटी ने अपनी २३ सितंबर १९२९ की पटना की बैठक में अखिल भारतीय चरखा संघ की स्थापना की। वह प्रस्ताव इस तरह है:—

"चूंकि हाथ से कातने की कला और खादी का विकास करने के लिये उसके विषय की जानकारी रखनेवाली एक संस्था स्थापित करने का समय आ पहुँचा है, और चूंकि अनुभव से यह सिद्ध हो चुका है कि राजनीति, राजनैतिक उथल-पुथल और राजनैतिक संस्था के नियंत्रण और प्रभाव से दूर रहनेवाली एक स्थायी संस्था के बिना ऐसा विकास हो सकना संभव नहीं है। इसलिये अखिल भारतीय कांग्रेस कमेटी की स्वीकृति से इस प्रस्ताव के द्वारा कांग्रेस संगठन के अंतर्गत किन्तु स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व और सत्ता रखनेवाली अखिल भारतीय चरखा संघ नाम की संस्था स्थापित की जाती है।"

दूसरे एक प्रस्ताव द्वारा अखिल भारतीय खादी बोर्ड और प्रान्तीय खादी बोर्डों की जो कुछ संपत्ति थी वह सब आर्थिक जिम्मेवारियों के साथ चरखा संघ के सुपुर्द की गयी तथा खादी काम के लिये चंदा एकत्रित करने तथा उसे काम में लाने का पूरा अधिकार संघ को दिया गया। प्रस्ताव के अनुसार चरखा संघ को खद्दर बोर्ड से रुई, सूत आदि माल, खादी के स्टॉक आदि के रूप में १२ लाख की रकम प्राप्त हुई। बाद में १९२६ और १९२९ के दरमियान गांधीजी ने देश में दौरा किया और देशबन्धु दास के स्मारक कोष के तौर पर १५ लाख रुपये जमा करके चरखा संघ को दिये। इस के बाद भी गांधीजी द्वारा चरखा संघ को समय समय पर दान मिलता रहा। आज चरखा संघ की पूंजी करीब ५० लाख है।

## तीन काल विभाग

चरखा संघ तथा खादी के तीन काल विभाग हो सकते हैं।

१९२५ से १९३४ तक सस्ती-खादी काल
१९३५ से १९४४ तक निर्वाह-वेतन काल
तथा १९४५ से आगे नव-संस्करण काल

इन तीनों काल-खंडों पर विचार करने से खादी व चरखा-संघ की प्रगति का पूरा चित्र हमारे सामने आ सकेगा।

## सस्ती खादी काल

पहिले सस्ती-खादी के काल को लीजिये। इस काल में खादी कार्य का विशेष लक्ष्य यह रहा कि सस्ती से सस्ती खादी बनाई जाय और सस्तेपन के द्वारा खादी की बिक्री को बढ़ाया जाय। खादी-कार्य के शुरू में जैसा कि पहले बताया जा चुका है, खादी की हाथ कताई, हाथ बुनाई तथा तत्संबंधी क्रियाओं का टेक्निकल ज्ञान कार्यकर्ताओं को नहीं के बराबर था। इसलिये शुरू शुरू में जो खादी तैयार हुई वह बहुत मोटी, खुरदरी तथा दिखने में भद्दी और टिकने में कमजोर होती थी। उसे बेचने में बहुत परिश्रम करना पड़ता था। घर-घर कंधे पर ले जाकर नेताओं की मदद से ग्राहकों को मनवा कर वह बेची जाती थी; भूतदया की दृष्टि से खादी खरीदने का लोगों में प्रचार

किया जाता था। "खादी अंधे की लकड़ी, भूखे की रोटी और विधवा का सहारा है" स्वर्गीय जमनालाल बजाज का यह वाक्य उसी ज़माने का है। उस समय संघ की नीति यह रही कि खादी-उत्पत्ति का काम अत्यन्त गरीब, बेकार लोगों से ही कराया जाय तथा जगहें ऐसी चुनी जायें जहाँ कम से कम मजदूरी से काम बढ़ने की संभावना हो। उस समय ६ अंक के एक सेर सूत के लिये कताई मजदूरी दस आने दी जाती थी; और इस मजदूरी से एक कत्तिन दिन भर कताई करके करीब तीन से चार पैसे तक कमा पाती थी। उन दिनों देश की व्यक्तिगत दैनिक औसत आमदनी केवल सात पैसे थी, तब कत्तिनों को दूसरे काम क अभाव में चार पैसे रोज़ भी मिले तो वह कम महत्त्व की बात नहीं थी। इसका सबूत, बढ़ते हुए खादी उत्पत्ति केन्द्रों ने दिया। शुरू में १९ लाख की खादी बनती थी। वह पांच सालों में ९५ लाख तक पहुंची। कपड़ा भी अच्छा बनने लगा और खादी-धारी-ग्राहक धीरे धीरे बढ़ने लगे; बिक्री की समस्या भी कुछ कम हुई।

इसके बाद १९३० का सत्याग्रह आंदोलन आया। आंदोलन के कारण खादी की माँग खूब बढ़ गयी, जिस कारण भंडारों में खादी का जो स्टाक पड़ा था वह बिक गया। उस वर्ष ९० लाख से भी अधिक खादी बिक्री हुई। इससे उत्साहित होकर संघ ने खादी काम और बढ़ाया। यह समय जागतिक मंदी का था इसलिये लोगों की ओर से खादी और सस्ती बनाने की मांग थी। चरखा-संघ भी अच्छी और सस्ती खादी बनाने की कोशिश करता रहा, जिसके फल-स्वरूप भंडारों में ३२ इंच अर्ज की खादी चार आने गज बेची जाने लगी। मतलब यह कि खादी की कुछ किस्में सस्ताई में मिल कापड़े की बराबरी करने लगीं। सस्ती खादी बनाने के काल का यह सर्वोच्च बिन्दु था।

## निर्वाह–मज़दूरी

लेकिन इसका नतीजा खादी कामगारों को कम से कम मजदूरी देने में हुआ। जो खादी गरीबों की सेवा का दावा रखती है वह कामगारों के शोषण पर कैसे खड़ी की जाय इस तरफ कार्य-कर्ताओं का ध्यान नहीं गया। वे खादी को सस्ती बनाने की धुन में आगे बढ़ते जा रहे थे। लेकिन गांधीजी के ध्यान में यह बात आये बिना नहीं रही। उन्होंने सस्ती खादी बनाने की नीति का विरोध किया और

निर्वाह-मजदूरी का सिद्धान्त खादी पर लागू करने का नया विचार चरखा संघ के सामने रखा।

निर्वाह-मजदूरी का अर्थ यह है, जिन से हम काम करवाते हैं फिर वह काम उनके फुरसत के समय में भी क्यों न हो, उन्हें उतनी मजदूरी हमें देनी चाहिये कि जिससे काम करनेवालों का अपनी मजदूरी से भरणपोषण हो सके। गांधीजी ने कहा कि एक घंटे के काम के लिये कम से कम एक आना मजदूरी चरखा-संघ अपने कामगारों को दे। गांधीजी के इस सुझाव से खादी सेवकों में बड़ी घबराहट हुई। मंदी का ज़माना अब तक ख़तम नहीं हुआ था और उनको डर था कि अगर हम खादी के दर बढ़ायेंगे तो खादी की बिक्री एकदम कम हो जायेगी और खादी के काम को बड़ा धक्का लगेगा। इससे चरखा-संघ को खादी के कई उत्पत्ति-केन्द्र बंद करने पड़ेंगे और फलतः कामगारों को अधिक रोज़ी मिलने के बजाय जो रोजी मिल रही है उससे भी हाथ धोना पड़ेगा। लेकिन गांधीजी निर्वाह-वेतन के सिद्धान्त पर दृढ़ थे। 'खादी का काम जिन कामगारों की सेवा के लिये चलाया जा रहा है उनको पेट भर खाना और तन भर वस्त्र अगर हम नहीं दे सकें तो हम उनकी सेवा नहीं, उनका शोषण कर रहे हैं।' ऐसा उन्होंने कहा और अंत में १९३९ में चरखा-संघ ने निर्वाह-वेतन का प्रस्ताव मंजूर किया। साथ साथ उसमें संघ का ध्येय हिन्दुस्तान के हर एक परिवार को उसकी वस्त्र-संबंधी-आवश्यकता खादी द्वारा पूरी करके वस्त्र स्वावलंबी बनाना है, ऐसा स्पष्ट कर दिया गया। इस समय से चरखा-संघ का दूसरा काल खंड शुरू होता है।

यद्यपि गांधीजी का कहना था कि आठ घंटे के काम के लिये आठ आना रोजाना मजदूरी दी जाय, लेकिन एकदम से इतनी अधिक मजदूरी देना संभव नहीं था। इसलिये चरखा-संघ ने प्रांत प्रांत में एक कामगारको खाने और कपड़े के लिये साधारण तथा कितना खर्च पड़ता है इसकी जांच कर के आठ घंटे के दिन भर के काम के लिये तीन आने निर्वाह-मजदूरी स्थिर की और इससे कम मजदूरी खादी-काम करनेवालों को नहीं दी जानी चाहिये ऐसा निर्णय किया। कत्तिनों को एक आना मजदूरी के बजाय इस प्रस्ताव से तीन आने मजदूरी मिलने लगी। १९४४ तक यह ३ आने दर कायम रहा, लेकिन महंगाई बढ़ने के कारण १९४४ से वह छ आना कर दिया गया। आज कत्तिनों को छ आने दर से मजदूरी दी जाती है।

## दूसरे काल की विशेषता

मजदूरी बढ़ाने के कारण कारीगरों को कुशलता बढ़ाने की ओर ध्यान देना संघ को आवश्यक हुआ और उस दृष्टि से खादी के सरंजाम और अमली तरीकों में काफी सुधार किये गये तथा कारीगरों को कताई आदि क्रियाओं की शिक्षा देने का विशेष प्रबंध किया गया। उनके औजारों की दुरुस्ती और मरम्मत की तरफ भी ज्यादा ध्यान दिया जाने लगा और कामगारों से विशेष संबंध स्थापित करने की कोशिश की गयी। अब तक कामगारों को बहुत कम मजदूरी दी जाती थी, इसलिये उनसे खादी पहनने के लिये कहना संभव नहीं था। लेकिन अब निर्वाह-मजदूरी दी जाने से संघ ने अपने कामगारों को खादी-धारी बनाने का निश्चय किया और उनकी मजदूरी से कुछ बचा कर उन्हें खादी देने का प्रबंध किया तथा खादी-धारी कामगारों से ही खादी का काम लेने की नीति बरती जाने लगी। कामगारों के रोजाना इस्तेमाल की गुड़, तेल, अनाज आदि चीजें सस्ते दामों में देने का प्रबंध करने की भी कोशिश की गयी। मतलब यह कि कामगारों की योग्यता बढ़ाने और उनको आवश्यक सुविधाएँ करा देने की संघ की ओर से कोशिश की गयी। पहले काल-खंड में सारा ध्यान खादी बिक्री की ओर रहा वह इस काल-खंड में कामगारों की उन्नति पर केन्द्रित हुआ यह इसकी विशेषता है।

## खादी राष्ट्रीयता का बैरोमीटर

लेकिन मजदूरी बढ़ाने के कारण खादी के दाम भी बढ़े और उसका असर खादी उत्पत्ति और बिक्री पर हुआ। १९३४, ३५ में खादी की उत्पत्ति जो करीब एक करोड़ गज होती थी वह निर्वाह-वेतन शुरू होने के बाद बिक्री न होने से ९० लाख गज पर आ गयी। भंडारों में खादी का शोक भी बढ़ने लगा। लेकिन यह हालत एक दो वर्ष ही रही। १९३७ में देश के प्रांत प्रांत में कांग्रेस के मंत्री-मंडल कायम हुए और लोगों में नया उत्साह पैदा हुआ। खादी की मांग धीरे धीरे बढ़ने लगी और १९३८ में पुनः एक करोड़ गज पर खादी की उत्पत्ति पहुँच गयी। देश में जब जब राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन हुए तथा राष्ट्रीयता को ज़ोर मिला तब तब खादी की मांग भी बढ़ी है और इसीलिये गांधीजी खादी को राष्ट्रीयता का बैरोमीटर कहते थे। निर्वाह-वेतन लगाने से खादी-काम को धक्का लगेगा, ऐसा खादी कार्यकर्ताओं के दिल में जो डर था वह इस

तरह बे-बुनियाद साबित हुआ और उन्हें विश्वास हुआ कि खादी महंगी हो तो भी देश उसे दूर नहीं कर सकता। क्योंकि देश की आजादी का वह अनिवार्य कार्यक्रम बन चुका है।

## तीसरा काल खंड

इस तरह खादी का काम अपने पुराने विस्तार पर जा रहा था कि १९४२ में "भारत छोड़ो" आन्दोलन शुरू हुआ। सरकार ने भीषण दमन शुरू किया। गांधीजी और देश के अन्य नेताओं को जेल में बंद किया गया। चरखा-संघ को भी सरकार ने अछूता नहीं छोड़ा। संघ के मंत्री तथा कई अन्य प्रमुख कार्यकर्ताओं को गिरफ्तार किया गया। संघ के कई भंडार तथा उत्पत्ति केन्द्र बंद कर दिये गये और सरकार ने उन पर ताला लगा दिया। कहीं कहीं माल छीन लिया गया, कहीं माल में आग लगा दी गयी तो कहीं माल लुटा दिया गया। कहीं माल का नीलाम मनमाना मूल्य पर कर दिया गया, तो कहीं खादी उत्पत्ति और बिक्री करने की संघ को मनाई कर दी गयी। इन सब बातों के कारण १९४२, ४३ मे चरखा संघ का कार्य बहुत अस्त-व्यस्त हो गया। सरकार के इस दमन से बिहार और संयुक्तप्रान्त में खादी-कार्य को सब से ज्यादा नुकसान पहुंचा और १९४२, ४३ में वहां का कार्य लगभग बंद-सा ही रहा।

लेकिन युद्ध के कारण इसी वक्त सब चीजों की महंगाई शुरू हो गयी। सरकारी नियंत्रण का अभाव, व्यापारियों का काला बजार आदि कई कारणों से लोगों को मिल का कपड़ा मिलना मुश्किल हो रहा था और मिल कपड़े के भाव बेतहाशा बढ़ गये थे। मिल कपड़े के भाव दुगुने चौगुने हो जाने पर भी खादी के भाव वे ही थे। इसलिये वह मिल के कपड़े से भी सस्ती मिल रही थी। अतः भंडार में खादी पहुंची कि लोग उस पर टूट पड़ते थे। लेकिन खादी-कार्य बहुत अस्त-व्यस्त हो चुका था। उसके बड़े बड़े कार्यकर्ता जेल में पड़े हुए थे और रेल से माल एक जगह से दूसरी जगह भेजना भी मुश्किल हो गया था। इन सब कारणों से लोगों की मांग पूरी करना असंभव था और इसलिये जो पुराने खादी-धारी ग्राहक थे उन्हीं को खादी देने के नियम जगह जगह खादी भंडारों को बनाने पड़े।

## विकेन्द्रीकरण

१९४२ के बाद युद्ध की परिस्थिति के कारण जैसे-जैसे महंगायी बढ़ती गयी वैसे-वैसे खादी के दाम भी बढ़ाने पड़े। बाद में सरकार ने कपड़ा-अनाज आदि जीवन के लिये विशेष आवश्यक चीजों के उत्पादन, वितरण तथा मूल्यपर नियंत्रण लगाये और इस कारण खादी-भंडारों पर टूटनेवाले दीगर खादी-धारी लोगों की भीड़ कम हो गई और सच्चे खादी-धारी ही खादी के ग्राहक रहे। फिर भी आन्दोलन के कारण सच्चे खादी-धारियों की संख्या इतनी बढ़ चुकी थी कि केवल उनकी मांग को पूरी करना भी चरखा-संघ के लिये असंभव था। इसलिये खादी का काम केवल चरखा-संघ के अधीन न रख कर स्थानीय लोगों की सहकारी समितियाँ बनाकर उनके द्वारा चलाना जरूरी लगा। उद्देश यह कि वे ही अपने लिये आवश्यक खादी तैयार करें तो सरकारी दमन, ढुलाई की मुश्किलें, कानून के तरह-तरह के अन्यान्य प्रतिबंध आदि अड़चनें बहुत कुछ कम हो सकेंगी और खादी की प्रगति में सुविधा होगी, इस दृष्टि से जेल से बाहर चरखा-संघ के जो कार्यकर्ता थे उन्होंने खादी-कार्य के विकेन्द्रीकरण की योजना बनायी।

विकेन्द्रीकरण का प्रश्न खादी कार्यकर्ताओं के सामने था; उसी वक्त सन् १९४४ में संघ के प्रधान कार्यकर्ता जेल से मुक्त हुए और गांधीजी भी जेल से बाहर आ गए। सरकार ने खादी काम को चोट पहुंचाई थी उसका गांधीजी के दिलपर बहुत असर हुआ और खादी कार्य को नई दृष्टि से चलाने के अपने विचार उन्होंने खादी-कार्यकर्ताओं के सामने रखे। उन्होंने कहा कि सरकार की मेहरबानी पर खादी को अगर जिन्दा न रखना हो तो हमें खादी को घर की चीज़ बना देना चाहिये। यानें खादी का काम मजदूरी के बजाय वस्त्र-स्वावलंबन के लिये होना चाहिये। लोग खुद कातें और अपने गांव में ही जुलाहों से सूत बुतवा कर पहिनें, तभी खादी का सच्चा प्रचार हुआ ऐसा माना जायेगा। चरखा अहिंसा का प्रतीक है; चरखे के पीछे जो अहिंसक-जीवन का तत्वज्ञान है उसके द्वारा ही अहिंसक समाज की रचना हो सकती है। ऐसा समझ कर जब लोग चरखा चलायेंगे तभी वे सच्चे खादी-धारी होंगें। इस विचार को सूत्रमय वाक्य में उन्होंने यों रखा :—

"कातो, समझ-बूझ कर कातो; कातें वे खद्दर पहिनें, पहिनें वे जरूर कातें।"

## नवसंस्करण काल

इस विचार को चरखा संघने दिसंबर १९४४ की अपनी बैठक में प्रस्ताव करके अमल में लाने का निश्चय किया। यहाँ से खादी का नवसंस्करण काल शुरू होता है। चरखा-संघ का मुख्य लक्ष्य अब वस्त्र स्वावलंबन है। उसे बढावा देने के लिये खादी बिक्री पर सूत शर्त लगाई गई, भंडारों का, दुकानदारी का स्वरूप बदल कर उन्हें खादी शिक्षा के केन्द्रों का स्वरूप दिया गया, उनमें चरखा, रुई आदि कताई का सामान लोगों को मिले ऐसी व्यवस्था की गयी, तथा कताई, बुनाई आदि खादी संबंधी क्रियाएँ सिखाने का प्रबंध भी किया गया। खादी विद्यालय खोले गये तथा जगह जगह कार्यकर्ताओं के शिबिर चलाये गये जिनमें चरखा-संघ के कार्यकर्ताओं को कताई-बुनाई की शिक्षा तथा खादी के सिद्धान्तों का ज्ञान देने का प्रबंध किया गया ताकि वे अपने अपने केन्द्रों में जाकर कताई का तथा खादी विचार का प्रचार कर सकें।

चरखे को केन्द्र बनाकर समग्र ग्राम सेवा का कार्यक्रम भी रखा गया। उसके अनुसार समग्र ग्राम सेवा के लिये कार्यकर्ता तैयार किये गये तथा उन्हें गांवों में भेजा गया। वस्त्र-स्वावलंबी तथा सहयोगी सदस्य बनाने का कार्यक्रम रखा गया तथा वस्त्र-स्वावलंबी सदस्य अपने अपने गांवों में कताई मंडल खोलें इसका प्रयत्न किया गया। स्कूल, कालेजों के विद्यार्थी और देश के नवयुवकों से अपील की गयी कि एक साल के लिये वे अपनी सेवा चरखा-संघ को दें। ऐसे नवयुवकों को देहातों में भेजकर चरखा द्वारा समग्र सेवा का कार्य चरखा-संघ करना चाहता है। इसके लिये नवयुवकों के शिबिर चलाने का कार्यक्रम भी चरखा-संघ ने हाथ में लिया है।

नवसंस्करण की दृष्टि से खादी के उत्पत्ति-बिक्री के काम से चरख-संघ मुक्त होना चाहता है। वह काम स्थानीय संस्थाओं के सुपुर्द करने की उसकी नीति है। उसके अनुसार युक्तप्रांत, बिहार, बंगाल तथा उड़ीसा का खादी काम वहां की खादी-काम की संस्थाओं के सुपुर्द किया गया है। अन्य प्रान्तों में भी कई जगह प्रमाणित संस्थाएं स्थापित कर उनको वहां का खादी उत्पत्ति व बिक्री का काम दे दिया गया है।

हिंदुस्तान स्वतंत्र हुआ है। देश का राजकाज हमारे नेताओं के हाथ में आ गया है। खादी काम को व्यापक बनाने का कार्य हमारी सरकारों को उठाना चाहिये, ऐसी चरखा-संघ की अपेक्षा है। गांधीजी के रहते हुए १९४९ में ही चरखा-संघ ने सरकारों के मार्गदर्शन

के लिये एक प्रस्ताव किया था। लेकिन सरकार की नीति मुख्यतः यंत्रोद्योगों को बढ़ावा देने की रहने के कारण खादी के बाबत सरकार विशेष कुछ नहीं कर सकी है। फिर भी कुछ प्रयत्न सरकार द्वारा किये गये हैं। मद्रास-सरकार ने एक खादी योजना बनाकर कुछ खादी केन्द्र चलाये हैं। बंबई तथा बंगाल की सरकारों ने खादी तथा ग्रामोद्योग समितियाँ बनाकर प्रान्त में वस्त्र-स्वावलंबन को बढ़ावा देने का काम चलाया है। इसके लिये वस्त्र-स्वावलंबियों को उनका सूत बुन देने के लिये गज पीछे कुछ मदद दी जाती है। कताई सिखाने का तथा रुई सरंजाम आदि लोगों को सस्ते दामों में देने का प्रबंध किया गया है। कई प्रान्तीय सरकारोंने प्राथमिक तथा माध्यमिक स्कूलों मे कताई की शिक्षा जारी की है, विशेषतः बंबई सरकार ने इस दृष्टि से ज्यादा काम किया है। सरकारी स्कूलों के शिक्षकों को कताई बुनाई की शिक्षा देने की व्यवस्था चरखा-संघ ने अपने खादी विद्यालयों में की है।

खादी के शास्त्रीय-ज्ञान के अध्ययन तथा प्रचार की दृष्टि से चरखा-संघ ने प्रकाशन का काम भी चलाया है। अब तक चरखा-संघ ने खादी संबंधी २०—२५ पुस्तकें प्रकाशित की है। संघ अपना एक मासिक पत्र 'खादीजगत" भी चलाता था। सर्व सेवा संघ से 'सर्वोदय' निकाला जाने के कारण वह अब बंद किया गया है। संघ की प्रान्तीय शाखाओं के द्वारा अपनी अपनी प्रान्तीय भाषाओं में खादी साहित्य का निर्माण किया जा रहा है। कुछ शाखाएँ अपना मासिक पत्र भी चलाती हैं। साहित्य तथा पत्र-पत्रिकाओं के अलावा सभा, सम्मेलन, व्याख्यान, प्रदर्शनी आदि द्वारा खादी के प्रति जनता में रुचि पैदा करने का प्रयत्न किया जाता है। गांधी जयंती सप्ताह में इस दृष्टि से विशेष कार्यक्रम रखे जाते हैं। गांधीजी के अवसान के बाद श्री. धीरेन्द्र मजूमदार चरखा-संघ के अध्यक्ष हुए। वे देश भर में घूम कर चर्चा-व्याख्यान द्वारा जनता को खादी का संदेश सुनाने का कार्य कर रहे हैं।

कताई-बुनाई की क्रियाएँ, साधनों आदि के सुधार संशोधन के लिये प्रयोग का तथा चरखे आदि तैयार करने का काम भी चरखा-संघ चला रहा है। सेवाग्राम का प्रधान कार्यालय तथा प्रान्त प्रान्त की शाखाएँ अपने प्रयोग विभाग और सरंजाम कार्यालयों द्वारा यह काम कर रही हैं। खादी काम के लिये हर प्रान्तों में योग्य कपास प्राप्त हो इस दिशा में भी प्रयत्न करने का अब विचार किया गया है।

इस तरह चरख-संघ आज खादी के प्रयोग, शिक्षा, प्रचार आदि बातों पर अपनी सारी शक्ति लगा रहा है। हर घर में चरखा चले, सब लोग वस्त्र-स्वावलंबी बन जायँ और चरखे के सिद्धान्त को अपने जीवन में उतारें तो अहिंसक समाज रचना का गांधीजी का स्वप्न साकार होने की शिक्षा में हम अग्रसर होंगे इस में शंका नहीं।

# 9. THE PROBLEM OF ABORIGINES

BY

DR. B. H. MEHTA

*Approach to the problem.* The problem of primitive races has been approached with different ideals, outlooks and motives in the course of world history. When the peoples of overcrowded Europe, in search of market and shelter, crossed the ocean to find new lands, they came across strange people who appeared to be different from them. Political philosphers like Rousseau idealised the primitive ways of living and deplored the Golden Age that was lost to the so-called civilised world. Charles Darwin, when he laid the foundations of biology, opened a new interest for the human mind. The theory of evolution permeated all scientific interest, and a search for the trend of human evolution created a scientific interest in the primitive races of the world, for they were the pioneers and originators of the social structure. Taylor, Westermarck, Durkheim, Boaz, Malinowski and many others started investigating all the aspects of primitive life; and ethonology, anthropology and anthropometry collected volumes of information about the mind, religion, marriage, family, society, art and economics and social life of primitive races. Imperialism followed the scientist, and anthropological researches came to be explored for seeking so-called proofs for the existence of superior races and minds. As imperialism and all forms of exploitation came to be exposed in the nineteenth century and the present century, and colonial rule and capitalism were found to be ruthlessly exterminating the primitive races, humanitarians the world over found a sincere interest in the well-being and welfare of these unfortunate and neglected peoples.

India is an ancient land and its history dates back four to six thousand years. India has been the home of the primitive races from pre-historic times. The Vedas contain useful information about the ' dark, thick-lipped, noseless, godless ' primitives who came into conflict with the ancestors of the Aryan race. Kingdoms of these so-called aborigines, however, continued to co-exist with Rajput and even Muslim kingdoms. The British rulers of India found it difficult to handle and tame the turbulent hunters and forest dwellers in the hills and the rugged countryside. The fighters for India's freedom, since the days of the Indian mutiny, when the aborigines played a heroic part in

freedom's battle, have found a sincere interest in the well-being of those who might be the descendants of India's real and original dwellers.

The problem of the aboriginal races in India demands a wealth of sympathy, knowledge and understanding, if emancipated India is to evolve a new and rich pattern of national culture. The threads of the lives of the twenty-five million aboriginal people have to be carefully woven into the larger picture of national life by a master hand, keeping in mind the ancient heritage and somewhat different pattern of life and living that has come down to them after thousands of years.

The destiny of India has come into the hands of the city-dwellers, intellectuals and middle classes who fought the battle of freedom, aided by the strength and co-operation of the Indian masses. The battle for freedom was ostensibly waged on behalf of the masses and that pledge has to be redeemed not only to the farmer and the city proletariat and the Harijans, but also to the twenty-five million people who have come to be known as Adivasis.

It is but natural, that the urban and educated sections of India who have invariably lived physically away from the interior of the country with its many millions, to feel that the so-called aborigines are different from them in many ways of life.

## The Physical Environmemt

The physical environment plays a vital role in the life of any human group, and the socio-economic pattern follows closely the life possibility of any given region. As against the dwellers of the plains, the culture breeders of the river banks, and the traders and industrialists of the coast line and the cities, the aborigines live on the hills, forest and rugged countryside of India. Broadly speaking, they live on a long and broad belt of land starting from the Aravali Hills in the West, proceeding into the Vindya and Satpura Hills and portions of Western Ghats, the Central Provinces and what has been known as the forest of the Dangs, portion of the Eastern Ghats and then in Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Assam meeting the large primitive group of aborigines in the hills of Burma.

Traditionally they have lived as hunters, gatherers, fishermen and crude cultivators tilling the soil by a method known as ' shifting cultivation '.

## Feudalism

Conquest and circumstances brought many of these people as serfs on land, fisher folk on the coast line, and as industrial workers of Jameshedpur, Ahmedabad and coal and iron mines.

## RACE

The Aryans and Dravidians are predominant races in India and aborigines have invariably been considered, sometimes whithout proof, that they belong to earlier, probably Mongolid and Kaularian races.

## RELIGION

India, with its spiritual life and philosphers dating back to Vedic times, has given great importance to the religious beliefs and worship of the Dravidians and Aryans and the latter conquerors of Islam and Christian faiths. The primitive races in India are animist, but through the centuries they have been assimilated into what is broadly and generally known as Hinduism. The Vedic Aryans, after battling for a long time with the primitive animists, collected and introduced all the religious beliefs and forms of worship of the animists into what is known as the Atharva Veda. The aborigines with their animistic beliefs in spirits of the supernatural who could mould the destiny of man ; their hill gods, ' Mata Worship ' (Mother Cult), witch doctors and ritualistic dances have gradually absorbed the beliefs in the greater Hindu Pantheon, the ' samskaras ' or ceremonies and even the holy scriptures and the teachings and philosophies of the Hindu prophets.

## LANGUAGE

The aboriginal tribes have their hundreds of rich primitive dialects like Bhilori, Gondwani, Santali, etc., without their scripts, but contact with the plain dwellers has brought into their tongues elements of the vocabulary and grammar of the various provincial tongues which are mainly daughters of the Hindi language descending from classical Sanskrit roots.

## SOCIAL LIFE

The social life of the aborigines has maintained many of the ancient and healthy elements. In many cases, marriage amongst the tribal people is a 'free and transient' union ; in some cases they are polygamous and polyandrous ; they did not marry their children early ; they still preserve many of the ancient forms of courtship ; and the marriage ceremony in many cases is neither a religious sacrament nor a legal contract. Tribal assemblies yet continue to perform their old and traditional functions regulating marriage and controlling and regulating the life of the people.

## Arts & Crafts

The aborigines are an artistic people with a high development and expression of aesthetics. Their dances are unique, their drawings and paintings express the wealth of colour and grace of line and curve which they see around them in nature. The simple life of the humble dwellers is not like song and music, and their ears are trained to the soft music of rustling leaves, flowing stream and winds that blow over their hot rugged lands. The architecture of their simple dwellings is not without design and consideration for the functions and comforts of life.

## The Daily Life

The food of the people is simple, and well cooked with care, responding to the traditional tastes of the people. If they are underprivileged today, it is not because they lack the will, vitality and initiative to work, but successive years of feudal domination have deprived them of the rich wealth of their once bountiful forests, hillsides and grasslands.

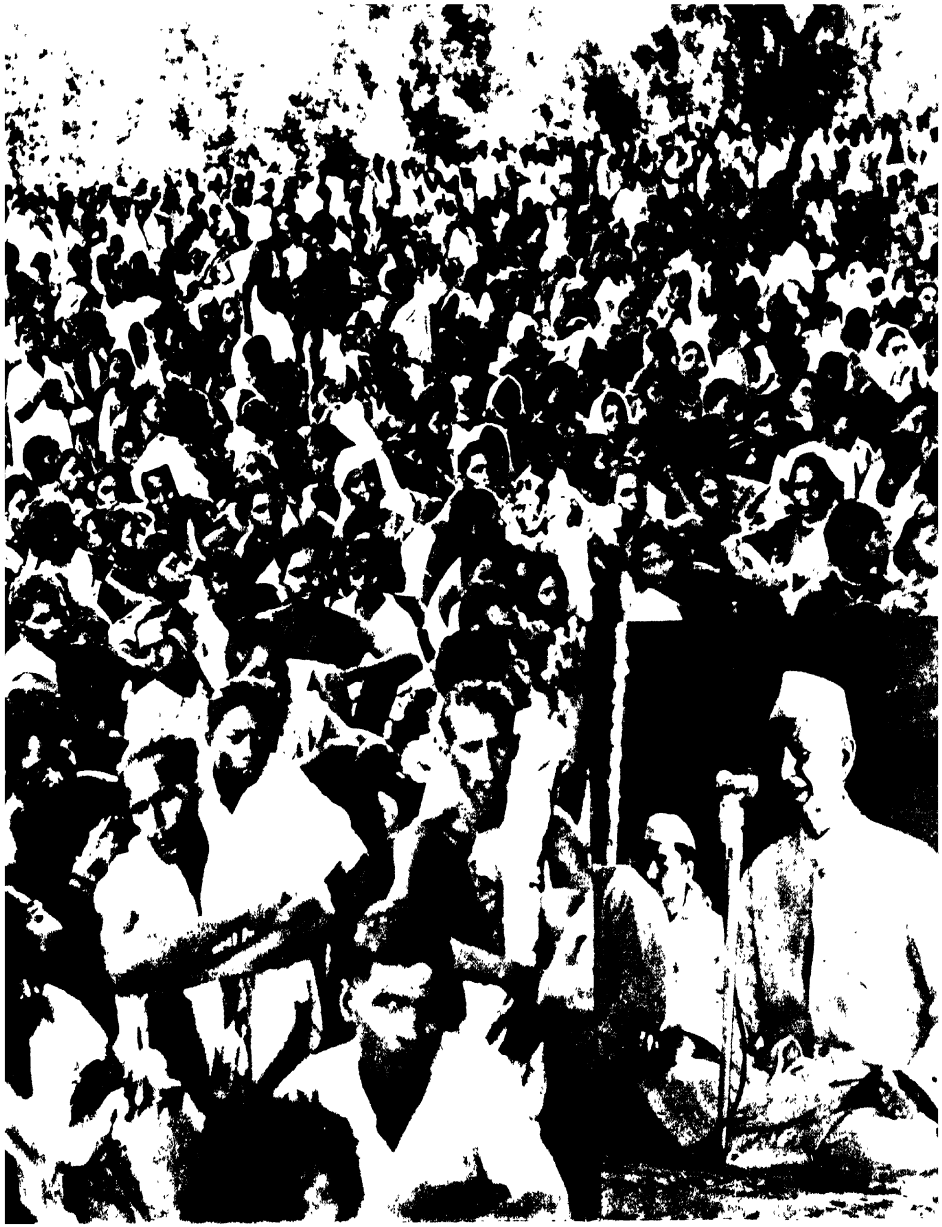
The clothing and ornaments of the aborigines are unique, colourful and aesthetic. In fact they have contributed a good deal to the dresses prevailing in the many castes and communities of India.

## Recreation

Though deprived of much of the joys of initiative and freedom so common to primitive peoples all over the world, the recreational life of the aborigines is rich with the normal pleasures of living found not only in the unique celebrations of festivals like Holi, but the day to day dances, songs and games and artistic pastimes of the people reveal a cultural heritage that is all their own. That they are children of Nature and appreciate beauty, few can deny.

## Education

The aborigines are an intensely social, friendly, tolerant people, except when their fears are aroused and their sense of security is endangered. On the whole, the pattern of their life is full of important details, and they show a remarkable interest in all the activities of life. Hambly in his *Origin of Education Amongst Primitive Peoples* has shown what is also very true in India, that though they may be illiterate and their environments void of complexities they have unique and practical methods of education and training.



(By courtesy of Shri M. D. Viweydi, (

BAPA ADDRESSES THE ADIVASIS OF CHAMPRA (ORISSA)

*who have assembled in large numbers from the remotest tracts to have his dharsan*

That enables their children to grow up with keenly developed senses, ability for hard work and a natural intelligence that is able to solve the many and complex problems of life with a clarity of mind and a sense of humour that will be a puzzle to the so-called educated citizens of urban India.

## Economic Life

The aborigines are children of Nature, and their economic life is peculiar to the physical environment in which they live. Originally, they were hunters and fishermen and lived on natural benevolence of the forests. With the encroachment of the agricultural populations on their lands, they became serfs of the landlords. Wherever they became tillers of the soil, they took to a shifting cultivation of land utilising primitive and crude methods. They could hardly afford cattle, or their rugged lands did not afford them food, and so they mainly kept goats and poultry to supplement their living. They utilised the few raw materials of the forests to further supplement their income by ingenious crafts in which they used the most simple tools.

## Their Isolation

Such is the socio-economic background of the many racial types of aborigines that inhabit this vast continent. The ways of their living, absence of communications, and lack of opportunity for economic development, left these people segregated in their habitat. They were approached with arrogance or fear, but with little understanding of the simple nature of their living. They lacked contact with the leadership of the land, nor could they reap the benefits of the nation's intellects. The petty administrative officers that came their way, lacked the training and culture of efficient administrators. The higher officials who sometimes visited them were patronising and paternal.

It is but natural that the aborigines lived in isolated islands of simple living, away from the influences that were modernising life in the cities and towns and important centres of rural development. With changes in the political life of the country, India has a new national consciousness. The fruits of freedom have to be shared by all, and the responsibilities of national regeneration fall on the shoulders of all communities in the nation. The feelings of freedom naturally penetrate the most isolated areas and the wish of the national government is to open all areas to the convenience of modern communications and the process of social intercourse through the educative, mental and cultural developments.

## NEED OF CAUTIOUS APPROACH

It is but natural that first contact will lead to bewilderment and perhaps conflicts. The approach to the people and their problems must be careful, cautious and scientific. The proper approach will be to recognise the fundamental differences that exist and the lack of physical contact which has left much to be understood between the rulers and the masses of the country. It is desirable that the problems should be understood, facts should be studied, the psychological barriers that exist are realised, and an attempt is made to understand before hasty and unplanned actions and legal directives lead to conflicts, misunderstandings and troubles. The aborigines must primarily be approached in a spirit of service and not domination. They should be first approached so that we can know them and assist them to help themselves. Action must be slow, planned and firm, making the people understand the need and meaning of changes in the light of world evolution and development.

## NATIONAL ISOLATION IMPOSSIBLE—ASSIMILATION IMPERATIVE

The idealistic approach of leaders like Malinowski can be appreciated and understood, but India has to realise that it is no longer possible to create cultural islands and to isolate natural human groups to their own way of development. The writer of the article had an opportunity to visit Red Indian Settlements and primitive settlemets in U.S.A. and Canada. It is futile to state or suggest that the human groups are ioslated and free and are developing in their own way. On the contrary, they seem to be living an artificial life which is a soulless imitation of the orignal forest dwellers, and the characters of the dominant culture around them force themselves in their lives, or inhibit them.

It is possible for primitive groups to have their own free evolution on vast areas of uninhabited continents. India has few such areas left in the country. The undeveloped physical regions in which the primitives live have already been economically exploited by the feudal, industrial and commercial communities. Schools and languages have made their inroads on primitive dialects. Primitive animism has faded into the mass of beliefs and worships of heterogenous Hindus. The caste system has cast its enslaving snare on the free social institutions of the primitives. Modern communications have reached their homes and aeroplanes fly over their skies. The products of their arts and crafts have found market in Indian towns and cities. Adult franchise brings them into the whirlpool of modern politics, and political parties have already pitched their camps in the minds and regions in which they live. It is futile now to plead for isolation, segregation and reservation.

They can no longer be left alone, and left to themselves they will not desire to be alone.

## Method of Approach

Under the above circumstances, it is not at all suggested that the aborigines should be approached by the administration, the police and the army, followed by a preacher and a teacher. On the contrary, they should be approached by a wise leadership that will not make plans without the understanding of the problems and facts that govern their different, difficult and peculiar situations.

The fundamental aim must be their welfare and happiness. The best that is in their life—religious, economic, social, cultural—*must be preserved and enriched.* The simplicity and sincerity of their worship, the wealth of their language in songs, the beauty of their paintings, dances and crafts, their ability for hard work in natural environments, the equality of woman with the man, the happy growth of children, and many such qualities of their life should not be permitted to die.

The exploitation of their lands and their people should cease forthwith in a new and free India, and they should be guided, trained and equipped to reap the fruit of their labour in the physical environment in which they find themselves.

What appears to be wrong amongst them must be understood with patience and deliberation, associating their own leadership with our own patient, thoughtful and constructive workers so that they may be assisted to remove the weeds in their own gardens with their own efforts, taking the necessary time. It has to be painfully realised and accepted that our minds, hands and hearts are not clean, and our own social and ethical backgrounds need to be adjusted to the needs of a free and prosperous nation.

It has to be seen that the changes that are to be introduced, the language they will speak, the laws they will obey, the social pattern they will evolve, the economic life they will develop in the future, and the cultural trends and patterns they will evolve in the future are their very own, and are not a result of thoughtless or ruthless domination. The manner of change must be happy, speedy and contributive to their happiness and welfare. Keeping the above in mind it is possible to suggest some measures that are useful for a proper approach to the problem.

## A New Leadership

The first need is adequate and proper leadership with a spirit of high and sincere ideals, clear objectives, a mind trained in methods of approach,

with organising ability and capacity to live and work with goodwill, sympathy and understanding in remote areas amongst a virile, active and useful population that is an asset to the nation.

This nucleus of trained leadership should possess adequate knowledge of India's ancient history and subsequent conquests, migration, and social, political, and economic upheavels. The simple and yet difficult nature of their lives cannot be understood unless there is a study in perspective of the growth of feudalism, commerce and industry in India. The leaders will have to learn some of the major dialects of the aboriginal tribes amongst whom they will work, practising the art of social assimilation, and learning to appreciate without criticism and condemnation the different ways of living and different patterns of morality, religion and culture of other people. A knowledge of anthropology, ethnology, psychology and sociology with special reference to primitive religion, social development and culture will be a necessary equipment for their minds.

Any effort at assimilation of these millions without conflict will fail unless this leadership quickly and systematically creates a leadership amongst the primitives themselves, capable of organising their lives on democratic lines.

## Remedying the Past

Before the foundations of a new economy are laid for them, the handicaps they have suffered so long and patiently should be removed. The entire lower grade staff of the forest department should be overhauled, any vestige of 'waith' or forced labour should disappear, absentee landlordism should be liquidated, money lending in the present form should be a thing of the past, and the aborigines should be quickly made the inheritors and guardians of the nation's forest wealth and pasture lands, exploiting them for their own and national benefit under the leadership of well-organised schools of forestry and their own producer, consumer and credit co-operatives. The economic life of the forest dwellers will gradually contain the use and exploitation of the entire forest wealth for fuel, timber, dye stuffs, glues, oils, etc., as well as the careful and productive exploitation of the flora, fauna and bird life. Thus the economic readjustment of the aborigines should be accompanied by a thorough overhaul and planned exploitation and development of India's forest wealth.

## A Public Welfare Department

After dealing with the difficult economic problem, the first charge of the Department of Public Welfare should be to organise health, primary education

and technical education of the aboriginal youths under the guidance of Directors of Education and Physical Welfare.

## Reconstruction Centres

It is not possible to deal with the reconstruction of vast areas comprising a population of millions, and, therefore, there is the need to organise provincial and district centres of influence and training in selected aboriginal villages in the heart of the forest and agricultural areas. These villages should become the seat of tribal assemblies, village punchayats and should develop as community centres with administrative officers, primary education centres, forestry schools and handicrafts schools, health centres, playgrounds and youth organisations.

The successful working of these centres will gradually change the outlook and ways of living of the primitives.

As stated before, it is worth repeating, that important problems in the life of primitives, especially dealing with religion, language, social organisations and traditions governing marriage, etc., should be approached with wisdom, caution and forbearance.

## Handling Social Problems

The religious beliefs and practices of the aborigines are the direct result of the simple working of their minds, and psychological reactions to the physical environment. It is not necessary that human beings should always evolve a philosophical outlook, a moral background of life, a pattern of spiritual life, and a rational understanding and interpretation of human conduct by going through all the experiences and experiments of organised religion. The spiritual life of man can and should be allowed to unfold itself and grow as a result of his own efforts and his struggles for survival and self-expression. Religious missionaries, temples and highly organised priesthoods belonging to any faith do not create understanding of life but only impose patterns of behaviour and sometimes bring about conflicts between old traditions and new trends that are introduced irrespective of the needs and requirements of a social situation.

## The Religious Problem

Hinduism is not a single religious faith. It is a way of living that has evolved out of the traditional experiences of people who came to be known as

Hindus, and who had lived on this historic land for centuries. Hinduism contains the seed, the trunk and branches, the leaves and the flowers and fruits of religion. It is on the one hand the product of the primitive mind struggling to know a complex existence ; on the other hand, it is the product of the spiritual efforts of some of the greatest prophets and philosophers born in this world to guide man on the path of morality and righteous conduct. It contains not one but several patterns of religious beliefs and worships, temples, priesthoods and Holy Books. Without difficulty or conflict, the primitives had adjusted themselves in the past to changing, historical, religious, social, and political situations. They should continue to do the same in future. The pattern of their life should be their own, they should assimilate with the rest of India volitionally and intelligently as a result of their own efforts, directed by their own tribal assemblies and guided by the administrative efforts, the social workers, and the educationists.

## THE GANDHIAN APPROACH

India has to find and show a new way of dealing with a major social problem. The relations between the primitive tribes in Africa, America and Australia with the so-called civilised people are not the same as the relations between the primitive people of India and the rest of the Indian population. Here populations of perhaps different races, with different types and degrees of culture have lived together for centuries, have braved the storms and struggles of life, and have intermingled to a greater or lesser extent in normal social intercourse. Assimilation of races, tradition, languages, beliefs and pattern of life have taken place sometimes violently but mostly in a peaceful manner, to such an extent, that the changes have been hardly noticeable.

The future approach to this seemingly simple but really difficult problem should be in the Gandhian way. The primitives should be approached on the basis of non-violence, accepting the principles of a democratic society and the fundamental equality and unity of man, in a spirit of love, service and humility. It must not be a process of social domination and political imposition, but a process of common effort and understanding, letting life evolve peacefully into new channels as a result of the common efforts of the so-called primitives and the so-called civilised.

The so-called primitives should retain the naturalness, health and physical beauty of primitive life and environment, and they should take to civilisation without its neurosis and its unhappiness, its intolerance and its bigotry, its violence and its ruthlessness, its selfishness and its cruelty and its tendency to seek prosperity and success of the few through the exploitation of the many.




KASTURBA GANDHI NATIONAL MEMORIAL TRUST

(HEAD OFFICE : WARDHA)

*Taken on the occasion of 77th Birthday of Shri Thakkar Bapa—29-11-1945*

First row (standing) : *Kishansingh Negi ; E. G. Dhotey ; Krishna Potude ; Gujabrao Bade ; Bapurao Deshmukh.*

Second row : *M. H. Kaujalgi ; Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani ; Shri A. V. Thakkar ; Shyamla S. N. Chatterjee.*

Third row : *Miss Shanta Karnik ; Baby Manjula ; Miss Mitra Pai.*

## 10. THAKKAR BAPA AND THE KASTURBA TRUST

BY

SHYAMLAL

GANDHIJI has been rightly called the greatest liberator of Indian womanhood. It was he, more than anybody else, who was responsible for raising Indian womanhood to its full height. He considered woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering.

While including 'uplift of women' as one of the items in his Constructive Work, among other things, he said: 'They (men) have not realised that the woman must be a true helpmate of man in the mission of service. Woman has been suppressed under customs of law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on non-violence woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from a performance of duty, it follows that rules for social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in fitness in their behaviour towards women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers.'

Though, Gandhiji, included uplift of women as one of the items in his constructive programme, owing to his pre-occupations with other pressing problems of the country, he could not start an all-India organisation for the service of women. I learn that in 1942, in response to insistent requests from a Sindhi philanthropist he was thinking of having an organisation for this kind of work. Gandhiji was responsible for starting the All India Spinners' Association, the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh, the All India Village Industries Association, the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, the Goseva Sangh and a number of other all-India organisations, but it was given to Thakkar Bapa, more than to any other, to give a concrete shape to an organisation meant for the service of women in India.

The inside story of the events leading to the formation of the Kasturba Trust is an interesting one.

Though Thakkar Bapa cannot be called a Gandhi-ite, his personal attachment and loyalty to Gandhiji amounted to hero-worship.

In 1943 when the mighty arm of the British Government had fallen heavily

on India and the 'peace of grave' prevailed in the country, Thakkar Bapa printed thousands of copies of Gandhiji's article in the *Harijan* of January 1942 entitled 'Real War Effects'. The article suggested ways and means to meet the food shortage in the country. But Thakkar Bapa's main objective in printing and broadcasting the article was that people should not forget Gandhiji under the British bayonet, but must know that he was the person who could deliver the goods.

It was at this critical period in the country's life that a few friends, of whom Thakkar Bapa was one, thought of raising a fund to demonstrate to the Government and the people of the world their love and esteem for Gandhiji. While this was still under active consultation the country received a tragic shock. The death of Kasturba Gandhi, while in detention in the Aga Khan Palace, on 22nd February, 1944, caused nation-wide grief and mourning. The position she held in the life of the nation and the affection and reverence that she commanded from old and young, stirred the country to its very depth. Therefore it was thought best to organise a fund which may serve the purpose as indicated above, which, at the same time, may be a fitting memorial to the good woman who had devoted her life to the service of the country and who had always followed her great husband in all his movements. The chief sponsors of the memorial fund were Shri Narandas Gandhi of Rajkot, Shri Thakkar Bapa, Shri Devadas Gandhi, Swami Anand, Shri Shantikumar N. Morarjee, Shri V. L. Mehta and others. Shri Thakkar Bapa and Shri Devadas Gandhi after consulting a number of friends arranged to issue an appeal under the signatures of about 100 leading persons of the country on the 8th March, 1944, headed by the late Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, for collection of a memorial fund of Rs. 75 lacs to be presented to Gandhiji on his 75th birthday falling on 2nd October, 1944, to be utilised for the welfare and education of women in India.

A Board of Trustees was named in the appeal and Thakkar Bapa was appointed as the Secretary of the Memorial Fund. Bapa never worked harder than during those months of May to September, 1944. He sat at the desk from morning till late at night, whipped the erring and slow collectors of the funds, organised collection committees, toured round the country and put words of cheer and hope among the workers. It has to be realised that in 1944 none of the important leaders and workers of the country were out of jail and therefore circumstances for collections were not very favourable. It was definitely unfavourable. I remember a very prominent businessman telling Bapa, on the eve of the issue of the appeal, 'You have fixed a very high target.' But Thakkar Bapa's hard and organised work, his loyalty to Gandhiji and Ba and the association of Gandhiji as the Chairman of the Fund after his release from

jail, in May 1944 made the task easier, though it was an uphill task. On the 21st June, 1944, he wrote to a very dear and devoted friend as follows :

> 'I have a complaint against you, that you are not helping me in the work of the Kasturba Fund. You must know that I am now an old man and my energy and physical power is not even half of what it was three or four years ago. All the same I undertook this heavy work in order to pay off my debt to Gandhiji, who has made me what I am. Will you not therefore assist me in paying off my debt! '

In this letter Bapa complains of his advancing age and physical infirmity, but as I have written in the foregoing paragraph, he worked hardest during the Kasturba collections. I once asked him as to what was the secret of his hard and sustained work. He replied ' Will power and devotion to the cause.' And when on the 2nd October 1944, the fund exceeded the target of 75 lacs, Bapa's joy knew no bounds. While presenting his report to Gandhiji on that day, along with the purse, Thakkar Bapa said :

> 'I am thankful to all Merciful God for having given me an opportunity in the closing months of my 75th year, to be the medium of collecting not only Rs. 75 lacs but over a hundred lacs and placing the same at your feet on the closing day of your 75th year in the place which is almost the centre of the country, both geographically and figuratively.'

Thakkar Bapa's loyalty to Gandhiji in the Kasturba work would not allow him to tolerate any reproach of Gandhiji, from whatsoever quarters it may come. The Delhi correspondent of *The Times* of London in May 1944 reported and published in his paper that Gandhiji had taken the first step towards revitalising activity of the Congress party by becoming the Chairman of the Kasturba Memorial Fund and that its organisation and chain of Committees throughout the country will be an useful instrument for propagating interest in the Congress. It was too much for Thakkar Bapa to bear the insinuations against Gandhiji, and he issued a strong rejoinder in which, among other things, he said :

> ' I wish to draw the attention of the public to the fact that the signatories to the appeal for the memorial fund issued on March 8th last had expressed the hope that after the termination of his detention, Gandhiji would be in a position to function as Chairman of the Trust. Even the New Delhi correspondent of the *London Times* should, therefore, know that the announcement made after a meeting of the Trustees on May 10th to the effect that Gandhiji had consented to be the Chairman of the Trust was merely in fulfilment of the desire expressed in the original appeal issued two months ago. I would add that Gandhiji has personally been disinclined to take up the chairmanship of this Trust and that it was only in deference to the

wishes of the Trustees, that he was good enough to give his consent. There is also no question of any need for Gandhiji to make special efforts to stimulate the collection of the fund. The work of the collection is well under way and the correspondent concerned should again know that popular sentiment in India for the memory of the late Shri Kasturba has never been in doubt and the full amount of Rs. 75 lacs will surely be collected before October 2.

'I must also say that the aspersion that the various committees which are now busy organising the collection are acting as instruments for propagating the interest of the Congress is unworthy of a responsible journalist and will rightly be resented by those large number of men and women of differing political views who have joined hands in the sacred object of perpetuating the memory of a lady who had enjoyed universal esteem in the country.

'Gandhiji never stoops to the use of indirect methods for the propagation of his political views and ideals and his high sense of honour is recognised all over the world. I trust that the *Times* correspondent will now see his way without delay to correct his original report and to remove the grave misunderstanding he is bound to have created among the millions of readers of his paper.'

Gandhiji looked to Thakkar Bapa as the father of the Trust. He very often used to say that in case his opinion was at variance with that of Thakkar Bapa, Bapa's opinion should prevail.

The deed of the settlement of the Trust came in operation from 1st April, 1945. This deed provided that the life of the first office-bearers of the Trust (except the Chairman Gandhiji) was for one year only. Subsequently the Trustees could appoint and determine the tenure of the office-bearers. When Shri Thakkar Bapa was appointed the Secretary for the second time in July 1946, Gandhiji proposed that Bapa's tenure of office should be for life. But Thakkar Bapa declined the offer and agreed to accept the office only for three years, which term expired in June last. This time also he wrote to the Chairman of the Trust, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel conveying his decision not to accept the secretaryship, if reappointed. But in deference to the unanimous wish of the Executive Committee of the Trust he agreed to accept the office for another period of three years. It is true he has not been able to give much time for the work of the Trust during the last two years or so, but his name and guidance has a sanctity all its own and continued to give inspiration to the members and workers of the Trust.

## WORKING OF THE TRUST

It may be remembered that Gandhiji was released from the Aga Khan Palace on 6th May, 1944, and was prevailed upon to accept the chairmanship

of the Trust for the purpose of guiding the Trustees. At the meeting of the Trustees held on 1st July 1944, Gandhiji explaining his own ideas about the utilisation of the fund said: 'Kasturba was a simple woman devoted to village life, actually living and serving among villages. The object of the fund should, therefore, properly be the welfare of village women and children. It was well that the Trustees and the world should know his mind on the question of the welfare of women and children in the numerous villages of India. The welfare of his conception encompassed the whole life of women and children in the villages. It, therefore, included maternity, hygiene and the treatment of diseases and education.'

The Trust was brought into existence for the welfare of women and children in villages. The main sphere of activity of the Trust was, therefore, centred round the re-orientation of the life of the village woman and child. It was, therefore, necessary not only to relieve the village woman of the misery, dirt, disease and ignorance that surround her every day of her life, but to develop in her the qualities of fearlessness, strength and self-reliance so that she could take her rightful place in society.

In order to educate and enlighten village women and children, training on the following lines has been agreed upon :

1. Nayi Talim (pre-basic, basic and post-basic education).
2. Improved Health Services (Sanitation, prevention of diseases, Home Nursing, Child Welfare Maternity Centres, other rural medical work).
3. Village Industries (crafts, weaving, sewing, etc.).
4. Gram Seva (village welfare service).
5. Miscellaneous—Gopalan (cow protection), gardening, etc.

## Women Workers

It was the wish of Gandhiji from the very beginning that the money should be spent through the agency of women workers. The Executive Committee of the Trust has therefore decided that all centres of work under the Trust must be in charge of women workers only. It was only in very special circumstances, when women workers with the necessary qualifications were not available, that the Chairman could make an exception and allow male workers in a centre. But the greatest difficulty that faced the provincial committees, and is even now facing the agents in their attempt to commence work, was the lack of adequately trained workers with the necessary outlook and equipment for rural work. Generally, the educated woman possessed the necessary capacity and ability, but she often did not know the troubles, hardships and dangers that have to be encountered in her work, in rural areas. On the other

hand, the village women, though familiar with the background of work, lacked the general outlook, proper method and knowledge. She is mostly illiterate. The trained personnel of health services that we get in the cities and towns have been trained to make them useful in urban environment only.

It, therefore, became imperative for the Trust to give the necessary training to such women workers who, though having a keen desire to serve the rural areas, cannot do so efficiently for want of proper training, approach and method.

## TRAINING OF WORKERS

Therefore the main resources of the Trust has been directed in preparing trained personnel for different kinds of activities envisaged under the Trust such as Balwadi, prebasic education, adult education, improved health services, village institutes, general gram seva, etc. This has become all the more important in view of the fact that we have now responsible governments who may be expected to give greater attention to the needs of masses in rural areas. Thus there is a growing need of having the necessary trained personnel with a proper outlook to carry through the educational, medical, sanitary as well as other schemes of the Governments, local bodies and other non-official agencies. If the Trust could train and supply such personnel it would achieve a great object.

At the May 1947 meeting of the Agents and the Executive Committee, the idea of giving specialised training to all workers was greatly appreciated. At the subsequent December meeting also, it was agreed that one year of general gram sevika training should be a compulsory preparatory training for all the trainees and that only after such training for one year, they should be sent for specialised training as follows :

1. Gram seva—specialising in balwadi, craft work, child welfare, *gopalan* and co-operative movement.
2. Basic training.
3. Gram udyog—weaving, paper making, goseva, local crafts, etc.
4. Midwifery and nursing.

The one year's preparatory training before the specialised training became necessary, in view of the fact that the agents found it wellnigh impossible to get the requisite type of women candidates from rural areas for training and hence the necessity of a longer period of training. It was also thought that weaving and improved craft work provided in the gram sevika syllabus should form a part of the specialised training, as from experience it was found that practically none of the gram sevika vidyalayas had been able to complete training in weaving within the stipulated period as prescribed in the syllabus.

Another important step taken by the Executive Committee during the report was the adoption of the scheme of starting a sevika ashram section, attached to Gram Sevika Vidyalayas, for widows, the deserted and such types of women who, having no encumbrances and other family responsibilities, present or future, wish to devote their whole life for the ideals of the Trust after taking necessary training, but cannot do so for want of required general knowledge. According to the scheme, it is proposed to give preparatory general knowledge for a year before admitting them in the regular gram sevika vidyalayas. The scheme is full of potentialities, there is enough material in the women-folk of the country; only they have to be properly harnessed.

## Basic Teachers' Training

The appeal for the Memorial Fund, issued on 8th March, 1948, said *inter alia*, ' We have here in mind the need, among other things, for the spread of principles of basic education in which Gandhiji has been a firm believer and which have obtained unanimous support in educationist circles in the country.' Gandhiji, too, in his address to the Trustees on 1st July, 1944, at Poona, while speaking of educational work of the Trust, had said : ' Education meant the Basic education of the Talimi Sangh.' Therefore, it became necessary for the Trust to train teachers for Basic education before it could start Basic schools in provinces. The Hindustani Talimi Sangh kindly offered to train at its headquarters and other training centres a limited number of trainees deputed by the Trust.

## Training of Medical Workers

The Advisory Medical Board of the Trust has prepared a number of syllabi, the most important of which are : (1) First-Aid and Home Nursing (period of training, three months), (2) Village Midwives (period of training, 18 months) and (3) Village Nurses (period of training, 2½ years). These syllabi have been prepared with reference to the needs of the rural areas. The first course of first-aid and home nursing is compulsory for all the trainees going in for Nos. 2 and 3. The Advisory Medical Board recommended to the Trust that before candidates are actually sent for the midwifery or nurses training they should undergo 12 months preliminary camp training and be acquainted with *organisation*.

The supreme body of the Trust is the Board of Trustees consisting of 26 Trustees at present, with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as the Chairman, Shri G. V. Mavalankar, as the Vice-Chairman, Shri Thakkar Bapa as the Secretary

and Shrimati Susheela Pai as Deputy Secretary. There is an Executive Committee from the Trustees of 12 members including the office-bearers.

All funds and properties of the Trust vest in the Holding Trustees who number six.

All the work in the provinces is carried by the provincial pratinidhis (agents) who are women, under the guidance of the Executive Committee, who appoints them. The Provincial Pratinidhis have advisory committees, wherever necessary.

The service of women and children in rural areas through the agency of trained women workers only is a new and pioneer type of work. The work has been carried not in a patronising manner but in the spirit of service and dedication. Gandhiji had implicit faith in the potentiality of woman, in her devotion and dedication to the cause that she takes up. But the work requires time and patience. It is an uphill task. Workers of the required type cannot be manufactured in a day or year. The trainees have to be recruited from rural areas. Naturally they are underqualified, bound by shackles of ignorance and superstition. They have to be trained for 2 to 3 years or so, to make them physically alert, and mentally and intellectually fit, before they can be sent to the villages.

However, the results so far achieved are very gratifying and give the workers and the Trust full hope in the destiny of village women and their role in the reorientation of the motherland. The sevikas, in the face of unimaginable difficulties, have generally speaking, rendered very effective service in the farthest nooks and corners of India and have tried to bring light and joy to the dark and dreary life of the village people.

ADIVASIS OF
KEONJHAR DISTRICT (ORISSA)
GIVE DEMONSTRATION
OF ARROW THROWING





BAPA HEARS THE
GRIEVANCES OF
ORISSA ADIVASIS

# 11. NAI TALIM AND THE 'PRIMITIVE' PEOPLES

BY

E. W. ARYANAYAKAM AND MARJORIE SYKES

IT is fitting that a volume of tributes to Thakkar Bapa, which endeavours in some degree to assess the importance and significance of his work for India, should contain some brief reference to Nai Talim as carried on by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. Thakkar Bapa has been from the beginning an enthusiastic member of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, and has taken a deep interest in the development of Basic Education in all its phases. It is the purpose of this article to show that this interest was not a mere 'side-line', with no vital relationship to his major interest in the welfare of the Harijans and aboriginals; but that on the contrary it is the natural corollary of that interest, and forms an intrinsic part of the work of a life devoted to their true welfare. Thakkar Bapa's own work has lain in other fields than the specifically educational, but nothing could be of greater importance for the fulfilment of his dearest hopes than the development among the peoples to whom his life has been dedicated of the 'education for and through the whole of life' which is envisaged by Nai Talim.

Many of us, the products of an urbanised, artificial educational system which is foreign to Indian tradition and without roots in Indian culture, still need to make a great mental effort and to be continually on the alert, if we are to divest our thinking of the fallacy of identifying 'culture' and 'civilisation' with the materialist, top-heavy society in which we have been brought up. Subconsciously, if not consciously, we still tend to measure a man's 'progress' by the number and variety of his clothes, the speed of the transport which he can command, the size and costliness of his house, or his skill in manipulating the spoken and written word. To put it in another way, we applaud the multiplication of the external means to a good life, we do not judge by the enrichment of the life itself. But, 'what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own life (or, "soul": the reference is to the spiritual, not the physical, life)'?

Our phrases betray us. We talk of the 'primitive' tribes, with a certain amount of condescension; we speak of the 'backward classes', the 'underprivileged', the 'scheduled castes'. We give them special monetary inducements so that some of them may assimilate the 'culture' which our cities and

schools have to offer, and we flatter ourselves that we are doing them good and conferring blessings upon them. We should do well to submit *our* plans for their benefit to some practical tests, and to reconsider our whole approach to these fellow-citizens of India.

What practical tests can we apply? We may take as a start the thoughts provoked by the suggestive and imaginative title of H. G. Wells' great book, 'The work, wealth, and happiness of mankind'. How right that order is! It is work that produces wealth; and we shall miss the whole grandeur of the thought if we interpret either of those two great words in any narrow sense. True *work* is no mere physical drudgery; it is the purposeful and harmonious use of all a man's powers of body, mind and spirit to some productive and creative end, and it includes in one balanced whole the work of the farmer, the scientist and the seer. True *wealth* does not consist of a balance at the bank, or even of a disproportionately large accumulation of land and goods; its meaning is seen clearly in its companion words 'weal' and 'welfare'; it is that which conduces to health and wholeness of the man, and of the society of which he is a member; and which makes for the vigour and wholesomeness of his bodily, mental and spiritual development. *Happiness* is the great and beautiful by-product of wealth-creating work; it will not come to the man who seeks it as an end in itself, but to the creative worker. However simple and humble the work on which he is engaged, the happiness which he finds through his labour is a sign that this labour is in harmony with the meaning and purpose of human existence.

Measured by tests of this kind, it would be hard to deny that the 'primitive' peoples of India, where their traditional culture has not been vitiated by contact with the greed of a capitalist and exploiting society, are even to-day closer to the ideal of a good life than their fellow-countrymen in the 'civilised' cities. They are happy people; while on the other hand a friend returning a few days ago from a visit to one of our cities named as her chief impression the vast amount of restless and fear-ridden unhappiness that she had found there. They are wealthy, in that together with the simple material needs of life they have leisure, and music, and vigorous bodily health. They work as Nature bids them work, in the open air, in hunting and cultivation and the care of their herds. Where they are subject, as too often they are now subject, to disease and degradation, their sufferings are the fruit of the 'civilising' influences of our urban society; the traditional beauty of their dress and ornaments, beautiful in its fitness for their needs, is exchanged for tawdry ugliness in the markets which exploit the innocent for their own profit.

There is another kind of wealth which these children of Nature hold in trust for India—a wealth of moral and spiritual integrity. They are clean

peoples, physically and morally clean. There is in their culture a sturdy honesty to which all who know them will bear witness. They are free men and women, free from that slave mentality which works only when the foreman is watching, making as much money and doing as little work as is possible without being found out. We have met that despicable type only too frequently; it is distressingly common among the products, both poor and well-to-do, of our 'progressive' civilisation. But the 'primitives' scorn such lazy dishonesty; to them a bond is a bond, to be carried out of their own free will; the simple young servant girl will not accept a week's wages for five days' work, and scrupulously returns the balance; she will trust and honour you as a fellow-worker, but the kind of mutual distrust which has become all too often the normal relationship between master and servant in the 'acquisitive society' is completely foreign to her tradition, and bewilders and hurts her. This humble integrity is still alive in many parts of village India; but it is possible to trace, in successive generations of the same family, the undermining of its splendid moral standards which life in the city has brought about.

Here, in the tribal areas, and among the aboriginals and 'backward' villages, is the real backbone of India. Here is the physical vigour and moral strength in which, if anywhere, lies our real hope. Can we complacently stand and watch this vigour being sapped by the encroaching, insidious influences of commercial greed? The pure culture of the tribes is an unself-conscious culture, and because it is the fruit of a healthy but unreasoned tradition, it is defenceless against the purposeful cunning of the exploiter. If we care that our heritage of simple integrity shall be preserved, we must begin now to help the 'primitive peoples' to grow into an active consciousness of the worth and beauty of their own traditions; they must not only follow, but understand with their full intelligence, their own ways of life; they must choose them of their own free-will because they see them to be good.

This is the significance of Nai Talim; this is where Nai Talim is so closely and naturally related to Thakkar Bapa's life-work and ideals. Nai Talim takes up and integrates into a conscious and purposeful educational process all the elements of life-tradition which form the living culture of the villages. The intimate knowledge and understanding of the ways of forest and field which the hill and jungle peoples so richly possess, is made the very centre of the life-experience through which the children are taught. For Nai Talim is Nature Talim, and the Basic teacher's job is so to co-operate with the environment in which Nature has set her children so that none of the wealth of her teaching is lost upon them. The school is not any longer an alien influence; on the contrary, the children are taught through the daily activities of their homes and villages, through their own society, through the family occupations in which

from babyhood they take their share. There is thus no tension between school and home, but a strengthening and stimulating harmony; because the school is teaching the children to take a joyous and intelligent pride in the preservation and enrichment of the heritage of home.

Nai Talim as Gandhiji conceived it does not begin or end with the years which children spend in school. It is a living force through the whole span of life, spurring the man or woman to newer and newer discoveries in the infinite world in which he is set. Therefore it concerns itself with the mother, even before the birth of the child, and with the home into which it is destined to be born. It concerns itself with youth, and the initiation of youth into the responsible adult life of society; with marriage and parenthood, with the economic position of the village, with its feasts and festivals, its music and legends, its sorrows and its amusements. It is concerned that all of these natural things should *draw out*, that is to say, should *educate*, the full latent possibilities of the men and women who come under its influence. To use a beautiful phrase from the Bible, it is concerned that all should grow ' into a perfect man, into the fulness of the stature of the glory of God '—as He can reveal his glory in the loveliness of human life.

Childhood, in its frank adventurousness and trustfulness, is a beautiful thing, and the unsophisticated cultures of India have much in common with it, both in their purity and beauty and in their defencelessness. They are defenceless now, because they are immature; they have not reached the fulness of their stature. When they grow into the perfection of their own God-given powers, they will no longer be defenceless, they will be armed by their own intrinsic strength against all dangers. The Nai Talim which Bapuji proclaimed holds the secret of healthy growth, and we look forward to the day when the ' primitive ' peoples of India, strengthened and matured by the gifts it has to offer, will lead this ancient land to the greatest renaissance of true culture that she has ever known.

# 12. THE ALL INDIA VILLAGE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

BY

G. RAMACHANDRAN

## THE WORK AND ITS FUTURE

THE All India Village Industries Association is now 15 years old. The association came into being in accordance with a resolution passed by the 48th session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay in the last week of October 1934 under the presidentship of Shri Rajendra Prasad. The resolution mentioned that much confusion had arisen in the public mind as to the true nature of Swadeshi, that village reorganisation was the basis of the constructive programme of the Congress and that village reconstruction essentially meant the revival and encouragement of dead and dying village industries. Shri J. C. Kumarappa was authorised to form the A.I.V.I.A., under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji, as part of the activities of the Congress. The revival and encouragement of village industries and the moral and physical advancement of the villages were laid down as the main objects of the association. Reading the resolution to-day, it is possible to think that the wording might have been clearer and more comprehensive. But as in the case of all work started by Gandhiji, the work itself has proved very much better than any terms of reference under which it was started. The rebuilding of the shattered economy of the villages and there through of the entire life of the people in the villages were undoubtedly the objects with which the A.I.V.I.A. started and has gone on working during the last 15 years.

It is no doubt true that some striking and original personality often becomes the chief factor in the growth of an organisation. But the Charka Sangh has had a distinguished line of builders. There was Shri Maganlal Gandhi and then the brilliant Shri Shankerlal Banker, followed by such veterans like Shri Jamnalal Bajaj, Shri Jajuji and others. The Harijan Sevak Sangh had Shri G. D. Birla, Shrimathi Rameshwari Nehru, Shri Thakkar Bapa and great workers in some of the Provinces. The Talimi Sangh has had Dr. Zakir Hussain, Shri Aryanayakam, Shrimathi Ashadevi, Dr. Zaiddyan, Shri Bhadrinath Varma and others. But the A.I.V.I.A. had only Shri J. C. Kumarappa. He has been everything in it. The A.I.V.I.A. is thus the creation of Shri J. C. Kumarappa aided only occasionally by someone here or there.

That at least is my impression. That is the impression one sees on the face of the whole work of the A.I.V.I.A. so far. It has been great work in some directions. It is the A.I.V.I.A. which has inherited the precept and practice of Gandhian Economics. Research has been carried out, the economic principles clearly stated and published, several village industries taken up and strengthened, hundreds of workers trained, economic surveys made, a general plan of village reconstruction formulated and more than all, the moral basis of a new economics brilliantly outlined. And yet, we have not touched except the fringe of the colossal problem of village reconstruction in a country where more than 80 per cent of the people live in several lakhs of villages.

The A.I.V.I.A. did not aim at organisational expansion. It aims only at evolving the correct technique of village reconstruction and then making it available to all those concerned. Shri Kumarappa deliberately refrained from building up a vast organisation with branches controlled from Maganwadi. But he has built up at Maganwadi departments which have guided village reconstruction and revival of village industries in many parts of India. The A.I.V.I.A.'s advice and guidance have been made available to constructive workers everywhere in India and now latterly to the Central and Provincial Governments. During the last 15 years numerous batches of workers have been trained in Maganwadi and many of them are doing village reconstruction work in several Provinces. The number of those thus trained exceed 500.

Now that we have our own Governments at the Centre and in the Provinces, the A.I.V.I.A. has a programme for spreading out on the basis mainly of local initiative. The A.I.V.I.A. has submitted a 10-year plan of development to the Gandhi National Memorial Trust for making its work countrywide but without undue centralisation. Instead of one training centre for All India in Maganwadi, the plan contemplates training centres for workers in properly demarcated regional areas. At Maganwadi itself more expensive research and experimentation are planned. If this scheme is worked out, the A.I.V.I.A. would then have emerged from its sheltered work in Maganwadi into the open and vast field of India's rural life.

At the present time the work of the A.I.V.I.A. is best studied at Maganwadi in Wardha. After Bapu migrated from Maganwadi to Sevagram, public attention has run to Sevagram and rather neglected Maganwadi. But Bapu stayed in Maganwadi for some years and his spirit still richly hovers over it.

Maganwadi is a beauty spot, in an otherwise arid landscape in Wardha. It has beautiful gardens and pleasant shades. The first thing to attract the eye is the Maganlal Gandhi Memorial Museum crowded with beautiful specimens of Indian handicrafts and also with exhibits of handicrafts from many

other countries. The building in which the Museum is located is undoubtedly the most beautiful one in Wardha with a fine garden in front. Then there is the big central quadrangle round which Shri Kumarappa has planned and built up his several departments of works. At one end of the quadrangle are situated the offices, the library and reading-room, the book depot, etc. Then there is the big hand-made paper production unit which trains workers in producing hand-made paper. Just now there are 40 students learning this art. It is a department full of various processes of converting rubbish and waste materials into hand-made paper. Just now a new experiment is being started by setting up a bullock-beater for pulp making. Then comes the research laboratory and the soap-making unit. Then there is our village pottery and magan-choola section which is becoming increasingly popular. The magandīps or vegetable oil lamps come next. Next in order are the spinning and bee-keeping sections followed by another big department, i.e. the oil pressing section. Six ghanis are daily at work and oil is pressed under scientifically improved methods from various kinds of seeds. Then there are the chakki and gur-making departments. There is also a blacksmithy and carpentry making tools and instruments for village Industries. Outside this big quadrangle and on the other side of the road are the hostels and class-rooms of the Gram Udyog Vidyalaya. There is also the village industry shop which is popular in Wardha. The course of training is for one year and every candidate must learn either hand-made paper production or oil production with all the other industries. Theoretical classes are held in rural economics and in the economics of various village industries. Every student is given a complete idea of the ideology and methodology of the Gandhian Constructive Programme. The attempt has been more and more, not merely to teach village industries, but to make complete village workers who will know the why and the how of all the work done or learnt.

A word about A.I.V.I.A. publications. Constructive workers have done a lot of good work. But few of them have cared to explain to others the ideals and methods of their work in a convincing manner. The result is, other parties with more propaganda catch the imagination of the younger generation more than constructive workers with their good work. But Shri Kumarappa, on the other hand, has published by now almost a small library of books on every aspect of Gandhian Economics and on the various ' village industries '. Half the correspondence in Maganwadi is from those who express admiration and gratitude for these books. One typical admirer wrote recently that he had for some time begun to gravitate to communism, but having read some of Shri Kumarappa's books he had found that Gandhism was non-violent communism and that he was all for it. If the younger generation in India has

understood the scientific basis of Gandhian Economics thanks are due to Shri Kumarappa. Some one has at last offered the non-violent and revolutionary equivalent to communism in a simple, direct and modern way. That perhaps is Shri Kumarappa's greatest contribution through the A.I.V.I.A. The significance of it will become clearer only as the years roll on. The *Gram Udyog Patrika*, the monthly organ of the A.I.V.I.A., has a circle of earnest readers throughout India and the articles appearing in them are widely copied by many of the newspapers. The *Gram Udyog Patrika* is thus source material for other papers.

From the next year the A.I.V.I.A. wants to go one step forward with its work. Till now, the A.I.V.I.A. experimented with village Industries for production. It now wants to experiment with village industries for a complete scheme of rural education. The inevitable line of development is thus from Gram Udyog to Gram Udyog Nai-Talim. Gandhiji's revolutionary idea in Nai Talim is that work should not only give material production but education to the mind. If basic education is education of boys and girls through handicrafts, Gram Udyog Nai-Talim will be adult education through village industries. Hand-made paper production, oil making and refining, pottery, etc., are multi-processed handicrafts which can be richly exploited for giving education in the various subjects. Agro-botany, chemistry, physics, mathematics, history and fine-arts can also be taught through various processes of work in village industries. Every unit of village industry in a rural area can become an adult education centre as Gandhiji dreamt it. In basic education, we have taken the educated, i.e., the teachers and trained them in handicrafts for getting true education. In Gram Udyog Nai-Talim, ultimately, craftsmen will be taken up and made into teachers to get true adult education. All those who work in a village industry will earn their living, produce goods needed by the country and at the same time educate themselves. If the A.I.V.I.A. succeeds in its programme of Gram Udyog Nai-Talim in Maganwadi, then the whole of adult education in India will undergo a most significant revolution with incalculable results in the rural areas.

# १३. जौनसार बावर के आदिवासी

(श्री० धर्मदेव शास्त्री)

## प्रदेश परिचय।

जौनसार बावर देहरादून जिले के अन्तर्गत अर्ध बहिष्कृत प्रदेश है। यह ज़िला अपेक्षाकृत छोटा है। इसकी केवल दो तहसीलें हैं। देहरादून और चकरोता। चकरोता तहसील का दूसरा नाम जौनसार बावर है। कालसी इस प्रदेश की प्रसिद्ध पुरानी बस्ती है। यहाँ यमुना किनारे २३ शताब्दी पुराना सम्राट् अशोक का शिलालेख आज भी सुरक्षित है। कालसी अब उजड़ी हुई बस्ती है। कालसी से जौनसार बावर का प्रदेश प्रारंभ होता है। यहां से २८ मील चकरोता तक मोटर का मार्ग है। कालसी चकरोता मार्ग के बीच में साहिया नाम की बस्ती भी सड़क पर है। जो इस प्रदेश के ठीक केन्द्र में है। यह व्यापार का केन्द्र है। कालसी साहिया और चकरोता के अलावा चौहडपुर भी बड़ी व्यापारिक मंडी है। इस प्रदेश के पूर्व में यमुना और पश्चिमोत्तर में टौंस नदी बहती है। दोनों का संगम कालसी के पास होता है।

## हिमाचल प्रदेश और टीहरी गढ़वाल।

टौंस पार हिमाचल प्रदेश है। यमुना पार टीहरी गढ़वाल तथा देहरादून है। इस प्रकार भोगोलिक दृष्टि से यह प्रदेश हिमाचल प्रदेश और टीहरी गढ़वाल से ही अधिक मिलता है। टीहरी गढ़वाल और जौन्सार बावर में परस्पर शादी व्याह आदि सम्बन्ध भी होते हैं। भाषा का भी बहुत कुछ साम्य है।

इस प्रकार जौन्सार बावर भोगोलिक सांस्कृतिक दृष्टि से बृहत्तर हिमालय का और इसी लिये टीहरी गढ़वाल और हिमाचल प्रदेश का भाग होने पर राजनीतिक दृष्टि से देहरादून ज़िले का ही भाग है।

## जनसंख्या।

१९४१ की मर्दुमशुमारी के अनुसार यहाँ की जनसंख्या ५५६२३ है। इसमें कालसी

साहित्य और चकरौता के वह लोग भी शामिल हैं जो व्यापार के लिये और सरकारी नौकरी आदि के सिलसिले में यहाँ रहते हैं।

## कोल्टा और देवाड़।

वास्तव में इस प्रदेश में ९ शताब्दी पूर्व केवल यहां के आदिवासी कोल्टे और उनके देवता महासू के वंशज बाजगी-देवाड़ ही रहते थे। ब्राह्मण राजपूत सीमान्त के हमलों के समय रक्षा के लिये यहां पहाड़ में आये और आकर यहां के आदिवासियों को दास बनाकर रह गये। आदिवासियों को भी अपेक्षाकृत शान्ति तथा निश्चिन्तता मिली। और नवीन व्यवस्था को उन्होंने स्वीकार किया।

## महासू।

'आदिवासियों और नवागन्तुकों' में तब अभिन्नता हो गयी जब कि ब्राह्मण राजपूतों ने आदिवासियों के देवता 'महासू' को अपना देवता मान लिया। देवता के वंशज बाजगी अथवा देवाड़ों के देवता के भंडारे से खाना देने की व्यवस्था की गयी। सब ने देवता के नाम मकान, भूमि और पशु देना स्वीकार किया, तब आगन्तुओं और आदिवासियों में समझौता हुआ कि महासू देवता की प्रतिष्ठा के लिये; कोई भी चारपाई पर नहीं सोवेगा और गौ का दूध और मक्खन देवता को ही दिया जायगा। महासू के अतिरिक्त किसी भी देवता की यहाँ मुख्यतया पूजा नहीं होगी। आज भी न्यूनाधिक रूप में यह शर्तें मानी जा रही हैं। काश्मीर पर होनेवाले आक्रमण में ही सर्व प्रथम काश्मीर में से कुछ ब्राह्मण राजपूत यहां आये थे। मुगलों के आक्रमण-काल में भी मैनपुरी, दिल्ली और आगरा की तरफ से कुछ चौहान राजपूत यहां आये थे। इनमें से कुछ आज भी मुसलमान बने हुए अपने सजातियों के ब्याह शादियों में आना जाना भी चलता है।

ब्राह्मण राजपूतों में पुराने आर्यों के अनुसार यहां परस्पर विवाह होता है। यह यहां की परिस्थिति के अनुसार नवागन्तुओं ने स्वीकार किया। इससे इनमें परस्पर प्रीति बढ़ी। यहां जंगल तथा शिकार की और खेती की सुविधा के कारण नीचे से ब्राह्मण राजपूतों का आगमन बढ़ता रहा। परिणाम यह हुआ कि यहां के आदिवासियों की अल्पसंख्या हो गयी और नवागन्तुक बहुसंख्यक हो गये। गोरखों के राज्य में यहां के

निवासियों से भी अधिक मुकाबला ब्राह्मण राजपूतों को करना पड़ा। यहां के आदिवासी दासता में ही आनन्द अनुभव करने के कारण धीरे धीरे पराश्रित और भीरु बन गये।

## आदिवासियों से विश्वासघात।

चाहे कुछ भी हुआ ब्राह्मण राजपूतों ने अपने आश्रयदाता आदिवासी कोल्टों और देवाड़ों को प्रतिज्ञानुसार अन्न और वस्त्र दिये। उन्हें भूखा नहीं मरने दिया। १८१९ में यह प्रदेश गोरखों से अंग्रेज़ी शासन में आया। गोरखों के शासन से जनता बहुत दुखी थी। अंग्रेज़ी शासन में निश्चिन्तता और व्यवस्था के कुछ दर्शन जनता को मिले। सर्वप्रथम यहां भूमि का बन्दोबस्त शुरू हुआ। सर्वप्रथम इसी समय नवागन्तुक ब्राह्मण राजपूतों ने अपने आश्रय आदिवासी कोल्टों को धोखा दिया। अंग्रेज़ शासकों के साथ मिलकर बन्दोबस्त में भूमि और मकान का स्वामित्व अपने नाम लिखा लिया। और आदिवासियों को विदेशी और अधिकार शून्य बना दिया। एक के बाद दूसरे बन्दोबस्त होते रहे। और धीरे धीरे ब्राह्मण राजपूतों ने आदिवासियों के सारे अधिकार छीन लिये। शासकों के साथ बन्दोबस्त के बाद जो यहां के सयानों ने एग्रीमेंट अथवा समझौता किये हैं उन्हें वाजिबुल-अर्ज कहा जाता है। उसे देखने से मालूम होता है विदेशी शासकों के साथ मिलकर यहां के सयानों ने आदिवासियों को सर्वथा पशुतुल्य माना है। इन्हें नई भूमि बनाने का अधिकार नहीं। यह ज़मींदार के बिके हुए दास माने गये हैं। परिणाम यह हुआ कि जो कोल्टो और देवांड़ आदि साझीदार थे वह ब्राह्मण राजपूतों के गुलाम हो गये और सम्पत्ति के मालिक न रह कर खुद दास बन गये। यह एक षड्यन्त्र था, जिसका पता आदिवासियों को नहीं लगा। आदिवासी पूर्ववत सेवा करते रहे। और आज भी कर रहे हैं। यह लोग पुराने रिवाज़ और समय पर दृढता से कायम हैं। उन दिनों दिल और ज़बान की सचाई सफाई चलती थी। तब कागज़ की ज़रूरत नहीं थी। अब तो दिल की नहीं कागज़ की सफाई आवश्यक है। जब कि कागज़ आदिवासियों के सर्वथा विरुद्ध है। कागज़ को देखे तो यहां आदिवासी रह ही नहीं सकते। उनका यहां कुछ नहीं है। यह लोग आकाश से गिरे हैं और धरती माता उन्हें अपने पेट में रखने से इनकार करती है। क्योंकि धरती पर ब्राह्मण राजपूत अपना ही अधिकार बताते हैं। परिणाम यह है कि आदिवासियों को उनके पुराने घरों से और ज़मीनों से भी यह कह कर ब्राह्मण

राजपूत बेदखल कर रहे हैं कि मकान और ज़मीन आदिवासियों को नहीं हैं। इसका बड़ा यह प्रमाण बताया जाता है। १८७२ के बन्दोबस्त में ज़मीन ज़मींदारों के नाम दर्ज है। वर्तमान कांग्रेस सरकार ने अन्तरिम आदेश (रेग्यूलेशन) द्वारा तीन साल से कब्ज़े में आ रही भूमि और मकान से काश्तकार को बेदखल न करने के आदेश जारी किये हैं। परन्तु इस प्रदेश में रेकार्ड ठीक न होने से तथा आदिवासियों के सर्वथा अशक्त होने से बेदखलियां हो रही हैं। वह रुक नहीं सकीं।

## आदिवासियों को निकालने का आन्दोलन।

युक्त प्रान्त की सरकार ने १८७२ के बाद १९४९ में भूमि का नया पुनः बन्दोबस्त शुरू किया है। ज़मींदार बन्दोबस्त से पूर्व ही आदिवासियों को बेदखल कर देना चाहते हैं, जिससे बन्दोबस्त के समय आदिवासियों का भूमि पर कोई अधिकार सिद्ध न हो सके। जो कभी आश्रयकी तलाश में सुरक्षित जीवन के लिए जौन्सार बावर आये वही अपने आश्रयदाताओं को विजातीय द्रव्य की भांति बाहर निकालना चाहते हैं। यह मानवता और दूरगामी प्रतिक्रिया की दृष्टि से आश्चर्य जनक ही नहीं भयावह भी है।

आदिवासियों के अलावा यहां के ज़मीदार ब्राह्मण राजपूत ६ हज़ार के करीब व्यापारियों सरकारी नौकरों तथा पठानों, गोरखों आदि को भी विदेशी बताकर जौन्सार बावर से निकालने का आन्दोलन कर रहे हैं। उन्हें यह भूल गया है कि कभी वह शरणार्थी के रूप में इस सुन्दर हिमालय के उपजाऊ प्रदेश में आये थे तथा मानवीय विकास की दृष्टि से मध्ययुग था। यहां के जंगलों को काटने और पहाड़ को समतल करके खेत बनाने में उनकी अपेक्षा आदिवासियों का अधिक परिश्रम है। आज जिन्हें वह निकालना चाहते हैं। इसी प्रकार जौन्सार बावर के विकास में यहां की कठिनाई की परवाह न करके बस गये व्यापारियों का हाथ है; जो प्रतिवर्ष यहां से करीब १० लाख रुपयों का आलू और करीब २५ लाख रुपयों का अन्य सामान निर्यात करके इस प्रदेश से बाहर लक्ष्मी को ला रहे हैं। वस्तुतः इस प्रदेश का विकास अभी और भी सम्भव है। यदि इस प्रदेश के विकास पर सरकार पूरा ध्यान दें तो यह छोटासा भूभाग भारत के लिए आदर्श पर्वतीय भाग बन सकता है।

**ब्राह्मण राजपूतों में अन्तर ।**

ब्राह्मण राजपूतों में यहां बड़ा अन्तर है। ब्राह्मण शराब नहीं पीते और राजपूत पीते हैं। अब ब्राह्मण भी शराब पीने लगे हैं।

**अर्ध बहिष्कृत क्यों ?**

यह प्रदेश दो कारणों से अर्ध बहिष्कृत रखा गया है। (१) बहुपतिप्रथा और ऐसे अन्य पुराने रिवाज़ों के कारण जो सभी जातियों में समान रूप से पाये जाते हैं। (२) आदिवासियों का प्रदेश होने के कारण।

हमारा विश्वास है कि बहुपतिप्रथा आगामी इस वर्षों में शिक्षा प्रसार के साथ मिट जायगी। यदि इस प्रदेश को अर्ध बहिष्कृत न रखा गया होता तो अँग्रेज़ी राज्य में ही यह प्रथा मिट जाती। जब तक यह प्रदेश अर्ध बहिष्कृत रहेगा तब तक पुराने रिवाज़ों का मिटना अपेक्षाकृत कठिन रहेगा। इसलिये अब इस प्रदेश को अर्ध बहिष्कृत न रखा जाय। इसके साथ ही बहुपति-प्रथा के कारण होनेवाले संसर्ग जन्य रोगों और कोढ की वृद्धि को ध्यान में रखकर इस प्रथा को मिटाने की योजना क्रियात्मक बनानी चाहिये। इसके लिये उचित प्रचार करना प्रथम कर्तव्य है। जनमत अनुकूल होने पर कानून द्वारा इस बुराई को समाप्त कर देना चाहिये। केवल कानून से यथेष्ट लाभ नहीं हो सकता।

यह प्रदेश आदिवासियों का मूल प्रदेश है। यह ठीक है, परन्तु इसके निर्माण और विकास में आदिवासियों के समान ब्राह्मण राजपूतों और व्यापारियों का भी हाथ है। यह व्यापारी गत एक शताब्दी से इस प्रदेश के उत्पादन को बढ़ाने में सहायता कर रहे हैं। इसलिये ऐसी व्यवस्था होनी चाहिये जिससे किसी को बाहर निकालने का आन्दोलन बल न पकड़े। अँग्रेज़ी शासन में शासकों के साथ मिलकर यहां के तथाकथित ज़मींदारों ने सारी भूमि अपने ही नाम लिखाने का जो षड्यंत्र किया है उसका निरीक्षण इसी प्रकार सम्भव है कि यहां भूमि का नये सिरे से वितरण हो; यदि यह सम्भव नहीं तो भी प्रान्तीय सरकार यहां के आदिवासियों की हितरक्षा के लिए और, और नये बन्दोबस्त में आदिवासियों की भूमि मकान का ठीक ठीक रेकार्ड कराने के लिये तथा बेदखल किये गये आदिवासियों को पुनः भूमि वापस दिलाने के लिये एक स्पेशल हरिजन आदिवासी सहायक आफ़िसर नियुक्त करे। यह आफ़िसर आदिवासियों के विकास के लिये सरकार के सम्मुख दस

वर्षीय योजना प्रस्तुत करे। इस बात का प्रयत्न होना चाहिये कि आगामी दश वर्षों में यह आदिवासी सवर्ण जातियों के समकक्ष हो जावें, उन्हें दस साल बाद विशेष सहायता की आवश्यकता न रहे। तब तक आदिवासियों को इस योग्य बना दिया जाय कि वह पृथक् न मालूम हों, विशाल हिन्दू समाज के वह अभिन्न अंग बन जावें।

प्रान्तीय सरकार का कर्तव्य।

इसलिये जौन्सार बावर के विकास के लिये प्रान्तीय सरकार को विशेष रूप से आदिवासी हरिजन कोल्टों और बाजगी आदिकी उन्नति पर ध्यान देना चाहिये। यह ठीक है कि यहाँ के ब्राह्मण राजपूत भी शिक्षा और सामाजिक दृष्टि से पिछड़े हुए हैं। परन्तु उनका जीवन अपेक्षाकृत स्थिर और आर्थिक दृष्टि से निश्चिन्त है। आदिवासियों की सैंकड़ों लड़कियां वेश्यावृत्ति के लिए नीचे मैदानों शहरों में गयी हुई हैं और जा रही हैं यह इस बात का प्रबल प्रमाण है कि इनकी आर्थिक स्थिति शोचनीय है।

आदिवासियों की संख्या।

जौन्सार बावर की कुल ९६ हज़ार जनसंख्या में आदिवासी हरिजन करीब १७ हज़ार हैं। यह लोग बहुत गरीब हैं। केवल धन की दृष्टि से नहीं बुद्धि की दृष्टि से भी सदियों से गुलामी में रहते रहते आज़ादी का सुख इन्हें मालूम नहीं।

कोल्टों के चार भेद।

आदिवासी कोल्टो का मुख्य व्यवसाय जमींदार की गुलामी कर के जीवन निर्वाह करना है। यह लोग परिश्रमी होते हैं। तथा जो ज़मीदार दे दे उसी से पेट भरके पशुओं की तरह उनकी सेवा करते हैं। मालिक इनको पशुओं की भांति बेच भी देता है। कोल्टो को चार भेदों में विभक्त किया जा सकता है।

(१) खुंडित: मुंडित।

अज्ञात काल से जो कोल्टा एक ज़मीन्दार की गुलामी कर रहा है तथा मालिक के घर में मृत्यु होने पर घर के आदमी के समान डाढ़ी मूंछ और सिर मुंड़ाता है और उसी के घर से जिसे खाना कपड़ा मिलता है वह कोल्टा खुंडित मुंडित है।

(२) मात।

दो तीन पीढ़ी पूर्व जिस कोल्टे के पूर्वज ने कार्यवश ज़मीदार के मालिक से कुछ रुपये ऋण के लिये थे तब से मात कोल्टा सूदके बदले में गुलामी करता है। मालिक इस कोल्टे को तभी आज़ाद करेगा जब कि वह रुपया अदा कर दे। परन्तु गुलाम होने से यह कोल्टा रुपया तभी दे सकता है जब कि वह किसी और मालिक बनाकर पहले मालिक के पैसे उससे दिला दे। इसकी दशा भी बुरी है। यह गुलामी की परंपरा में जकड़ा है। स्वयं मरने पर इस कोल्टे के पुत्र पौत्र आदि गुलामी करते हैं। कभी मालिक मात कोल्टे को शादी में उत्साह दिखाता है। क्योंकि उसका कोल्टा शादी करके पुत्र उत्पन्न करेगा जो उस मालिक की गुलामी करते रहेंगे। अन्यथा मालिक को कोल्टे के मर जाने पर रुपयों के मारे जाने का भय है।

संजायत।

तीसरे प्रकार का कोल्टा संजायत है। जो एक व्यक्ति का नहीं अथवा खत का सर्व सम्मिलित कोल्टा है। यह पंचायती गुलाम ग्राम में मरने जीने की खबर पहुंचाता है। मरे हुए डंगर की गति करता है। और बारी बारी से मालिकों को खेती में इमदाद करता है।

नौतोड़ वाले।

यहां पहाड़ में नयी ज़मीन बनाकर उसे अपनी भूमि बनाने का रिवाज है। यद्यपि आज तक नौतोड़ अथवा नई ज़मीन तोड़ने बनाने का अधिकार ब्राह्मण राजपूतों को ही कानून द्वारा प्राप्त रहा है फिर भी हाल ही सरकारी अधिकारियोंने नौतोड़ का अधिकार आदिवासियों को भी दिया है। इस प्रकार कुछ कोल्टों ने नई भूमि भी बनाई है।

इनके अलावा कुछ ऐसे भी कोल्टे हैं जिनके पास अपनी ज़मीन मकान भी है।

इनके साथ व्यवहार कैसा होता है।

खुंडित मुंडित कोल्टा, घर के भाइयों के समान ही घर शामिलाती है। वह घर के अन्य व्यक्तियों की तरह सिर और मूंछ मुंड़ाता है। घर वालों की तरह शोक में ३ अथवा

५ दिन तक शामिल रहता है। परन्तु ऐसे उदाहरण अब सामने आये हैं जिसमें खुंडित मुंडित कोल्टों को भी ज़मींदारों ने मकान और भूमि से बेदखल कर दिया है।

अज्ञात ऋण के सूद के एवज़ में गुलाम रखना मानवता की दृष्टि से बहुत बुरी बात है कि युक्त प्रान्तीय सरकार के प्रधानमंत्री पं० गोविन्दवल्लभ जी पन्त ने २३ मई १९४९ को चकरौता में अपनी घोषणा द्वारा तीन साल पुराना सारा अबंध घोषित कर दिया है। कानूनी भाषा में गुलामी समाप्त होने पर भी व्यवहार में वह पूर्ववत् चालू है।

## भूमि और मकान।

दास अथवा गुलाम होने पर भी कोल्टों और दूसरे आदिवासियों के पास भूमि तथा मकान वैसे हैं? यह प्रश्न स्वाभाविक है। वस्तु स्थिति यह है कि पुराने अथवा नये व्यवहार में कोल्टों और अन्य आदिवासी का सारा कुटुम्ब दास रहता है। परन्तु खाना ज़मींदार मालिक केवल एक ही व्यक्ति को देता है। शेष कुटुम्ब के पालन के लिए यहां ब्राह्मण राजपूतों ने आदिवासियों का खाने पीने के लिए भूमि और रहने के लिए मकान दे रखा है। बहुधा इस भूमि को बोने के लिए आदिवासियों के पास अपने हल बैल नहीं हैं, उनकी आर्थिक स्थिति सर्वथा दास की सी होने से उनके पास निज का धान नहीं है। इसलिए ज़मींदार के हल बैलों से ही आदिवासियों की भूमि जोती बोई जाती है। प्रायः अनेक पीढ़ियों से इन आदिवासियों के पास रहने पर भी यह ज़मीन और मकान उनके नाम दर्ज नहीं हैं। इसी भूमि और इन मकानों को प्रान्तीय सरकार ने आदिवासियों की भूमि और मकान मानकर उनके काश्तकारी अधिकार स्वीकार किये हैं। और उन्हें बेदखल न करने के आदेश जारी किये हैं।

## आदिवासियों का पुनः संस्थापन।

इस प्रदेश में भूमि के बिना कोई भी नहीं रह सकता है, साथ ही भूमि कम है। इसलिए आदिवासियों को नौतोड़ के लिये पूरी सुविधा मिलनी चाहिये। नौतोड़ के लिये ज़मींदारों से पुनः संस्थापन कर प्राप्त किया जाय, अथवा उनसे कुछ भूमि आदिवासियों को दिलाई जाय जिससे आदिवासियों का जीवन निर्वाह हो सके। जंगलात विभाग की कुछ बंजर भूमि आदिवासियों को दिलाई जा सके तो दिलानी चाहिये। पुराने के नये

प्रोनोट बनवानेवाले ज़मींदारों को कठोर दंड दिलाया जाय। वास्तव में आदिवासियों को देना ही निषिद्ध किया जाय। तथा उन्हें लेने को सुविधा को-आपरेटिव बैंक से मिले। ऐसा सुप्रबन्ध किया जाय।

शिक्षा।

वैसे तो सारा प्रदेश ही शिक्षा की दृष्टि से पिछड़ा हुआ है, उसमें भी आदिवासियों की और भी बुरी है। माननीय प्रधान मन्त्री पन्त जी ने २३ मई चकरौता वाली घोषणामें हाई स्कूल और कालेज के प्रथम द्वितीय वर्षों में पढ़नेवाले प्रत्येक जौनसारी छात्र को क्रमशः २० रु. २५ रु. ३० रु. मासिक छात्रवृत्ति देने की बात कही है। इसका सभी स्वागत करते हैं।

अशोक आश्रम कालसी।

इस प्रदेश में आज जो भी जागृति है उसका श्रेय अशोक आश्रम कालसी को ही है। आश्रम के प्रभाव और प्रचार से यहां के ब्राह्मण राजपूत भी हरिजन आदिवासियों को अपना भाई मानने लगे हैं। आश्रम के प्रधान और अन्य सदस्य प्रायः इस प्रदेश के सुखाखादी राजपूत ब्राह्मण हैं। यहां सब ने जिस तत्परता से आदिवासियों की सेवा की है और कर रहे हैं उसका यहां के हरिजन आदिवासी पूरा पूरा आदर करते हैं और सवर्णों पर भी उसका प्रभाव पड़ा है।

उपसंहार।

यहां के आदिवासी लोग ब्राह्मण राजपूत ज़मींदारों का आदर करते हैं। आज भी काम करने को तथा उनकी आज्ञा पालने को तैयार हैं। इस पारस्परिक प्रेमपूर्ण व्यवहार और भावना को स्थायी रखने के लिए यह नितान्त आवश्यक है कि आदिवासी हरिजनों की उन्नति और स्थिरता के लिये ठोस योजना बनाई जाय और दृष्टि से स्वतंत्र बनाया जाय। वस्तुतः जौनसार बावर का सही विकास और सुधार इस प्रदेश के आदिवासी हरिजन कोल्टा बाजगी डूम और देवाड़ आदि के ही विकास उन्नति पर निर्भर है, उन्हें ही इसकी मुख्य आवश्यकता है।

## 14. THE HARIJAN ASHRAM, PRAYAG

BY

SANKAR SARAN

I CONSIDER it a privilege to be offered an opportunity of joining in the tribute that is being paid all over the country to Shri A. V. Thakkar, known to us in the Harijan world as Thakkar Bapa. In writing as the President of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Allahabad—a small part of Thakkar Bapa's domain—I rejoice with friends all over the country that he is amongst us to bless us and guide us as he has done in the past. Our Ashram here had the good fortune of welcoming him more than once. He came to us as an Inspector—as a boss who has to scrutinize, and as an elder who has to guide. His visits were always welcome.

It will not be out of place if I briefly survey the work of this branch of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh. The epic fast of Mahatma Gandhi in the year 1932 led to the establishment of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh with its branches all over the country. In Allahabad his inspiration led not only to the establishment of a branch of the Sangh, but to the founding of an Ashram where Harijans and non-Harijans live and work as comrades in the common cause of breaking down untouchability.

The founder of the Allahabad Harijan Sevak Sangh was Munshi Iswar Saran who was a well-known worker in educational, social and political spheres. Born on August 26, 1874, at Gorakhpur, he spent most of his life at Allahabad where he passed away on January 1, 1947. He was educated at the Muir Central College and practised law at the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad. Since 1920 he devoted himself almost exclusively to public work. He was a member of the first Legislative Assembly of India and was elected again to the third Legislative Assembly. He was President of the Provincial Social and Political Conferences. He visited Europe on several occasions and spent a good deal of his time there in doing propaganda for India. For a number of years he was the President of one of the foremost institutions in the Province, the Kayastha Pathshala. He was intimately connected with the Allahabad and Benares Hindu Universities.

From the 8th of January, 1933, when the Allahabad Harijan Sevak Sangh was established, till the 1st of January, 1947, practically every minute of Munshi Iswar Saran's life was devoted to this Sangh and to the Harijan Ashram which

was founded by him in the year 1937. The Allahabad Harijan Sevak Sangh is a society registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.

The Government have been pleased to recognise the Harijan Ashram for purposes of section 15-B of the Income-Tax Act which provides for rebate of income-tax to donors on the amount contributed to the Ashram. Originally the Sangh rented cottages in various parts of the town, but eventually a plot of land measuring twenty acres was acquired in Chandpur Salori, a village which is surrounded by large habitations of Harijans and near enough to the town, being at a distance of only a mile from the University and the Prayag Railway Station. The site is near the banks of the sacred river Ganga. The idea of the Harijan Ashram attracted considerable sympathy, and more land was gradually acquired, with the result that now the Harijan Sevak Sangh at Allahabad can claim seventy acres of land as its own.

Munshi Iswar Saran made an earnest appeal for funds for the Ashram, and before his demise he was able to collect sufficient funds, so that to-day the Harijan Ashram has several activities—educational, industrial and propagandist. It has a hospital equipped with an operation theatre, with accommodation for indoor patients, a hostel for boys, another for girls, a block of eight quarters for workers, a building for office, a hall and guest rooms, a tannery, workshop and a vocational school where, in addition to normal High School subjects, students can learn leather, cane, and wood work, and tailoring.

In grateful recognition of what the Founder-President Munshi Iswar Saran did for the cause, the workers at the Ashram have, as a token of love, reverence and homage, named the site on which the Harijan Ashram stands as Iswar Saran Nagar.

The propaganda side of the Ashram activities is two-fold, work among the caste Hindus against old prejudices and restrictions against Harijans, and work among Harijans to improve their moral and material well-being.

The selfless and sustained devotion of Munshi Iswar Saran to the Harijan cause has aroused interest and attracted visitors. The Ashram has had the good fortune of welcoming Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Among the distinguished visitors mention may be made of the Right Hon'ble Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, H. E. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, H. E. Shri M. S. Aney, H. E. Babu Sri Prakasa, H. E. Dr. Kailas Nath Katju, the Hon'ble Shri Jagjiwan Ram, the Hon'ble Shri Krishna Singh, the Hon'ble Shri Govind Ballabh Pant, and the Hon'ble Shri Sampurranand. Among Europeans, the late Lord Lothain, Sir Henry Craik and Sir Francis Wylie have also visited the Ashram.

The Ashram had the pleasure of welcoming a distinguished gathering of the Presidents and Secretaries of the Provincial Congress Committees when they assembled at Allahabad for their Conference in 1947.

Generous contributions for the Ashram have not been lacking. Donations from a few annas to thousands of rupees have been given to this institution. Prominent among the subscribers are the Maharani Sahiba of Bettiah, the Right Hon'ble Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Major Sardar M. N. Shitole of Gwalior, Sir Padampat Singhania of Kanpur, Mr. Gurusaran Lal of Bihar, Maharaja Saheb of Balrampur, Seth B. N. Birla of Calcutta, Munshi Iswar Saran and the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sankar Saran.

Competent observers believe that the Harijan Ashram at Allahabad is the biggest Harijan institution in the country, in the sense that it is attacking the monster of untouchability on various fronts. Students, both boys and girls, come for education and training from different parts of India. When they go back to their homes they carry the message of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

The Ashram at Iswar Saran Nagar is a brotherhood of the so-called caste Hindus and Harijans of different provinces. There is no question of segregation or any feeling of inferiority among the different sets of people. They all mess together and lead a common life. Friday evenings are devoted to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, and the first of every month is a day of remembrance of the Founder Munshi Iswar Saran. Gandhi Jayanti and Founder's Memorial Mela are annual features during the months of October and August respectively.

Needless to say that a growing institution which serves the lowliest and the humblest in the land who have suffered neglect and repression for generations, feels the surge of new freedom which our country has attained. The awakened national life flowing around this great land, and the constitutional and statutory rights that India's Constituent and Legislative Assemblies have guaranteed to Harijans, have created many urgent needs. The Ashram has now to work with redoubled energy. Its schools and hostels are full of life, but its accommodation has now become meagre and its equipment and furniture insufficient. Expansion and replacement are now a pressing necessity.

The workers desire that this institution should play a far more prominent part in free India than it has done in the past. The first objective is to end untouchability and the next objective is to break all shackles—social, religious and economic—that enchain the Harijans. It is a noble enterprise. The Ashram needs the help and support of all men of goodwill, irrespective of caste, creed, nationality or politics. It is a humanitarian cause and is supported

by all lovers of humanity. It needs funds, and plenty of them, and in addition the good wishes and prayers of every lover of neglected Harijans for the Ashram motto is :

"कामये दुःख तप्तानाम् प्राणि नामार्ति नाशनम्"

' I desire to destroy the suffering of those that are laden with sorrow.'

SECTION IV

# GLEANINGS FROM BAPA'S OCCASIONAL WRITINGS

## 1. FAMINE RELIEF

### I. FAMINE TOUR IN PANCH MAHALS

*(From 'The Servant of India', February 6, 1919)*

I WAS deputed by the Bombay Presidency Famine Relief Fund to visit the Panch Mahals District with a view to inform the Committee if the non-official relief in that backward district was being well distributed, and to report what further relief was needed. I spent about 10 days towards the end of March last with a view to making this inquiry, travelled about 150 miles by cart, visited 11 famine relief works of tank excavation and metal-breaking and came away with a great liking for the Bhils, who form the bulk of the cultivating classes. The eastern or Dohad sub-division is the worst affected portion of the district. I confined myself therefore to wandering in the Dohad and Jhalod talukas only. Distress among cattle was found to be great, and though mortality among them has not been great so far, they are at present reduced to mere bones and skin. As the district officials seem to have blundered at the start in the matter of estimating the extent of cattle distress in this sub-division, the quantity of Government grass allotted to this area is very small in proportion to its requirements and hence some cultivators are advanced cash money to buy grass instead of their being given grass. Human relief, too, was not adequate for some time and gratuitous relief was given a month or so too late. Even at the time of my visit the number of workers' dependants, children and old persons, entitled to free relief, was restricted by a great many unnecessary restrictions. But things have much improved during the last month and the officers in charge are not slow to correct their errors or defects when pointed out to them in good spirit.

#### THE BHIL

The Bhil is a very good fellow. Improvident by nature, he does not spend much labour on his farm. Besides he is addicted to drinking. But he is a brave, honest and straightforward man. He does not reside in congested villages with crooked and insanitary lanes, but in the open in his farm house. A village is a number of hamlets spread over a few square miles. His language is a corrupt form of Gujarati with several common words borrowed from Marathi. As soon as a youth takes a wife, he separates himself from his

parents and sets up his own house. He is not regarded as an untouchable, but still even the Shudra may not drink water touched by him, perhaps because the Bhil does not cherish the same reverence for the cow as other Hindus do. The Salvation Army and other Christian missionaries befriend him, but no Hindu religious or social organization has yet given a thought to the amelioration of his condition, for he is in a tight economical bondage to his Sowkar. Over three-quarters of the population of these two talukas is Bhil. Owing to the large number of Bhil teachers sent out from the Bhil Boarding Schools at (1) Dohad in this district and at (2) Godsamba in Mandir Taluka of Surat district, Government has made it possible to start a number of primary schools for Bhil children and thus to elevate the younger generation.

### CATTLE AND HUMAN DISTRESS

The pinch felt by the Bhil on account of failure of crops is great, but that felt by his cattle is greater. The advice, given by H.E. the Governor at Dohad, in reply to the address from the municipal board, that the cultivator should keep his own fodder reserve for bad years, was a counsel of perfection, and given, I am afraid, in the wrong place. If given to the Kaira Patidar or the Kathiawad Kunbi, it may be of some practical value, but when given to the Bhil, it is absolutely thrown away. The fodder stacks at the time of my inspection had run out, trees in reserved forests were bare of leaves, and cultivators were anxiously waiting for grass being advanced to them by Government, sold at cheap rates by charitable bodies. To the great misfortune of the Bhil, the revenue officers greatly over-estimated the fodder available on the spot and grew wiser when it was all but too late to get more grass. The evil effects of this bungling will be felt in the months of May and June; and I hope they will not be serious. Amongst human beings there is not much distress at present, but large numbers of them flock to relief works and walk 2 to 6 miles, morning and evening, to get employment. According to latest figures, there were over 15,000 persons employed on relief works and nearly 12,000 gratuitously relieved. Almost all of these were in the two talukas, Dohad and Jhalod, the total population of which is about 1,25,000. So about 20 per cent of the people in the two areas are already on Government relief lists. This is rather a huge proportion.

### LARGE *v.* VILLAGE FAMINE WORKS

It would not be inopportune to discuss here the comparative merits and demerits of large and small works for giving employment to those that need it.

A village work is generally more attractive on account of its proximity to the worker's home, and on that account the famine code enjoins upon the worker there to do 33 per cent more work than on a large work, which naturally happens to be a distant work. In the areas visited by me, I saw a happy mean between the two classes of work, each work serving villagers from an area with a radius of about 5 or 6 miles and giving employment to 500 to 4,000 workers. Naturally, the worker likes to spend his evening in his home, surrounded by his children and other relatives, and to take what care he can of his starving cattle. He prefers walking 10 miles a day to living a camp life away from his cattle and in any hut that may be provided for him by the unsympathetic engineering officer. The general tax-payer is spared the expense of erecting the camp for such a large army of workers, and the worker is more happy at home than in camp, say 10 to 20 miles away from his village. A large camp of 10,000 persons or more is more difficult to supervise from a health point of view, apart from the heavy expense of the camp, and in case of an epidemic great panic ensues and demoralises all concerned. The present arrangement therefore of having, say, one work to about 20 to 60 square miles is very satisfactory.

## NON-OFFICIAL RELIEF

In the current famine, Governmental efforts for famine relief are supplemented to a great extent by non-official organized efforts. The Bombay Fund not only supplies funds to famine-stricken districts, but sends its representatives for the information of local committees which run either cost price or cheap grain shops or cheap fodder shops or for the distribution of clothing and supplementing Government doles of grain to destitutes or for maintaining free cattle kitchens. This sub-division has three such committees. Besides, the Salvation Army officers and other missionaries are at work to alleviate distress. Cattle camps are being started to maintain poor cultivators' bullocks, cows and other animals, free of charge or at a nominal charge, till the dire days are over. Pleaders and schoolmasters are found devoting all their spare time, merchants are seen working, neglecting their private business in favour of the work of attending to the wants of the distressed men and cattle, and we come across occasional instances of Government servants throwing up their jobs for this work of charity. College boys hasten to enrol their names when volunteers are invited to do social welfare work among famine workers. Women in high station in life, accustomed to urban life only, are seen rambling from village to village in springless bullock carts in search of the hungry and the half-naked, —and sights of half-naked women are not wanting in villages in these days.

Amidst the squalid poverty that we see in villages, this desire of serving one's fellow-beings is a great relief and raises great hopes for the future.

### SOCIAL WELFARE WORK

I have submitted a small scheme to the Bombay Fund for posting honorary social workers on large famine works, and hope that it will soon be put into operation. The workers are being selected from among college students who are prepared to spend their days of vacation among the Bhils and their children, trying to help them, instruct them in the three R's and elevate them, preaching abstinence or moderation in drink and giving them a wider outlook on life. About a dozen such workers will, it is hoped, be living in famine camps, befriending the Bhil and sowing the seeds of a Hindu Mission for the Bhils in the near future. Let even the illiterate Bhil feel that he forms a part of the Indian nation and that he, too, is no mean citizen of the British Empire.

I conclude these remarks with an expression of great admiration and respect for the Salvation Army, which is doing meritorious work in this area. The Army Officer goes out in villages with a bundle of clothes to cover the naked, and arranges to send the poor man's lean bullocks to his cattle kitchen. I am also obliged to the Collector, Mr. Clayton, for facilitating my work, allowing me to co-operate with him, and adopting several of the suggestions made to him.

## II. FAMINE IN THE PURI DISTRICT

*(From 'The Servant of India', May 20, 1920)*

I CAME here on the 27th April last, being deputed by the Servants of India Society and Mahatma Gandhi to enquire into the extent of distress existing in the Puri District and the sufficiency or otherwise of measures adopted by Government and the public to relieve the same. I went out in the District on the 29th last and returned to-day after about 100 miles' journey, one-third of it by *kutcha* road and the remaining by village tracks. The report is as follows :—

The year 1918-19 was one of general scarcity for almost the whole country, including Orissa. The Puri District is noted for its deficient and ill-distributed rainfall and, in addition to that, for its liability to inundation from the rivers forming branches of the Mahanadi. The District Board had to open rice depots last year for supplying coarse rice to the people to enable them to withstand the exorbitantly high prices which went up to 6 Bengal seers per rupee. On the top of such a bad year came the floods in the rivers in August

last, bursting the embankment of Kushabhadra, which flooded a portion of the district between that river and Bhargavi covering a tract about 150 square miles. The water was 10 ft. in the deepest part and stood for a period of from 1 to 6 weeks. Not only was the monsoon crop thus washed away, but the untimely rainfall of November last spoiled the autumn crop also. Thus the cultivators and labouring classes were reduced to a condition bordering on penury and extreme destitution.

### PRIVATE RELIEF

The Oriya peasantry is by nature feeble and timid due to continuous tyranny since the 16th century by Afghans, Mughals and Marathas. Besides this the cultivating class is extremely poor, living always on the verge of starvation. Though public opinion in the town of Puri is not strong and robust, the public had in May 1919 asked Government in a public meeting to declare famine then. It was in March last that the Hon. Mr. Gopabandhu Das brought the distress in his district into prominence in the Bihar Legislative Council by showing pictures of famished people and sample herbs and powdered rice husk which the afflicted people used as food, and by asking for a total grant of Rs. 2,00,000 for their relief. But absolutely nothing was done for the relief of the suffering people by Government. In the meantime, some non-official relief by free distribution of rice was given by the Puri Famine Committee and by the exertion of Rai Bahadur Sakhi Chand, Police Superintendent of the District in his private capacity and by the Hindi Natya Samaj of Calcutta. An Orphanage and a Hospital for the Homeless have also been opened since by Rai Bahadur Saki Chand in Puri, which are now overflowing. The Servants of India Society deputed Mr. L. Sahu with some funds for aiding the non-official relief work in the beginning of March last.

### GOVERNMENT RELIEF

The Commissioner of the Orissa Division at last visited the affected area, though in a cursory way, in March last and did not think that the situation was at all serious, as represented by the public and the Press, and he mentioned in the Legislative Council that the picture drawn by the Hon. Mr. Das of popular distress was overdrawn. As a result of this difference in the two estimates, official and non-official, Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, visited the afflicted area on the 7th of April last. This had a good effect as regards the relief of the prevailing distress, though as much has not come out of it as people expected. Gratuitous doles of rice and cooked food are

given to about 5,200 persons from six central villages, and a Deputy Collector is appointed on special duty for this work. But the quantity of rice doled out to each person is less than that prescribed in the Famine Code (40 tolas instead of 60 and 50 tolas to males and females respectively), and more centres of relief are required to be opened to relieve many more afflicted villages. Village works are as necessary for the sustenance of life of able-bodied persons as rice doles are for the emaciated and famished. The area affected by severe distress is, roughly speaking, 250 sq. miles, the number of villages over 400, and the population about a lac and a half out of a total population of ten lacs in the district. A comparatively larger percentage of the affected population requires relief than elsewhere, as the prosperous class of tillers of land or artisans that are not in need of relief is much smaller than at other places.

## LOSS OF LIFE

In the meantime, famine has done its work by taking a heavy toll of human lives. Every village, howsoever small (and in this tract villages consist of only 10 to 100 houses each), has lost a few men, varying from 3 to 4 dozens and in one case 75, due to sheer want of food. Persons suffering from leprosy, beggars, and wandering members of the population have fallen an easy prey. Children and old persons have succumbed in large numbers, and even youths have been sacrificed to this calamity. I have not mentioned here anything about desertion of homes by men and women and also the children, perhaps to die as wanderers. If relief by Government had not been so long deferred, the loss of human lives would have been much less. I am not in a position to say accurately what the total loss has been. I have visited 40 villages in my 8 days' tour, and on enquiry in those villages I have been able to gather that about 440 persons died of starvation in these and a few other villages about which I have a reliable record. On this basis of computation I can roughly guess the total loss of life at 1,500 at the lowest estimate. I had the misfortune to see one famished man dying in my camp at Nimapara in my presence, and another in a village who had been dead a few hours previously and not removed for cremation. Three members of the non-official Famine Enquiry Committee of Puri counted as many as thirteen human skulls with several skeletons outside a village of 60 houses, which had a very heavy mortality of as many as 27 since August last. In the village of Sutan, only 16 miles off from Puri, as many as 60 to 80 are said to have died since the August flood, and we had the misfortune to count as many as 28 human skulls in the cremation ground on the day of our visit.

### POLICE MUDDLE

In case of possible distress, some of the preliminary measures of enquiry and preparation to meet it are the submission of periodical reports by the Police Department on (1) the wandering of any needy, starving persons ; (2) any unusual increase of mortality, and (3) cases of starvation or severe want (*vide* clause 34 of the Bihar Famine Code, 1913). In the case of a population of 2,750 persons included in a group of villages, I found total mortality due to all causes during the first four months of this year at 183 per mile, though there had been no epidemic. Is this not a sufficient indication of the existence of extraordinary distress, and that due to want of food, irrespective of police reports ? Again, about half of this number was said to have died by starvation only, as per statements made by the police chowkidars, who record vital statistics. Moreover, all police subordinates have an impression that they will be held responsible for all deaths by starvation, and therefore they show all such deaths as due not to want of food, but to any ordinary disease, as fever, cholera or dysentery. As a matter of fact, the Famine Code enjoins on them the duty of reporting cases of want and starvation, but perhaps to save themselves the trouble of reporting them, they seem to have made almost a rule, as I observed in numerous cases, that they pass off starvation deaths as ordinary deaths and thus mislead Government and the public into a false belief of good conditions of the people and indirectly cause deaths of poor innocent creatures by stopping timely action being taken for their protection.

### PRIVATE CHARITY WANTED

Even at the present moment, deaths due to starvation are not absent or uncommon. To prevent any further loss of life, gratuitous relief should be given to at least three times the present number, and in every village, instead of in a few central villages public works should be liberally opened to provide work for the able-bodied. But private charity also should come to the assistance. It is a very disgraceful sight to see a woman of 40 or 50 dressed in rags reaching only to her knee, or a girl of 12 or 14 dressed in a mere *langotee*. To cover such naked persons, to give milk to dying babies, to set the houses in order of those who have deserted their homes, to take care of famine orphans, and to set the people again on their legs, a large amount of money is needed. It is hoped that rich Bengal zamindars and others who have estates in Orissa, Marwari merchants of Calcutta and the ever-generous millionaires of Bombay will send their mite to Babu Jagabandhu Sinha, pleader, Puri. A sum of about one lakh of rupees is not much for private charity to assist this practically uncared-for and unfortunate district.

## III. The Muddle of the Puri Famine

*(From 'The Servant of India', July 8, 1920)*

After a protracted silence extending over eight long months, during which period leaders of the people did everything they could do to awaken the sleeping conscience of Government, the Bihar and Orissa Government have found it necessary to make a public explanation of the action they took to alleviate acute suffering, or rather, of their inaction. They have issued a communique recently 'to correct numerous inaccuracies of statement' as their attention 'has been drawn to a number of articles and letters which have lately appeared in the public press regarding the distress in the Puri District and the measures taken to relieve it'. In trying to correct alleged inaccuracies, the Government themselves have committed very serious blunders, have appropriated to themselves work done by others, have tried to gloss over unpardonable official remissness, thrown blame on the wrong shoulders and made a scape-goat of an Indian Collector to save an I.C.S. European Commissioner. These are strong words, but they are written after a full knowledge of the question for over two months on the spot.

In the communique, the Government have been very careful to make detailed mention of non-official relief work done in 1918 and 1919, which at other times they would not have known, much less cared to applaud. Any private charity work with which any officer was connected in even the smallest way has been paraded as if it was done mainly by public servants out of public funds under instructions from an ever-vigilant administration, and as if the donors of thousands of rupees and the honorary self-sacrificing workers were almost negligible. But they were not content with taking full credit for the work of the District Relief Committee ; they even went so far as to chastise these selfless workers when their resources were at an end and when they could no longer give any further relief. The communique makes absolutely no mention of the fact that in spite of their own officers relieving distress in their private capacity by the aid of influential friends, they remained unmoved and saw no distress when people were dying of starvation, not only in villages but even in the streets of Puri town.

Thanks to the selfless Oriya champion, the Hon. Mr. Gopabandhu Das, the matter received some prominence when he pleaded in March last in the Bihar Council for the relief of sufferings of his brethren. He was pooh-poohed by his official opponents, headed by the Hon. Mr. Grunning, the Commissioner of Orissa, who had the effrontery to question the accuracy of the facts, though he himself had never been to the real scene of distress. This gentleman carries the whole burden of Orissa, including five British Districts and 24 feuda-

tory states, on his broad back. He said to a member of the Famine Enquiry Committee and wrote so to another, suggesting thereby that an officer of his high responsibilities could not be expected to visit out-of-the-way villages, where a few people might be dying of starvation. Can it be imagined that he was so ignorant as to believe that the brass bangles which some women wore were made of gold and that the zinc bangles which others wore were made of silver ? If Mr. Grunning thinks that the burden of Orissa is too much for him he should request Government to put him in charge of work which he can efficiently manage. It is really Mr. Grunning who was responsible for the failure to organise relief in the Puri District and who is obstinate enough to mislead the Bihar Government into refraining from the declaration of famine at any cost. Though the area of suffering is now as much as 1,000 sq. miles and the population about five lacs of human beings, he considers the area ' so small ' and reduces it, by a cruel juggling of words and by adopting a criterion thirty times stricter than in section 68 of the Famine Code to 90 sq. miles only. The author of the *Imperial Gazetteer* wrote in 1873 in connection with the famine policy:

> 'In the Orissa Famine of 1866 . . . the men who spoke out before Government was willing to hear, were ruined. It should never be forgotten that, with the average officials, especially in the subordinate ranks, and for the native gentry as a body, the attitude which the head of Government takes up will be the attitude which they adopt. The example of facing the facts will penetrate to every police station and landlord's office.' Skrine's *Life of Hunter*, p. 218.

In the present case Orissa, being far from Bihar, Mr. Grunning has been the *de facto* Government, and his attitude which was ' no famine, not even distress,' was taken up by every official from the Collector down to the police sub-inspector and the village chowkidar. As the head of the Government did not sanction the use of the word ' famine ', deaths by starvation of hundreds and thousands of persons were not enough for the declaration of famine.

Referring to deaths from starvation the communique states :

> 'No deaths from starvation have been reported by the chowkidars, and in view of the uniformly excellent work which the Superintendent of Police, Rai Bahadur Sakhichand, is admitted by all concerned to have done in connection with the scarcity, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council is unable to accept the statement that deaths from starvation have been deliberately reported as deaths from ordinary diseases.'

This is wonderful logic. Rai Bahadur Sakhichand, the good Jain that he is, has done excellent work in connection with the relief of distress. But he and

his hundreds of village chowkidars have nothing in common and they do not go by his lofty principles of ethics and religion. From this chain of reasoning Sir Edward Gait and his executive Councillors conclude that they do not believe that a single individual from those hundreds of the chowkidars, who have had the benefit of a high-souled superior as Mr. Sakhichand, would stoop so low as to make false entries in their books. Moreover, they have forgotten to note, though it was brought to their notice by a letter in the ' Searchlight of Patna ', that the safeguard of Panchayat member's countersignature in death and birth registers, provided in the Chowkidari Act of 1871, is systematically disregarded in the Puri district. Mr. Vaughan Nash, the special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in the great Indian Famine of 1900, writes in his book, *The Great Famine*, p. 43, that as the word ' starvation ' is one that the Government does not sanction, fifteen children were reported to have died of ' emaciation', a disease invented for famine days. In Puri, fever, diarrhoea and other common diseases have taken the place of ' emaciation ', because the use of even the mild disease of emaciation was not sanctioned by Mr. Grunning.

I reported in the beginning of May last that I have in my possession a reliable record of 440 starvation deaths that have taken place in 40 villages, and on that basis I then computed that the total number of such deaths was about 1,500. After a closer acquaintance with the condition of Puri people, I find that my estimate was rather low and I was then not aware of the numerous starvation deaths that took place in the streets of Puri, as well as in other parts of the district which I then thought to be free from distress. If the estimate be now revised, I would not put it at less than 3,000. After the enquiry made by the Collector of two starvation cases that I reported and of fifteen more reported by others and the result thereof which has appeared in the communique, I am not sorry that I did not supply the list of the 440 dead persons with their place of residence and other particulars, as enquiry into them would not have met with a better fate. If an impartial committee be appointed to enquire into starvation deaths, hundreds of them will be brought to the public notice and things will appear in true colours, but not if the enquiry is made by the Collector or Commissioner who are held by the public to be responsible for the acuteness of their misery and distress.

## 2. EDUCATION

### I. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

*(From 'The Servant of India', December 4, 1919)*

THE Joint Committee on the Reforms has safe-guarded the interests of the depressed classes and women by providing special seats for the representatives of the former and by leaving the grant of franchise for women to the provincial legislatures whose progressive views on the question are too well known to cause one any anxiety. This is as it should be. But the vote would do neither the franchise-holder nor the country much good if the voters are not able to understand the importance of the problems of the day and to exercise their voting powers in an intelligent and effective way. This, it need hardly be said, they would be in a position to do, only if they have at least an elementary education—just sufficient, if no more, to grasp things when presented within an easy compass. The present condition of our masses is immeasurably far from any approach to this. The last (1911) census figures show that only 11% of the male and 1% of the female population could read and write in their own vernacular. The ten years which have since then elapsed are not likely to show any very startling achievement. At the present day, if I may venture on a guess, not less than 80% of our men and 97% of our women remain illiterate still. No doubt, Compulsory Education Acts have been recently passed, but their application, where they are enforced at all, is very limited. In the Bombay Presidency which was the first to enact compulsion, only two towns with a population of 110,000 and 22,000 have till now come forward to take advantage of the Act, that is, only 0.67% of the total population in the Presidency.

One of the most formidable obstacles in the way is, of course, finance. Money has to be found for the increased pay of starved teachers, for opening more schools for boys and many more for girls (of even advanced communities), for giving additional facilities to children of backward and depressed classes, for opening a large number of schools or colleges for training teachers, for engaging attendance officers and their staff for compelling children to go to school, and for building or renting houses for accommodating the increased number of schools in our congested towns. The nation, no doubt, has to pay for all this. There are no two opinions on the point. But the trouble has

been in settling who should pay for it all,—whether (1) the national exchequer, or (2) the provincial treasury, or (3) local funds. All tall talk of universal education in the country notwithstanding, it is an admitted fact that compulsory education is still to be an experiment with us. Not that it is doubted whether it will prove successful or not ; but it is a novel thing for the masses, and, before they see the ends of the experiment realised, at least in a large measure, it would not be fair to ask them to pay fully for it from local funds only. To say that if you care for the education of your backward communities (for in the advanced ones, even under the voluntary method, education has become almost universal), you must find all the money you want by taxing yourself locally, and that you shall not get from the provincial or national treasury a pie more than the proportion you get under the voluntary system, looks like a step-motherly method of doing it. Often the ruling class is heard arguing that, if more money be given to towns for this so-called experiment, it will be at the expense of the village folk, whose interest is their prime consideration and whose education is much less advanced than that of the people of the towns. Such an argument of setting one class against another, of one community against another, of town people against village people, is at this late hour of the day, simply sickening. You may as well argue that, if colleges and science institutions be started in out-of-the-way villages, it will be in the interest of the village folk and that, therefore, they shall hereafter be located at such places alone. In the same way you may argue that, when the pay of the civil or the medical services is increased, it is at the cost of the education of the poor village child. But this reasoning is neither fruitful, nor logical, nor even wise. The State treasury is not inelastic and budgets are not framed year after year on fixed income from taxes.

Elementary education is as necessary for the good government and for the prosperity of the country, as protection by the army, by the police and by the navy. It is as necessary as the post and telegraph, the railway and irrigation works. All these departments are conducted as national, as all-India, concerns. If expenditure voted for the construction of new railways or for the building of houses for the police or for prodigal expenses on the army, etc., be treated as a national burden, one cannot understand why education, and primary education at that, should be an exception and a local matter. Elementary education is generally in charge of local bodies—Municipalities and District Boards—in this country as well as elsewhere with a view to take advantage of popular agency for the spread of education, and not because the local bodies are richer than the State, or because education is a local duty like roads and sanitation. But in India at present, not only is the education of

the child not a national concern, but has been made a provincial concern by long usage. Nay, more ; not only is it made a provincial department, but the executive officers in charge of the provincial funds say that is as much a local as a provincial concern, and that for the education of a town child you shall not get anything more than one-half of your total expenditure on such education.

Let us take the Bombay Presidency. Provincial grants to elementary education in towns did not exceed 40% of its total expenditure till about a year ago, when, thanks to the Hon. Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla, it was increased to 50%. Grants to education in villages, i.e. areas within the sphere of work of District Boards, are as much as 75 to 90% of their total educational vote. This is good and as it ought to be, and nobody grudges it. But all this is only for voluntary education. The case of compulsory education is different. Compulsion can be begun with towns only and it is only if things are made a little easy for them that the new system can be popular, or, to be more precise, can become less unpopular than at present. Let us take an instance. Supposing that a town at present spends Rs. 5,000 for voluntary education of its children, for universal education on a compulsory basis, it will have to spend about Rs. 12,500. For boys, about double the money will have to be spent, and for girls three times, as about 50% of boys and 33% of girls may be taken as attending schools in towns voluntarily and as the number of boys and girls are almost equal. At present the town finds Rs. 2,500 from its local taxation and gets 2,500 from provincial taxation. Under the altered circumstances, the town will have to find Rs. 3,750 in addition, and the provincial fund the same amount if the present proportion is borne by the two funds. How very difficult it is for the town to find one and a half times as much again for its education, without increasing its taxation abnormally, can be well imagined. To the provincial funds, which aggregate 10 crores a year, it is a fleabite. Leaders of popular opinion have, therefore, been clamouring for a two-thirds contribution from provincial funds for such towns as introduce compulsory education. They have moved the Bombay Legislative Council thrice on this subject, but without success. On the basis of a two-thirds grant, the town, in the case taken above for illustration, will have to find an additional Rs. 1,667 or two-thirds more of its present expenditure, and the province an additional Rs. 5,833. This may be said to be a fairly reasonable proportion, one to three and a half. But now, the Bombay Government says: if you want to try the experiment you must pay for it and pay heavily too, otherwise, you shall not make it. It almost amounts to saying : we will penalise you for trying this experiment of universal education. But it is to be earnestly hoped that when the long hoped-for

Reform Bill is passed this month before the happy Christmas, the popular element will be increased both in our legislative and executive councils and that money will then be found for this all-important step in national advance. Until money is voted liberally from the provincial, if not from the national, treasury, universal education will remain a happy dream, both for the town and the village.

## II. Primary Education in Bombay

*(From 'The Servant of India', February 2, 1922)*

The Chandavarkar Committee, appointed by the Bombay Legislative Council to enquire into the extent of the demand for compulsory education in the various parts of the presidency and to suggest ways and means for meeting it, has raised a new hope in the mind of the masses, not to speak of the intelligentsia. The Committee made a tour and took evidence at Bombay, Ahmedabad, Karachi, Belgaum and Poona, and are now drafting their report. The great bulk of the evidence, excepting, perhaps, Sindh and the landlord class in Gujarat was decidedly in favour of the introduction of compulsory education, by rapid stages for boys, and after a short interval, for girls. By compulsory education is meant not the compulsion by local option which is now permitted in Municipal towns only by the Patel Act of 1918, but absolute compulsion, either for boys or children of both sexes, in any particular area decided upon by the Education Minister after full consultation with local officers and representative bodies. Compulsion by local option has evidently been not very fruitful, if it has not proved quite a failure. The large non-Brahman population of the Deccan is thirsting for universal education and is willing to be taxed specially for it. Not only that but they believe, rightly or wrongly, that their aspirations for literacy are being kept in check by the Brahman community in general, and by Brahman teachers and inspectors in particular. Such is the popular demand at present in the Deccan and Karnatak. It is to be hoped that this will be encouraged and not damped. Our Legislative Council will have to find the money necessary to realise these hopes and to carry the light of knowledge to the smallest village within a reasonable period of time.

The question of making elementary education universal depends mostly, if not wholly, on the provision of funds. It is true that the Bombay Presidency, as well as other provinces and the Central Government, are passing through very bad financial times. Revenue has decreased everywhere, trade is depressed and expenditure—due to higher salaries of officers as well as subordinates, chiefly of the former—has increased enormously, and all Finance Members

have had a very uneasy time of it. Tax on amusements and racing, higher court-fees and stamp duty, succession duties, tax on Devasthan and other inams, increased cess on land revenue, income-tax on lower incomes than are at present liable to central taxation, income-tax cess, even marriage tax, tax on luxuries—all sorts of taxes were suggested to the Chandavarkar Committee, to be levied by the State and utilised only for compulsory education. On a very rough estimate about Rs. 3 crores are needed for bringing every boy or girl of school-age (6 to 11) in the presidency to school. So if the programme be spread over a period of ten years, the Education Minister wants annually Rs. 30 lakhs more than the preceding year for ten years to come, for this one branch of education only. With the rapid expansion of primary education, secondary, collegiate and industrial education are bound to grow. So an annual increment of the educational budget by about 50 lakhs more for ten years to come, or of 5 crores by 1932, if universal primary education is to be a reality and not merely a pleasant talk, must be met from some source or other.

While on this point, a fact seriously complained of by the rural population, especially of the villages which have no schools (and these contain a large proportion of the total population), may be mentioned. They say, 'the Government has been taking the local fund cess from us since the sixties of the last century, and earmarking one-third of it for primary education. But we, the people of the 16,000 school-less villages (out of a total of 26,000) have been simply paying for education for 60 years but never receiving anything—absolutely nothing—in return. Of course, it is not much; it is being very largely supplemented from provincial funds, which again are made up from land revenue which is the main source of supply of the provincial revenue (6 out of 15 crores, total). If this is so, on what principle of equity or justice do you refuse us a primary school, or primary education?' The answer usually trotted out by an unsympathetic officer or politician is that the law does not say that a school shall be provided in every village that pays the education cess, and that schools are provided at many large villages in every district, which alone can be taken as an administrative unit and not a village. This is equivalent to saying, 'You shall pay at your village a part of the purchase money for education, but the goods need not be delivered in your village, but 5 to 10 miles away, where you can send your six-year child daily to receive it, if you care.' This may sound well in the mouth of a quibbling lawyer, but not of a statesman who should provide equal facilities for every unit of the nation, howsoever low or humble.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of equity to small villages and of universal compulsion, we may fairly expect that our Minister will immediately

formulate a good programme of educational expansion. Even during the war (except for two years) the usual programme of 500 new primary schools every year was kept up. Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla, in August 1918, laid down his policy of expansion and aimed at providing every village, with a population of not less than 500, with a school. As a result new schools were provided as follows :

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1917-18 | .. | .. | 387 |
| 1918-19 | .. | .. | 826 |
| 1919-20 | .. | .. | 746 |

The number of schools provided in 1920-21 is not known, as the report is not yet out, being overdue for 10 months. We do not expect that any appreciable number of new schools was opened in the current year (1921-22), as we were given to understand that 'we gave up the programme of expansion for the year, because the money required for it was wanted to be spent in making low-paid primary teachers to a certain extent contented.' Now that the teachers have been made contented with better salaries, and nobody grudges them that, the public rightly expects that the programme which was suspended for one year only will be put in hand from April next.

In order to meet the demand for trained teachers, training schools have been opened during the last 2 or 3 years, one in each district, each training about 50 scholars annually. So on that account at any rate there need be no hindrance to the opening of new schools. But we have heard with great regret that six of these schools have been closed since December last, either for want of funds or because more trained teachers could not be employed. Three of these schools were located in the Kanarese Districts of Belgaum, Bijapur and Karwar, and the fact that the percentage of trained teachers in these districts was greater than in Marathi or Gujarati Districts, cannot be an argument for abolishing the schools. But there does not seem to us to be a shadow of an argument in favour of abolition of the training schools at Godhra (Gujarati) and Mirpur khas (Singhi) and more so for Mahomedan women's training school for Urdu at Hubli. Mahomedan women teachers are *rara avis* in this presidency, as elsewhere and the Bombay Schools Committee cannot open Mahomedan girls' schools for want of such teachers. But let us hope that there may have been some other convincing reason for the abolition of these new training institutions. As no new schools have been opened during the current year, we hope that a larger number than the usual 500 will be opened in the coming year, and we will be content to wait for compulsory education till the Committee submits its report to the Council, and the Council discusses it and legislates on the basis of their decision.

## III. Mass Education

*(From 'The Hindustan Times', February 13, 1949)*

The compulsory primary education of our masses has been talked of for the last 39 years. Gopal Krishna Gokhale of revered memory had brought a resolution in the Legislative Assembly in the year 1910, proposing the introduction of compulsion for primary education of children. He followed it by a Bill in the year 1911 seriously proposing that it should be taken in hand and the principle underlying it accepted by the Government. But the Government of the day thought the move was premature.

Thirty-nine years have rolled by. Many provinces, especially Bombay and Madras, have passed Acts in this direction but the result has not yet been anything substantial. If I say that even these advanced provincial Governments have merely tinkered with the problem I will not be very inaccurate. The Bombay Government has resolved to introduce compulsory education in villages and towns with a population of 1,000 and over. This was in the year 1947. But if my information is correct, it has not been able to give full effect to it for want of duly qualified teachers and for other reasons.

An economy drive, as a result of the inflation in the grip of which the country is at present, is ordered by the Central Government all round and therefore, even primary education has been retarded. Though social education, a new name for adult education, is now taken by some provinces in earnest, it cannot be a substitute for whole-time education of children for four or five hours a day. Adult education can be at the most a good supplementary to the education of children.

The Sargeant Scheme of Compulsory Education is almost forgotten now. No doubt some other things have moved fast after August 15, 1947. The setting up of embassies in foreign countries, the accession and merging of States with the adjoining provinces or into their own unions, and such political matters, are going apace. The abolition of Zamindari in the provinces of West Bengal, Bihar and U.P. is envisaged and a big province like Madras has gone completely dry by the abolition of its excise revenue. But hardly anybody talks about the abolition of mass illiteracy.

And yet adult franchise has already been included in our constitution. Some of our leaders, especially Dr. Rajendra Prasad, doubt whether adult franchise can be feasible in the next elections which will be on us at the latest in 1951.

No doubt primary education is the duty and obligation of provincial and State Governments, but until the Central Government shows the way by introducing compulsory education in Centrally-administered areas like Himachal

Pradesh, the State of Cutch, Ajmer-Merwara, etc., the provinces will not be awakened to their sense of duty. Moreover, in present circumstances, the provinces cannot foot the whole bill for mass literacy. Unless the Central Finance Minister makes up his mind to devote a few crores annually for this great object, no progress will be shown. If he can find crores of rupees for the campaign in Kashmir why not a few crores for the campaign against illiteracy?

I have just returned from a 20-day tour in a most backward area situated in the centre of the country, the Mandla District of C.P., which has 67% of tribal and backward population. I also visited the southern part of Rewa State, which too has an equally large proportion of still more backward tribes; the State of Korea, which has now been economically developed on account of its coal-fields, discovered only 20 years ago; the extensive area of Surguja, which is untouched by rail communication and has hardly any roads; and Jashpur State of Chhattisgarh.

This may be said to be the darkest region from the literacy point of view. But even here what did I observe? Wherever primary schools were set up by the C.P. Government under its newly-started Backward Areas Welfare Department, they were filled up to overflowing by scores of children eager and thirsting for knowledge and new light. I could see one- or two-teacher schools overflowing with 50 to 125 children, including girls. In some places, villagers had started their own schools independently of the Government and were asking me and my party to take up those schools which they were no longer able to pay for. In the Jashpur sub-division of Raigarh District, 75 primary schools and 7 middle schools with free hostels, have been set up in the last eight months. When such is the crying demand for education in the most backward regions, how much greater is the demand in the comparatively advanced areas?

The education of girls presents special problems. Even in parts where girls do not suffer under special disabilities their attendance in common schools is poor. There must be special encouragement for them, if not for all children. There should be special stipends for them, free slates and books, and, last but not least, provision of women teachers.

My tour extended to regions mostly inhabited by backward tribal people —Gonds, Pankas, Baigas, Oraons, Kisans and others. While talking about them, I cannot resist the temptation of saying that as long as they are subjected to the temptation of drink by means of scores of small distilleries-cum-drink shops amidst them, they can never be economically well off. Prohibition may or may not be introduced amongst our industrial labour in cities, but it must be introduced first and foremost amongst these people. The widely spread-out system ruins these unsophisticated people physically and economically.

In conclusion the Government of India must take a lead in pointing the way to lift up these backward communities who have been mostly residents of areas known as Indian States. The States Ministry, headed by our popular Sardar Patel, may be asked to take special interest in the amelioration of the conditions of these backward people. Article 301 of the Draft Constitution proposes that a commission may be sent round in the country, in all provinces and States to investigate the condition of socially and educationally backward classes and to make recommendations on the steps that should be taken by the Central Government. But why wait for the new constitution to come into effect two or three years after? Why not set up such a commission at the present moment? There is nothing to prevent the Government taking such a beneficent step and in the interest of the most backward and the weakest section of the nation at the present moment. This is an important item in the nation-building programme, as it affects several crores of our people. This weakest section cannot be estimated at less than 8 crores or 25% of the nation. Not a day should be lost in sending round such a commission and to adopt its recommendations.

## 3. THE ADIVASIS

### I. THE BHIL

*(From 'The Servant of India', December* 14, 1922)

SALVATIONIST and other Christian Missionaries have worked for several years past for the amelioration of the Bhil, both in Gujarat and Khandesh, but no indigenous body seems to have done so. One Guru Govind worked and accomplished a lot for the service of the Bhil, but as he mixed himself up with politics in his temperance work he had to be removed by Government from the field of his beneficent activities. The famine of 1919 and the scarcity of 1922 have brought the writer in pretty close contact with the Bhils. The Bhil is to be found in every stage of civilization ; from the wild hunter to the orderly and hardworking peasant, and the Bhil of the Panch Mahals very nearly approximates to the latter description. According to the Official Gazetteer, the Bhil is 'truthful and honest but thriftless, excitable and given to drink'.

He is in great terror of the 'Mehta' (officials of the all powerful sarkar), and of the thousand and one regulations of a complex Government. As tends to a wild life, his village is not a cluster of houses or huts as ordinary Gujarati villages ; every Bhil has his own separate hut on or close to his farm, preferably on high ground. His wants are but few. A mere langoti serves for his dhoti, but while working bare-bodied in his field with the langoti alone, he does not put off his head dress, which is an apology for a turban. All clothes with him are mere 'rags', such is his philosophic disregard of what is considered a prime necessity of life by most of our countrymen. As a matter of fact, he or his wife are to be seen mostly in tattered rags, and the children, including girls up to, say, 12, and sometimes more, are often without any clothing save a langoti. To the police every Bhil is a potential thief, and truly so, because he is so often starving. As the Sanskrit proverb runs, 'Which sin is not capable of being committed by a starving man?' Maize is his principal crop and favourite food, and wheat, rice and gram he seeks only as a last resort. He keeps a number of cattle, which he uses for milk as well as for food in case of necessity. On the whole he is an honest, simple, manly fellow and capable of hard work, but he needs to be lifted up above the primitive state in which he now is.

## II. Social Work Amongst Gujarat Bhils

(*From 'The Servant of India', June* 22, 1922)

The Bhils have recently come into some prominence on account of the agrarian trouble which some Bhil cultivators of Sirohi State (South Rajputana) had with Sirohi Durbar. The purpose of this short article, however, is not to deal with that trouble or to apportion the blame for it. It is only to awaken the social conscience of their more fortunate neighbours to a duty which they have long neglected. The home of the Bhils is in the hilly country which stretches from Mount Abu in the north, embraces Dungarpur, Banswada and other States of Central India and extends to the Satpuda range and Khandesh in the south. From their homeland many of them have descended to the plains of Gujarat and Northern Deccan and latterly, under pressure of famine, some of them have gone even to Sind. In the unsettled times between the Mogul rule and the British rule they lived as robbers, but for some time past they have settled down as peaceful cultivators of the soil. They can be found, even at the present time, in every stage of civilization from the wild hunter of the hills to the hard-working peasant of our ryotwari villages, with a sprinkling of persons who are employed as teachers in our rural schools. They speak a mixed dialect of Gujarati and Rajastani with a few words of Marathi. They have the reputation of being truthful and honest, but are thriftless, excitable and very much given to drink. They are a very simple race, with very few wants ; they will not trouble themselves to earn more than is necessary to meet their absolute needs, and are a very merry people.

The present writer has come in personal touch with the Bhils of Gujarat, who live in the Dohad subdivision of the Panch Mahals and the adjoining States of Revakantha and Mahikantha Agencies, while doing relief work amongst them during periods of distress due to bad seasons. He has therefore had some opportunity of observing the weaknesses as well as the potentialities of that race. With regard to the economic condition of the Bhil, it may be said that, as a general rule, he is completely in the hands of his sowkar or money-lender in good season or bad, unless he has completely lost his credit. In good season he carries all his excess grain to the sowkar, who credits the price thereof to his account. If he wants to buy cloth for himself or his family or to get his son married, he goes to his sowkar, who is ready to oblige him with the necessary amount. In case he wants to have seed or to replace a dead bullock, he goes to him, and is charged 25% interest up to the next harvest, i.e. for a period not exceeding six months. The sowkar is his banker who will not give him any interest for his deposit as it is supposed to be idle money, but will charge him quite a high rate when he has a minus balance. A large land bank

is a great necessity to assist him to escape the very kind attentions of a class of men who live on the labour of the over-trustful and illiterate Bhil. About twenty-five Co-operative Credit Societies have been recently started for the Bhils but this number has to be greatly increased before any appreciable good can come out of them.

The Bhil is in very great fear of the ' Mehtas ' (officials) of the all-powerful Government and of the thousand and one regulations of the Sarkar. He will allow himself to be subjected to any zoolum on the part of the petty officials. Though daring and physically powerful, he will not grumble in the least against illegal exactions or corporal punishment inflicted by a peon or a talati. Illiteracy is his great enemy and he does not know how much power lies behind the art of reading and writing. Recently a few day schools and boarding schools are started by Government, the Christian Missions and other organizations in which the children are given primary instruction, but that is a very small beginning. It is not that they are indifferent to learning, but schools are not provided for them and the proper class of teacher, one with a missionary zeal, is not coming forward. The present writer has had the good fortune to supervise a free boarding school and a day school for Bhil boys recently started, and these schools are availed of much beyond his expectation and are filled with students.

An organization exclusively devoted to the service of the Bhils in Gujarat is a great necessity. It would be very effective, if it undertook intensive work for their social and economic betterment in a small area. A devoted worker living among them would be able among other things :

(*a*) By personal contact to inculcate in them the habit of cleanliness and abstinence from drink. To teach the children of both sexes the art of reading and writing in schools to be started and to adults the habits of industry and hard work.

(*b*) To give them protection from the greed of the sowkar and to start co-operative credit and stores societies. To secure him against the petty tyrannies of the police, forest and land revenue subordinates.

(*c*) To hold periodical informal meetings and to read to them stories from *Ramayana* and other religious books and also to give them a certain amount of general information from the newspapers.

(*d*) To reform their customs in respect of marriage, birth, death and guide their caste meetings.

Steady and disinterested social workers from the educated and advanced classes are needed for carrying on such missionary work for the uplift of a section of our countrymen. It is not asking too much of Gujarat to supply a few such workers to work there for about ten years, if not for life.

## III. Social Work Among the Aboriginals

*(From 'The Servant of India', December 6, 1923)*

A large part of our people, found in all parts of India, are known by the name of forest tribes or aboriginals. They apparently are the remaining non-Aryans who were driven to hills and forests by successive Aryan invasions. Originally they were the owners of this land, until our Aryan forefathers dispossessed them of it. Their numbers are quite large. I regret I have not got the statistics of the various castes comprising these communities for the various provinces, but in Bombay Presidency including the Indian States their number is close upon 19 lacs in a population of 290 lacs. They form therefore over 6% of the Bombay population or one anna in the rupee. In other parts of the country too, I believe, their numbers are considerable, especially so in the Central Provinces, Rajputana and Chota Nagpur. Khonds and Gonds, Santals and Todas, Mundas and Oraons are very large communities and exceed greatly in numbers our Bhils and other Kaliparajs.

The Bhil's ignorance is profound. Figures of literacy found in the latest Bombay Census reports show that hardly one person in 275 of these communities can read and write their own language, against 1 in 13 among Hindus and 1 in 1¼ among Parsis. Their exploitation by the Aryans, especially by the so-called higher castes has been going on ruthlessly for centuries past. Governments and trading classes have all combined to keep them down and to treat them not like human beings, but like wild beasts or, at the best, like cattle. They have been duped out of their lands, which they brought under cultivation by reclaiming forests. All their wealth in cattle and money has been taken away from them by the wily money-lenders who trade upon their ignorance of accounting and thus defraud them. Such is the depressing social, economic and intellectual condition in which lacs and millions of our brethren are rotting at the present day. Yet, I am afraid I am not exaggerating when I say that our national conscience towards these tribes has still not awakened—not even to the extent that it has towards the untouchable classes. There is a greater and stronger barrier between these aboriginal tribes and ourselves than between the untouchable classes and ourselves. We do take service from the untouchables ; we do let them live, though in locations, in our villages : but there are hardly any points of contact between the forest tribes and ourselves except money-lending and purchasing their forest and other produce at very cheap rates. Very few, if any, social workers of note have worked amongst them, except Christian missionaries. The Hindu has completely neglected them, though, by slow degrees, the aboriginal is willing to, and does as a matter of fact, assimilate himself to him. His religion is described in census reports as

animistic, but very large numbers from them are enumerated as Hindus in this Presidency.

I may narrate here, in brief, the work of the Bhil Seva Mandal, an association of social workers started for work among the Bhils of Panchmahals in Gujarat on the settlement system. The work is restricted to only two talukas, measuring 600 sq. miles, so that it can be done intensively. Seven centres of work have been started, each having a school with an agricultural bias for their children, two of them being Boarding Schools. Two dispensaries are run specially for their benefit, temperance work is done amongst them, protection is given to them against the tyranny of the sowkar and the subordinate official, chiefly the policeman, and a religious turn is given to their daily life and their songs. One is surprised to find that the Bhil boys show great keenness in attending schools, and for that purpose some of our boys daily walk 2 to 3 miles to their school ; only one must first gain their confidence. They appreciate medical relief very much, and though attached in a large measure to the belief that all diseases are caused by evil spirits, which must be propitiated by offerings of goats or fowl, they are taking to medicine very easily. The work is very hopeful, interesting and encouraging.

The Kaliparaj of Surat and Baroda—the term Kaliparaj includes all forest or aboriginal tribes of Gujarat—has recently awakened in an astonishing manner to a sense of self-respect. He has cast off, as if by a miracle, his vice of drink, and now leads a hygienic and clean life, and refuses any longer to serve the bullying landlord. Whilst classes with vested interests naturally oppose this self-purifying movement, I may mention that this community has sent one delegate from among themselves to the recently held Social Workers' Conference at Bombay. I would close with an earnest appeal that this great question of the uplift of these communities be taken up, and taken up in right earnest. Their numbers are very large, their ignorance stupendous, their degradation unthinkable. Our treatment of them in the past has been nothing short of criminal. No doubt the work amongst them, living as they do, not in settled villages, but each one in his own farm, on hills and in jungles, is more difficult than that in ordinary villages and towns, much more so than in industrial cities like Bombay, Calcutta or Cawnpore. Their habits are different, their mode of living strange, their language difficult to master and their religious ideas very crude. But we can no longer afford to neglect them. Their number is several times greater than the Factory Labour of the whole country, and the call to duty towards them is really more urgent than that towards the industrial worker. Our neglect of them in the past has been scandalous and compensation to them for our old sins is long over-due. May the Almighty God give us strength to make amends for the past ! !

## IV. THE NEGLECTED BHIL

### FIVE LIQUOR SHOPS & ONLY ONE SCHOOL FOR HIM

(*From 'The Bombay Chronicle', March* 15, 1939)

A long held-up ambition of my life has been fulfilled and so I feel happy. If I die shortly hereafter, I will not complain against the Almighty. I have been now able, thank God, to visit the Akrani Mahal of Taloda Taluka in West Khandesh, a hilly region peopled by the sturdy Povra and the Bhil almost inaccessible to the ordinary man, and having very little contact, if any, with the so-called civilization and the amenities of ordinary life.

Upto now I had seen many inaccessible places and people in other parts of our country, but not this one in my own native province of Bombay. I had visited the Naga Hills and the head-hunting Nagas of Assam in 1926. I had visited the Dangs and the most primitive Bhils in the Surat District in 1929. I visited Ganjam and Koraput highlands of South Orissa and also Bastar State of the C.P. only last year and formed a casual acquaintance with Khonds and Savaras of the former area and Marias and Murias of the latter. I have ended this small list of achievements in my seventieth year by a three-day trip to the Akrani Mahal by the circuitous route via Shahada up a hazardous hill road, about 26 miles long, by the kindness of a Shahada friend who lent me his car for the purpose.

This hilly region forms a part of the area of forest land between the Tapti river in the south and Narbada in the north and is peopled by the Pavra and the Bhil. The Pavra is a tall stalwart man like the Punjabi, and is much superior to and more manly than the Bhil, of the hills or the plains. The fine picture of him given in the front page of one of the three volumes of Enthoven's *Castes and Tribes of Bombay* is very attractive and invites admiration and respect. But the drunken and degraded state in which he is sometimes found reminds us of the disservice which we, who boast of a higher civilisation, Britishers and Indians, have done him. The Bhil in these hills is more manly than his companion in the plains who has been cowed down to a servile state of existence by the uniformed police man, whom he dreads more than a tiger or a serpent.

#### THE ADMINISTRATION

The administration of this Mahal with a population of only 16,000, of whom only 250 or about 1½ per cent are non-aboriginals, is peculiar. The Forest Department whose chief duty is to exploit the wild growth of timbers growing on the hills, administers this extensive area of 490 sq. miles. A ranger

of the Forest Department is in charge of revenue, excise, police, justice, education, health and medical and every other department, besides his own Forest Department. The Medical man, the police sub-inspector, the distillery superintendent are all practically subordinate to him, except in technical matters.

The Excise arrangement here is peculiar. There is a special distillery exclusively for the small area in which mahua flower is distilled and liquor sold in five shops in central villages and which are not farmed out to contractors, but managed by State servants. The 60 degrees liquor is sold at the uniform low rate of four annas a bottle or a rupee and a half a gallon.

The only State educational institution in this area is a solitary primary school with 41 boys and 2 teachers and a free hostel for 15 boys, situated at Dhadgaon village, the capital. A Christian Missionary resides in the village of Mundalvad, 6 miles to the west of Dhadgaon and conducts a village school. The Bhil Seva Mandal of West Khandesh has opened a primary school for the last four months at Bhagpada. Thus there is only one State School, as against five state liquor shops.

## DRIVING OUT LIQUOR

But due to cheap liquor being placed at the door of the Bhil's hut, and no other amenities of tea, or even sweetmeats being available to him on the hill and due to his law-abiding nature denying to himself the crime of illicit brewing, the Bhil has earned the reputation of a drunkard. But even he has now awakened and he is asking that the state liquor shops, run by contractor or the state, should be closed and the enticement taken away from his parts. An experienced officer who has moved among Bhil masses says : 'Even in remote forest settlements large gatherings of Bhils and others surprised me by asking that the liquor shops should be closed.' He adds 'As a race they have very little chance of improvement, economic, social or moral, so long as their habit of drinking remains. In my opinion, therefore, prohibition, if possible, is required more in those areas than in places where individual freedom of choice is at any rate possible and where the racial damage is not so obvious.'

## NEED FOR UPLIFT

What is wanted for raising the moral tone and material condition of such hill tribes segregated by nature and not capable of self-development is to enforce prohibition of liquor, at any rate of cheap liquor, accompanied by propaganda against it and introduction of counter-attractions. Education in the language of the district, Marathi, though the Bhil speaks his own Bhil dialect,

must be widely spread by Hindu missionary societies, like the Bhil Seva Mandal with free hostels or Ashrams under devoted teachers aided by the State. Various trades like carpentry, smithy, tailoring and weaving should be taught to Bhil youths.

At present Akrani Mahal is almost an unknown land to the public at large hated by Government servants like a place of exile. There is no reason why a few thousands of rupees should not be earmarked by Government for the social, moral and economic uplift of these people who have almost been lost to the Indian nation, and why a band of some public social workers should not make their home here and settle in the midst of Pavras and Bhils. If Christian Missionaries from distant lands beyond the seas can settle themselves in such solitary places for a number of years, why not we men of the same country for our brethren who are less developed than ourselves? A party of Bhil Sevaks must plant themselves in the hills, should learn their dialects and try to assimilate themselves with them and lift up this older race by dint of hard and sustained work for a few years, after which they will be able to stand on their own legs.

## 4. KHADI WORK

### I. AN EXPERIMENT IN HAND-SPINNING

*(From 'The Servant of India', June 16, 1921)*

AN experiment on a fairly large scale is being carried on in Kathiawad some months past to see if hand-spinning and weaving can be made remunerative. In January last I received an offer of a lakh of rupees from a friend to be utilized as capital for the encouragement of spinning and manufacture of khaddar in Kathiawad. Before closing with the offer, I had to consult friends and colleagues as to the feasibility of the work; therefore in order to study the local conditions and to see the work of a colleague who was already working in that direction, I went to Kathiawad and ultimately decided to try the experiment with headquarters in Amreli town.

Cotton of the Mathia variety, which is short-stapled and the cheapest available in this country, is grown in abundance in the southern half of the province and is considered best for making coarse cloth. Kathiawad is a poor province comparatively and the charkha has not yet died out there. It was therefore considered to be the best place for the experiment. I have been working there for the last four months and the following facts in connection therewith will be found interesting to the reader.

Over 5,000 charkhas are now at work at 25 centres, a quarter of them being supplied to the spinners by the promoters of the experiment, and the rest being supplied by the spinners themselves. Cotton is regularly supplied and yarn collected at the different centres by paid agents. The spinners mostly belong to the ordinary cultivating class and the lower middle class and earn at the rate of about two annas a day. They are all women and are not in a position to go out to earn a livelihood. Some of them are purda women, who will not stir out of their homes. However small the income may appear to be, they feel it a great boon, and bless the soul that has revived the spinning wheel. It must be borne in mind that it is only a supplementary income. Two annas a day may not be much, but it is better than nothing to these poor people. As was mentioned in this paper in its issue of May 19 last by 'An Economist' of wide repute :

*'The possible subsidiary earning by means of spinning wheels in a family of a poor ryot or agricultural labourer is very likely in millions of cases to make all the difference between adequate and inadequate maintenance'*

*Bapa does not really need so much help*



*A Spinnii Demonstra by the Adiva Champra (O*



or in other words between a state of sufficiency and semi-starvation. (The italics are mine).

Carded cotton is supplied to the spinners, carding costing about an anna per lb., which brings about rupees two per day to a carder of ordinary strength. The yarn is given to the village weavers, who are exclusively members of the Dhed community; for the ordinary weaver has not yet overcome his objection to weave handspun yarn, on the score of its being uneven and breaking often, thus requiring a longer time to weave than the mill-made yarn. The weaver gets four to five annas a lb., whereby he is enabled to make about a rupee a day. The khaddar that is produced is sold either locally or in Bombay. The percentage of local sale at present is small, but it is hoped that in the near future by a little advertising most of the khaddar produced will be consumed in the province. A maund of 40 lbs. of ginned mathia cotton costs at present about Rs. 9 and the same quantity of cotton turned into cloth (about 31 lbs.) costs about Rs. 32. Of this Rs. 2½ go to the carder, Rs. 6½ to the spinner, Rs. 10¼ to the weaver and Rs. 3 for supervision and miscellaneous charges. The khaddar costs about seven annas a yard by 27 inches. The whole business is conducted on commercial and not on philanthropic lines, but no profits are earned and the khaddar is sold at cost price. At present about Rs. 80,000 are employed in capital expenses and during the last month over Rs. 20,000 in all were distributed in wages to the different classes of workers. It is hoped to extend the business after the rainy season. Spinning is the least remunerative of the three operations, but in spite of that, scores of women come every morning, some from distances of four to six miles, and some have to be sent back without cotton, as the yarn collected cannot be woven as fast.

From my experience I can say that there is a great future for spinning, but as a supplementary home industry only, provided cotton is regularly supplied at various places. By providing such an occupation, it adds to the slender income of the rural population and is bound to prevent the tide of men and women going in search of employment to towns in normal times and prevent their flocking to relief works in famine times. The indirect benefits to the weaver and the carpenter are obvious. So long as the country remains a predominantly agricultural one, some supplementary source of income is absolutely necessary for those who depend upon land for their daily bread. Next to that of food, clothing is the greatest universal need and spinning is the most suitable home industry for this country. It may be said that the demand for khaddar cloth is artificial and hence ephemeral and is bound to disappear sooner or later; but this is due to the misapprehension that mills can make even coarse cloth at a cheaper rate than the charkha and the handloom. When such cloth is produced locally and is known to be decidedly more durable, and

the middleman's profit eliminated, it is bound to supply all local demand, at any rate on the part of poorer classes of the population, who form such a large percentage of the total. So the revival of the spinning wheel can be looked upon as a permanent feature and not a mere passing phase in rural Indian life. The nation lives in villages, not in towns.

## II. CHARKHA OR REVIVAL OF THE SPINNING WHEEL

(*From 'The Servant of India', April* 27, 1922)

This book[1] gives an account of the handspinning and weaving industry of Bengal, as it existed in the first two decades of the last century, when the industry was at its lowest ebb, and tells us how the hand-wrought fabrics had even then got a foothold in the English market and how they were driven out therefrom by prohibitive duties and by cheap products of the steam looms of Lancashire, Yorkshire and Glasgow. This is done by means of copious extracts from the three volumes of R. M. Martin's *Eastern India* 1838 and other authors. In 1807 Dr. Francis Buchanan was appointed by the Court of Directors of the East India Company to carry on a statistical survey of the Bengal Presidency. The survey took six years and its operations were confined only to the districts of (1) Bihar, (2) Patna, (3) Shahabad, (4) Bhagalpore, (5) Dinajpore, (6) Gorakhpore, (7) Purnea, (8) Rangpore and (9) Assam. These districts have an aggregate area of 60,000 square miles and a population of 150 lakhs. The materials collected by Dr. Buchanan were sent in 1816 to England where they remained uncared for for over 20 years. In 1837 Mr. R. M. Martin examined the manuscripts and the results were published by him in 1838 under the title of *Eastern India.* This excellent and comprehensive work gives a vivid description of those districts in all its minutest details including the number of spinners, looms, etc. in each district and the earning of the spinner and the weaver.

The author's own views and suggestions with regard to this industry are contained in the last fourteen pages only. Mr. Bhaduri suggests that every one should grow cotton on his own homestead and provide at least one charkha per family, not as a piece of furniture for the drawing room, but for the actual spinning of the women of the household. Bengal has ceased to be a cotton-producing province, notwithstanding the fact that a large proportion of Indian cotton passes under the name of Bengal cotton. The hand-loom is still there, though it weaves fine mill-made yarn, and can be easily adapted to weaving

[1] *Charkha or Revival of the Spinning Wheel.* Rai Indu Bhusan Bhaduri Bahadur, Krishnagar, Bengal. (Published by Messrs. S. C. Sanial & Co., 32 College Street Market, Calcutta.)

coarse hand-spun yarn. If the author had elaborated a scheme for the growing of cotton, introducing the charkha and setting up depots for collection and distribution of yarn as proposed by him, it would have made a more useful and constructive proposal. As it is, the booklet is at least valuable for the statistics of spinner's wages, the area under cotton then and other details contained in the extracts from Mr. Martin's *Eastern India*.

## 5. LABOUR WELFARE

### I. Social Work in Tata Iron and Steel Co.'s Works

*(From 'The Servant of India', January 30, 1919)*

Sakchi, or Jamshedpur as it has been recently renamed, is the new industrial town brought into existence by the colossal Iron and Steel Works, so inseparably connected with the name of the late Jamshedji N. Tata, the great industrialist and patriot. It is situated on the Bengal Nagpur Railway at a distance of 1,050 miles from Bombay and 150 from Calcutta. Being newly built, it presents a remarkably tidy appearance, and is scrupulously clean, with detached houses and wide open spaces in front of every house. Its wards and roads are named after the American fashion, according to the letters of the alphabet, e.g., H, L, or G town and C, D, or E road. The works are kept going all the twenty-four hours, every day all the year round, with a slight break of perhaps 3 or 4 days in the year. There are three shifts of workmen every day, each shift working 8 hours a day. The total number of workmen, skilled and unskilled, is about 25,000. The management and superior workmen are imported mostly from the United States of America and from Great Britain, and there were several Germans, too, up to the commencement of the War. Other workmen come from all parts of India, the Punjab, Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces. Even Nepal, Malabar, and China supply their quota of workmen. Unskilled workmen are drawn from the aborigines of this and surrounding districts, the Santals and Kols, mostly the former.

During the last year of the war, prices of foodstuffs and cloth were going up by leaps and bounds all over the country, and so the management made up their mind to take steps to ameliorate the conditions of their workmen in Jamshedpur. The Company's employees and their dependents number about 50,000, and it can be easily imagined what a stupendous work lay in front of them. The Board of Directors set apart in July 1918, a sum of rupees ten lakhs to be utilised in providing capital for setting up large stores of cloth and foodstuffs for the benefit of this large population of the town. On account of the failure of the monsoon over a large part of the country, and the consequent scarcity of foodstuffs, this provision on the part of the management was not only fully justified but proved to be imperatively necessary to save the situation. The management asked the Servants of India Society to depute one of its mem-

bers to proceed to Sakchi and report on the proposal and to work out a scheme in detail. I came here in the beginning of August 1918 and made the required report, and was subsequently asked to give effect to the proposal and to manage the stores for a period of twelve months. The Managing Director wrote to the President of the Society for the same, requesting him to lend the services of a member. The President readily agreed, and accordingly I undertook on behalf of the Society the starting of the stores and their management for the period of one year.

The supply of provisions to the large army of workmen is done by a number of wholesale and retail shop-keepers. Wholesale shop-keepers, who are not more than a dozen, having capital at their command, import foodstuffs and sell on about a month's credit to retail shop-keepers, sixty or seventy in number, who sell in small quantities to consumers. Thus, before rice, for instance, was passed on to the consumer, the profit of these two merchants was added to the cost price. It was the purpose of the Company to cut out the middleman's profit as much as possible and to supply necessaries to its employees at a price not much above the cost price. The company having set up its own stores, took the place of the wholesale merchants' stores. It charges no interest on the capital invested, and adds about 5 per cent for establishment and other expenses to the cost price. Further, due care is taken to see that retail dealers do not charge more than 5 per cent over the Company's wholesale prices. Rice was purchased and railed from Midnapore, Bankura, Balasore and Sambalpore districts, wheat from Bilaspur district, tur dal from Gorakhpur district, salt (which is imported from Aden and Port Said) from Calcutta, and ghee from Bilaspur district (Pendra Road). For the purpose of making purchases from all these places and making myself conversant with local markets and merchants, I had to do considerable travelling. The following figures show the extent of purchases made month by month :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| September | 1919 | .. Rs. 25,000 |
| October | ,, | .. Rs. 15,000 |
| November | ,, | .. Rs. 31,000 |
| December | ,, | .. Rs. 68,000 |

It may be interesting to many to know that salt used in Bengal Presidency and the greater part of Bihar and Orissa is not Indian salt, but that manufactured at Aden, Port Said, Mussowah, Spain and Liverpool. It is very fine and free from dirt. Madras salt is used only in the Cuttack division of Orissa. Prices have thus been kept down and are appreciably below those obtaining in Kharagpur Junction and Calcutta.

The next step was to open cloth stores for the benefit of the employees.

Bengal and Bihar and Orissa suffered considerably, perhaps more than any other part of India, during the last year, from the cloth famine. Fortunately, during October last there was a slump in the cloth market and taking advantage of that, a large quantity of cloth, all made in India and mostly in the Nagpur Empress Mills, was bought to the extent of about Rs. 60,000. The stores were opened on the 19th of November last, and the daily sale, all in retail, has averaged about Rs. 400. These stores are not intended for making profit, and nothing is sold wholesale to shop-keepers, except to licensed hawkers, on a small commission, who sell at Company's prices. Everything is sold strictly on cash payment. This shop has proved a veritable boon to artizans and workmen, who have found out that the shop-keepers used to charge them 50% more than what is now charged in the stores. A policeman, who said he had used but one dhoti during the whole of the past 12 months, bought 2 pairs, because he got them very cheap from this shop, and thus satisfied his cloth hunger for a couple of years to come. Further stock of cloth costing about Rs. 26,000 has been added.

The formation of Co-operative Credit Societies has been the next item of social work undertaken by me. The ubiquitous Kabuli, with his lathi, is not absent from this place, and about a dozen of them thrive on the needs of poor people, who pay the usual interest of 1 to 2 annas per rupee per mensem, i.e., 75 to 150% per annum.

One Credit Society of workmen of an Electric Repairs Shop, with 58 members, has already been formed, and two others, one for sweepers called Ghasis and the other for Khalasis from Surat district of Gujarat, are under formation. It is hoped that about a dozen of these share-banks will be formed within the next few months, thus enabling poor artizans to liquidate their prior debts contracted at inordinate rates of interest, the loan to be taken from their Societies being recovered by easy instalments from their pay.

But it is not intended to confine our welfare work merely to a provision of supplies to workmen at reduced rates and putting them in the way of redeeming themselves from indebtedness, though the work must necessarily begin with these, under the circumstances. Of the five months that I have so far devoted to the work here, the first was spent in the preliminary work, the remaining period being devoted to the organisation of and the making of purchases for the two stores, and the spadework of the Co-operative Credit Societies. Now that the stores are in working order, more time can be devoted to other forms of social work, e.g., formation of boys' and mens' clubs, sports and excursions for the children, starting of primary schools in the various vernacular languages of India (for all Indian languages are represented in this very

cosmopolitan town), restaurants to wean men away from grog-shops, of which there are two, close to the works, and similar other activities. I am confident these will bring about a lasting improvement in both the economic and moral conditions of these workmen, and I only hope that it will be granted to me to start all these new branches of work within the next seven months, for a greater part of which I hope to be residing in this town.

## II. Labour in Jharia Colliery

*(From 'The Servant of India', October 26, 1922)*

The mining industry in British India gives employment to about 2½ lakhs of persons, of whom as many as 190,000 are employed in coal mines. All other mines—of mica, manganese, wolfram, copper and iron ores, etc.—employ only about 60,000 persons. Coal is thus the premier mining industry, not only from the point of view of labour but also from that of the development of railways and factories. The Jharia coal-field in Manbhum district in Bihar stands first among all the coal-fields in the country, employing nearly a lakh of persons and yielding about 12 million tons or 55 per cent of the entire output of Indian coal. The conditions under which such a large labour force lives and works certainly deserve the earnest attention of the public.

Unskilled labour for this coal-field comes mostly from the surrounding districts and from Bilaspur in the C.P. The Santals of Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas go to the mine for about eight months in the year, devoting the other months for agriculture. A Santal migrates to the mines with his wife and other adult members and also with such children as can carry a few pounds of coal on their head. Coal cutting in this country, as in others, is done by piece-work, the wage given for cutting a tubful (13 cwt.) of coal by a pickaxe, carrying it on the head in baskets and loading it in the tub, and pushing the tub on a trolley line to the bottom of the pit, ready for hoisting to the surface, varies between 6 and 10 annas a tub, according to the hardness or softness of the coal, and other circumstances. Each group of workers, i.e. a man, a woman (in most cases the wife) and one or two children, is able to cut and deliver about three tubs of coal daily, working from 8 to 10 hours either during day or night. All mines are worked day and night there being no difference underground between day and night. There are two shifts of work, one by day and the other by night, say of about 10 hours each, the men entering the mine and leaving it at their sweet will. Under the Mines Act of 1901, there is absolutely no restriction with regard to the working hours of the men, nor on the work of women and children. The workmen take even their babies underground and leave them on the floor of the gallery, sometimes at great risk to their safety.

The babies naturally inhale the unhealthy air of the mine and particles of coal dust with it. There is no prohibition to child labour nor to women working at night, nor to their working during pregnancy or soon after child-birth. Fortunately all labour of children under 13 years of age will be a thing of the past, if the amending and consolidating Bill now before the legislature in Simla is passed. But still there will be no limitation of any sort whatsoever to the employment of women underground, which is worse than work in factories at night, now prohibited by law.

In the Jharia field, regular mining began in 1894, but the real development of the mines dates from 1903 when the Bengal Nagpur Railway laid down lines in the field and stimulated the constructional activities of the East Indian Railway also. The development of this industry in this field has been very rapid and has brought, with some advantages, some evils in its wake. It necessarily attracted a large labour force from aboriginal tribes and low caste Hindus whose standards of sanitation and hygiene were extremely low. This fact, combined with the lack of pure water-supply and the springing up of irregular and insanitary temporary bazaars, was responsible for virulent outbreaks of cholera which seriously threatened the industry itself. The Bengal Government passed in 1912 the Mining Settlements Act, and the Government of Bihar and Orissa, then newly formed, took action under it and formed a Mines Board of Health for improving the sanitation of the area, preventing epidemics and controlling bazaars. Dr. G. W. Thompson, the able Sanitary Officer of the Board, has no doubt done much in the way of improvement of sanitary and housing conditions, and epidemics are now rare. Moreover, the passing of the Jharia Water Supply Act in 1914 created a Board for the purpose of constructing water works, the funds being supplied by taxing all despatches of coal to the extent of half an anna per ton. The works, though begun in 1915, are not yet completed ; the workmen have still to drink the water pumped up from the bottom of the mine, and no bathing arrangements exist at the mouth of the pit. The mine-owner complains, and justifiably, that he has been paying hundreds and thousands of rupees as cess for the last seven years without any signs yet of water reaching his property including the workmen's lines. As wells are unknown in this area, tanks which are protected are the ordinary source of water supply.

Every mine-owner is required to provide living accommodation for all his staff and workmen. The lines of rooms (called dhawras) provided for the workmen by some mine-owners were, and still are, far from satisfactory. The rooms were in many cases too small and too low, without ventilation and without doorways. This state of things is now happily changing, thanks to the efforts of the late Rev. Dr. Campbell (a missionary who spent his life among the

Santals) and the Sanitary Officer of the Health Board, which has framed by-laws for improving all existing dhawras to a standard pattern, to be fully enforced in the course of the next three years. It is alleged that, in the past, cases have occurred of sleeping persons having died, due to lack of ventilation, of carbonic acid gas produced by coal fires kept in the room during night. On the other hand, as some dhawras had no doors, the work people were obliged to take their few belongings down the mine while at work. At the same time, detached houses for each family or blocks of four tenements, constructed by well-managed concerns like the Birds or Tatas, with drains and latrine accommodation, are a source of great satisfaction to any welfare visitor. But much remains to be done in this connection by the small Cutchi and Marwadi mine-owner, who out of apathy for labour and lack of capital invests as little as possible in buildings for workmen, as the expenditure is not immediately remunerative. Such colliery-owners need to be compelled by law to treat their labour better in the matter of housing, and it is hoped that when the new by-laws are brought into full force, all workmen will get a minimum of good housing accommodation.

The greatest vice of the miner is drink, and the Santal miner is the greatest sinner in this respect. From immemorial times the Santal has been fond of his pachwai, a kind of beer made from rice, and this is acknowledged to be a harmless drink like fresh toddy. The Excise department, too, does not prohibit him from making this at home and using it freely, if he chooses to do so. But, not satisfied with the Santal's using this harmless drink, the Excise department has benevolently provided the workman with a large number of licensed shops where strong alcoholic drink can be had within a very easy distance. The result is that he has become almost a confirmed drunkard, especially on Sundays and Mondays, these two days being universally observed as holidays every week. But the evil does not stop there. The miner's wife, who works with him on the mine the whole day long, or the whole night long, often joins her husband in the drinking bout on these two non-working days of the week. Thus a large part of the wages of the man and his wife goes to swell the revenue of the Excise department. The system of the whole family working in the mines results, in an indirect way, in driving the husband to the liquor shop every working day in the evening. The husband and the wife go down the mine together for work in the morning, say, at 7 a.m. after a very early meal. Both of them return home at the same time in the evening, quite tired and hungry, having had nothing to eat in the mine underground. As the food has still to be cooked, the wife takes a hasty bath, lights the fire and takes about two hours to make the food ready. But the husband, not having the patience to wait so long, runs to the nearest grog-shop and returns home well drunk

and with his appetite for food lost. Thus the non-prohibition of women working underground besides doing harm to her physique (and perhaps morals, as freely alleged by those who have experience of mining work) leads to the husband's drunkenness. If the wife stayed at home and attended to her domestic duties, and kept the food ready when the husband returned home, he would not be attracted to the liquor shop. Meanwhile, the number of liquor shops in the coal-field area should be considerably reduced, if not removed altogether, leaving the workman to his rice beer or pachwai. The Mining Association and the Mining Federation, the two bodies of mine-owners, European and Indian respectively, should, in the interest of the simple workman and of themselves, move the Government in the matter and put a stop to the growing demoralisation of the workman and also the workwoman.

Another equally important and grave defect in the administration of the mining area is the total absence of educational facilities for the children of the workmen. Practically no primary schools exist in the vast area of about 100 sq. miles populated by about a lakh of workmen, not to speak of the shop-keepers and casual labourers. This state of things is perfectly scandalous. It is so bad, that both the Government of Bihar and Orissa and the mine-owners ought to be ashamed of it. The existing state of things is the more regrettable, because the District Board of Manbhum, which is in direct charge of primary education, is the richest in the province, and it is mainly indebted to the mine-owners for its large income. For, the cess collected from the mining area of 100 sq. miles is Rs. 5,80,000, while the amount collected from the rest of the area (about 4,150 sq. miles) is a paltry sum of Rs. 20,000. The District Board and the educational officers could have very well taken a lesson from the excellent and unique system of primary schools at Giridih, in the neighbouring district of Hazaribagh, in the collieries of the East Indian Railway, which has existed for over 25 years and where primary education for sons of workmen is made compulsory between the ages of 5 and 12 without the aid of legislation.

In conclusion, the question of improving the miner, which has been practically neglected both by Government and the public, requires now to be seriously considered. The factory worker is always before the eye of the legislature and the public, because he works in towns and above ground, in God's light and under the blue sky, while the miner is lost sight of, as his lot is to work hundreds of feet below ground. Fortunately, child labour will be eliminated from the mine, if the Bill now before the Legislative Assembly is passed in due course, but woman labour in mines will continue to be a stigma on the country —who can say for how long?

## III. The Oppression of the Poor[1]

*(From 'The Servant of India', April 6, 1922)*

This little book contains everything that Mr. Andrews wrote and spoke in connection with the well-known Gurkha assault on starving Assam plantation coolies at Chandpur in East Bengal, followed by a cholera epidemic, strikes by employees of steamship and railway companies, repatriation of the coolies, and Government effort at whitewashing the Commissioner's inhuman conduct in calling out the Gurkhas at midnight to drive away by force the coolies, men, women and children, from the railway station platform. The introduction specially written for this book, the chapter on 'oppression of the poor', and those on strikes, are all worth reading, especially as it can now be done in a dispassionate mood, months after the gloomy event. Making due allowance for the emotional nature of the author, the conclusions arrived at and the moral drawn by him with regard to the sufferings of the poor in this country from various causes—political, social and economic—should convince any hard-headed man that 'the poor of India, who have been so terribly oppressed by governments and priestcrafts, by land-owners and profiteers, have cried to God for deliverance' and now feel that the hour of their freedom is at hand. Any social worker who has lived among the poor in rural areas, will without the least hesitation agree with Mr. Andrew's experience: 'The incidents with regard to oppression which the poor relate—with reference to forced labour and forced supplies and forced impositions by the police and subordinate officers, and also with reference to the forced impositions, equally tyrannical—have made my blood boil with indignation.' Commenting upon the present, almost complete, aloofness of the officials, foreign as well as indigenous, from the common people, and the complete absence of the spirit of Seva to the people, whose salt they are eating, Mr. Andrews gives a sound warning to those Governments that find delight on the heights of Simla, Darjeeling or Mahableshwar, away from the common herd, and surrounded either by landlording, tea-planting or mill-owning interests. He says: 'The Day of Judgment has begun for all. There is now one question which the Government will have to face. Are you on the side of the rich, or are you on the side of the poor? Are you on the side of Mammon or are you on the side of God?' We are glad to observe that along with his word of praise for the sacrificing services of young volunteers, some of whom died from cholera contracted while nursing the poor at Chandpur, Mr. Andrews does not mince matters when he addresses our educated countrymen. He says: 'The Day of Judgment has come for the educated leaders of the people of India also.

[1] *The Oppression of the Poor.* By Mr. C. F. Andrews, Published by Ganesh & Co., Madras.

They will have to face the same issue. What are these outcastes ? the question will be asked. What are these untouchables ? What are these oppressed ryots, crushed down by their landlords, whose misery in the plains has driven them to seek refuge in Fiji and Natal, in Ceylon and in Assam ? '

We recommend the book to every public worker in the country to ponder over the contents.

## 6. ORISSA AND ITS PROBLEMS

### I. DISMEMBERED ORISSA

*(From 'The Servant of India', December 8, 1921)*

LAST week the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council resolved unanimously that all Oriya-speaking tracts in Orissa, Madras, Bengal and the Central Provinces be brought under one administration. Orissa has a glorious history, and its architecture and its temples are a matter of pride to all Hindus. Geographical limits of the provinces of India have been drawn to suit the convenience of the administration and not of the people inhabiting them. The formation of provinces on a linguistic or racial basis was never thought of. Before the partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911, Orissa (together with Bihar) was tacked on to Bengal. Since then Orissa has formed part of the new province of Bihar. But during the last 150 years of British rule over Orissa, the province has remained in a mutilated condition, parts of it having been attached to the Madras Presidency and the Central Provinces in all this long period. The dismemberment was partially remedied in 1905 when the Oriya district of Sambalpur was separated from the Central Provinces and joined to Orissa (under Bengal). Parts of Ganjam district (Madras), of Bilaspur and Raipur (the C.P.) and of Midnapur (Bengal) are predominantly Oriya, and are clamouring for the last 20 years to merge in the parent province. The Utkal (Oriya) Conference has been sitting year after year since 1903 and crying itself hoarse over their amalgamation. When Mr. Montagu visited this country, the people laid their grievance before him. The Montagu-Chelmsford report, in alluding to this matter, says :

> 'We are bound to indicate our own clear opinion that where such redistributions (of provincial areas) are necessary and capable of being effected by process of consent, an attempt to do so should be made; and therefore we desire that it should be recognised as one of the earliest duties incumbent upon all the Provincial Governments. In Orissa and Berar, at all events, it seems to us that the possibility of instituting sub-provinces need not be excluded from consideration at a very early date.'

Clause 15 of the Government of India Act, 1919, authorises the Governor-General in Council with the previous sanction of His Majesty to form a sub-province or a new province, if opinions of local Governments and legislative

councils be favourable, and place it under a Deputy-Governor or a Lieutenant-Governor or a Chief Commissioner. But this requires to be effected by the process of consent of the provinces concerned, viz. of Bihar and Orissa, Madras, C.P. and Bengal, in the case of Orissa. The first province has consented, but the consent of the remaining three remains to be obtained. As per recommendation of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament pertaining to this and similar questions, a Committee of enquiry will be appointed by the Secretary of State to ascertain the opinions of the provinces concerned and to recommend the necessary changes in the boundaries.

The existing division of Orissa consists of the districts of (1) Cuttack, (2) Puri, (3) Balassore, (4) Angul, and (5) Sambalpur. The population is about 50 lakhs. The Oriya population of the parts of outlying districts in the three other provinces is about 20 lakhs. The population of the Feudatory States in the hills of Orissa, and contiguous to the British districts and under the political supervision of the Commissioner of Orissa is about 40 lakhs. Thus the total population of Orissa—hill and plain—is about 110 lakhs and forms one homogeneous mass in language, race, traditions and customs. It has been the lot of the Oriya to be always joined on to a much stronger and more virile race, with the result that the latter has always been predominant over him. In his own part of the country, he is subject not only to foreign British rule, but is always dominated by officials, who are either Bengalis or Biharis. Consequently, he is always comparatively backward and feels it at every turn. He enjoys very few posts of trust and responsibility in his own land.

It is said that the Englishman is wanting in the power of imagination. He is more so in this country where the administrative machinery is wooden and inelastic. It took our rulers fifty years to discover that third class carriages on our railways ought to be provided with lavatories for the use of Indian passengers. It is no wonder then that more than 150 years have rolled on and still the cry of a dismembered race for amalgamation has not been attended to! The question was looked into by Lord Curzon during his viceroyalty, but was brushed aside by Lord Ampthill during his short tenure of that office after Lord Curzon. Orissa is more in need of amalgamation of its dispersed parts than of separation from Bihar. The cases of Berar and Sind are not on the same level as Orissa. The former are not cut up under more than one administration, but are only tacked on bodily to other provinces, from which they are desirous of separating and of setting up their own house. Orissa cares more for getting back its own lost limbs than for having a separate entity of its own. It will know no peace till it is again made into one whole.

## II. ANGUL AND ITS LESSON

(*From 'The Servant of India', May* 24, 1934)

Angul is a non-regulated district of the province of Orissa and consists of two sub-divisions, being a purely aboriginal area. Angul came into British possession in 1848, as a result of 'a long career of disobedience, mismanagement and oppression' on the part of the Raja of Angul. The Khonds, a primitive tribe, were for a long time past given to practising human sacrifice known as 'Meria' and the area was, on that account, annexed by the British in 1855, seven years after Angul. The two areas are separated from each other and divided by a wedge of the State of Baud, the distance between the chief town of each being as great as 90 miles. The total population of both the sub-divisions is a little less than two lakhs and a quarter. The country is hilly and ever green even in the hot season and very beautiful. It has not been fully developed on account of the sparseness of population and want of means of communication. The recent construction of the railway to Talcher coal-fields has brought Angul within 15 miles of the railway, and the Khond Mahals is still about 100 miles off the railway, but the country has recently been opened up by motor buses.

### AUTOCRACY IN EXCELSIS

This much with regard to the description of the country, its history and geography. But, politically speaking, it must be said that its administration is in an ante-diluvian state. It is governed by an autocratic Deputy Commissioner, who is guided by a special regulation called the 'Angul Laws District Regulation of 1894' modified as Act III of 1913, and framed on the lines of the laws prevalent in the more autocratic Orissa States. This law enacts that 'any court in the district may construe any enactment in British India with such alteration, not affecting the substance thereof, as may be necessary or proper to adapt it to the matter before the Court'. As if this was not enough, it is further provided that 'no finding, sentence, judgment or order of any Court shall be reversed, set aside or modified on appeal, revision or otherwise, by reason of any irregularity in procedure, unless such irregularity has, in the opinion of the Court, caused a failure of justice'. No appeal lies from the Deputy Commissioner to the High Court of Bihar and Orissa at Patna, but to the Political Agent of the Orissa Feudatory States up to March 1933 and thereafter to the Commissioner of Orissa Division. The Executive combines the functions of the Judiciary, the Revenue Courts and the Criminal Courts as well. In addition to these, it is laid down that the 'Local Government may make rules to prohibit, restrict or regulate the appearance of legal

practitioners in cases arising in the district'. In the daily administration of the district any visitor may be disallowed admission and any house-owner may be prohibited, without showing any reason, from receiving as guest any person from outside.

### UNWELCOME VISITOR GANDHI

Recently the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Angul and the event of a house-owner of Angul being prohibited from quartering him, even for a few hours, has been a glaring instance of the supreme autocracy of the Executive. This fact has been an eye-opener to the country. The powers arbitrarily placed in the Deputy Commissioner have been exercised to the full by him and he has thus prevented the most respected citizen of India and a world figure from residing for a few hours in a house offered to him in the town of Angul, and that too without showing any reason whatsoever. It was very well known to the whole country, including the Deputy Commissioner, that Mahatmaji was out on a campaign against untouchability, and on no political mission whatsoever. It must be considered a stroke of good luck that Mahatmaji was not prohibited from entering the Angul district, or asked to leave the district having once entered it.

So far as one can judge, there seems to be no desire on the part of the Government to bring the district under ordinary rule. Both Morley-Minto and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms did nothing to lessen its original autocracy.

### WORSE FUTURE

But what is far worse than the present state of things is that even in the 1933 proposals for constitutional reforms, unsatisfactory as these are, there is not the ghost of a chance for such areas coming into their own for a long time to come. Sec. 106 of the reforms proposals lays down that 'His Majesty will be empowered to direct by Order in Council that any area within a province is to be "excluded area" or "partially excluded area" and by subsequent Orders in Council to revoke or vary any such order'. Thus it lies within the discretion of His Majesty by an Order in Council to create many more Anguls than at present. At present, Angul is fully excluded from the operations of the ordinary constitution. Further, under Sec. 108, the Governor will be empowered, at his discretion, to make regulations for peace and good government of any excluded area and will be competent by any regulation so made, to repeal or amend any act of the Federal Legislature or of the Provincial Legis-



*Visiting the Anathashram, Cuttack*

*On a visit to Harijan Colony, Cuttack*



lature which will be applicable to the area in question. Thus the Governor can supersede any Act of the Legislature at his sweet will, without assigning any reason or without allowing any question in Council to be asked. In other words, he can arrogate to himself the powers not vested even in His Majesty in Council and may act as a most irresponsible potentate.

Sec. 109 of the proposals is even more dangerous. It contains a provision prohibiting the discussion in the provincial legislature of, or the asking of questions on, any matter arising out of the administration of an excluded area. Thus if a crowd is fired upon by the police in any part of Angul, or if any massacre, like the Jallianwalla Bagh, takes place in Angul, say, in the year 1950, even the asking of questions about the event will be prohibited in the Orissa Council or the All-India Assembly. In short, the whole chapter in the White Paper on Excluded Areas consisting of four clauses from 106 to 109 is pregnant with forebodings for the aboriginal tribes of India, who number as many as 25 million people, and who inhabit such wholly or partially excluded areas. The Santals of Chota Nagpur, the Gonds of the Central Provinces and the various tribes of the hills bordering the Brahmaputra Valley are probably for ever to be kept in non-regulated areas under the direct administration of the Governors, and to be kept absolutely unaffected by a democratic constitution.

Thus, for all we know, these backward tribes may be shunted off for the next half a century or a century from civilised government. If such is the meaning of the section, can there be any greater injustice to posterity than this ?

## III. MAHANADI

(*From 'The Hindustan Times', January* 15, 1945)

Sir Ardeshir Dalal, Planning and Development Member of the Government of India, talked last week in Delhi *inter alia* of the proposals to establish Damodar Valley and Sone Valley Authorities on the model of the Tennessee Valley Authority in U.S.A. This is a very good move for utilizing the natural resources of our great rivers and for reducing the damage they so often cause in case of extraordinary rainfall. The damage caused to the E.I. Railway line near Burdwan by the Damodar river and the dislocation of food transport to Bengal are too fresh in our minds.

The Damodar and Sone rivers are big enough and projects for utilizing and controlling them are quite welcome. But the Mahanadi—the Great River—is still greater and the damage it causes by its periodical floods to the deltaic areas in Orissa province, thereby lessening our food production, is enormous and is one of the chief causes of the great misery and poverty of

Orissa. The Mahanadi is a large river in the Central Provinces and Orissa with a total length of 550 miles, about half of which lies in the C.P. The drainage area is estimated at 43,000 square miles, almost the same catchment area as the Tennessee has. Owing to the rapidity of its current, the maximum discharge of the Mahanadi at flood time near its mouth is calculated at nearly 2 million cubic feet a second, or as great as that of the Ganges. In the dry season, however, the discharge dwindles to 1,125 cubic feet per second, while the least discharge of the Ganges is 45,000 cubic feet. During eight months of the year the Mahanadi is nothing more than a mere narrow and shallow channel winding through a vast expanse of sand.

The river passes through the Central Provinces and some Orissa States, and finally joins the Bay of Bengal in several channels, in the Orissa districts of Cuttack and Puri. Thus any project dealing with the river has to deal with the C.P. Government, some Orissa States and the Orissa Government. Unless the Government of India takes up the matter of controlling and utilizing the river, and brings together the various interests concerned in one body, like the famous Tennessee Valley Authority, popularly known as T.V.A., the enormous damage that the Mahanadi causes almost annually by destroying a part of its crops will not be stopped, and the river cannot be made navigable. The part of the country traversed by this river is quite untapped by railway and, if the river is made navigable, it will provide a very cheap mode of transport for the forest produce of the C.P. and Orissa States, and will form a highway from Sambalpur to Cuttack as of old. Besides providing navigation, the river can be used for providing irrigation both in the C.P. districts as well as in the Orissa States. There is hardly any irrigation now being done all along its course except in Cuttack district from this river. Moreover, there is great scope for the generation of electricity from the waters, as there is a very great fall in the bed of the river along the first 400 miles of its course.

But the greatest advantage that is likely to result from the control of this fast-flowing river is that the province of Orissa will be saved from its almost annual ruination due to all-devouring floods. Orissa is well-known as the poorest province in India, and the recurring floods of the Mahanadi and other rivers to the north, like Brahmani, Baitarni and Subarnarekha, all combine to keep down the poor province in a state of continued poverty and unabated misery. The Oriyas live continuously on the verge of starvation. In spite of the irrigation system in Cuttack district and the embankments provided to the various channels of the Mahanadi for protection from floods, the periodical damage done to agriculture and the loss of food crops are incalculable. Unless the flood waters are controlled higher up the river the protective embankments give no protection.

As Sir Ardeshir Dalal will be visiting Nagpur on the 17th instant in his tour in the South, will he kindly look into the question of utilizing and harnessing the Mahanadi and thus indirectly lessening the misery of poverty-stricken Orissa ?

*Note* :—As Shri Harekrushna Mahtab, the Premier of Orissa, says in his article, 'Thakkar Bapa of Orissa' (published elsewhere in this volume) 'Mahanadi was not forgotten and thanks are due to Shri Thakkar's vigilance.' The following remarks in an article by Horace Alexander entitled, 'Orissa the Land of Hope and Promise' (*Harijan*, October 26, 1947) will be read with interest by the readers :

> 'Now at last a really adequate, multi-purpose Mahanadi-harnessing scheme has been adopted, based in some respects on the notable precedent of the Tennessee Valley authority. The foundation stone of the Hirakud dam was laid eighteen months ago. . . . If all goes well, the dam will be completed and the canals built in five years. After that, floods and droughts should be for ever banished from Orissa. Large uncultivated areas will be cultivable. The water power will be sufficient to supply a number of new industries.'—EDS.

## 7. HARIJAN WELFARE

### I. HOUSING OF UNTOUCHABLES

(*From 'The Servant of India', October* 16, 1924)

TO THE EDITOR OF *The Servant of India*

SIR,—I have read with great interest, tempered with feelings of pain and grief, the discussion that took place in the Bombay Municipal Corporation last Monday over Mr. Kanji's motion on the subject of ejection of some relatives of Halalkhors and Bhangis residing in Municipal chawls at Valpakhady, Mazgaon. I am glad in a way that the Commissioner took the drastic step, presumably at the instance of his Health Department subordinates, of turning out bag and baggage on the street some of the relatives of Bhangi employees, including the husband in one case, as admitted by the Commissioner himself, for that will force public attention on the serious disabilities that untouchable castes of Dheds, Bhangis and Mahars are placed under in the matter of housing in Bombay. It is a patent fact that even the cultured men of these castes find insuperable difficulty in getting rooms to live in, either for love or money, even on payment of full economic rent, unless they manage to pass off as men of some touchable caste. I know of cases where even high officers of a public body like the Improvement Trust have refused rooms to very decent men of the Dhed caste, merely because of their caste. I know of a rich Hindu landlord of Bombay being requested by no less a person than Mahatma Gandhi to erect a chawl, at least to let out vacant land for erecting huts, for the exclusive use of these brethren, but without any result. Nay more. I know of cases in which people of Dhed caste, driven from their villages by scarcity and poverty to the City of Bombay, are compelled against their will to accept the work of Halalkhors, though their own and their ancestral occupation was that of the weaver, merely to get a few square feet of covered space—mind you, it is no home—for themselves and their family to stretch their limbs, in Municipal Bhangi chawls. For no other landlord, whether he be a Hindu, Parsi or Moslem, would dare let out a room to a Dhed teacher or labourer for any consideration. Even the Improvement Trust has to let out a whole chawl—never a room or rooms in a chawl—to a Mahar or a Dhed, to a Bhangi more so, though the latter may not be doing the work of actual removal of nightsoil. Such is the public prejudice that keeps the whole caste numbering thousands

*With Swami Sahajanandha of Chidambaram*





*At Devakottah*

*At Mathurai Municipal Harijan Colony*



ever degraded, and often homeless and at the mercy of the Municipal Commissioner.

But I must not let this opportunity pass of mentioning one more result of this untouchability on the morale of some of our Health Department subordinates. Now it is well known that the Municipality has not been able to build its own chawls for housing all its employees of the conservancy department, I mean sweepers and Halalkhors, even at this date. So there is constantly a dearth of living rooms for them. As soon as a new Municipal chawl is built and ready for occupation, of course on payment of the rent charged by the Municipality, the right of occupation is regularly sold by the Inspector in charge, for a sum varying from fifty to hundred rupees a room, and thus the Inspector, and with him some others, make a little fortune every time a new chawl is occupied. This sale does not take place by a public auction, but clandestinely through Bhangi Mukadam, the usual agent of the Inspector and others. Malpractices of this kind of squeezing money from poor sweepers and Halalkhors of Bombay by the Inspectorial staff are many and varied, but as they are not relevant to the subject in hand, I rest content with merely alluding to them.

In the matter of housing members of the untouchable castes, it is not only the Hindu landlords who are to blame but Parsi and Moslem also. All are agreed in tabooing such tenants, lest their pockets should be affected. Government and philanthropists may start special schools for their children or may erect special public taps or construct wells for their benefit, but will nobody in Bombay undertake to build special chawls for them in suitable localities? Will not those rich men who endow their thousands and lakhs in building temples, dharmashalas and sanatoriums, direct their kind attention to the housing of these unfortunate brethren, from whom we take the meanest and most necessary service? Surely, Bombay is not yet barren of such businessmen who will invest their money in such a humane cause and for the help of the downtrodden.—Yours, etc.

## II. THE REDEMPTION OF THE DOMS

*(From 'The Servant of India', October 15, 1925)*

*Prisoners Released.* By THE REV. C. PHILLIPS CAPE (Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, London), 1924. $7\frac{1}{2}'' \times 4\frac{3}{8}''$. pp. 143. 1*s.*

The Rev. C. P. Cape gave ten years of his life to the service of the Doms. The service rendered was exacting, but a sense of humour which is abundantly seen in the pages of the book helped the author on in his work for the most oppressed among several depressed Hindu communities in Benares,

The Doms are at the very bottom of the social scale in North India, lower in some respects than the Bhangis of Bombay. They are mostly scavengers. It is their exclusive privilege to supply fire for lighting the funeral pyre of Hindus of all castes brought to the burning ghats and to remove clothes and ornaments from the dead bodies of people left floating in the holy Ganges. They are besides dog-catchers and official hangmen. The Benares Doms have been declared a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911, and many of them are expert thieves. They prefer to commit burglaries in Bengal, and Jalpaiguri is the favourite temporary resort of defaulting Doms.

The Benares Doms in the service of the City are subjected to the same tyranny by Municipal subordinates as the Bhangis in the service of the Bombay Municipality. Mr. Cape's words are worth repeating in this connection :

> ' Naturally enough, there is a great deal of bribery. Many of the Municipal Conservancy Staff are underpaid, and to compensate themselves, they demand offerings from scavengers. A generous douceur must be given to the sanitary supervisors by every Dom seeking employment. A lazy Dom may pay an Inspector to mark him present when absent.'

The Bombay Conservancy Inspector has not even the pretext of underpayment for fleecing the poor Bhangis in all imaginable ways. The experience of the reviewer in this respect corresponds exactly with that of Mr. Cape, who has known the regular system prevailing in the Benares Municipal Service, whereby Sanitary Inspectors get fat at the expense of the much-despised, ill-paid Dom.

Nor are the policeman and the police inspector less clever than their sanitary confrere in exacting money from the poor Dom. They are in fact more oppressive, their powers being larger. In order to seek relief and shelter from the black-coated and black-souled policeman, the poor Dom seeks the Christian Missionary, who has the advantage of coming from the caste of the British ruler. Mr. Cape frankly says :

> ' We do not attempt to disguise the fact that it was at first a desire to flee, not from the wrath to come, but from present tribulation and especially from the police, that turned the Doms of Benares towards the Missionary. A Dom came from Calcutta, he had to pay a rupee before the police would let him settle in Benares. If he wished to leave he had to square the police. If he wanted to give a dinner to his friends he must first settle with the Inspector. If a Dom wished to be free to roam at night he had to pay the police to mark him present. The village Doms were expected to provide the police with fowls. The Doms did not object to pay the police for the services rendered, but they did object to give something for nothing.

The author's comparison of the Dom Christians with the ' rice Christians ' of China is very appropriate.

Chapter 13 of the book headed 'Human Documents' must be read in order to understand the type of sin and shame to which some Doms are driven by their degraded circumstances, above which it is very difficult, if not impossible, for them to rise. Some strange stories of life tragedies are related therein and will benefit any social worker, whatever his field of work may be.

The foes which a religious or social worker has to fight, while dealing with degraded communities like the Doms are : (1) drink ; (2) feuds and breaking of heads, the usual accompaniment of their feasts ; (3) witchcraft ; (4) bad marriage customs ; and, finally, (5) abject poverty. As the author says, 'Drink brutalises the Dom, and makes a man after the Devil's own heart ; and only a brute or fool would wish him to drink this liquor which is manufactured in Government distilleries.' The poverty which a Dom suffers from is abject, grinding and degrading. Though his manner of life is very simple, his means of subsistence are extremely precarious. He is driven to the moneylender for every little bit of extra money required by sickness, death, marriage or similar incidents, and the Pathan moneylender, or Agha, as he is called in Benares, is always willing to oblige him. The Agha's weapons for the collection of debt, which always increases, are foul language, a few friends of his own tribe, and his heavy iron-shod stick.

The author is rather hard on Hinduism, which no doubt deserves some of the attacks made on it. In his opinion, Hinduism has done nothing for the outcastes but to despise, degrade and despoil them. Nor does he spare Islam : 'Nor indeed is there in Islam any virtue which could elevate the depressed classes to the height to which Christianty can lift them.' Because, in the opinion of Mr. Cape, 'the God of holy life is unknown in Islam'.

It is very heartening to see that the author has on the whole a good opinion of the Doms. They are wonderfully good, he says, considering their disabilities.

Anyhow this is a book which every social worker among our backward and depressed communities ought to read.

## III. Sixty Millions or Thirty ?

(*From* '*The Servant of India*', *February* 6, 1930)

### UNTOUCHABLE POPULATION IN INDIA

It is very much to be regretted that even after six consecutive decennial censuses taken in this country, 1872 to 1921, the Government of India are not in a position to tell the people the exact total population of the so-called untouchable communities in the various parts of the country. Of course, the

degree of untouchability or unapproachability varies in different parts of this vast country, but the lines of division which mark them off from the orthodox section of the Hindus are clear and unmistakable. In this country where everybody has his caste by birth, it is not at all difficult to name the castes that are considered by the people in general of that locality as causing pollution, either by touch or proximity, and to add up their numbers at any census. But it is only during the last decade or so that the untouchable castes have come into prominence from a political standpoint, and the question of their uplift has come into limelight, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi; and so the census officers were not careful enough to sort out such castes and find out their exact population for every district, province and State. It is hoped that the very wide divergence found in different official estimates of their population will be a thing of the past after the census operations of 1931 and that proper instructions for sorting such castes will be issued in good time to all provincial and State census officers.

The confusion about the untouchable population figures arises from two causes. One is the want of precision as to whether the figures refer to British India only or to British India plus the small states that do not prepare their own census reports but have their figures included in the British provincial figures, or to the whole of India, including all the States, small and large. The figure of sixty millions given by Mr. Marten, the all-India census officer of 1921 (vide para. 193 of his Report), quoted often by the Government of India in its annual publications presented to the Parliament, is for the whole country, including all States, large and small, and not for British India alone.

The other cause of confusion is due to the term ' depressed ' classes being used rather loosely. It is used sometimes to denote only the untouchable castes, and at other times the aboriginal, hill and forest tribes and wandering and criminal tribes as well. Almost all educational statistics, and some provincial census officers, use the term ' depressed ' in this wider sense, and thus give no indication of the number ' untouchables ' proper. In February 1928 Mr. G. S. Bajpai, Secretary to the Education Department of the Government of India, gave to the Legislative Assembly the number of untouchables proper as 28½ millions in the nine major or Governors' Provinces, two of which—Burma and Assam—he said, had no untouchable population. Thus the two Government estimates are 28½, or say 30 million (if we include the areas directly administered by the Government of India), for British India alone, at one end, and 60 millions for the whole of India at the other end.

Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, M.L.A., gives a very interesting table in his note on the Depressed classes appended to the Report of the Indian Central (Nair)

Committee, showing the five various estimates of the untouchable population formed by different Committees at different times during the last ten years.

The table is quoted below :

POPULATION OF DEPRESSED CLASSES (UNTOUCHABLES) IN MILLIONS

| PROVINCES | Franchise Committee's figures, 1919 | Marten's Census figures, 1921 | Reforms Enquiry Committee's figures, 1924 | Hartog Committee's figures, 1928 | Nair Central Committee's figures, 1929 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Madras .. | 6.4 | 6.4 | 6.4 | 6.53 | 6.50 |
| 2. Bombay .. | 0.6 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 1.46 | 1.47 |
| 3. Bengal .. | 9.9 | 9.0 | 9.0 | 6.64 | 11.50 |
| 4. U.P. .. | 10.1 | 9.0 | 9.0 | 7.89 | 13.00 |
| 5. Punjab .. | 1.7 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 1.70 | 2.80 |
| 6. Bihar & Orissa .. | 9.4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 2.53 | 5.00 |
| 7. C.P. .. | 3.8 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.01 | 2.67 |
| 8. Assam .. | 0.3 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.00 | 1.53 |
| Total .. | 42.2 | 43.3 | 43.3 | 29.76 | 44.50 |

As can be seen from the above table, the first three and the fifth estimates very nearly agree. The fourth estimate, which is practically the same as that given by Mr. G. S. Bajpai to the Legislative Assembly in 1928, is the lower estimate of about 30 millions. So it can be said without much fear of contradiction that the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes, 30 and 44½ millions, but not in any case 60 for British Indian population of 247-1/3 millions.

Let us try to dive a little deeper into these provincial figures. The provinces in which there are wide divergences of figures, comparing the fourth and the fifth columns above, are (1) Bengal, (2) U.P., (3) Bihar and Orissa, and (4) Assam. Surely, when the differences are so large as 11.50 against 6.64 and 13.00 against 7.89 millions, there must be something evidently wrong. Even a casual reference to detailed figures of caste population, and to the list of castes scheduled as untouchables, in each of these four provinces, will reveal where the mistake lies. Speaking of Bengal, a reference to pages 365-8 of the Census Report of 1921 shows that the aboriginal tribes of Mundas, Oraons and Santals and the large cultivating caste of Chasi Kaibarttas are included in the list of depressed classes and therefore in the figure of 11½ millions. This figure is obviously incorrect and must be reduced. The difference between the two estimates for the U.P. is as large as for Bengal, i.e. over 5 millions. Here, too, the list of castes taken in the two estimates may be compared and the mistake detected. With regard to Assam, it is a patent fact that there is a very large

aboriginal population of hill tribes in that Province and very often this is included in the depressed (or untouchable) classes by educational officers. As a matter of fact, they are not untouchables, and hence cannot be included in these figures. Simply because the Governor of Assam appointed in August 1929 one member of the depressed classes to the local Legislative Council, Mr. Rajah jumps to the conclusion that that fact alone is an irrefutable testimony to the existence of a large untouchable population in Assam. But here Mr. Rajah loses sight of the difference in the meaning of the two terms—depressed and untouchable—and hence his conclusion cannot be taken as accurate.

The case requires further and fuller investigation, province by province and state by state, in order to attain accuracy in the matter of these figures, especially for the four disputed provinces of Bengal, U.P., Bihar and Orissa, and Assam. Local knowledge is very necessary for this purpose, and the help of local officials and non-official public men should be taken to settle this question once for all. The figure should not be unnecessarily swollen, nor the gravity of the problem of the untouchables minimised by quoting a low figure. The truth must be found out, in fact, lists of untouchable castes should be published by provincial governments, thus preventing some touchable (though backward) castes from taking undue advantage of concessions offered to untouchables for educational and Legislative Council purposes. Some officer must make it his business to give the public correct and authoritative figures, province by province and district by district, and set the controversy at rest.

## IV. THE POONA PACT

(*From 'The Servant of India', September* 29, 1932)

Whether one agrees with Mahatma Gandhi or not, in the efficacy of 'fasting unto death', as a weapon to bring about social change, his most sceptical critic will not doubt that the fast has done incalculable good to the Hindu community as a whole, or to the 'federation of Hindu communities' as Dr. Ambedkar recently described it in Bombay. It has done immense good to both parties who were signatories to the historic Poona Agreement of Saturday, the 24th September 1932. It has awakened the conscience of the slow-moving and conservative Hindu community in a way in which it could not have done otherwise. The famous temple of Jagannath at Puri, one of the famous impregnable citadels of Hindu orthodoxy, has been thrown open to the erstwhile untouchables. Progressive sons of orthodox Hindu fathers are dining publicly with the so-called depressed classes including Bhangis who have been considered the lowest of the low, in cosmopolitan Bombay, as well as in conservative Benares, in open challenge to their elders and the whole Hindu

community, as if to say that they have begun the revolt against the very institution of caste. Scores of temples and public wells are being thrown open to the heretofore suppressed. Social workers, men and women, are giving pledges to devote themselves exclusively to the uplift work of their depressed brethren. And to crown all, Mahatma Gandhi himself has threatened to go on another fast, before his first one was broken—we hope not 'fast into death'—unless the Caste Hindus changed their heart completely and lifted up their downtrodden brethren.

But let us consider the Agreement arrived at in its political aspect. The Communal Award of 4th August last gave the depressed classes in the eight provinces (all except the N.W.F.P.) 71 seats in provincial councils in their own separate constituencies, together with the right of contesting further seats in the Hindu or so-called 'general' constituencies. This latter right would have proved shadowy, frankly speaking. We use the word shadowy deliberately, without meaning any offence to the Caste Hindus In place of these 71 seats plus a few more doubtful seats, the Depressed Classes get under the Agreement 148 seats reserved for them. This is a great service that Dr. Ambedkar has done to his own section of the Hindu community, and let us add, to the whole Hindu community. If the Caste Hindus have given away 25 seats, in addition to the 123 seats that Dr. Ambedkar could have fairly demanded on the population basis, i.e. in the ratio of depressed population to total Hindu population, it is but a poor recompense for the disabilities that have been imposed upon the suppressed classes for centuries past. If the whip of the Mahatma's fast has made the comparatively advanced sections of the Hindu community to give away a few more seats in councils, provincial as well as central, to the Depressed Classes, and stirred them to undertake the collection and expenditure of a fund of 25 lakhs of rupees for their uplift, as the Venerable Pandit Malaviya proclaimed in the Hindu leaders' conference in Bombay on Sunday last, we cannot say that they have done an over-generous act, but only an act that ought to have been done years ago. But it is better late than never.

Some people are likely to enquire why the proportion of depressed classes seats to Hindu seats in the Central legislature was fixed by the Poona Agreement, when it did not form part of the Premier's Award, which was sought to be modified. It may also be asked why franchise matters were discussed and agreed upon, before anything in that direction was decided by the R.T.C. or the British Government. The wisdom of going generally into other questions of representation in local bodies and in services, as well as of educational grants, may be doubted by others. The reply is that, once the questions were raised by Dr. Ambedkar, it would have been very impolitic on the part of Hindu leaders to refuse to consider these questions on the merely technical

ground that they were 'outside the scope of the Premier's Award'. The Caste Hindus, in order to show their bona fides and their perfect good faith, had to consider them and meet the wishes of the Depressed Classes. This has been done, and the British Government has taken note of these clauses (8 and 9) as definite 'pledges of the intention of the Caste Hindus towards the depressed classes.' This is as it should be.

The Premier has now ratified the Poona Agreement and has agreed to substitute relevant parts thereof for similar parts in his own Award. The Mahatma's fast has been broken, and the whole community—suppressing and suppressed sections together—are overjoyed at the result achieved so far. Let us in all humility put in a word of warning. The Mahatma is not a man to be easily satisfied with small results obtained at a moment of national crisis and threatened disaster. He will exact strenuous and thorough work of a constructive nature from the Hindu reformers. 'There is more in common between Mahatma Gandhi and me than with any of you gathered here,' was said on two occasions by Dr. Ambedkar while addressing the Hindu leaders at Bombay and Poona in recent conferences. This is too true. The Hindu community will now be put on its trial, and a very crucial trial, by the man of whom Mr. Sastri said at Coimbatore only on Saturday last: 'His life, it would be presumptuous to say, is lived as few lives in history or fable have been lived.'

## V. The Poona Pact and Bengal

*(From 'The Servant of India', April 20, 1933)*

The population of Bengal according to the Census Report of 1931 is as follows:

| | *Millions* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Muslims .. .. .. .. | 27.50 | 54.90 |
| Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians .. .. .. .. | 00.18 | 00.36 |
| Hindus, including Harijans 21.57, 'Others' 00.87 .. .. .. .. | 22.44 | 44.80 |
| Total population of Bengal .. | 50.12 | |

As regards the population of the Depressed Classes of Bengal, the Bengal Government has published a tentative list of 86 castes described as 'socially and politically backward'. The total population of these castes, according to the 1931 Census, comes to 100,17,955, or a little over 100 lakhs. The Census Commissioner has invented a new phrase for the 'Depressed' classes and

calls them 'exterior castes' and has made his own list, whose total population is 79,99,373, or roughly 80 lakhs.

The Lothian Committee report has set down the criteria on which castes may be treated as 'depressed' or 'untouchable', and estimated the population of the Harijans on that basis as 7½ millions, which is nearly the same as the Census Commissioner's figure for 'exterior castes'.

At Poona, when the Pact was concluded in September 1932, Mr. R. L. Biswas, B.A., LL.B., who was the Depressed Class representative from Bengal, objected to the Lothian Committee figure as an under-estimate and insisted that the correct figure was the Bengal Government's estimate of 10 millions (referred to on page 263 of Lothian Report, Vol. 2). This, however, was not accepted and the Lothian report estimate was adopted.

Dr. Ambedkar strenuously contended that the Harijan seats should bear that proportion to the total number of seats in the Councils which the Harijan population bears to the total population of Bengal, that is to say, that the reservation should be strictly calculated with reference to the population and without any proportional reduction due to any shortage in representation imposed on the Hindu population by reason of seats provided for Europeans, commerce, etc. This contention was pressed by him on two grounds, viz., his community could not hope to get any seat out of Commerce, Landholders, Universities and other special seats, and they should not suffer because a large number of seats had been surrendered to Europeans and European commerce. According to him, 37.5 seats should be reserved for the Harijans. If the seats were to be reserved out of the Hindu seats and in accordance with the proportion of the Harijans to the Hindu population, the seats reserved for Harijan should be 28½, taking as basis the Census Commissioner's figures as to 'exterior castes'. Though there was much weight in Dr. Ambedkar's contention, it was felt that the Caste Hindus of Bengal could not, in fairness, be penalised to such an extent. The Hindus of Bengal, though a minority, not only did not under the Communal Decision get weightage, but did not even get their due proportion, even after setting apart the abnormally large number of seats for Europeans and European commerce. Recognising this fact, Dr. Ambedkar's contention was rejected, but instead of 28½, 30 seats were reserved as a compromise between 28½ and 37½.

The suggestion in the printed Memorandum of the Caste Hindus of Bengal that the Harijans will contest as well as capture seats beyond the number reserved for them is not correct. It was understood, when the seats were reserved at the full level of their population, that other seats should not be available to the Harijans. The apprehension that 14 more seats could be captured by the Harijans contrary to the wishes of Caste Hindus and in spite

of the joint electorate system, and that the Caste Hindus may have to be content with 33 seats, is based on impossible premises.

The assumption that one seat will go to the Hill tribes, and the argument that two Hindu women's seats could not be counted as Hindu seats are wholly un-understandable. It may be taken for granted that the Caste Hindus will have 50 seats out of those allotted to the general electorate in Bengal.

It is not true to say that Bengal delegates were not invited to the Poona Conference. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had sent invitations to Babu Ramananda Chatterjee and Mr. J. N. Basu. The absence of the invitees cannot be a ground for upsetting the Pact.

If, as the Caste Hindu Memorandum contends, there is no Depressed Class problem in Bengal, and if it is true that most of the classes taken as ' untouchable ' in the Lothian Committee report are as much Caste Hindus as any others, there is no reason to complain if any number of the 80 seats are filled in from out of these castes. The allotment of 30 seats to these castes in strict accordance with the population, be they untouchable or not, cannot be deemed as an act of injustice to the other sections of the Hindus.

The arguments advanced in the Caste Hindu Memorandum based on the fact that the Harijans are divided into several castes do not lead to any useful conclusion. Even the Caste Hindus are divided into many castes and we cannot bewail any disproportion that may arise in the elections as among them. The Memorandum of the Caste Hindus suggests that the reserved seats may be monopolised by certain castes among the Harijans. The Poona Pact provides the panel system and the single vote, by which the chances of various groups can be effectively secured. It is neither possible nor necessary to provide any further safeguards, nor would it be a remedy to reduce the number reserved.

One fact not widely recognised has to be remembered, that out of all provinces in India, Bengal has the largest percentage of Harijans, whatever the causes might be. In the Madras Presidency, which is taken to be the worst sinner, the Harijan population is about 17 per cent of the total Hindu population. The Bengal percentage is 35½ per cent taking the Census report figure of 80 lakhs.

The Bengal Hindus have a just grievance in respect of the abnormal weightage given to the Europeans, Anglo-Indians and others and it is necessary to remedy this. The claim of the Depressed Classes should not, however, be left unrecognised for that reason.

According to the Memorandum of the Caste Hindus of Bengal who now oppose the Poona Pact, there is ' hardly any Depressed Class problem in discernible shape in Bengal ' and the only castes treated as untouchables in Bengal

are the Sweepers, Mehtars, Domes, and Charms, who, all counted, number only a few lakhs. If this be so, it is open and must be easy to the Caste Hindus to prove it to the satisfaction of the leaders of the Depressed Classes of Bengal. If the facts are proved to be as claimed by the Caste Hindus, we cannot believe that the local Depressed Class leaders will refuse to recognise them. The Poona Pact was framed on the facts placed before the Conference, and it cannot be contented that it did injustice to the Caste Hindus of Bengal.

## 8. THE BACKWARD CLASSES AND MINORITIES

### I. How are the Backward Classes?

*(From 'The Hindustan Times', December 26, 1948)*

In a country like ours, it is very difficult to say which are the advanced and which the backward sections in society. These are comparative terms.

After the census returns of 1921, the Education Department of the Bombay Province divided all Hindu and Muslim castes in three categories of (1) advanced, (2) intermediate and (3) backward castes, from the literacy point of view. The first class consisted of advanced classes like Amils, Parsis, Brahmins, Jains, Banias, Brahma Kshatris, Prabhus and similar castes. The second category consisted of large numbers of middle classes like Marathas, Kunbis, Muslims and many agricultural castes. The third category consisted of the well-known backward sections of depressed classes, hill and forest tribes and the numerous small castes of domestic servants and agricultural labourers in rural parts.

If my memory is correct, the first class formed only 10 per cent, the second about 50 per cent and the third about 40 per cent. It is but natural that people of the castes mentioned in the first category will always be at the topmost rung of the ladder in Government services, in trade and industries and in administration. The people in the second category are and will always be struggling to work their way up and thus try to compete with the people above them and take away a part of their monopoly in services and industries. But the third category forming about 40 per cent is very far behind in the race of life and it will take them many decades to come up to the level of the people of even the second class, not to mention the first.

#### NOT A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

Primary education in our country has not been introduced yet on a mass scale. Even the new constitution now being forged lays it down in Article 36 merely as a 'directive principle' of State policy and not as a fundamental right. 'Every citizen is entitled to free and compulsory education and the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution for free and compulsory education, for children until they complete the age of 14 years.'

Mr. G. K. Gokhale of revered memory introduced his first compulsory education bill in the then Imperial Council as early as 1910. Since then the whole country, including even the advanced provinces like Bombay and Madras, have only been tinkering with compulsory education. No one can say if the endeavour promised in Article 36 will be sufficient in the year 1960 to make it universal in all the Provinces and States, in backward areas like Himachal and Vindhya Pradesh as well as in the Andaman Islands in the east and the Minocy and Amindivi Islands in the west. Only a Gokhale reborn can do this stupendous work and there does not seem to be any administration in sight, so devoted and sincere as to go in for this one solid reform of universal education.

## MADRAS HARIJAN SCHOOLS

The Labour Department of Madras, which is doing welfare work for the underdog—Harijans and primitive tribes—was started in the year 1920. It opened thousands of primary schools, specially for the Harijans. There were separate Harijan Schools as Harijans were then tabooed in the ordinary city and village schools. A couple of thousand such schools are run at the present day by the Madras Government in very backward districts.

The Bombay Government appointed a committee to enquire into the educational and social conditions of Harijans and hill tribes in the year 1929, of which Dr. Ambedkar and the present writer were members. As a result of the recommendations of this committee the Government of the day opened the Backward Classes Department, though on a small scale. This grew in course of time.

All backward castes entitled to get the benefits of welfare work were divided into three categories : (1) depressed and untouchable castes, (2) aboriginal and hill tribes and (3) other backward castes of Hindus and Muslims which though very small in numbers individually were at the bottom of society and, from an educational point of view, were perhaps worse off than Harijans. This classification of backward classes is very strictly followed and adhered to for the last 18 years in Bombay Province. Further this Department makes very serious efforts by its influence to see that all differences *inter se* between these categories are abolished.

## IN OTHER PROVINCES

Unfortunately, no other province, not to speak of any State, has copied the example of Bombay in this respect. Recently, C.P., Bihar, the U.P., and

Orissa have started departments for either one or two categories of their backward classes. Bihar has in addition started a department for its backward Muslims also, formerly called Julahas or weavers, and now Momins. Assam has done very little. East Punjab and West Bengal are doing some work for Harijans only. But now the time has come when all backward classes in all the provinces, in Hyderabad, in Rajputana, and even in the backward regions like Himachal and Vindhya areas, must be taken care of by the Union as a special obligation imposed upon it by the new constitution.

Recently Article 10 of the Constitution, which is one of the articles conferring Fundamental Rights, was debated. According to it, though equal opportunity will be given to all citizens in State service without any discrimination, exception is made in favour of the backward classes of citizens who are not adequately represented in the services at present.

During the discussion it was brought out that the word ' backward ' was undefined and that the listing of any caste as backward and recruiting higher services from among such castes under this article might create inefficiency and even chaos in the administration. But the new entrants into service from the backward classes will be, it was mentioned, selected for their competence. It was also said in some private circles that this concession in favour of the backward classes created a furore in the Brahmin circles of Madras. It is heard that the present non-Brahmin Government of Madras has been giving preference to backward class people in services and to backward class students in educational institutions, thus infringing on the vested rights of Brahmins or on free competition by merit alone. However, the article has been adopted and now forms part of the constitution.

## BACKWARD CLASS COMMISSION

Article 301 of the Draft Constitution, which, I am afraid, will take two or three months, if not a longer period to reach, will, when passed, provide a great charter for all backward classes. A Commission is promised to be appointed by the new President to go out through the whole of the country including the Indian States and find out which castes of Hindus, Muslims, etc., are really backward according to certain standards, educational, social, economic, etc. The Commission will then recommend ways and means to bring them up to the level of the other classes, within a certain period and the Parliament of the day shall vote funds required for the purpose.

This process will take not less than five years from now and all backward people who will now vote for the first time in 1950 will have to wait for a few years more before the State will devise and carry out measures to

uplift them and to put them on the road to equality with more advanced sections.

The writer earnestly hopes that this process of pushing upwards the weakest section of our society will not be unduly delayed by our leaders on account of political stress or due to any domestic trouble. Inequalities exist everywhere in the world, but nowhere as in a caste-ridden country like ours. It is therefore more necessary in India that the welfare of the backward classes, which form such a large section of the population, should be a special charge on the central administration, and not be left to small units of administration unable to find funds for heavy tasks.

## II. Protection of Minorities

(*From 'The Hitavada', December* 4, 1948)

The Draft Constitution of India, now being considered by the Constituent Assembly, contains two kinds of provisions for the protection of minority communities. The first kind of measures contemplated by it ensures the representation of these communities in the legislatures in proportion to their population through joint electorates. That the evil of separate electorates is being at last got rid of is a matter of sincere gratification, but the need for reservation of seats even in joint electorates for some of the communities to which this concession is proposed to be given is not clear. Anglo-Indians, who number less than a lakh and a half in the whole country, could not benefit by such reservation in any case, and consequently provision is proposed to be made for their representation in the lower chamber of the Central Legislature by the nomination of two members if that be considered necessary. Indian Christians are a more numerous community, numbering 56 lakhs in the whole Union. Seats are going to be reserved for them in the Central Legislature and in the Provincial Legislatures of Madras and Bombay only. But they are a comparatively advanced community, capable of winning seats in open competition, and the necessity of reserving any seats for them is open to question. Even more so is the proposed reservation of seats for Muslims who, besides being numerically strong (numbering 4,27,00,000 in the Union) are also, except for Momins or Julahas and such like people, on the whole not less advanced than the Hindus in general, who do not enjoy the benefit of reservation of seats. If the question could be handled solely on the basis of reason, Muslims in India surely are not entitled to reservation, but probably past history left our constitution-makers no alternative.

The only two communities for which seats are proposed to be reserved and which really deserve and require this kind of protection are the scheduled castes and numbering about four and a half crores in the Union and the tribal people now to be called the scheduled tribes numbering roughly two crores and a half in the country. Reservation of seats is justified in their case by their social and economic backwardness, which is not true of any of the other communities to which this concession is to be given. Indeed, in the case of the scheduled tribes, a more effective safeguard than the one that is proposed for them is required in this respect. For the reservation that they are to enjoy will last only for ten years, unless at the end of this period the concession is continued by an amendment of the constitution, which is not very likely. It is true that the scheduled tribes are not discriminated against in this matter, for reservation of seats for all communities is to lapse equally after ten years. But this is hard on the scheduled tribes. Under the Act of 1935 they had only a bare modicum of representation, their claim to full and proportionate representation is being recognised now for the first time and provision is being made accordingly in the new constitution. But if a limit of ten years is put upon reservation of seats for them, a grave injustice will be done. The scheduled castes have been enjoying representation in proportion to their population since 1935, and if they continue to enjoy it till 1960, as they ought to do, they will be in a position at the end of this period to stand on their own feet. But such is certainly not the case in respect of the scheduled tribes. They live on the hills and in the jungles, and are even more backward than the Scheduled castes. They are also far less organised. They will most assuredly not be able to face open competition in election after ten years on anything like equal terms. I would therefore earnestly plead for longer reservation for them. The scheduled castes have had a lead over them for fifteen years, and reservation should be continued for the Scheduled Tribes for as long a period as the scheduled castes will enjoy it, viz., for 25 years. There is no guarantee that they will be able to get the number of seats that is due to them unless, by continuing the reservation for so long a time, they are enabled to look after their interests unaided by reservation. And as constitutional amendment to prolong this concession after ten years is unlikely in the extreme, a provision must be inserted in the constitution now to the effect that while reservation will cease in all other cases after the lapse of ten years, in the case of the scheduled tribes it will cease only after the lapse of 25 years, i.e. after 1975.

The second kind of protection proposed to be afforded to the minority communities consists in measures to promote their educational and economic interests. Of course, all minority communities do not stand in need of such

protection and will not receive it. But all 'weaker sections of the people' are intended to be the recipients of it. Article 37 provides :

> 'The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes, and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.'

It is true that this is no mandatory provision, there being no sanction behind it except the pressure of enlightened public opinion. But it is a directive principle of State policy, and will be morally if not legally binding upon all Governments. Two remarks might be made about this provision. One is that while the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are mentioned in particular in the article there are several other communities, each perhaps small in size, but all undoubtedly backward and needing special protection. In Bombay Province a list is made of such 'Other Backward Classes'. This list appears to be exhaustive. It is the duty of the Central Government to direct all other Provincial Governments to prepare similar lists, adding to them also the backward classes among Muslims, and to plan concrete measures for their upliftment in pursuance of this article, which is evidently intended to be implemented and not to be kept in a show-case.

The second remark is that what is contemplated in the article is not merely protection from possible exploitation, which of course is essential, but also redemption from sheer neglect. Exploitation, when it takes place, will leap into our eyes, and I have enough faith in our intelligentsia to believe that all bare-faced exploitation will be prevented. But what is apt to be ignored by them is the continued neglect of the backward people. They need not only negative measures which will prevent their exploitation, but special position and constructive measures intended to place them on a par, socially and educationally, with the other elements in the population in as brief a period as may be practicable.

If Article 37 has only normative jurisdiction, Article 301 is fully mandatory, which runs as follows :

> '301. (1) The President may by order appoint a Commission consisting of such persons as he thinks fit to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the Union or any State to remove such difficulties and to improve their conditions and as to the grants that should be given for the purpose to which such grants should be given, and the order appointing such Commission shall define the procedure to be followed by the Commission,

(2) A Commission so appointed shall investigate the matters referred to them and present to the President a report setting out the facts as found by them and making such recommendations as they think proper.

(3) The President shall cause a copy of the report so presented, together with a memorandum explaining the action taken thereon to be laid before Parliament.'

Two things will be apparent from the text of the article. One is that while the responsibility of raising the level of ' socially and educationally backward classes ' among all communities rests primarily upon local Governments, the Central Government assumes, as it should, the ultimate responsibility in this respect. It will be before the national Parliament that the report of the Commission to be appointed to investigate the condition of such classes and the measures to be taken to improve it will be laid. Only under such supervision from above will the local Governments feel the urge to adopt necessary measures with as much promptitude as is desirable. The other thing to be noted about this article is that therein are contemplated subsidies from the Central Government for this special purpose. In the absence of such help the local Governments are apt to plead inability on account of want of financial resources to do anything substantial for the improvement of the condition of these helpless people. Where there is real lack of financial means, as in Assam and Orissa, the Central Government must come forward with all the help that will be required to supplement the finances of local Governments. The extent of such help will necessarily vary from Province to Province, but it must be given if we are to be true to the trusteeship of these people which our political freedom has confided to us. The responsibilities due to this trusteeship must be discharged by us at all costs ; the discharge of these responsibilities cannot be allowed to be postponed to anything else on account of our financial weakness. It must be recognised to be the first charge on our resources, however slender they may be. This, and nothing short of this, is, as I understand it, the implication of this Article 301, and when the Constituent Assembly passes it, I would implore all the members to realise fully the nature of this implication before they cast their vote in its favour. The first step in this direction would be for the President of the Union to appoint forthwith after the constitution comes into force the Commission contemplated by this article and thus to put the process of upliftment of backward people in the train.

## 9. LEPROSY RELIEF WORK

[The following speech was delivered by Bapa while inaugurating the first All India Leprosy Workers' Conference in Wardha on 30th November, 1947]

FRIENDS,

It gives me great pleasure to accept the work of opening this Conference which our friend Jajuji has entrusted me with. When I received his telegram, I hesitated. I thought a doctor engaged in the relief of leprosy should be in that place and not I. But I accepted it in the hope that this cause of leprosy relief will get an impetus not by my speaking to you on the opening of this Conference, but by its vast and influential congregation of people assembled here. A word of gratefulness is due to the *Guru* of myself in this particular line of service—I mean the Mission to Lepers. It is the mission that has been working all the world over for over 75 years and for nearly 20 years I followed the Annual Report of the same with very great love and admiration, waiting for the day when our own people, I mean the Indians, will take up the work. And it is no small satisfaction to me to tell you that the day has arrived. India is now free from foreign yoke, and can solve her problems, for good or bad, as she likes. And with the help of you all, the old workers in the field and the new workers, the work can be done much better. I can say without the least doubt of contradiction that this is the first popular Conference of the kind. It is the one wherein the experts and the laymen have assembled to work in a common cause. The work is chiefly for the experts, no doubt, but services of laymen like myself are as much necessary if not more in this cause, which is aptly described as the disease shunned by the people like plague. It is hated by them. Moving in the streets of Bombay, the busy Bombay, and looking at the large number of beggars with leprosy, I could not but pay some attention to them, and paid occasional visits to the Acworth Leper Home in Matunga in Bombay. Now this Conference will, I am sure, be a precursor of many such Conferences. And, as I have said, it should not be a Conference of doctors only, but of social workers also, and in this respect this Conference is unique. These workers should go around the country, make propaganda and tell the people that it is not an incurable disease, which is the general impression unfortunately. The public do not know that only about 20 per cent of the people affected by the disease are infective, the remaining 80 per cent being non-infective. In that way the laymen can do a lot, and the services of my friend

Jagadisan have done much in the South in this direction. This disease is so much shunned by the people that when in the draft of the Kasturba Trust I interpolated the service of women and children with leprosy, somebody looked up with horror and remarked: 'What ! Kasturba Trust, and leprosy in that ! !' 'Yes,' I said, 'this is one of the diseases which affects our women and children.' Fortunately, as you know, Gandhiji has introduced it as one of the 18 items in the constructive programme. So in addition to the 70 or so institutions for the cure or relief of leprosy started by the Mission to Lepers, I hope there will now be a large number of small hospitals, asylums or homes, for the relief of leprosy. There are two schools of thought, as far as I know, for the relief of leprosy. One believes in large hospitals, and large homes, accommodating 500 or even 1,000 people afflicted by leprosy, and the other believes in small homes dispersed over the villages, small villages, and being taken care of by the village doctors and particular attention being given, personal attention, to these people. This is a matter for experts to decide. The only thing I wish to say is that leprosy is a village disease, not a town disease like tuberculosis. It is not created in the industrial factories of our country. It exists in the villages more than the towns and cities. So they should be treated in the villages rather than in large towns and cities like the one in Purulia of which I am reminded by the presence in our midst of Mr. Donald Miller, the Secretary of the Mission to Lepers. Yes, in Purulia, there is a large centre treating about 1,000 patients, and the other of a later growth with accommodation for 200 or 300 patients. The country requires a large number of small hospitals dispersed over the country and I hope the question will be taken up by our experts who will guide us how and where to locate them, and what expenditure is to be incurred on them, what is to be the design of their structure, kutcha or pucca, thatched or tiled. In the end I will say that if we are able, at the end of our deliberations, to evolve an indigenous organisation like the Mission to Lepers, or the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association, which is another body doing very good work, we would have done well. But we must have some organisation which is more indigenous than the two I have mentioned which will work with their help and guidance. Such an organisation should be started without any delay. Let me tell you our Governments are not very forward in taking steps they should have taken long ago. They are backward, I will take the liberty of saying so. They should not rest satisfied with grants and doles which they pay to the Mission to Lepers or B.E.L.R.A. or other organisations, but should take up the work in right earnest themselves. If this is done by the State the whole population will take interest in it and will try to eradicate leprosy from our midst.

Last, but not the least, I will say that we want a large army of workers in this work. Unless there are capable men who will be in charge of small leprosy centres and in villages they cannot be run efficiently. Unless discipline is exacted from patients in their charge, these village centres will not be able to do their allotted work. So a large number of medical and non-medical workers is necessary for that. Of course, it is the work of people who will not be known to the public. But we want a large number of laymen with missionary spirit and I hope they will come forward in due course. Such an organisation must come from non-official sources. Of course, Governments will be there to support them. But we should hope to run it completely non-officially like the Mission to Lepers and the B.E.L.R.A. I declare the Conference open and wish it prospers to such an extent that we will have further meetings of this nature till a time comes when the disease will be completely wiped from this country as it has been done in some other countries of the world.

## 10. V. R. SHINDE

*(From 'The Indian Social Reformer', April 8, 1944)*

THE late Mr. V. R. Shinde died recently after several years of continued paralytic attack. During the last fifteen years he was not in active life, being bed-ridden and so out of public gaze.

He was one of my four gurus and, next to my father, I took my lessons of public welfare work at his feet. Though younger in age to me, he was far advanced in the study of national beneficent activities. It is well-known that he was the father of the depressed classes welfare movement on Bombay-side, while he was the first man and a pioneer in such an activity, except in the Punjab and U.P. in recent times. I took my first lessons of practical work from him. After a lapse of 40 years, I have not forgotten the vivid description that he gave me of a Buddhist Bhikshu of Irish origin, and of his inimitable humility and piety, standing at his door, in the Bombay Prarthana Samaj building one early morning. When I was in Bombay Municipal service and in charge of the Kuchra unloading works, in about the years 1906 and 1907, with two or three hundred Mahars and Mangs doing the filthiest work, perhaps more insanitary than carrying night-soil by Bhangis, he gave me lessons in how to conduct schools for their children and to obtain as many privileges as I could for these humble low class workmen of the city of Bombay.

When a technical drafting error that was detected in the Bombay Municipal Act of 1888 prevented the Corporation of Bombay from sanctioning the grant for a school I had started for its employees, he managed to get me the funds through some friendly Corporation member.

Years rolled by, and Sir N. G. Chandavarkar led a group of workers on the path of service to the Harijans, with Shinde as the working Secretary.

Neither the Government of India nor the subordinate Governments of the Provinces of those days were awakened to their sense of duty to the humblest and the suppressed. The Labour Department of Madras which has led the vanguard in this kind of public service and provided an object-lesson to other Provincial Governments, was not even then born. Thank God, it has flourished and spends about Rs. 10 to 12 lacs a year, which is not a very creditable percentage, even less than one per cent.

However, other Governments have not come up even to that stage yet, inspite of greatly added resources.

Temperamental differences divided the President and the Secretary of the

Depressed Classes Mission after a long period, but Shinde continued to do his missionary task at four different places, Bombay, Poona, Dharwar and Nagpur, mostly in the Marathi area. I very well remember how he coaxed me to speak at a small meeting in a small state of Kathiawar in the year 1908 for the first time in my life. He encouraged me by complimenting me on the Gujarati speech I had then made. In the latter twenties of this century Shinde was out of action. Thereafter came the famous Gandhiji's movement and the whirlwind Harijan tour in 1933 and 1934 for 270 days continuously for the service of Harijans in the whole country and for the removal of untouchability from Hindu society. But that is another story.

He was an ill-paid missionary, but carrying on his mission all the same with unabated enthusiasm. He lived to the end in voluntary poverty with a small family. His widowed sister was also trained in this missionary work and she has survived him. He could ill-educate his sons, one of whom managed to maintain him in his declining years. The younger generation knows very little of Shinde. He was a man of far-sight with a lofty mission to do the long-denied justice to 5 crores of our nation, about one-sixth of Indian humanity. In his time there was hardly any group of workers in the country for the social service activities, more so for our neglected and suppressed section. May his life be an inspiration to the new generation of field workers in the social service ! May his soul rest in peace and be one with the Almighty who had endowed him with a noble mission and only ' but one spark ' for the regeneration of not an inconsiderable part of our nation !

## 11. IN THE LOWEST RUNG OF THE SOCIAL LADDER

### I. OUR SWEEPERS

*(From 'The Harijan', January 28, 1939)*

I NEED not apologise to the readers of the *Harijan* if I return once more to the subject of ameliorating the lot of our municipal sweepers. Their condition, especially of housing, is most deplorable in large towns, where they assemble in large numbers. Nobody will rent houses to them either for love or for money. Unless municipalities take pity on their condition and build houses or barracks or chawls for them, they must live like cattle or like pigs, which they themselves rear. Even large cities like Calcutta, Nagpur and Jubbulpur are thoroughly apathetic about providing them with even rows of rooms, let alone decent separate tenements for each family.

Their services are indispensable for municipal committees, yet they are considered temporary employees even though they may be life-long servants. During my recent tour in the C.P. and Berar municipal towns, I came across two sweepers, one over 80 and the other over 90 years of age, still at work, because they were 'emporary servants and were not entitled to any old age pension or provident fund or even a gratuity of any kind. I saw also one sweeper, completely blind, at work. He was knocked down by a cyclist and was lying in hospital with a fractured leg. Not only this but they never get one full day's leave, as a matter of right, out of the 365 days in a year. They may never get sick, they may never have occasion to go to a friend or a relative for social functions, they may not have any time for rest or recreation. Fortunately a few municipalities have recently made rules to give them a half-holiday on Sunday afternoons or on weekly bazaar days, and some even on a few public holidays. But that is all. Not a day's causal leave, not a day's sick leave; that is the hard and fast rule in the case of a Harijan sweeper. If he cares to stay at home for some reason or other, he must either send an unemployed substitute from his own family or have his pay proportionately cut. A few municipalities have recently begun to give short maternity leave to women sweepers. The C.P. Government circularised a model by-law at the end of 1936 to all municipal committees to the effect that maternity leave two weeks previous to and four weeks subsequent to the confinement should be given to their female sweepers. But after a lapse of two years, half the number of committees in the province have done absolutely nothing in the matter and the



*Inspecting the Harijan Colony for sweepers under construction in Sukkur (Sind) in* 1943 *with Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru*



*Shiva Mandir at Bhainsdehi Dist. Betul, C. P., with a broken idol of 'Nandi' inside the Temple, which on being struck with a hammer or a piece of stone produces a metallic sound*



*At Mohan-ja Daro during his visit to Sind in* 1943

other half that have shown some regard to the Government suggestion, have granted the leave grudgingly for two or three or four weeks only, instead of six. Why should a sweeper woman be so delicate as to require six weeks rest even when a baby is born, is apparently how they argue.

The C.P. Government has appointed a committee of enquiry into the housing condition of municipal sweepers, the adequacy or inadequacy of their pay, the minimum wage to be laid down, if any, and holidays or leave with pay. It is reported that the U.P. Government too is contemplating the appointment of such a committee. But the Bombay Government, who believe more in action than in the reports of expensive committees, has already sent round orders on 30th November 1938 to give to sweepers all the benefits of permanent service. The order runs as follows :

> 'An examination of the position of Harijan employees of municipalities does not admit these employees, as well as some other classes of inferior servants, to the benefits of leave, gratuity, provident fund, etc., to which other classes of employees are admitted. Government considers that there is little justification for such discrimination. The criterion to be followed should be whether the posts in which such appointments are made are required permanently or not. If they are, then the appointments should be in substantive capacity with the benefits allowed to permanent employees and the expedient of making temporary appointments in such posts *to avoid legitimate expenditure* should not be resorted to.' (The italics are mine).

The Government order has also asked for the reports of divisional commissioners after one year mentioning what action is taken in the matter by municipalities in their divisions.

Unless such prompt orders are issued and also given effect to by municipalities, the injustice meted out to poor Harijans who are rendering one of the most important services to society will not be removed in the near future.

## II. A Village Sweeper's Society

*(From 'The Harijan', February* 8, 1935)

The Co-operative Credit Society working for the last three and a half years for the sweeper employees of the Village Panchayat of Mahudha, Kaira Dist., supplies a very good instance of how heavily indebted sweepers can be completely got out of the mire of indebtedness by a little effort. Mahudha is a large village with a population of 7,143, having a village Panchayat to look after its sanitary needs under the Bombay Village Panchayat Act. It employs only 22 sweepers, the pay of each being only Rs. 5 p.m. They eke

out this income by cleaning private latrines in that village for house-holders, that work not having been taken up by the Panchayat.

Before this Society was organised they had incurred debts from a hard-headed money-lender, who, besides charging them interest at one anna per rupee per month, or 75 per cent per annum, exacted the same in a very ingenious fashion. Having found it against the tenets of his religion to charge any interest as interest, he used to take in mortgage sweeper's huts, he being the mortgagee in possession, and then let it out to the mortgagor at a rent that would make up his one-anna interest. Thus, if Rs. 75 was the loan given to any one sweeper, the lender would charge Rs. 4-11-0 as the rent of the hut, of which he was the master and the sweeper a mere tenant-at-will. In case the monthly sum of Rs. 4-11-0 was not paid to the money-lender, he would at once go to the hut, with staff in hand and foul language on his tongue, to get the hut vacated and drive the defaulter out of his tenement. He had, of course, also the rent-notes signed on stamped paper by the poor sweeper. Thus he had a complete hold on all the poor sweepers of the village, who were trembling every month on pay day, when the money-lender was expected to make his appearance at the Municipal office for dunning them. He did not care to take back his loan, but was always insistent upon payment of the interest described as rent ; and the poor sweepers had no means to pay back the principal, even if they so wished. It was with great difficulty that they could scrape together the full interest, out of their monthly Rs. 5, less the deduction in the pay due to absence on sick leave or leave for private reasons. As is well known, sweepers in this country never obtain a day's leave on full pay out of the 365 days. Leave to them always means leave without pay, or leave by supplying a substitute worker.

So a Co-operative Society was organised and got registered in June, 1931, by D. B. Ambashankar Maljee and myself, with the help and co-operation of the Chairman of the Village Panchayat. Before the registration, the sweepers were ' put wise ' as to the procedure of forming the Society, the method of their redemption and the need for their keeping loyalty to the Society by not borrowing from any one outside their own Society. Hand-bills were distributed in that village and adjacent ones, saying that no money-lenders should lend the sweepers of the Panchayat any longer and that if they did, it was at their own risk. This had a very salutary effect in preventing the sweepers from taking any further loans outside.

On the first pay day after the registration of the Society came the test of the trembling sweepers, who were to challenge their money-lender, who was present, as usual, with his staff, his hirelings and his filthy language, to exact his interest, or his rent. The sweepers were instructed to suffer everything,

but not to part with any money. In fact, their pay was, by mutual understanding, not given in their hands, lest they may yield to the threats of the creditors, but was credited in their names in the books of the Society. The creditor threatened to go to the Court but could not do so, because, though the rent-notes were on stamped paper, they were not registered and the debtors could not be sued on the strength of the rent-notes. Thus the creditor was forced to come to terms and to accept the principal plus a reasonable rate of interest, about 12 per cent, until the former was paid in full.

But in order that the sweepers may not get into debt again, even surreptitiously, they were persuaded to take a vow not to incur large expenditure in giving feasts at the time of marriage, after-death ceremonies and first pregnancy for three years to come, i.e. until they were completely freed from their debt and ready to start with a clean slate. It may be said to their credit that, on the whole, they have stood true to their word in the observance of their vow.

Each member has to pay a monthly sum of 8 annas from his pay towards the share capital of the Society, and in this way a sum of Rs. 455-8-0 has been collected during the period of 3½ years. Besides this, a reserve fund of Rs. 222 has been collected. This is from the difference of the interest charged for the loans given to members (18¾%) and the interest paid to the depositors in the Society (6¾%). A sum of Rs. 1,590 was taken as outside deposits on 6% interest. Much of this has been returned, leaving only Rs. 140 to be returned yet. Out of the initial deposit taken from outside, the total of the debts of 22 members, which amounted to Rs. 3,100, was compounded for Rs. 2,326. After 3½ year's working, the Society almost stands on its own legs. The loans of Rs. 755, now standing against the members have been paid from the share capital of the members (Rs. 455-8-0), the reserve fund (Rs. 222) and the small outside deposit of Rs. 140. Thus, by continued efficient management and self-restraint on the part of the members, they have been now completely freed from their debts, except to their own Society.

The moral of this is that, if a good worker interested in the welfare of the sweepers gives his attention to this debt-redemption work, if he gets the full co-operation of the Municipal executive and if the sweeper-members can impose self-restraint upon themselves, they will be enabled, in the course of two to three years, to become self-reliant and self-respecting men.

## III. Social Uplift of Bedias

*(From 'The Harijan', June 7, 1949)*

During my tour in Bundelkhand (Vindhya Pradesh), I came to Bijawar, a town of about 10,000 population on the morning of May 1, 1949. After

going round the streets inhabited by Sweepers, Basors, Chamars and after inspecting a Harijan lower primary school, my party was taken to a street inhabited by a caste known as Bedias. This caste is not very numerous and is to be found at a few places on this side. This street has 18 families consisting of 21 men, 34 women, 8 boys and 10 girls (total 73).

During my visit to the locality of Sweepers, Chamars, Basors, etc., I had no difficulty in getting information about their ways of living, their profession, their wages and their social condition. But in this locality, it took some time to gather together the men and women of the locality. The women were the first to come and the men could be gathered with a little difficulty.

### QUESTION OF PROFESSION

The first question put to the 8 or 10 men after they had assembled was about their profession. We were first told that they cultivated the lands given to them by the State, but this proved to be incorrect. They said that they had no land to cultivate and the one field including a well that was given to one of them had passed off from their hands to the ' jagirdar ' of the village. A young woman then brought forward a Government stamped paper which proved to be a lease of land given to her old father who was present. But this land too was taken away from the family by the ' jagirdar '.

I soon received the correct answer about the profession, when an old man told the party, very frankly that, besides ordinary labour, ' We are living upon the money earned by our sisters and daughters '—meaning thereby prostitution. The want of ordinary modesty common among women of other classes, and their boldness showed that the women were more forward and advanced than the men. They were the spokesmen of the small gathering. When we pressed upon the gathering that the profession that the caste was following should be left by them in favour of more decent manual work, the young lady who was in the possession of the lease of land, related to us her story. She said in a complaining mood that though she had proposed some time back to marry a willing Brahman, the matter was reported to the police and the ' thanedar ' (Sub-Inspector of Police) did not approve of the marriage and banned it. ' I was willing to marry and lead an honest domestic life but I was not allowed to do so by the almighty police department.' She added, ' there are many others like myself who are willing to lead a settled life but we are unable to do so for no fault of ours. We are compelled to lead the life we are traditionally living. If you enable us to get settled in life and give our menfolk some lands to cultivate and earn their living from the same, we are ready to live like other people of the society.'

A DISGRACE TO SOCIETY

Our local friends, officials and non-officials said very frankly that this was the first time that they came across this caste and its degraded social condition. They said, ' We are doing our routine work of courts and offices—of Congress and Praja Mandal, and of holding conferences and organizing agitations ; but we never knew this problem, which exists in our own locality and is no doubt a disgrace to the society of which the Bedias form a part.'

Out of the 34 women, about 25 lived as prostitutes. Will not social servants take up the work of reforming these women ? There is a class of such women in Karnatak, going by the name of Devadasis. Shri Kaka Karkhanis, one of our senior and seasoned Harijan workers, undertook some years back to educate such Devadasi girls and also admitted them into ordinary Harijan girls' hostel in the city of Bijapur, Bombay Province. He has been successful in educating and sending forth in the world as honourable women 10 girls since 1938 and some of them are school teachers.

# 12. THE PROBLEM OF ABORIGINES IN INDIA

BY

A. V. THAKKAR, L.C.E.

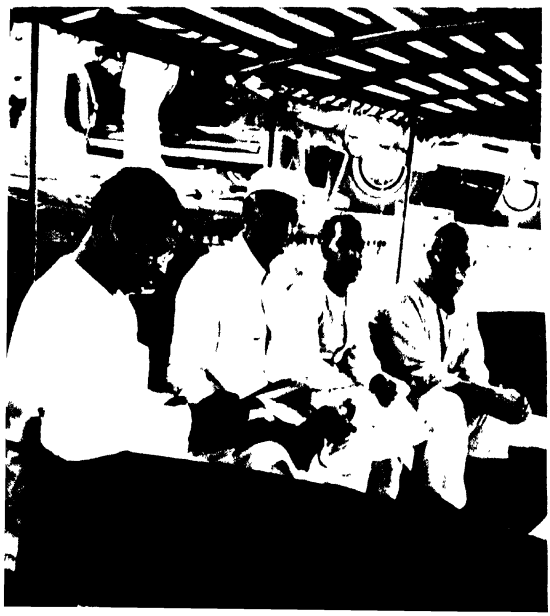
(*Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics*
*R. R. Kale Memorial Lecture* 1941)

FEW people, I believe, have a comprehensive idea of the magnitude of the problem of the aboriginals who inhabit all the provinces of this sub-continent of ours, of their vast numbers, of their ignorance, their poverty, their subjection to drink, their aloofness from the general population, and isolation in hills and forests. Still fewer people have any idea of the great responsibility of the social worker, who has not yet directed his attention to this problem to any appreciable extent.

The population of the aborigines of our country is not a negligible figure. It is nearly two crores and a quarter and thus forms a substantial part, 6½ per cent of the total population of India. It is about half that of the Harijan population, which is five crores. To put it in a little more graphic way, if we can imagine the great city of Bombay to be inhabited purely by aboriginal and hill people like the illiterate, ill-clad and poverty-stricken Bhils, Gonds and Santals, we can have nineteen of such aboriginal cities. If we can transplant the whole aboriginal population of India to a compact area, removing all non-aborigines from the same, we can have a big province of aborigines, having a greater population than the present C.P. and Berar together with the State of Baroda. The aborigines are more than twice the population of Assam, or of all the Indian States in the Bombay Presidency excluding Baroda. In the Bombay Presidency their number bears a larger proportion to the total population than in most other provinces, i.e. over 7 per cent. You will find them by thousands and lakhs in Khandesh, Thana, Kolaba, Panchmahals, North Gujerat and Nasik, and the famine of 1900 has driven them in thousands even to the desert region of Thar and Parkar in Sind. Of course, you will not find them in towns and railway trains, but if you care to travel through their villages, their hills and forests, away from the railway line, the telegraph wire and even the postal runner's track, you will find them in thousands, roaming in Nature's garb and subsisting on the scanty meal provided by their indifferent cultivation of cleared forest-land and roots and herbs.

BAPA WALKS ON HILLY TRACTS
TO MEET HIS BELOVED
ADIVASIS





BAPA CROSSES THE MAHANAD
IN A MOTOR LAUNCH
*With him is the Hon'ble the Minister*
*the Welfare of the Backward Class*

These people were the original sons of the soil and were in possession of our country before the Aryans poured in from the North-West and North-East passes, conquered them with their superior powers and talents and drove them from the plains to the hills and forests. They are older and more ancient children of the soil than Hindus, and still more so, of course, than Muslims and Anglo-Indians. But they are steeped in ignorance and poverty and do not know their rights and privileges, much less their collective and national responsibilities. If we can bestow a little serious thought, we will realise what a great and pressing problem it is to improve the social and economic or moral and material condition of aborigines. We can ill afford to allow such a huge population as that of the Adivasis to remain any longer illiterate, ignorant, and labouring under great hardships like abject poverty, unsympathetic administration, serfdom to sowcars and landlords, and unkind exploitation by more advanced sections of the general population.

As per the Census of 1931 the primitive people are distributed in the various Provinces and States as follows :

| | *Province* | *Population* |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Assam .. .. .. .. .. | 16,78,419 |
| 2. | Bengal .. .. .. .. .. | 19,27,299 |
| 3. | Bihar and Orissa (as before 1935) .. .. | 66,81,228 |
| 4. | Bombay (with Sind) .. .. .. .. .. | 28,41,080 |
| 5. | C.P. and Berar .. .. .. .. | 40,65,277 |
| 6. | Madras (with Ganjam and Koraput Dts., now in Orissa). | 12,62,369 |
| 7. | Others .. .. .. .. .. | 4,30,582 |
| | Total .. | 1,88,86,254 |

| | *State* | *Population* |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Central India Agency .. .. .. | 13,42,081 |
| 2. | Rajputana Agency .. .. .. | 8,02,178 |
| 3. | Western India Agency (Kathiawad & Gujerat States) .. | 4,95,834 |
| 4. | Baroda .. .. .. .. .. | 3,13,273 |
| 5. | Gwalior .. .. .. .. .. | 2,81,033 |
| 6. | Hyderabad .. .. .. .. | 2,22,806 |
| 7. | Others .. .. .. .. .. | 64,033 |
| | Total .. | 35,21,238 |
| | Total for Provinces .. | 1,88,86,254 |
| | Total for States .. | 35,21,238 |
| | Grand Total .. | 2,24,07,492 |

The above table has been taken from Vol. 1, Part 1, of the All-India Census. The figures in this table slightly vary from the figures given in table XVIII of the respective Provincial and States' Censuses, due to the elimination of certain tribes from and the addition of certain others to the list. But as the difference is slight the above figures may be taken as accurate and final for all practical purposes.

The hills bordering both sides of the Brahmaputra valley and other hills of Assam, the hilly tracts in northern and eastern Bengal, Chhota Nagpur plateau in the south of Bihar, the extensive forests of the Central Provinces, the uplands of South Orissa and the jungles of Western Orissa, the Satpura Range and the neighbouring areas in Bombay and Rajputana, these form the chief habitat of the aborigines.

I give below a list by Provinces of the chief tribes, each of which numbers a lakh or more. Districts in which each tribe has a population of at least 25,000 are also mentioned in the 3rd column of the table :

| Name of Tribe | Population (1931) | Districts—chief habitat |
|---|---|---|
| *Assam* | | |
| 1. Garo | 1,93,473 | Garo Hills & Goalpara dts. |
| 2. Kachari | 3,42,297 | Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur & Cachar dts. |
| 3. Khasi | 1,71,957 | Khasi States and Khasi & Jaintia Hills dt. |
| 4. Lushai | 1,14,158 | Lushai Hills dt. |
| 5. Mikir | 1,29,797 | Nowgong, Sibsagar and Khasi & Jaintia Hills dts. |
| 6. Naga | 2,68,303 | Naga Hills dt. and Manipur State |
| *Bengal* | | |
| 7. Chakma | 1,35,508 | Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong dt. |
| 8. Munda | 1,08,686 | 24 Parganas and Jalpaiguri dts. |
| 9. Oraon | 2,28,161 | Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur dts. |
| 10. Santal | 7,96,656 | Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore, Hughly, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Malda dts. |
| 11. Tipara | 2,03,069 | Chittagong Hill Tracts and Tripura State |
| *Bihar and Orissa* | | |
| 12. Bhuiya | 6,25,824 | Gaya, Bhagalpur, Santal Parganas, Hazaribagh, Palamau and Manbhum dts. and Orissa States |
| 13. Bhumij | 2,74,058 | Manbhum and Singhbhum dts. and Orissa States |



PARTIALLY EXCLUDED AREAS ENQUIRY COMMITTEE, ORISSA

From left (sitting) : *Mr. M. Azfar, I.C.S.* & *Mr. R. C. S. Bell, I.C.S.* (*Members*)
*Mr. A. V. Thakkar* (*Chairman*) ; *Mr. R. K. Bose, M.L.A.*
& *Rev. E. M. Evans, O.B.E., M.I.A.* (*Members*)

| Name of Tribe | Population (1931) | Districts—chief habitats |
|---|---|---|
| *Bihar and Orissa*—(continued) | | |
| 14. Gond | 2,55,752 | Sambalpur dt. and Orissa States |
| 15. Ho | 5,23,158 | Singhbhum dt., Chhota Nagpur States and Orissa States |
| 16. Khadia | 1,46,037 | Ranchi dt. and Orissa States |
| 17. Kandha or Khond | 3,15,709 | Angul district (including Khondmals) and Orissa States |
| .. *Munda* | 5,49,764 | Ranchi and Singhbhum dts. and Orissa States |
| .. Oraon | 6,37,111 | Ranchi and Palamau dts. and Orissa States |
| .. *Santal* | 17,12,133 | Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Purnea, *Santal Parganas*, Hazaribagh, Manbhum and Singhbhum dts., *Chhota Nagpur States* and Orissa States |
| 18. Savara | 2,44,678 | Cuttack, Puri and Sambalpur dts. and Orissa States |
| *Madras* | | |
| .. Kandha or Khond (Including Jatapu) | 4,25,369 | Ganjam and Vizag. dts. including Koraput District (i.e. mostly the areas now in Orissa) |
| 19. Paraja | | |
| Bondo Porojo (Banda Paraja) | 1,23,100 | Vizag. Agency (or the present Koraput dt. of Orissa) |
| .. Savara | 2,11,781 | Vizag. and Ganjam dts. (or the present Koraput and Ganjam dts. of Orissa) |
| *C.P. & Berar* | | |
| .. *Gond* | 22,61,138 | Sagar, Damoh, Jubbulpore, *Mandla*, Seoni, Narsinghpur, Hoshangabad, Betul, Chhindwara, Wardha, Nagpur, Chanda, Bhandara, Balaghat, Raipur, Bilaspur, Drug, Amraoti and Yeotmal dts., Bastar & Kanked States |
| 20. Kawar | 2,87,156 | Raipur and Bilaspur dts., Raigarh & Surguja sts. |
| 21. Korku | 1,76,616 | Hoshangabad, Nimar, Betul and Amraoti dts. |
| 22. Pardhan | 1,19,555 | Mandla, Seoni, Chanda and Yeotmal dts. |

| Name of Tribe | Population (1931) | Districts—chief habitats |
|---|---|---|
| *Bombay* | | |
| 23. *Bhil* | 7,76,975 | *Panchmahals*, Ahmednagar, East, and *West Khandesh dts.*, Nasik Thar & Parkar dts. and Mahikantha and Revakantha Agencies |
| 24. Dhodia | 1,39,309 | Surat dt. and Agency |
| 25. Dubla & Talavia | 1,44,644 | Surat dt. |
| 26. Naikda | 1,01,954 | Panchmahals and Surat dts. and Revkantha Agency |
| 27. Thakurs | 1,16,591 | Thana, Nasik and Kolaba dts. |
| 28. Varlis | 2,06,551 | Thana and Nasik dts. Surat Agency and Jawhar State |
| *U.P.* | | |
| .. Gond | 1,21,579 | Ballia and Gorakhpur dts. |
| *Rajputana States* | | |
| .. Bhil | 6,55,647 | Banswara, Dungarpur, Marwar and Mewar States |
| *Central India States* | | |
| .. *Bhil* | 3,63,124 | Indore, Ratlam, Dhar & Jhabua States. |
| .. Gond | 2,82,397 | Reewa and Bhopal States |
| 29. Kol | 2,00,249 | Reewa State |

The above list includes only such tribes as have got a population of not less than one lakh. But there are a few important tribes each of which has a population of more than 85,000 but below one lakh and they are :

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Miri | 85,038 | Assam : | (Sibsagar and Lakhimpur) |
| 2. Kuki | 91,690 | Assam : | (Manipur State) |
| 3. Halba | 92,275 | C.P. : | (Bastar) |
| 4. Katkari | 87,784 | Bombay: | (Thana and Kolaba) |
| 5. Konda-Dora | 85,952 | Madras : | (Vizag. Plains & Agency) |
| 6. Koya | 95,818 | Madras : | (Vizag. dt. and East including Koraput dt. and Godavari Agency) |

The problem of the aborigines may be analysed into (1) Poverty, (2) Illiteracy, (3) Ill-health, (4) Inaccessibility of the areas inhabited by tribals, (5) Defects in administration, and (6) Lack of leadership.

## I. POVERTY

It is no exaggeration if I say that the Adivasis are the poorest section of the Indian population, not excepting the Harijans. The so-called untouchables, though suffering under many social disabilities, always lived with us, either in towns or villages; they are part and parcel of our town and village life; they are always in our sight, if not in our touch, and we cannot afford to forget them by their presence amidst us and by the unpleasant service we exact from them. But we hardly feel the existence of our aborigines. They never see the towns and cities, and rarely villages. The urban people, the intelligentsia, and those that minister to the religious wants of the people rarely come in contact with those whom we have called in contempt the 'Kali Praja' or the dark race. They live as if in a water-tight compartment of their own, which we in our pride of birth and possession never care even to peep into. From time immemorial they have been neglected by the rulers—be they Hindu, Muslim or British—with the result that they are still labouring under very hard primitive conditions of life, waging an unequal fight against disease and exploitation by the advanced sections of our people. Since the Aryan invaders drove them to mountain-fastnesses, they have remained there in almost prehistoric civilisation.

Most of the aborigines pursue agriculture in a very crude form. Even the ordinary wooden plough is rarely used. What is called 'shifting cultivation' is practised by these people. This consists of hacking and burning forests on the hill slopes and sowing seeds broadcast on the ashes of the forest thus burnt, without ploughing the land. This is a wasteful method resulting in serious loss of forests, less rainfall, and soil erosion. The aboriginal is proverbially lazy, and this form of cultivation encourages his laziness.

'Shifting cultivation,' called '*Jhum*' in Assam, '*Podu*' in South Orissa, and '*Bewar*' in C.P., presents one of the greatest difficulties in the administration of tribal areas. The Provincial Governments have made some attempts to eradicate this evil practice, but have not met with success except in a few cases. This problem of 'shifting cultivation' taxes the brains of the forest departments of the provinces and is not confined to our country. It forms a feature of the life of the African and Burmese aboriginal too. The tribals, most probably due to traditional habit, have almost a passion for this method of cultivation, and illiterate as they are, they do not easily realise the harmfulness of the practice. Governmental measures prohibiting it have not and cannot by themselves put an end to it. Propaganda must be carried on against it in addition to such measures. The aboriginals must be taught the use of the

plough, plots must be allotted on the lower slopes of the hills and in the valleys for cultivation, and aboriginal children must be instructed in the art of good cultivation in special vocational schools as well as in ordinary schools. In the meantime, 'shifting cultivation' must be limited by law to two years, and not more, on each plot of land, to enable the regrowth of forest wherever possible. Taccavi loans and loans from co-operative societies must be advanced to the aboriginal cultivator who gives up 'shifting cultivation' in favour of the plough to enable him to purchase bullocks and agricultural implements. The State should render some financial aid to such aborigines. By such means it is quite possible to wean the Adivasi from the harmful habit of 'shifting cultivation'.

It has been noted in the 1931 Census Report of Bengal that the tribe of Chakmas has mostly taken kindly to the imported plough cultivation in place of the indigenous '*Jhum*'. So it seems quite possible to introduce plough cultivation amongst all Adivasis if the Governments concerned are bent upon it. For example, the paddy cultivation of the Savaras of South Orissa is marvellous and bears eloquent testimony to the fact that the aboriginal can bestow great labour and skill in the cultivation of his land. The terraced cultivation of the Savaras of Orissa and Nagas of Assam is not only a pleasant sight to see, but also a great asset to the tribes. My own observations, as well as the observations of my assistants, during our tours in the Savara hills confirm to the very letter the following description of the Savara terraced cultivation by Mr. F. Fawcett (in the Journal of the Anthropological Society, Bombay, 1901):

> 'Many a time have I tried to find a place for an extra paddy field (in the Savara area), but never with success. It is not too much to say that paddy is grown on every available foot of arable ground, all the hill streams being utilised for this purpose. From almost the very top of the hills, in fact from wherever the springs arise, there are paddy fields; at the top of every small area there are a few square yards, the front perpendicular revetment (of large masses of stones) sometimes as large in area as the area of the field; and larger and larger down the hill-side, taking every advantage of every available foot of ground, there are fields below fields to the bottom of the valleys. The Savaras show remarkable engineering skill in constructing paddy fields on hill slopes. They seem to construct them in the most impossible places and certainly at the expense of great labour.'

So here is an example of the aboriginal's interest in good cultivation, and if only he is initiated into it, he will surely stick to it. In the two districts of Nowgong and Kamrup, in Assam, some Mikirs have settled down in the

plains and taken to plough cultivation. They have also established settlements of the same kind, north of the Brahmaputra in Darrang District. I recently read about the efforts of the Government of Tripura State in East Bengal to settle some aboriginal families on reclaimed land. It was mentioned that 'the idea of His Highness the Maharaja Manikya Bahadur was to bring all his old hill subjects to give up their nomadic habits and *Jhum* cultivation and take to plough cultivation and settle down permanently. Steps taken are already bearing fruit. His Highness the Maharaja Manikya Bahadur is not unkind to the needs of the children of the soil and accordingly a vast area of 11,000 *drones* (or 110 sq. miles) was reserved for the hill people of the State.' If Provincial and States' Governments concerned take some such action and extend a generous and helpful hand to the ignorant Adivasi, it is quite possible to root out the evil of 'shifting cultivation' in a comparatively short time.

Mr. Verrier Elwin has discussed the subject of 'shifting cultivation' at great length in his book on the Baigas. But his views seem to incline towards the policy of allowing this kind of cultivation with certain alterations and restrictions. I cannot agree with the opinion that *Bewar* or *Podu* is almost a religious necessity to some of the tribes. The argument of the Baigas that they do not plough the land because they consider it a sin to 'lacerate the womb of *Dharti Mata*' (Mother Earth) does not justify the practice, though surely that sentiment of the Baigas may be borne in mind when we have to deal with the problem, in order to avoid hasty action, which will estrange the feelings of the aborigines, who generally are easily irritable.

Many thousands of aborigines are found working in coal mines of C.P. and Bihar and on tea gardens of Assam and North Bengal. The aboriginals on the tea gardens seem to be economically better off than their compatriots at home and they can be quite prosperous but for the drink evil and other wasteful habits they cultivate on the gardens.

The Zamindari system of land-tenure exists in many of the tribal areas. When we know that there are innumerable grievances even in the Zamindars areas of the plains where a more advanced section of our people lives, it is not difficult to imagine the lot of the illiterate and ignorant aboriginal tenants under their landlords, who are mostly non-aboriginal. Writing about land-tenure in the backward areas, Dr. Hutton observes that 'the tribal custom is normally superseded by a code which is neither valued nor understood by the tribe and in the application of which the tribe is deprived of its property, generally in the nature of law, either by alienation to foreigners or by transforming the trusteeship of tribal chief into absolute ownership of a kind quite foreign to the custom of the tribe. This has befallen both the Mundas and the

hill tribes of Chittagong, to mention only two instances, while even in Rajputana a somewhat similar process has been at work'. The unscrupulous methods employed generally by the agents of the Zamindars in collecting rents from the tenants are a standing grievance, and owing to them sometimes aboriginal tribes have had to 'revolt', the only solution for an ignorant people, as in the case of the tribals of South Orissa and Madras. Of course, these '*Phituris*' often hit the aborigines harder than the Zamindar, but what else can they do? Rent-collectors very rarely issue receipts to the tenants for payment of the rent, and as such there can be no supervision and check from above over them. Of course, even if receipts are issued, the aboriginal tenant cannot read them and so there is every scope for the rent-collector to extract more money than the dues. But at least the administration of the Zamindari would have done its duty and it can to some extent protect the poor tenant from exploitation by the minor officials.

*System of Bethi and bonded labour*:—Many aborigines are reduced to the position of serfs. *Bethi* or forced labour is exacted from them without any payment or with only a nominal payment by the Zamindars. The report of Mr. D. Symington, I.C.S., of Bombay Province, who was appointed in 1937 to enquire into the conditions of the Aboriginal and Hill tribes of the province, reveals that 'all jungle tract tenants are liable to be called upon to work for their landlords. This forced labour is demanded for as many days as are necessary for the landlords' requirements. If they refuse or procrastinate, they are liable to assault or beatings. I was told, on creditable authority, of men being tied up to posts and whipped. There are also rumours of men in the past having been killed. The maximum remuneration of forced labour is one anna per diem. More often rice is given, barely sufficient for one man for one meal. If the landlord is also a forest contractor, he will use his tenants labour by *Veth* for working his coupes. Landlords will not scruple to use their power in fulfilment of their purposes; for instance, the use of their tenants' womenfolk for the gratification of their lust.' When such a strong indictment is made by a responsible officer, we can imagine how wretched the life of the aboriginal tenant must be.

The system of bonded agricultural labour called '*Gothi*' in South Orissa and '*Kamiauti*' in Chhota Nagpur districts is another of the grievances of the aboriginal. 'Kamias are bound servants of their masters; in return for a loan received they bind themselves to perform whatever menial services are required of them in lieu of the interest due on the loan. In practice the system leads to absolute degradation of Kamias. . . .'

Organisation and running of a number of co-operative credit societies, purchase and sale societies and grain-golas will go a long way towards improv-

ing the economic condition of the Adivasis. First they will be freed from the clutches of the usurious and unscrupulous money-lenders, and that is a blessing of no small consequence. Mr. Symington recommended the organisation of Purchase and Sale Societies in the Bhil and other aboriginal areas of Bombay. For the Bhil area of West Khandesh, he recommended the organisation of these societies at an annual cost of Rs. 94,000, or nearly one lakh. He mentions that such a scheme will not only be self-supporting, but that it would, like the grain banks in Thana District and Peint Taluka, earn large profits, which should be utilised as a contribution to the cost of compulsory primary education in the four Bhil talukas of West Khandesh. It may be difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to make the aboriginal understand the 'Ten Main Points of Co-operation' but it is quite practicable to get into working order a C. C. Society in an aboriginal village if only the Supervisors, Inspectors and higher officials of the Department take a real interest in the matter, as in the case of Mandla District in C.P. and in Panch Mahals in Gujerat.

The drink evil is another cause of the poverty of the Adivasi. 'They drink as a race ; their children are brought up to it, and no man or woman can avoid the habit.' (Mr. Symington.) In certain aboriginal areas excise rules do not operate. The Adivasi prepares and consumes liquor by himself. But in most of the areas, excise rules do operate and the liquor contractor, usually a non-aboriginal, is almost a master of the aboriginal village, as he has at his beck and call all the men-folk, if not women too, by advancing loans and also supplying them with liquor on loan, whenever possible. What little is left after the payment of land-revenue, goes to the liquor-seller, who thus is able to have a powerful grip on the aborigines.

Generally the Government officials—particularly the English I.C.S. officers —and the anthropologists do not favour the introduction of prohibition in aboriginal areas. But it is quite interesting and good that Mr. Symington writes in his report thus : 'I cannot avoid stating the opinion that if prohibition is justifiable at all, it is particularly justifiable in the case of people like the Bhils and allied tribes.' Of course it is true that prohibition cannot be introduced in aboriginal areas abruptly. People must be made to understand the benefits they would derive if prohibition is introduced. Temperance propaganda must be carried on for some time before attempting to introduce prohibition. I am in favour of gradual introduction of prohibition even amongst the aborigines, as I fully believe that prohibition of liquor and intoxicating drugs confirms a great and everlasting benefit on the people ; the aboriginal does not differ from the non-aboriginal so far as fundamental human qualities are concerned. Only, due to his poverty and ignorance, his problems assume a slightly different garb from those of the non-aboriginal.

## II. Illiteracy

Literacy figures with regard to the aborigines reveal a gloomy picture and send out a piteous cry to the educational authorities and philanthropists. In the 1931 Census, for a tribal population of 76,11,803 (for which the literacy figures have been extracted), only 44,351 were literate. That means a literacy of 0.58% or one in 172 persons was literate.

**(Literacy by Religion)**

**(1931 Census)**

| *Province* | *Tribals* | *Tribal literates* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assam | 9,92,390 | 14,094 | 1.4 |
| Bengal | 5,28,037 | 3,874 | 0.7 |
| Bihar and Orissa | 20,48,809 | 11,834 | 0.5 |
| C.P. | 13,51,615 | 6,769 | 0.5 |

The figures of 1921 Census revealed that there were only 3 literate males per thousand among the Katkaris and 4 among the Bhils as against 10 of Bharwad or Shepherd, 23 of Mahar, 28 of Bhangi and 65 of Dhed. Thus in the art of letters they are seven times more depressed than the most depressed Bhangi and sixteen times more than the weaving Dhed. In a State in South Central India, wholly populated by aboriginal tribes, I found to my great surprise and pain (in 1924) that the literacy among the Bhils was only *one per thirteen thousand or next to zero* !

A large number of schools have to be organised in order to teach even the three R's to the aboriginal children. The efforts of the Provincial Governments and the Local Boards must be supplemented by philanthropic work. Spreading of primary education will help the Adivasi to a great extent and give him a little self-confidence, which he lacks now. He will then be able to understand the causes for his present backwardness and work for his improvement. The organisation of primary schools amongst aborigines presents, no doubt, some special difficulties, besides the big problem of finance. Due to the inaccessibility of the areas and the bad climatic conditions prevalent there, very few teachers would go there willingly or stick to those places if they go. Persons must be inspired to take up this work as missionaries and look upon it as a labour of love. Of course, attempts must be made to train tribal candidates wherever possible. But for some years to come, people from the plains have to be recruited to a great extent, for teaching in the aboriginal schools.

The aboriginal children should be taught through the medium of the

provincial language pertaining to their area and in the script of that particular language. Generally all tribals are conversant to some extent with the provincial language, besides their various tribal dialects. Only young children may find it difficult to follow the provincial language, in which case they should be taught the provincial language through the medium of the tribal dialect in the lowest classes. For this purpose the teachers must be conversant with tribal dialects. The introduction of Roman script in the aboriginal schools, as has been the case among the Khasis of Assam, should be discouraged as it presents innumerable complexities and estranges the feelings of the major communities, besides having many technical disadvantages.

Equally important, if not more, is the need for vocational residential schools here and there amidst the Adivasis. The Adivasi is proverbially lazy in addition to his being illiterate. Probably that is why he is so much attached or addicted to 'shifting cultivation', which requires much less labour than the more useful plough cultivation. If it is desired to make him a hard-working citizen, we have to tackle the Adivasi child first. Hence the necessity of residential vocational schools, where the child can be moulded into a useful and industrious citizen. Such education must be made absolutely free in most cases. Otherwise the aboriginal will not send his child to such a school. Agriculture and some handicrafts suitable to local conditions, like carpentry, smithy and weaving must be taught to the Adivasi children in these schools, besides a knowledge of the three R's. Three or four years' residence in hostels will teach regular habits to these children and they would be immensely benefited by cultivation of regular habits. Teaching of good and regular habits is the primary duty of the teacher in the aboriginal school.

A knowledge of even merely the three R's gives the Adivasi a little self-confidence and thus benefits him very much, though of course there is a likelihood of his forgetting the little that he has learnt in the school, in the course of a few years.

Educational grants to aboriginal areas have been meagre and inadequate hitherto. For example, in Orissa, though schools have increased in number in these areas during the last few years, grants to private schools are paid on the basis of distribution by districts, fixed some years ago, without taking into consideration the need for greater sums on account of the increase in the number of schools. The result is that the same amount has to be distributed among a larger number of schools and the teachers get poorer grants—hardly fifty rupees per annum per head. The Simon Commission, recognising that the progress made in education amongst the aborigines was decidedly less than even amongst the Harijans, observed that 'it is clear from the Committee's review that the main reason for this is the adoption by provincial governments of a

scheme of grants to local authorities *proportionate to the sums set aside for education by the local authorities themselves*, without any provision, except in Bihar and Orissa, for the grading of districts according to their financial resources. Thus, backward areas, which might be supposed to need most assistance from their provincial governments, *receive* in most cases, *owing to their own poverty less help* from this quarter than wealthier districts.' Even in Bihar and Orissa, where the system of grading was adopted, the Government admitted in a memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission that in the matter of education the aboriginals of that province 'as a whole are relatively to the general population in a worse position than they were in 1921. They have got a little less than their general share of the big advance made in primary education and decidedly less of the advance in High and Middle education.'

Middle School, High School and College education among the Adivasis is of course negligible, if not altogether a zero. We can find a few aborigines who have received or are now receiving University education, among the Khasis of Assam and the Mundas and Oraons of Chhota Nagpur. In June 1940, when I learnt that a Bhil girl who was educated by the efforts of the Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad, had passed the Bombay Matriculation examination, I felt extremely happy. Probably she is the first non-Christian Bhil girl to enter an Arts College.

At present, many Christian Mission organisations and a few non-Christian Indian bodies are conducting schools for aborigines, with Government aid in most cases. Their work, commendable as it is, appears to be only a drop in the ocean. Much greater efforts by such bodies and progressive and generous help by the authorities are urgently needed in order to lift the aborigines from the slough of despond and ignorance.

## III. Ill-Health

The aboriginal areas are notoriously malarial. Besides malaria which takes a heavy toll, there are some contagious diseases also prevalent there. Yaws or Koya disease is one such, and is prevalent among the aborigines of South Orissa and Madras. The person affected by this disease gets ulcers all over the body, even in the most delicate parts like the tongue and the anus. It affects men and women, young and old, and greatly reduces their capacity for work and slowly saps away their energy. Also it is found that due to crude marital relations and promiscuity in sexual matters, venereal diseases are common among them.

Disease ravages aboriginal life mercilessly, because of the ignorance of the people and their crude treatment, as well as lack of sufficient medical aid

organised by the State. The primitive fight against disease consists mainly of exorcism, and now and then recourse to some herbs administered by quacks.

Hence organisation of medical relief work is the most important welfare activity that should be conducted among the Adivasis. Supply of quinine and other medicines must be provided and distributed free among them by itinerant rural workers and teachers. In the beginning, good propaganda has to be carried on to persuade the aborigines to take Ayurvedic or allopathic medicines, because they strongly believe that disease is directly due to some evil spirit and that it can be got rid of only by offering animal sacrifices. Their traditional ideas should not be disturbed hastily. Persuasion and patient propaganda must be the only weapons of the social welfare worker to fight the superstitious ideas of the Adivasi.

## IV. Inaccessibility of the Areas Inhabited by Adivasis

Communications are very bad in aboriginal regions. There are very few motorable and all-weather roads. For example, in the district of Lushai Hills in Assam and the district of Garhwal in U.P., there are practically no motorable roads, but only bridle paths of a width of only five feet. The hilly nature of the regions is the main cause of such bad communications. But it is quite possible to make these regions more accessible than at present, by bestowing attention on and allotting large funds to the construction and improvement of roads. Innumerable hillstreams, which make even cart-traffic impossible during the rainy season, have to be bridged.

Good roads will open up the country, encourage trade, and attract industrialists to these regions, which are rich in minerals and other natural resources. Also, the aborigines will come into greater contact with the advanced people of the plains. The fear that such contact is dangerous to the tribals is held by some anthropologists and British administrators. But I do not share that belief. I shall explain at a later stage my views on this aspect of the aboriginal problem.

## V. Defects in Administration

The areas inhabited predominantly by Adivasis are classed as Excluded and Partially Excluded areas under the Government of India Act of 1935. The Montford reforms treated these areas as ' Backward Areas ' and made the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919 inapplicable to them. Before the Montford reforms they were ' Scheduled Districts ' as per the India Act XIV of 1874.

Under the present constitution there are eight Excluded areas and twenty-eight Partially Excluded areas, having in all a population of about 150 lakhs. The administration of the Excluded areas is controlled and directed exclusively by the Governor of the Province concerned, while that of the Partially Excluded areas is controlled largely by the Governor who has been given 'special responsibilities' in this case. No legislative enactment will apply to either of these unless the Governor so directs by a notification.

The Governor has complete authority to make any laws and regulations for Excluded areas and also to repeal or amend any law which may be for the time being applicable to these areas. The expenditure on these areas cannot be sanctioned by the legislatures. In all matters concerning these areas, the Governor can act entirely in his discretion, and the validity of anything done by him shall not be called in question on any ground whatever by the ministers or the legislature.

With regard to the Partially Excluded areas, the constitution is not so hopeless and authoritative, though even here there is much to be undone or repaired.

The administration obtaining in these areas is highly authoritative and autocratic. All powers are concentrated in the hands of a few officials. Executive and judicial powers are vested in one and the same officer. Even education is entrusted to him. Besides, such officers are the Chairmen of Union, Taluk and District Boards, wherever these exist. When so many functions are allotted to one and the same officer, can administration be efficient and popular?

Local self-government, where it does exist, is only nominal. The Boards are constituted with cent per cent nominated members and official presidents. These Boards work only as another branch of the government machinery and there is very little scope for expression of popular feeling within them.

*Administration of justice.* Due to the fact that judicial powers are vested in executive officers, who are over-burdened with executive functions and whose legal knowledge cannot be of a very high standard if not altogether questionable, administration of justice in tribal areas has drawn upon itself much justified criticism. The aboriginal is rarely satisfied with the present method of meting out justice, and often he is afraid of the inhuman delay and cost involved in seeking justice in government courts. The first difficulty lies in the long distances to be covered in order to be present at the court. There are very few all-weather roads in these areas and so one has to walk scores of miles over hills and dales. In the rainy season, even walking becomes extremely difficult on these forest tracks, which are cut up by innumerable mountain streams flowing at great velocity. Mr. W. V. Grigson, I.C.S., of C.P., writes

as follows in his recent booklet on Mandla aborigines : ' On arrival at Court, it often happens that the Gond may be kept waiting for a day or two or find that the Tahsildar is away or too busy to take his case, and he is then told to go away and return a week or ten days later, perhaps for another abortive visit. . . .' This represents the state of things in most of the tribal areas.

Oftentimes, the officer, in addition to his being not well-conversant with legal matters, is ignorant of tribal law and customs, a knowledge of which is essential to mete out justice to the aborigines. Sometimes tribal law is at variance with the law obtaining in plains districts, and magistrates who are generally from the plains cannot easily realise that what is considered illegal amongst non-aborigines may be perfectly legal according to tribal custom, e.g. marriage by capture. Rao Bahadur S. C. Roy writes :

> ' The British system of law and administration has further tended to impair the social solidarity of these tribes and has weakened the authority of the social heads or *Panchas* and the respect they formerly commanded. Until recently, when Government orders validating tribal customary law regarding succession and inheritance were promulgated, the Courts often disregarded the custom against inheritance by daughters and applied to them a Succession Act quite inconsistent with the fundamental social structure and ideas of kinship of the tribes. Until recently, when rules against alienation of ancestral lands were promulgated by Government, the ancient tribal custom against such alienation was utterly disregarded.'

The remedy for all this lies not only in the appointment of independent judges, but also in studying carefully tribal customs and laws and taking these into consideration in the administration of justice.

The principles of tribal Panchayats are quite sound, and the Government should avoid encroaching upon the powers of these ancient and indigenous organisations of the people. A great help will be rendered to the aborigines if these Panchayats are allowed to function without encumbrances, of course within certain limits.

*Representation in Legislatures and Local Boards.* The seats reserved by separate electorates for aboriginal people in the provincial legislatures under the 1935 Constitution are twenty-four in all, and they are distributed as follows :

Assam 9 ; Bihar 7 ; Orissa 5 ; and Bombay, Madras and C.P. 1 in each of the three ; total 24.

In C.P. where the aboriginal population is very nearly equal to the Harijan population, and one-fifth of the total population, only one seat has been reserved for the aborigines, while twenty are for Harijans. In the province of Orissa, out of the five seats reserved, four are filled up by nomination,

a feature peculiar to Orissa, as nomination to Provincial legislatures has been discarded in all other provinces.

In Local Boards hardly any representation to the aborigines is generally given, except very recently by the Bombay Government.

## VI. Lack of Leadership

Lack of leadership in the tribal communities is a great handicap. Amongst the Christianized aborigines, e.g. of Chhota Nagpur, there are a few educated people, but they generally seem to be interested chiefly in Christian aborigines rather than in their non-Christian brethren. Amongst the latter, leaders are fewer still. This is one of the reasons why aboriginal interests fail to receive proper attention from the authorities and the general public. So, till such time to come when the aborigines can stand on their own legs and safeguard their rights and interests, non-aboriginal politicians and social workers have to espouse the cause of these dumb millions and work disinterestedly for their economic and educational advancement.

'*Isolationism*' *and* '*Intervention*'.—Among those interested in the welfare of the aborigines, there are two schools favouring two different policies, which are generally called 'Isolationism' and 'Intervention'. Generally, anthropologists and British members of the I.C.S. and other government officers favour Isolationism, which may be briefly explained as 'keeping the aborigines in their areas untouched by the civilisation of the plains.' They fear that contact with the Hindus of the plains breaks the solidarity of the tribal society and brings many social evils into tribal areas, hitherto unknown there, as for example, untouchability, early marriage and purdah. They are of opinion that the aborigines will try to imitate only the lower strata of the Hindu community of the plains and thus get demoralised and form another depressed community like the various Hindu Scheduled Castes. For example, Dr. Hutton writes that 'the opening up of the communications, involving contact at many points and often practical settlement of tribal country, alters the aspect of any agricultural changes that may have been taking place. Generally speaking it substitutes *conflict* for *contact*—not necessarily a conflict of arms, but of cultures and of material interests. Attempts to develop minerals, forests or land for intensive cultivation can only be made at the expense of the tribe whose isolation is thus invaded. . . . Again, the exploitation of minerals not only involves the tribal land but generally the introduction of an alien population usually of an extremely mixed character and not infrequently exceptionally dissolute.' These words of Dr. Hutton represent the views generally held by all isolationists.

It is difficult for me to understand why these persons fear the contact with the Hindus and Muslims of the plains. It may be that in a few cases some social evils of the people of the plains are likely to be copied by the unsophisticated aboriginals. But it is not right to consider that the contact will bring only bad customs into tribal life and that the aborigines will suffer more than they benefit. Safeguards may be instituted to protect the aborigines from exploitation by the more advanced people of the plains, as has been done with regard to non-alienation of land. But to keep these people confined to and isolated in their inaccessible hills and jungles is something like keeping them in glass cases of a museum for the curiosity of purely academic persons. Thereby I do not underrate the great service that is rendered, and that can be rendered in the future also, by anthropologists, in the cause of the poor aborigines. In fact, vast fields, concerning aboriginal life, still remain to be explored, and there is plenty of work for anthropologists and other scholars.

But how can the aborigines realise their present backwardness and work for their own economic, social and political progress if there is no contact with people more advanced than themselves? When contact is advocated, I do not for a moment suggest that large populations of the plains should be transplanted to aboriginal regions and made to live amidst and dominate the Adivasis. Also, I do not discountenance the need for protection of aboriginal interests against any possible exploitation by some sections of the advanced people of the plains. What I mean to say is that a healthy comradeship should develop between the aborigines and the non-aborigines and each should profit culturally from the other and in course of time work hand in hand for the welfare of India as a whole. I am one of those who strongly advocate reservation of seats, but in a general electorate, for the Adivasis in the legislatures and Local Boards for some time to come. All the same, I feel that there is no cause for getting alarmed over imaginary evils resulting out of the contact with non-aborigines and their civilisation.

Another charge levelled by some isolationists against indigenous social workers and nationalist politicians is that they are interventionists, that they approach the aborigines with the feelings of a morally and socially superior person approaching a degraded individual, and that these social workers more often bring with them social evils like untouchability, purdah, early marriage and many taboos with regard to food (e.g. beef-eating). Of course we should take care that the contagion of social evils like untouchability does not spread in aboriginal areas. Moreover, when these evils are dying in the plains and when well-educated persons take up social welfare work among the tribals, there is no likelihood of their being carried to the aboriginal society. At the same time it is curious to note that these friends do not object to the Christian

Missionaries' close and uncontrolled contact with them. Not only that, but they actively encourage them to spread Christian propaganda and even Roman script for tribal dialects. They also remain perfectly silent over the removal by law of thousands of aborigines from provinces like Bihar, Orissa and North Madras from their natural surroundings to the tea estates of Assam and North Bengal on low wages.

In fact, it is unjust and wrong to call the indigenous social workers 'interventionists'. It would be proper to call them advocates of the policy of *assimilation*. The aborigines should form part of the civilized communities of our country, not for the purpose of swelling the figures of the followers of this religion or that, but to share with the advanced communities the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general, social and political life of the country. Separatism and isolation seem to be dangerous theories and they strike at the root of national solidarity. We have already enough communal troubles and should we add to them instead of extinguishing the existing ones and seeing that we are all one and indivisible? Safety lies in union and not in isolation. Nationalists cannot but view with concern and regret statements like the following one of Dr. Hutton :

'*Education in itself is a doubtful blessing in so far as it is apt to unfit them (aborigines) for their environment*, but it is probably a necessary weapon of defence for them in the circumstances in which they are placed, perhaps the only one of any permanent value, *though the real solution of the problem would appear to be to create self-governing tribal areas with free power to self-determination in regard to surrounding or adjacent provincial units.*' (Italics mine.) It is clear from the above that isolationists seem to doubt even the value of education so far as the aborigines are concerned. But at the same time it is encouraging to note that education is recognized at least as a weapon of defence against exploitation, if not as a means of achieving their moral and material progress.

## Short Notes on some of the Important Aboriginal Tribes of India

1. *Baigas.*—The Baigas are more backward than their neighbours, the Gonds. In the villages the Baiga quarters are apart from the Gond quarters and are not even as clean and comfortable as the latter. Their belief in magic and their love for '*Bewar*' or 'shifting cultivation' are said to be especially strong.

2. *Bhils.*—The Bhils are one of the three major aboriginal tribes of our

country, the other two being the Gonds and the Santals. They are the largest tribe in the Presidency of Bombay and in Rajputana States. I have had the fortune of coming into close touch with them and their problems since two decades. The Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad has been carrying on welfare work for the Bhils of Panch Mahals since the year 1921. The Bhil Seva Mandal of West Khandesh, though of recent growth, has started well and is taking keen interest in the education of the Bhil children. In the State of Dungarpur in Rajputana, a High School teacher, Sjt. Bhogilal Pandya by name, who is also a good social worker, runs a hostel and a number of schools for the Bhils, and carries on other welfare work and is encouraged by the State.

In 1938 a big social reform movement was started among the Bhils of West Khandesh, by a saintly Bhil named Gula Maharaj. This movement had a wonderful moral effect. Thousands of Bhils gave up the evil habit of drink, they began taking the daily bath, observing clean habits in everyday life, and they co-operated enthusiastically with the workers of the Bhil Seva Mandal of West Khandesh in organising schools in their villages.

The Report of Mr. D. Symington, I.C.S., on the Aboriginal and Hill Tribes of the Partially Excluded Areas in the Province of Bombay, published in 1939, deals with the various problems of the Bhils with thoroughness and sympathy and serves as a landmark in the administration of the Bhils and other tribes of the province. One of his important recommendations was that ' a policy of prohibition should be attempted in these areas, preferably by means of obtaining increased Government control of *mhowa* flower crops.' Equally important, if not more, is his scheme of Purchase and Sale Societies for the four Bhil talukas of West Khandesh.

3. *Bhuiya.*—Bhuiyas are found mostly in the northern Tributary States of Orissa in various stages of civilisation and cultural development, from the almost primitive Hill Bhuiyas of Keonjhar State to the thoroughly Hinduised Bhuiya Zamindars of Gangpur and other States. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy writes thus about the hill Bhuiyas : ' With their activities almost wholly confined to the collection and production of food in their inhospitable hill fastnesses, they are still in a very low state of material culture.'

4. *Chakmas.*—Chakmas are a tribe living in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong district. It is reported by Mr. J. C. Mills, I.C.S., in the 1931 Census of Bengal, Part I, that the Chakmas have taken most kindly to the imported plough cultivation in place of the indigenous system of *jhuming* or ' shifting cultivation '.

5. *Gadabas.*—They reside mostly in Koraput district of Orissa and Vizag. district of Madras. Some of them have migrated to Assam tea gardens. Gadaba women wear immense ear-rings of a diameter of about 8 inches,

made of brass wire, which reach to the shoulders. These women wear cloth made of cotton thread and fibre, a bustle or dress improver, which has always big stripes of white and red. By custom they are prohibited from using purely cotton cloth but their menfolk are not. The home-spun and woven cloth seems to be still holding the field amongst the Gadabas as against the mill-cloth.

6. *Garos.*—A noteworthy feature of the Garos of Assam is their social organisation, which is based on democratic principles. Whenever a dispute arises, all concerned, including women, assemble and discuss the matter.

7. *Gonds.*—This is one of the three major aboriginal tribes of India, with a total population of about 25 lakhs, of which nearly 19 lakhs are found in the province of C.P. In ancient days there were a number of Gond Kingdoms, and even today some small States in C.P. are ruled by Gond Chiefs. The Gond country is still known as Gondwana, as in ancient days. We cannot forget the brave Gond Queen, Rani Durgavati, who fought heroically against Akbar. The small State of Bastar in C.P., hedged in between the borders of Hyderabad State and Madras and Orissa Provinces, contains the Maria and Muria Gonds and Halbas, who are said to be some of the most primitive peoples of the world. Mr. Verrier Elwin is just now engaged in anthropological research work in Bastar State.

8. *Kacharis.*—They are the biggest of all the aboriginal tribes of Assam, with a population of about 3½ lakhs. Tradition ascribes their ancestry to the non-Aryan hero of the Mahabharata, Ghatotkacha, the son of Hedamba and Bhima. Since 1935 welfare work is being conducted amongst these people under the auspices of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Sjt. Rupnath Brahma, who is a member of this tribe, is a minister in the Assam Government since 1938.

9. *Katkaris.*—They are probably of Bhil origin. They are also called Kathodis and Kathodias. They are found chiefly in that part of the Western Ghats which runs through Thana and Kolaba districts. Their original occupation was catechu-making. Some of them still pursue the same. But the majority of them now engage themselves in burning charcoal, gathering and selling of firewood and as agricultural labourers. The Adivasi Seva Mandal of Thana dt. was formed in May 1940 by ex-Premier Mr. B. G. Kher with the object of improving the lot of the Katakaris, Varlis and Thakurs of the district.

10. *Khasis.*—They are one of the numerous tribes of Assam, and tradition ascribes their origin to Babhruvahan, the son of Arjun. Christianisation goes on at great speed amidst them and a visitor to Shillong, the capital of Assam, will find most of the Khasi men and women dressed in western clothes. Spread of education among the Khasis is quite encouraging. The present Cabinet of Assam includes one Khasi lady, Miss Dunn,

In many schools in the Khasi area, Khasi language is taught in Roman script instead of in the Assamese script.

The Khasi States are limited monarchies, the Chief's powers being much circumscribed by a Darbar of *Mantris*.

11. *Khonds*.—They are a big aboriginal tribe of Orissa, with a population of about 7½ lakhs including 80,000 Jatapus, who are a slightly advanced section of the same tribe. They used to offer human sacrifice, called the Meriah sacrifice, in the belief that such a sacrifice satisfies the unknown powers and gives them in return a bumper crop. This was put down only in the middle of the last century by British administrators. 'The last recorded Meriah sacrifice in Ganjam hills occurred in 1852 and there were still (in 1909) Khonds alive who were present at it. 25 descendants of persons, who were reserved for sacrifice but were rescued by Government officers, returned themselves as Meriah at the 1901 Census. The Khonds have now substituted a buffalo for a human being.' (Thurston). But it is mentioned in the *Gazetteer* of Vizagapatam district that as recently as 1880 two persons were convicted of attempting a Meriah sacrifice near Ambadola in the present Koraput district; in 1883 a man was found at daybreak murdered in one of the temples of Jeypore (Koraput dt.) in circumstances which pointed to his having been slain as a Meriah, and that as late as 1886 a formal enquiry showed that there were ample grounds for suspicion that kidnapping of victims still went on in Bastar State. As recently as 1902 a petition was presented to the District Magistrate of Ganjam to sanction the performance of human sacrifice !

The following is a translation of a Khond song dealing with this subject :

'At the time of the great Kaibon (Campbell) Sahib's coming, the country was in darkness ; it was enveloped in mist.

'Having sent "Paiks" (Sepoys) to collect the people of the land, they, having surrounded them, caught the Meriah sacrificers.

'Having caught the Meriah sacrificers, they brought them, and again went and seized the evil councillors.

'Having seen the chains and shackles, the people were afraid ; murder and blood-shed were quelled.

'The land became beautiful and a certain Mokodella Sahib (Macpherson) came.

'He destroyed the lairs of the tigers and bears in the hills and rocks and taught wisdom to the people....' (Quoted by Thurston).

The credit of putting down this dreadful and inhuman practice goes to British administrators, Campbell and Macpherson topping the list.

The Servants of India Society has been running some schools and an ashram amongst the Khonds and other aboriginal tribes of Koraput district

since Nov. 1939. Mr. L. N. Sahu, a member of the Society, is in charge of this work.

The Khonds of Ganjam hills do not pay any land tax to the Government and it is claimed that they were exempted by the Government (in the middle of the last century) as a sign of friendship and goodwill and fair treatment, on the Khonds promising to give up Meriah sacrifice.

12. *Konda-Doras.*—These people of the East Godavari district have been Telugu-ised to a great extent. They are considered by some scholars to be a section of the Kandhas or Khonds and their dialect (now mostly discarded in favour of Telugu) is said to be a dialect of Kui, the language of the Khandas. They are hill-cultivators.

13. *Koyas.*—These people also have been Telugu-ised like the Konda-Doras. They are considered to be a branch of the Gond family. Sjt. Kodanda Ramiah conducts some welfare work among the Koyas of East Godavari Agency.

14. *Kukis.*—Kukis are another tribe of Assam. Head-hunting used to exist among the Biete Kukis as among the Nagas. Enemies' heads used to be stuck on poles in the village. A man had to bring in a head of a man of an enemy village, slain by himself, before he could marry.

15. *Lushais.*—Their home, the Lushai Hills dt., lies in the extreme south-east of Assam, bordering on Burma. There are no motorable roads but only bridle paths in this district, and as such it is accessible only with great difficulty. Head-hunting used to exist among the Lushais also. A young man who had taken a head was known as a ' Man of Valour ' (' Huaisen ' or ' Pasaltha ').

16. *Mikirs.*—Mikirs are addicted to opium. As among the Khasis, pottery is made without the help of the wheel. Mikirs grow cotton and rice. They practise *Jhuming* as other Assam tribes do.

17. *Nagas.*—The Nagas of Assam are 2¼ lakhs in population. Head-hunting existed among them till very recent days. It is suspected that some of the Nagas in the hills still practise it occasionally in very remote and inaccessible places.

In the last decade there was a rising amidst the Nagas, headed by a Naga maiden and a Naga youth. The youth was sentenced to death and executed, and the maiden is still in internment.

18. *Oraons.*—They are one of the important tribes of Chhota Nagpur. Rai Saheb Bandi Ram is a leading non-Christian Oraon, and he takes keen interest in the educational and social uplift of his tribe. There are also a few well-educated persons among the Christian Oraons. There is a free Hostel at Ranchi for the convenience of Oraon and Munda students, and several more have sprung up in the district of Ranchi.

19. *Parajas (or Banda Parajas).*—The Paraja women wear probably the 'irreducible minimum of cloth', i.e. a small thick cloth of fibre, measuring only 2 ft. in girth by 8 inches wide and tied round the loins. They wear innumerable necklaces of beads, which almost conceal their breast. They shave their heads and wear a tiara round them. Thus the Paraja women have a distinct dress of their own.

Parajas live by cultivation, keep cattle and pigs. Social welfare work on a very small scale is being conducted in a Paraja village of Malkangiri taluk of Koraput district by the Servants of India Society.

20. *Santals.*—This tribe is one of the three major tribes of our country, with a population of nearly 30 lakhs. The Santals are the largest of the primitive tribes of Bihar Province and they are most numerous in the district of Santal Parganas. There are many collieries in this district, which provide work for a number of Santal coolies. The great industrial town of Jamshedpur situated in Singhbhum district has a considerable working population of Santals, Mundas and *Bhumijs.* Many thousands of Santals are found on the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal. 'In the work of reclaiming land and clearing jungles, the Santals have few equals in India, but as a rule they care little for flat lowland tracts. As regards the quality of their cultivation, a few, and those who live in the vicinity of Hindu villages, have learnt to take proper care of their lands.'

21. *Savaras.*—They are a feature of South Orissa. Tradition connects this tribe with the life of Shri *Ramachandra,* of the great Hindu Epic, the Ramayana. Shabari, from whom the Hero-God accepted tasted fruits, is said to have belonged to this tribe. The Savaras practise what is called terraced cultivation, which is one of the best forms of cultivation.

22. *Tipperas.*—They are Bengal-ised to a great extent. A more primitive section of the tribe is found in the south of Chittagong Hill Tracts.

## SECTION V

# EXTRACTS FROM BAPA'S DIARY

## EXTRACTS FROM BAPA'S DIARY

So far as we know, Bapa has maintained a regular diary from 1924 onwards. With very few interruptions, he recorded each day's events and observations in his diary, sometimes the same night, sometimes the next day. Very rarely he dictates the diary of two days together. Up to 1942 he wrote his diary in Gujarati. From 1942 to 1946 most of the pages were written in English either in his own hand or with the aid of an amanuensis. The entries are a record of incessant and devoted activity, shrewd and accurate observation, sincere, impassioned but nevertheless disciplined feeling, and frank criticism of men and things. They will more than repay the reader's perusal.

We print Shri Vinobaji's 'Keep a Regular Diary' as an appropriate introduction to the extracts from Bapa's diary.—EDS.

## KEEP A REGULAR DIARY

BY

VINOBA

*(From 'The Harijan', February 23, 1947)*

I WOULD like to draw the attention of village-workers to a defect which has come to my notice. Very few of them keep a regular diary. This is not good. It must become a part of their daily routine.

It must briefly record the work done during the day and the worker's experience, retrospection and introspection—daily or periodical—material as well as spiritual. It is not expected to take the shape of an article or literary writing.

Writing is one of the exterior means which promotes thinking. I have seen several workers who do a good deal of hard work and yet make no improvement or progress in it. The reason is that they never do any thinking. Some of them feel that thinking is a pastime for the idle and the unenergetic. Those who work do not need to waste their time on chewing thought. This attitude itself indicates the under-development of the intellect which cannot even understand the necessity of thinking.

It was the result of thinking that first prompted the worker to take to village service. But after having taken to it and started it according to his then light he gave up thinking further for himself. The result was that he ceased to make progress. One cannot expand or improve one's business on old capital alone. So also in other spheres of work. As Buddha has said, 'The house must be cleaned and arranged everyday ; so also the mind.' You must think anew and study new things everyday.

Gandhiji is seen initiating new schemes and methods everyday. He has always something fresh to say on the various problems. It is so, because he thinks, takes a retrospect and makes introspection everyday. But some of the workers do not read even Gandhiji's writings. This is very regrettable.

Every worker who wants to serve intelligently and progressively must regularly set apart some time both for study and thinking for himself. For the latter, keeping a regular diary is a helpful means. It will quickly show excellent results.

# EXTRACTS FROM BAPA'S DIARY

**A page from tour in Dohad Taluka**

## MAY 11, 1924

*From Timarda to Limdabara, Khangela, Bulbar and to Jambua (All Bhil Villages)*

Got up at 3-30 in the early hours of morning. Started at 4. It was a bright moon-lit-night. As we had no guide, we had to find out the way. Took a statement of the father of the Patel, named Titaria of Limdabara.

Reached Bulbar passing through Khangela and Agawada and the pass in the north hills of Bulbar. Arrived at the Police out-post at Bulbar. Breakfast. A good well of the out-post station. Pulleys have been adjusted to pieces of angles in between brick-pillars raised over the parapet wall of the well. This is a nice arrangement for drawing water. Walked nearly half the distance from the pass between hills to Jambua.

Reached Jambua at 12. Had we not have started at 3, we would not have reached at 12. Bath at the tank. Washed clothes. Wrote four days' diaries while sitting beneath the roof of a black-smith's house. Sent Raysing to Garbada with the post and a note to Chimanlal.

Luncheon at 5. Took statements of Village people of four to five villages who had gathered there beneath a Banyan-tree on the tank. Discussed with them their woes and miseries. Inquired about Drink-Evil, School, Village-roads, etc. The people of Jambua did not give proper information. Distributed Jaggery bought from a Bohra's shop, to children.

All slept on cots in the street. Was very sleepy but dictated an application for an approach road of Kali river.

Sukhdev was persuading Bhurka Ranji who was putting hitches in the work at Jambua. Saw the foundation pits of wooden pillars for a hut to be erected for a School.

Sound sleep at night.

## SEPTEMBER 25, 1924

*Nadiad.—General meeting of the Antyaj Seva Mandal—to Baroda at night ; Drama for the benefit of the Bhil Seva Mandal*

Got up at 5-30 ; ablutions. Left at 6-15. Went with Trambaklal to his house in Madalpur (in Ahmedabad). He accompanied me up to Bhadra to the station by bus.

From Ahmedabad to Nadiad by Express. Read yesterday's *Praja Mitra* and to-day's *Times*.

Examined the accounts of Parixitlal. Decided to get forms printed. Examined the *Sale-Deed* of the piece of land at Navsari. Bath and luncheon. All took their luncheon here.

Wrote diaries of the previous two days and of to-day upto noon. Bakorbhai and Chunilal Vyas came by noon-train. Meeting began at 1.

Meeting from 1 to 5. Everything went on smoothly. Budgets were framed and passed. Framed the Constitution. Decided where to open schools. Heard in private the petty quarrels of two teachers of *Mansa*.

To the station on foot. For Baroda by local passenger train. Manilal Kashiwala of Vaghodia met me in the train. Reached Baroda at 8. Went on foot to Motibhai, carrying a bundle of my luggage. Laxmidas from Dohad arrived by Express. 34 students of Vaso School also arrived.

Four of us—Motibhai, Laxmidas, Ambaram and myself—went to the Theatre in a tonga. Drama of *Shankit Hridaya* was performed. The Dewan Saheb had graced the occasion. I said a few words and expressed thanks. The Dewan Saheb gave a very good and courteous reply. I garlanded him and the Prince of Sant Rampur. Sat till the Drama was complete.

Went home at 2 p.m. in a tonga.

**A page from daily dairies during his tour in C.P. for studying the problems of the Aborigines of C.P. who number more than 30 lakhs**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1926**

*Mandla to Patpara (seven miles and back)*

Up at 6-30. Ablutions and tea.

Inquired from Umesh Dutt about going to Patpara at noon. He advised me to go to Patpara in the morning so that the school can be visited. Went to Umesh Dutt's place. His brother accompanied me. Hired a car at Rs. 5 near garage adjacent to the market.

Met on the way three to four bullock caravans, coming from Dindori carrying grains. They return to Dindori with salt, tobacco, etc. It is 64 miles from Mandla. On the way was a pucca building of one Malguzar. Huts of Ahirs were either thatched with grass or tiled.

Met Hodkinson of the Church Mission Society. Had a good talk with him. He worked for 13 years at one centre in Idar State (Gujarat) and is working for another 13 years among the Gondas. Visited a Boys' school, Girls' school, two separate hostels for boys and girls, a dispensary, church and an asylum for those afflicted with leprosy.

The Girls' school presented a very neat and tidy appearance. The girls are very clean and are of advanced age.

Five males and seven women leprosy patients. One has become blind.

Returned at 11. Bath and lunch.

Read *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* of Saturday. Wrote in a note-book the report of Patpara. Read chapters from *C.P. Census Report* of 1911 and 1921 on Animists and Christians. Marked important portions with pencil. Went to see

Ganesh Dutt at 5 to gather information on co-operation. He was not available at his house. Read a little from the Land Revenue Code. Umesh Dutt was examining one woman witness. Went to the club after half an hour.

Read *Hitavada* in the club. A portion of Bhil memorial has appeared in it. Umesh Dutt came there. Knew from him how the Gond Malguzars lost their land and villages. Malguzars of Ghughari and Mokas were lost in 1857 rebellion. He narrated instances of cheating and obtaining court decrees by not serving summons. The Land Alienation Act of 1916 enacted mainly through the efforts of Russell does not give proper protection. Though the villages cannot be alienated, they can be given on lease for a maximum period of 20 years.

Went to Umesh Dutt after supper. Got information about co-operative societies.

Wrote diary. To bed at 10-30.

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1926

*From Pithora to Sasaipali* (34 *miles*)
*From Sasaipali to Shingoda* (12 *miles*)

Up at 6. Ablutions. Ready after tea and toast. Mangal-Murti went out for a walk. On my request to keep the manager with me for some time, he took the assistant manager with him and asked Bhargave (manager) to remain with me.

He is the manager of two Zamindaris of 190 villages and having an income of about a lakh and a quarter.

There are 12 schools in these Zamindaris. A building for a boarding has been constructed ; he will spend Rs. 180 per month from October towards scholarships to the students. One Gond boy studying in IV English at Raipur is a recipient of scholarship. Brahmin and Kisan students receive scholarships.

There are Gonds, Savers, Binjwars, Bhunjias, Pankas and other aboriginal tribes in the Zamindaris. Great quantity of quinine is sold at the post office. It is a malaria-ridden place.

Called the teacher of the school. He told that instead of giving scholarships for books or clothes it would be more desirable to give Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 per month to the parents for attracting more boys to the school. The number on the roll is 136, out of which 30 are aborigines.

Visited the boarding. Foundation of the well is in sand, so it cannot be deepened. Started at 8 by car. The road leads through forest. Covered 34 miles from 62nd mile to 96th mile. On the way the carrier was dislocated. Had to tie it up with a rope.

Lodged at the Guest-House at Saraipali. Could not take bath. Barber was not available. Lunch. Took rest. Read about Binjwars and Agarias from *Tribes and Castes*. Read some portion from the history of Maharaja of Raj Gond. It became late as the dislocated carrier was being adjusted. Started at 5. Reached Shingoda, but went up further. Took the car back and came near the police outpost.

From there came to P.W.D. Bungalow in the dark by a very bad road. There was good accommodation in the bungalow. After supper talk upto 10. R. K. Nehru's thinking is clear, keen, and of superior type. He is an advocate of Western Civilization. Very clever in talk.

Wrote diary. Read about Kolta. To bed at 11.

It was arranged to return to Saraipali to-morrow evening. But reached at Sariapali to-day at 11. We had to reach Kalanda to-day evening, 5 to 6 miles from the road. But it will be reached to-morrow morning.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1926

*To Raipur from Dhamtari*

Up early in the morning. Ablutions.

Went with Vinayak for hiring a tonga on the tank. There met Bavaji (Sadhu) Agandevji. He holds progressive views. He tries to uplift depressed classes like Teli, Bhoi, Baya Mahar, Jheri Mahar, Rout, etc.

He distributes medicines and knows other sanyasis doing social work. Started in tonga with Narayanrao and Padole. On the way to Kanker. At a distance of 4½ miles, there is a leprosy asylum. Met the doctor of the asylum. Buildings are being constructed for the last two years. Roof of the church is under construction. Dr. C. D. Esch was giving liming of flooring. One lakh has been spent in the buildings. Government has given half of it as grant and the remaining half has been contributed by the Mission to Leper Asylum. Doctor told that the monthly expenditure per one patient comes to Rs. 7-2. Government gives Rs. 3 grant per month per patient. The remaining is met with by the Mission. Saw five patients who were inoculated. I requested him to train my worker if sent by me and to send him to Dr. Muir at Calcutta for further training. He himself has been trained by Dr. Muir. After return, bath and lunch.

Girjashanker Vaidya—retired Range Officer met me. Had a talk with him. Though a native of Surat District, he intends to stay here for five to seven years. After lunch went to Narayanrao's. Asked him to write a letter to Shyamlal Som. I wrote diary of yesterday and upto to-day's noon.

To the station in a bullock cart with Narayanrao.

Seed of harda separated by light pounding. The upper part (thick skin) is used in tanning. The inner part is ued as fuel. There are many factories of country cigarettes. Rate for preparing 1,000 cigarettes is seven annas. A labourer earns four to twelve annas daily.

Wrote letters to Mahatmaji and Laxmidas about the Mission and the leprosy asylum. Read *Times* and report of the Mission. Talk with Narayanrao. Got down at the city station in the evening. To bungalow—read post. Wrote three postcards. Despatched the report of the Mission by book-post. Wrote the remaining for to-day.

To the station at 11. Left Raipur for Nagpur.

## MARCH 28, 1928

*Flood Relief Work in Gujarat, Whole day in Anand*

Up in the morning. Ablutions. To the station with Motibhai. To Anand at 8-30 by local train.

Read post of two days. Had called Darbar Gopaldas and the Vice-President to see me. But Darbar alone had come. So could not dispose of the work. He told me to send a copy of the letter written to him regarding a well for Antyajas (Harijans).

Chimanbhai and Parixitlal had asked some persons to come personally to receive help for houses from the Central fund. Distributed help to them. Antyajas from *Daol* village had come for help to a Harijan well. Rs. 75 were given to them, and a note of recommendation for giving free cement for the well. A letter from Harivadan, who was invited to Jessawada for the annual Function of Bhil Seva Mandal that he would not be able to remain present due to pressure of work. He is loyal to the duty.

Got shaved. Bath and lunch.

Continued the office work. Wrote letters to Bapu and Malkani regarding decision arrived at in Bombay about Malkani. Maganbhai Shankerbhai, Laxmidas Asar and Jairamdas came from Nadiad. They saw Mr. Jayker the Collector. Brought Rs. 36,000 from the Government Treasury. They experienced difficulty in financing depots. Persuaded Maganbhai to take over from Kale contract for construction of Bhangis' huts in Baroda.

Went to see a student of the boarding named Jafar in the Mission Hospital. Saw Dr. Hanna. He gave information about the boy. Told that his father might be informed that he was improving. Saw the arrangements of a septic tank.

Came to the Ashram. To the station at 7. Met in the train Kaka Kalelker and Naginbhai going to Godhra. Read *Patidar*, a monthly magazine. Baroda at 8-20. Talk with Almoulla, the Assistant Registrar. To Motibhai's place. Went to Wamanrao Vadanerker for supper. After 9 back to Motibhai's place. Dictated three letters to Parixitlal.

To bed at 11.

**A page from diaries regarding Flood-Relief Work in Gujarat**

## THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1928

*To Mogar, Asodar, Vodal, Borsad, Vachhial, Dehewan, Badalpur, Kathana, Jantral, Virsad, Dharmaj, and night-halt at Petlad*

Up at 5-30. Ready at 6, after ablutions. The car which was hired at Rs. 25 came not at 6 as was fixed but at 7-30. Waited for it, while sitting on a verandah of a house of Dharala (an intermediate class community in Kaira District) outside the gate. Harivallabhdas gave a piece of advice to Narsinbhai,

Started at 7-30. Took Narsinbhai with us upto Railway-crossing on the way to Mogar.

Inspected the well of Christian *Dheds* (untouchable caste in Gujarat). The wooden curb is little deviated. Got it seen by a labourer. Told them that they will be supplied with 12 bags of cement and labour charges of a mason. Dahyabhai agreed to inspect the construction of well.

Went to *Asodar*. On the way two villages of Khadol and Vadod. At Vadod inspected an R.C.C. well of Dheds (Harijans). At Asodar steining of about 10 feet in the well of Harijans has been constructed above the curb. The inside diameter is 10 ft. 5 in. An arrangement for excavation charges at Rs. 3 per day has been made with Bhois.

Reached *Bodal*. Went to Daol with Ambalal for inspection of wells of Bhangis and Dheds. Bricks at a rate of Rs. 12 to Rs. 13 per thousand are purchased. The rate is a little higher. The construction of steining of the well of Dheds has reached the surface.

Back to Bodál Ashram. Bath and lunch.

Motibhai Amin came. Rest from 1-15 to 2-15 in a small room. Started at 2-30. Saw the Dharmashala under repairs. Passing through *Daol* and crossing *Borsad* from one end to the other end, reached *Nachhiaval* via *Kasari*. It is inhabited wholly by poor Dharalas. The number of houses is 200. Saw the village water supply well which was totally damaged. The village people agreed to collect Rs. 400 for its repairs. The Mukhi (Patel) was present.

Waited for a while at the house of Bhangis at Kathor. Harivadan was inquiring at every village about the wells of Harijans. Reached Badalpur via Gorawa and Dehwan. Inspected a well of Harijans. The width of steining is 1 ft. 6 in. and the diameter is 7 ft. 6 in.

Rebuked Raghunath Dolaji for charging higher rate for bricks. Saw the accounts from his son who was called from the Brick Kiln. According to his accounts the rate comes to Rs. 10 per thousand. Overseer Shivabhai and Mohansinh Parmar met. Inspected the school building of which the roof is being reconstructed and one well is rebuilt. The building is without plinth. Inspected two village wells of Solanki Pati and Parmar Pati. Solankis have done it by their own labour.

Reached Kathana. Taking Harilal Thakkar and the School-master with me inspected the school building. Saw the pointing and the plaster work on the back-wall.

We had to reach any how to Petlad. The chauffeur hesitatingly and reluctantly brought us to Petlad. Arrived at 10-30 to Chandubhai's Sanatorium. Supper and to bed totally exhausted at 12.

Travelled 50 to 60 miles through a bad road.

**A page from Tour in Thana District**

## OCTOBER 24, 1929

*From Jawhar to Mokhada, Kasara, Khardi, Shapur and Kalyan*

Up at 5-30. Ablutions and hot water bath. Milk. Jagjiwan and Vagholikar came to see.

Went to see Gune (formerly Karbhari of the State and now the Administrator). Told him about the scarcity of water in the State. Discussed with him affairs of the boarding.

Visited the boarding. There are 12 boarders: 1 Thakur, 4 Konkanas and 7 Kolis. There is no Varli student. One who was admitted has run away.

Mokhada is 14 miles from Jawahar. The road is hilly and winding. The tract is beautiful. The visitors who go to Europe for pleasure trip should come here and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Visited the boarding of 15 students in Mokhada. It is a matter of satisfaction that there are 8 boys of Varlies here. One is Thakur. Talks with Malhar Kolis, Kathodis and Mahars and a Bhangi employee of the dispensary.

From Mokhada to Khodale—15 miles. Road is hilly, but the tract is very beautiful. Visited a separate school for Mahars. Distributed clothes—dhoties of the District Local Board. From Khodale Kasara is 15 miles. Agra Road at the 6th mile. The road is wide and goes touching the hills. Did not stop at Kasara but went to Khardi. There is a school and boarding for Mahars. There are 30 boarders in the boarding and 40 in the school. Visited the school for Mahar girls. The mistress of the school—Mahar by caste—seemed to be very decent. Took milk at the Patel's house. Took rest at Konkani Muslim's place in Vasind. To the station. The cars sent to Thana. Reached Kalyan by train. Put up at Sankerrao's place. Got shaved. Wrote the report upto 10, and dictated a typed page.

To bed at 10-15.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1930

*A Red Letter Day—Opening of an Ashram in Nagar Parker (Sind)*

Got up late in the morning. Ablutions and milk. Spent the whole morning in disposal of correspondence and office work. Sent telegrams to Devdhar at Poona, to Amritlal Sheth at Ranpur (Kathiawar) and to Bavaji Shankerbhai at Harji (re. price of foodgrains required for flood relief), but as telegraphic line was out of order they were not despatched. So wrote letters to Amritlal Seth that I could not accept the editorship of *Saurashtra* (a weekly), to Parxitlal regarding an application from Nadiad and to Hariji for sending prices of foodgrains for Swami Krishnanand and to Laxmidas and Ramanlal.

Spent half an hour in the Ashram and wrote the names and other particulars of students to be admitted. Asked to get themselves dressed. Admitted eleven

in the Ashram. Two were admitted in the afternoon thus making a total of 13 of which one is Bhil, 5 are Kolis and 7 Meghwal. No girl has come for admission.

Heard from the Sub-Inspector of Police the story of a Bhil being absconded by a Mohemmedan. Many such incidents occur in Sind. It requires serious attention.

Bath and lunch at 1. Rest upto 3-30 or 4. Read Malkani's monograph on salt.

Wrote letters and despatched them before 6.

The function of the opening ceremony of the Ashram began at about 5-30. The High Caste (Savarna) Hindus were sitting closely with Bhils, Kōlis and Meghwals. Mukhtyar, the Sub-Inspector of Police, and others had attended the function. Jairamdas, Swami and others spoke. I think it will have a great effect in favour of untouchables. The function ended at 7-45. 13 boys were shown in uniform dress to the gathering. Mrs. Hira held prayers and sang ' Vande -Matram '. I wish the seed sown may blossom into a big tree and many spring up from one by grace of God. To-day is a red letter day. Message of Bapu was read before the audience.

Arrangement for food was made for Bhils and Meghwals who had come from villages. At noon food was cooked in Dharmasala, and in the evening it was cooked in the Ashram.

Supper at Shanti's house. Returned to Ashram. Heard Bhajans of Bhils. Jairamdas discussed with them their social problems. The Bhils requested to depute a worker to their villages. They agreed to send their children to the Ashram after the visit of the worker.

To bed at 10-30.

## DECEMBER 25, 1931

*To Kosamba from Anand—Jhagadia* via *Ankleshwar—by car to Chaswad*

Rajpipla Lok Sabha and Bhil Conference.

In waiting room at Anand. After midnight entrained the local train at 1 a.m., with Vishu and Madhubai. Spread bedding on the upper berth.

Sukhdevbhai joined us from Baroda at 2-30 a.m. He narrated Dohad news and Kushalgarh incident (he was asked to quit the State).

Got down at Kosamba at 5 a.m. ; put up at Vithaldas's shop. Took sleep for one hour. Ablution, bath, milk and breakfast. Took train for Ankleshwar at 7.

Entrained the narrow guage train at Ankleshwar. Reached Jhagadia crossing Dhdhal (Inami), Bodidra, Guman Dev (place of pilgrimage)—wayside stations.

Dayaram Sitaram Shura—President of the Reception Committee received. Vithaldas was present ; started by bus of Hormasji—Homi Seth—five on each bench in the bus.

Metal road for first 12 miles. Limbhat (of Rajput Mukhi) and Valia-taluka

town—a very small town—were on the way. There is a tank at Valia, where the Maharaja of Rajpipla comes for shikar of birds.

Thereafter Katcha Cart Road, fairly good road upto Dehali. Visited the Sanskrit Pathshala. Village—a very small one. 100 huts of Bhils. Not a single student of Bhil goes to the school. Brother-in-law of Vishu is a teacher there. 12 plus 4½ plus 10 = 26½ miles from Dehali forest road, but is sufficiently wide and fairly good.

Reached *Chaswad* at 12-30. On the way a village of two Parsis and one shoemaker. Kasturba, Kalyanji, Mithuben Petit, Kunverji, Khushalbhai, Jugatram and others were present. Ramdas Gandhi and Arvind Pakwasa were also there. Workers of Rajpipla met me.

Luncheon. Lok Sabha's session to be begun at 3 p.m. Took rest. Decided to hold Bhil Conference to-night instead of to-morrow as it is likely that the Bhils who have assembled in great numbers (more than two thousand) might disperse.

Session of Lok Sabha from 3 to 5. Speech of the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Seven short speeches for the election of the president, address of the president and a short sweet speech by Kasturba Gandhi.

Rest from 5 to 5-30. Saw Khadi Pradarshan. Subjects Committee meeting from 5-30 to 7 or 7-30. Passed a number of resolutions.

After supper from 7-30 to 8-15, Bhil Conference. Arrangements made by Kalyanjibhai. Conference of two to three thousand in open. Bhils were given food. The servers could not cope with the work. After Bhils had taken food, read the printed address. Four main resolutions were moved by Bhils. They were supported by persons of advanced classes. Conference ended at 11-30. Drama of ' Shikar of Agriculturists ' of Jugatram Dave was performed. But I had gone to sleep as was exhausted.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 1932

*Laxmidas, Sukhdev and Vaniker arrested and taken to Godhra*

At 1-30 a.m. an informant gave news that Laxmidas would be arrested in the early morning. Laxmidas was told of this. Afterwards slept.

Up at 5-30. Ablutions. Vishu went to Ishwarbhai's place. He sent news that a crowd has gathered there. The police has still not come. I immediately went there. After quarter of an hour the Police Sub-Inspector and Kekhesaru came. Laxmidas was ready with his bedding. Females were ready to say good-bye. Laxmidas was taken to ' Gadi '. Sukhdev was arrested at his house and taken to ' Gadi '.

Vaniker was arrested at Jesawada and brought here at 7 by bus. I went to ' Gadi ' as called by Sukhdev. Police Sub-Inspector offered tea to all.

There was a great crowd, it peacefully dispersed.

Worked in the office from 8-30 to 11-30. Read the post. Received the report of Chimubhai regarding Nagarparkar Ashram, which was sent to Bombay. Received the monthly bill of Nagarparker (Sind) Ashram. Dictated a press telegram to

be sent to A. P. regarding arrests of Laxmidas and others. Wrote myself few letters as Vishu was absent.

Bath, luncheon. Read *Times*, ordinance and 'Rajasthani Bhutaval'. Read *Times* in details. Studied the relevant sections of the ordinance.

Did office work from 2-30 to 6. Wrote a long letter to the Superintendent of Bodal Ashram persuading him not to leave the Ashram. Sent a letter to Raman Kadakia to Bombay. Sent to him and to Ochhavlal Modi copies of the letter from Mr. Turner which is somewhat conciliatory.

Pandya Vakil, Maganlal D. Ishwarbhai, Kalamlashanker and others came to see me.

A procession in the evening. 'Vanar Sena', females and others had joined it. It was a big procession. There was complete hartal. Vegetable shops were also closed. Shops of Muslims were open. Received the news of death of Mohmad Safi at Lahore.

Vishu came from Godhra at 4. He brought the news that at Godhra Wamanrao, Vallabhdas and Ramprasad were arrested. All were locked up in Godhra sub-jail.

Did not go out for a walk. Strolled in the house. Disposed of few monthly bills with the help of Harilal.

Supper at 7. Wrote diary. Got the Gazette with the list of institutions declared unlawful from the library and got it filed.

Public meeting at 8 in Gandhi Chawk.

Bed at 9-30.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 1932

IN DOHAD

Wrote a letter to Shastriji. Letter to Somabhai V. Bhangi Society at Nadiad.

*Diary* :—Up at 6-45 ; little late. Ablutions, milk and prayer.

Read the post. Dictated replies. Dictated a long letter to Parikshit at Palitana. He intends to go to Navsari in the beginning of April, but it is not definite. Sent a recommendatory letter to Himatlal Anjaria, about Bakorbhai.

Replied to a letter regarding Madhav (Wadhwan City) of Maneklal Dave.

Read Newspapers. Two painful news—Kasturba Gandhi was given six months' imprisonment at Bardoli: she was given 'C' Class. Is there any limit to meanness ? The second one was about the dispersal by 'Lathi-charge' of procession of BUY INDIAN LEAGUE at Narsapur in Kistna district in Madras Province. Venkatarama Shastri and Shivrao have sent telegrams of protest to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for India and Lansbury. At present we are a nation in servitude, so have to suffer all this.

Luncheon at noon. Slept while reading *Prasthan*. Got up at 2.

Read an article of Ramnarain Pathak regarding our inability to suffer physical injuries from *Prasthan*. Ramnarain is an able thinker.

Wrote two long letters—one to the Municipal President, Somabhai at Nadiad regarding impediments of the Chief-Officer, Mr. Doshi, in the work of Bhangi Society; second to Shastriji about meanness and wickedness of Government ; quoted the above mentioned two examples. Also informed him that he should not be taken by surprise if I should court Jail. To Club at 6. Felt the absence of Muslim members. It may be perhaps due to Yakub Khan being on leave.

Supper and prayer. Sat in the terrace thinking seriously on our helplessness. Wrote diary. To bed at 10.

## WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1932

IN POONA

*Talks with C. Rajagopalachariar*

Stayed in the Society for the whole morning, as Rajaji and Rajendra Babu were to come to see Hariji and me. Had phoned to them in the morning for fixing appointment.

Phoned to Lady Thackersey apologizing for inconvenience to Gurudev (Rabindranath Tagore) at the meeting in Shivaji Mandir last night owing to a little disturbance.

Kodand, Hariji, and myself sent a telegram to Shastriji requesting him to come to Poona immediately. Received his reply in the evening that he has become very weak ; if there was no alternative, he would start. Thought of calling Jaykar, but decided to contact him by phone after watching the trend of discussion upto the evening. Hariji discussed about two articles of Kodand—one on Communal Award and the second on the fast of Gandhiji. He was convinced that his thinking was not proper. He is a little hasty. After lunch, worked out figures for seats of the three communities of the Punjab according to their populations. Raj Gosh Mishra came for making arrangements for dinner. He was asked to see Kodand.

Hariji held discussions with Rajaji and Rajendra Babu from 1-30 to 2-45. Rajaji's proposal for immediate Provincial Autonomy without a Bill to be passed in the Parliament seemed a little strange. It is impossible for the Liberals to propose so.

Went in the car of Kale to jail at 3-30. Had to wait for more than an hour at two places—firstly at a distance of two furlongs from the jail and secondly at the gate. Went in at 5. Navale, Rajbhoj and Dalpatram met at the gate. Dalpatram had come to hand over fruits.

Colonel Bhandari came out at 5. So we could get in, otherwise it would not have been possible. Hariji talked with Bapu in private for half an hour. Bapu leaving aside all the work dictated a message to Rajbhoj and gave it to him. This is real love for Harijans.

Kunzru and myself had a talk with Vallabhbhai. Government is not honest in its dealings. Discussed whether Jaykar should be called. Bapu requested Malviyaji to go to Calicut for Kelappan. He did not decide as his health was not well. Home at 8. Hariji discussed with Rajaji while at dinner but no end. My article has been published in *Servant*.

## FRIDAY, JULY 7, 1933

IN DOHAD

*Saw Cheap-Grain Shop and a relief work*

Detrained at Dohad before 7 in the morning. Damodar and Manilal had come to the station. Knew from them that two Dhed (Harijan) youths had been converted to Islam and a few persons had been wounded at a dacoity in Raniar in Jhalod Taluka. Met Chunibhai and others at the Office. Dahyabhai came at 10 after completing his tour of Garbada and Jambua. Sent a man on cycle to call Mangaldas who had gone to Jesawada. He came at 2. Decided to keep him at Garbada for supervising Famine Works and keep Viswanath at Jhalod. Wrote a letter to Viswanath to come to Dohad on the 11th or 12th.

Got information about Relief Works—three works of Taluka Board—one of the Municipality and three of Bhil Seva Mandal. Got all the figures. Dahyabhai and myself wrote detailed letters to Bombay Humanitarian League.

Had a talk with one Pandit of 'DAYA PRACHARINI SABHA', Ahmedabad, who was formerly in Anathashram of Baroda.

Wrote an article in English for newspapers. Dahyabhai got it typed for all papers. Visited cheap-grain shops in the evening. The Bhils, who had come there to purchase 'juvari' of an anna and a half, acquainted me with their condition of starvation. Knew the bad condition of Bhils from Bachubhai of Jesawada. According to him this famine is worse than the famine of 1900. Sixteen thousand have been received as donation till now—five thousand from Tata Trust, five thousand from Bombay Humanitarian League and six thousand miscellaneous. Expenditure six thousand, six hundred.

Went to Pandya Vakil on return after seeing Tank Relief Work. Met Dr. Harilal and Vaidya Naranbhai. From 1-30 to 3 made future arrangements for relief in consultation with Dahyabhai and Chunibhai.

To bed at 11 in the terrace.

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1933

IN DELHI

*In the evening visit to Harful Basti, a dirty and undulating locality in Sadar Bazar*

Awoke before 3 a. m.; but did not get up before 4. Wrote four letters in Gujerati: (1) to Harakhchand regarding Flood Relief in Orissa—distribution of rice of one pice per day; (2) to Magan at Thana Devli regarding his marriage; (3) to Chandrashanker at Wardha regarding publishing news of Orissa famine in Harijan; and (4) to Ramjibhai asking him to remain present in the marriage of Magan and to persuade his father-in-law to spend less in marriage.

Read *Hindustan Times* and *Bombay Times*. Went to the office at 8.

Dolatrai and Tansukhrai came from Rohtak. Talked about their work. Got figures of other 100 villages. There is comparatively very little damage in twenty

of them. Got read an article against Harijan Sevakh Sangh appeared in an Urdu paper of Rohtak. Arranged for medicines for them through Vaidji. Purchased 50 ' Thans ' of cloth, each at Rs. 6, and 14 maunds of cotton, at Rs. 10 per maund, from the mill and arranged to send them.

Both went at 1 after seeing me at the Kothi (residence). Was drowsy but did not sleep. Went to the office at 2. Did not go to Birlaji. Examined the budget of Andhra. Got a letter regarding notes on budget typed and despatched it. Sent telegrams to four places to send annual statements of accounts. In the morning signed five to seven M.Os. Sent Rs. 90 to C. Dharmalingam, a student of Veterinary College of Madras.

Discussed with Ramprasad of Delhi Board regarding work to be done at the time of Gandhiji's visit to Delhi. Did office work upto 5-30, thereafter went with Ramprasad to see ' Harful Basti ' in Sadar Bazar. Very dirty and narrow lanes having drains in the midst, no light at night. Lanes at some places very narrow, hardly three feet in width, and in the midst drains. About 4,000 houses. Municipality has resolved to purchase the whole area, but the resolution has not been put into effect. Though many houses have fallen, permission is not given to rebuild them. At one place a wall has been erected horizontally in a lane, thus the width of the lane has been reduced to half. This is the condition in the capital of India—a gorgeous city.

Received two fixed deposit receipts of the funds of Gujerati Samaj from * * * * But they are of no use as they are in his name. Are they merchants or thieves ? The receipts can be transferred to the names of the Trustees if they are selected.

Read some portions from Census Volume of Central India Agency. Supper and wrote diary. To bed at 9. Received a telegram from Gandhiji to persuade ' Neela ' and send her to Wardha.

## FRIDAY, JULY 13, 1934

IN LAHORE :

Passed morning in quiet after yesterday's and night's disturbances and harassment. But ' Bapu ' had to suffer from loud noises of crowds. ' Mahatmaji, Darshan Do,' from 5-30 to 9.

Attended the prayer in the morning. Afterwards did not sleep. From 8 to 9 Harijan Sangh's Deputations of six Districts, namely, Bannu, Abottabad, Ambala, Ludhiana, Gurudaspur and Rawalpindi waited on Bapu. Each of them presented a purse. Report of each has been received, discussion on each report. From 9 to 10-30 gave replies to persons, coming to see Bapu. Persons from Bhola Company came to request Bapu to spend silence day at their place. Model Town people came in the afternoon with a similar request.

Discussion with Kaka Saheb and Devdas to request Bapu to take more rest. After lunch, dictated letter for arranging Cawnpore programme, and arranged programme of four hours-work, a day. Took good sleep upto 3-15. 4 to 5 p.m. deputation No. 1 of Harijans which related to Harijan Sangh. Bapu gave an

appropriate reply to their written statement. 5 to 6 Deputation of Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha. They gave an account of Sabha's work, it was told that they are working in collaboration with Harijan Sevak Sangh. Discussion with them, regarding six questions put by them. Gosawami Ganesh Dutt was the chief among them.

After supper went with Bapu to the meeting of students of college and school. Some portion of the meeting ground meant for students was occupied by a crowd which created disturbances in the morning. But as was feared, no disturbance occurred in the meeting. The people in front of the loud speaker heard distinctly, while those in the rear did not hear ; and so there was little noise.

Prayers held in the hall of Bapu. Discussed with Bapu whether any change in the programme is to be made. He told that in the programme 4 hours for work should be kept. No curtailment in the total number of days.

He agreed to spend silence day at some other suitable place.

Saw the place by going in Gopichand's car.

Returned at 10-30 and to bed.

## SATURDAY, JULY 21, 1934

*Third day in Calcutta. Very busy day. Left for Allahabad and Cawnpore at night*

Took part in prayers at 4 in morning, did not sleep afterwards, as it was arranged to start work immediately after prayers.

It was decided to go to Suresh Banerjee on foot but as it was late went in a car. On the way Bapu went to Mrs. Sen Gupta's residence. Then to Suresh Banerjee's residence. He has removed the jacket of plaster of Paris. He has gathered labourers. Had arranged a meeting of females. Bapu refused to go there and rebuked Ananda Babu. Went to see Harijan quarters at two places. Saw the Bhangi huts which are very bad.

Went to the Ashram of Satish Babu. Rent of Rs. 45. There is a dispensary attached to it. There is a settlement of the poor in the midst. Bapu went at 8 to perform opening ceremony of a wing of Seva Sadan. All 'Bhadra Lok'. Nil Ratna Sarkar delivered a very long speech. Went to Mulji Sikka. Breakfast. His family members presented Bapu many coins. It amounted to Rs. 1,044.

Came to residence. Bapu saw groups of (1) students, (2) Harijan leaders, and (3) socialists, each of them in each separate room.

One hour in shaving, bath and luncheon.

At noon could not take a minute's rest ; had to settle account of collections.

Left residence at 4. Went to Kauoria. As his son had recently expired, his wife could not go out ; therefore Gandhji was invited at his place. Bapu was presented with heaps of coins. Total more than two thousand.

Went at 4-30 to the Corporation. Presentation of address to Bapu. I got separated from Bapu there. Could hear from a distance. In the middle I left and sat in a car with 'Kaka'. Hall was very long like a strip of Langoti. Many photos

of Governors. In the public meeting from 5-30 to 6. About a lakh of people in the meeting. Could not hear anything, though there were loudspeakers. The meeting was wound up earlier as no purse was to be given. One purse of the Bus Syndicate of Rs. 500 was given. Saw the procession of communists taken out as a protest. Popularity of Gandhiji is unbounded. People were crying shouts of ' Gandhiji-ki Jai ' at the top of their voices.

Supper and prayer. Money poured in like rain this evening. Hundreds of persons pouring in to give.

Gandhiji entrained from Belur. We from Howrah. Got fairly good accommodation. Gandhiji dictated a message to A.P. Slept at 9-30

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 1934

IN WARDHA

*Third day of Bapu's fast. Gandhiji's health good*

Up at 5-30. Ablutions.

Waited for a long time for Surajmal. He went away to the Ashram, where he had to wait for long, as Bapu was taking good sleep in the morning.

Sitram was creating disturbance by indulging in talks with others. But arranged Bapu's programme of travels—monthwise—from January to July.

Barber came, got shaved. Bath and luncheon.

In the room of Bapu from 2 to 6. Sitram sat there from 2 to 4. But he kept quiet. I wrote one letter to Devidas Vaidya at Lahore. Read chapters on India from ' Modern World.'

Gandhiji's health very good to-day. Even better than yesterday. Doctors examined him in the evening. ' Condition good '. Bapu did all the movements without any support. He was reading and talking. I shampooed his feet after 5-30.

Dr. S. K. Dutt, Principal of Foreman College of Lahore came from Delhi. He is a Christian, but a nationalist. A religious man. He was given my room. Though he is habituated to the use of chair and table, he got himself accommodated without them. He is very simple.

After supper went to the Ashram for prayer. While on return took Dr. Dutt with me. He talked about Harijan Work.

To bed at 9-30.

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 1935

*From Velgaun to Hubli via Dharwar. Public meeting from* 5-30 *to* 6-45. *Dramatic performance from* 10-30 *to* 11-30

Up at 7. Owing to mosquitos, door of the gallery was kept open. It gave some relief. Ablutions, and milk. Got ready at 7-30. Patil came first. Could not get car of Shri Latha, so brought a bus. Started at 8. Dharwar is 48 miles. At a distance of one mile motor wheel was punctured ; walked on foot. Went in a tonga to the hostel near the Fort. Pleader friends—Koppikar, Hukerikar, Karmarkar

and others—were present. Warale—the Superintendent was absent. His assistant gave information. Saw the kitchen.

27 students present. 11 in matric. class and 2 in college. All of very good physique. 11 from Chikodi Taluka. Almost all have freeships. They belong to Mahar, Mang, Chamar and Dhor. They have to give examination fees and college fees in one single instalment. They complained of this. On the whole the hostel is well managed. Government gives a grant-in-aid to 3-5 of the expenditure.

Reached Hubli at 12-20. Patel's bungalow and Balika Ashram are situated on river banks, opposite to each other. Both have been secured at a very cheap rent. 20 girls present. Six absent. Took bath in the Ashram. Luncheon at Patel's.

After luncheon got information about the hostel. Rent from 2 to 3. After going to lavatory went to the Balika Ashram.

Held a meeting of the Provincial H. S. Sangh. R. S. Papanatta and Man had come. Rane and a young landlord from Bennur and a Harijan named Govinddas attended the meeting. Meeting continued from 3 to 4-30. Read the report. Passed budgets of the districts. Discussed the scheme of Water Fund. Went to the theatre for public meeting in the tonga of Vinayak Vishnoo—a Deccani merchant, doing advanced business. Had to wait for half an hour.

Public meeting upto 6-45. Gaonkar was the President. I spoke in English. Kannad translation was rendered by Dinkar Desai. President spoke for ten minutes. The audience was good. Hirjibhai—a Parsee Cotton broker met me. Hardikar also met.

Came to Bungalow in a tonga. Read the Post. Got information about an Ashram at Kunbev from Sirur. Read the *Times*. Wrote diary. Replied to the letter of Kalandgi.

Saw a dramatic performance on untouchables made touchables by Sant Basawa.

To bed at 11·45.

## MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 1936

IN WARDHA

*Started for Ahmedabad at Night*

Could not get up in the morning earlier. Got up at 6-30 when the bell rang for break-fast. Ablution and Breakfast.

Read in the *Times* of Monday that the Gaekwar of Baroda has set apart One Crore of Rupees for the uplift of ' Raniparaj ', ' Harijans ', ' Thakardas ', ' Rabaris ' and such other backward communities and Backward Areas, in commemoration of his Jubilee festival.

Read comments on Christmas Tree by Elwin in *Social Reformer*. Told Mahadeo about Natrajan's caustic attitude in such small matters.

Read post at 9-30. Got depressed as no letter from Vallabhbhai. Mahadeo and myself presumed that Vallabhbhai might have fallen ill.

Sat for lunch, but Harilal Gandhi reminded me of invitation from Kishorlal; though the dish was served, I got up and went in a 'Taunga' to Kishorlal. Talked with Kishorlal about Decanni versus Gujarati spirit. Told to Dharmadhikari—Jamnalalji's private secretary and a public worker about a temple of Chamars of Nagpur.

Met Jamnalalji. He offered his cot to me for Noon-repose. He himself took rest on the floor. Great man's greatness knows no bounds.

Got up at 2-30. Went to lavatory. Took sugar-cane juice. Went to Kanyashram to see Gandhiji. Jamnalalji politely prevented me from seeing him and on my behalf he brought Gandhiji's message to send second telegram to Vallabhbhai.

Returned to Maganwadi in the same 'Taunga'. At 3-30 received Vallabhbhai's telegram on me and on Bapu. Decided to start for Ahmedabad this night. Went to Jamnalalji's Bungalow at 4-30. Wrote yesterday's and to-day's diaries and a weekly letter to Poona.

Read the correspondence, regarding Sikur, between Jamnalalji and Jaipur Government. Took supper in company of Gangadharrao—Deshpande.

Prayers in the terrace of the Bungalow of Kanyashram. Talked with Gandhiji after 7-30 when his silence was broken. He asked me to tell Vallabhbhai and others that if Rs. 29,000 would not be collected, he would not rest in peace even after death. Bapu's health not well. His illness is very serious. Went to Maganwadi. Asked Mahadeo to spend more time near Bapu as he was very seriously ill. Left for Bhusawal by Express at 10-15.

## MONDAY, MARCH 15, 1937

IN DOHAD

*In the morning to tank relief work at Kharedi. In the after-noon saw the Collector*

In the after-noon met the Collector and the 'Mahajan'. Got down at Dohad at 6-30, with Laxmidas. Many had come to receive at the Station. Among them was Devendra Satyarthi of the Punjab. After going to Bhil Seva Mandal's Office, bath, etc. Started at 8 in a bus. First went to Tank-Relief work at Kharedi. About 2,100 persons were on the work. While returning went to see Damodar who is suffering from T.B. Saw the well in the field owned by Mandal. The staining is of Cement Concrete, 4 in. in width. Discussed with merchants regarding opening of Cattle Camps. Laxmidas of Sabarmati came. He also took part in it.

Took rest for an hour after lunch. Went to see the Assistant Collector in company of Laxmidas and Dahyabhai, Vaniker, Parikshit and others went to see Metal-breaking work at Kathala.

Discussed with Mani whether declaration of Famine would be in the interest of the famine-stricken people. Then met the Collector with him. Laxmidas argued that Cheap Grain Shops run by Congress should be subsidised from the Sheriff Fund. Mani seems to be of very good nature.

Visited Veterinary Dispensary of Local Board and Gaushala at 5 with a view whether would it be possible to open a Cattle Camp there. Talks with members of Bhil Seva Mandal.

Got fever. Got typed extracts from Famine Code. To bed at 10 after taking medicine.

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1937

IN PATNA

*In the morning Binoda Jha and K. V. Sahay met. In the evening met Krishnasingh Babu and Dr. Sayad Mohamed. Left for Lucknow at night.*

Up in the morning. Gave to Shivam a resolution in 7 parts drafted last night. He immediately typed.

Binodanad Jha—Parliamentary Secretary came to see. He gave general information about Santhal Pargana. An income of Rs. 3 lacs from one Mahal Daminini-Koh area is not spent in the District, but taken to Central account Rs. 50,000 for Roads have been received and another amount of Rs. 50,000 for education is expected to be received. He talked about present administration of Bihar.

Got shaved. Bath. Dinner.

Krishnavallabh was expected at 11, but came at 12-15. He was in a hurry to go for meals. Recommended to him to do something for aborigines. He told that that work was not in his hands. Read the resolution and obtained his opinion.

Read the manual on the rules under the Criminal Tribes Act. Shri D. Raghunandan Prasad (of Monghir) called on me. After some talk with him got sleep. So slept upto 3 p.m. Was not feeling well as I did not get sleep last night. Slept during day time but it was not beneficial. Jagjivan's car arrived at 5. Went with him in the car and met Shri Krishnasingh—Premier, for 15 minutes. He was very courteous. Complained to him against the Education Department. Then sat on the lawn for sometime. One inspector of schools called.

Met at 6 Dr. Sayad Mohmed. He evaded discussion by simply saying, 'I have too much work and little time. Hence appoint a committee of three including Shri Jagjivan and Shri Vindhya Babu. I will agree with their decisions.'

Returned home. Took meals. Packed bedding—to station by car. Picked up Jagjivan from his house on the way.

Train arrived at 9-30 instead of 8-30. Got good seat and good sleep too.

## DECEMBER 10, 1938

*Whole day in Barwani. In the morning visited Bhil Villages. In afternoon correspondence. Saw the Diwan. And then to club.*

Up before 6. Ablutions and bath. Milk and breakfast. Ready at 7-30. Kashiram Joshi, B.A., B.T. came to see. Asked Mr. Date and Joshi to stay for dis-

cussion, with Harijan workers who might come afterwards. Hiralal Shah, B.A., LL.B., Chief Officer of Revenue, came. He is from Kathiawar. Started with Rameshwari Ben and Hiralal Shah. But the talkative Diwan detained us upto 9. In talks with Miss Dr. Hira and School Mistress.

Went to Bhil Villages after 9—Unjarada and Osada—at a distance of 10 to 12 miles. On the way Bhils were present. Four sub-tribes—(1) Bhilala, (2) Tadvi, (3) Rathia, and (4) Mankar. Rathias are the most industrious among them. All of them do not eat beef. Their women just resemble Bhil women of Panchmahals.

Their demand is to collect ' Bancharai Tax ' in January instead of June and July. As it was late, saw, on return, Jain image (Bavangaja) from a distance. It was 12-50 when returned to home. The roads had many ups and downs. After food while reading Newspapers slept. Got up at 3. Dictated letters to Shivam. Letters to Bansawara, Dungarpur and Pratapgrah about tour. Rameshwariji returned after attending the meeting of women. Took tea and milk. At 5-30 went to see the Diwan, who had just got up from sleep. On hearing our suggestions he narrated how ' Bigar ' was stopped within 3 years, as a consequence of letters from League of Nations.

He took us to the club where 30 officers were present. Discussed with them, about Harijan work. 20 Harijan boys go to the Hindi School. Municipal President took good part in the discussion. Arranged for car for to-morrow. After supper read *Times, Bombay Times, Reader* and *Leader*. And went to sleep at 11-30.

## JUNE 7, 1939

*Kothpada to Umerkot—67 miles—Hon. Viswanath Das arrived. Public meeting—witnesses*

Up at 4-30. Ablutions and bath. Started by bus at 5-45. (10 minutes late). On the way paid a visit to the rural dispensary conducted by Dr. Somyajulla, at Boriguma subsidied by Government at Rs. 50 per month. Dr. was taken to task by B. N. Rajkrishna Bose. Naidu pacified him. Took tea in the Congress office at Navrangpur. Got *Amrit Bazar Patrika*. On the way read it. Congressmen met. Reached at 10. On the road-side crowds were standing to honour the Premier. Put up at Dak Bungalow of mudwalls of good height, but dark. Arranged cots and tables in the veranda. Viswanath Das also came here. After half an hour took lunch with him. Talked on many subjects—Estate, squabbles among Congressmen, and complaints of Nilkanthdas.

Slept in the room inside. Modified the scheme of ' Sahu ' and brought up to Rs. 4,000. Added in it scheme of volunteers and a hostel for aboriginals. Viswanath Das promised to give Rs. 2,000 as there was deficit in Budget. The work to be begun in November. More provisions would be made in the next year.

Meeting in Mangogrove. Vishwas Rai and four or five persons spoke. Rajkrishna spoke for 10 minutes, and Viswanath Das for 10 minutes. Alderson and Rao had come in the meetings. At 4 p.m. Premier left for Navrangpur.

From 4 to 7-50 we examined witnesses. First two emigrants—one opium merchant from Parla-ki-medi and the other Kathiawadi Menon ; then four local persons and lastly four Congressmen. The Congressmen gave a detailed description of immorality perpetrated during ' Chatra Parava '. They narrated the Forest grievances . . . told that they are disliked by high caste people and not allowed to fetch water. Slept at 8 after taking supper. Was exhausted and became very drowsy. From 8 to 10-30 slept in open. At 10-30 came to veranda due to rain.

Many peasants were accommodated in the veranda.

## SEPTEMBER 4, 1939

IN SHILLONG

*To Gauhatti in the afternoon. Speech at Cotton College*

Up at 6 a.m. Ablutions. Study. Morning spent in study and seeing visitors.

At 8-30 representative, A.P.I. came to see. Dictated some information. He promised to send to several Newspapers.

Swami of Ramkrishna Mission, President of R. K. Mission Committee (Bengali gentleman, Retired Director of Agriculture), came to see me. He gave an account of ' Charapunji' and Rolla M.E. Schools and asked for help. Some questions to Sonaram Dutt from his booklet, removed his doubts. Read the list of schools—primary as well as secondary—which received Government grant this year.

Saw the details from budget estimate. Regarding an amount of Rs. 1,45,000 placed under the direct supervision of the Governor of Education in excluded area of Naga and Lushai Hills. Saw different figures in the budget and list of new proposals for 1939-40. After 12 to Sharat Chandra Goswami for food taking him from his office. His daughter and his wife were present. His daughter speaks good English. His wife seemed very kind. She invited me to be her guest at Jorhat.

At 1-45 to the Bungalow of Gopinath. Upendranath came with his car to take us to Gauhatti. Packed the luggage at the back of the car and left at 2-30.

Driver was very competent and knowing English etiquette. He was driving very fast. On the mid-way at the bus station Nong-Po, Kerkchandra Dolai and Bilasrai Khemani met. Talked about Assam, Dibrugarh and girls schools.

Reached Gauhatti at 6. Read the post. Received a telegram to reach to Delhi early. Committee will be held at Delhi instead of Calcutta. Birlaji might have gone there.

Gave a lecture on Mass Literacy at Cotton College from 7-30 to 8-30. P. C. Roy, the Acting Principal, and Professor Bhuia were present. Took supper. Slept in small open room, outside, at 10 without writing diary.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 1940

IN PURI

*Interview with the Governor from* 10 *to* 12-15. *Started for Howrah at* 6-40 *by Express*

Up at 5-0. Ablutions, bath. Took a walk from 7 to 7-30 on the big road.

Stayed at home from 7-30 to 8-30. Talked with Murari and Raghunath Mishra. Started at 8-30 in a tonga.

Went to see the construction of Electric Power House undertaken by B. Das & Co. There is no co-operation of the people of Puri. Even Rikshawallas have stopped coming there by the spread of the scare that human sacrifice is to be performed while laying the foundation. The Station is just opposite to Cholera Hospital. Das showed everything by taking a round.

Reached Government House exactly at 10 by the outer way. Discussed with the Governor about resolutions on Koraput, Angul and Sambalpur. Left discussion on Ganjam to the next meeting. Returned home at 1 p.m. Luncheon, dictated a letter of the interview and took rest. Got up at 2.

Went at 3 to see ' Nari Shiksha Ghar '. There are 9 to 10 women. Took a round. Saw the account after coming home. Accounts of three to six months have not been written. Took to task Jagbandhu Babu for this.

Dictated to the reporter of *Patrika* from 4-30 to 5. Wrote diary. Light refreshment. Lakhi went by 5-20 train. I left at 6 for the Station. Dictated to the reporters of *Statesman* and A.P.I. at the Station.

Swami had not come to see at Cuttack. A peon of Sachi Babu came with post. Gave him the Book ' Baiga ' to be sent to Nicholson by post. Good accommodation in Inter-class for sleeping.

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1940

IN HYDERABAD SIND

*Educational institutions from* 8-30 *to* 1 *from* 5 *to* 10,
*Nari Shala, Harijan bastis, and public meeting of Harijans*

Up at 6-30. Ablutions, shaving and bath. Started at 8-30.

First went to ' Mira High School ' of Sadhu Vaswani. Prayer, Congratulations by the Secretary. Short speeches by Rameshwari Nehru and me. Then visited Gurdashmal Hindu High School of 600 students, where I read my visit notes of 1936. Moti of Malkani studying in the High School. Then visited the Seva Ashram of ' Bapa ' Kishanchand, situated on the bank of Fuleli, at a distance of about 2 miles. Spinning, weaving, carding, ghani, etc. going on well. Visited a school of Kumhar boys located in a building donated from the trust of the father of Partap. The school is conducted by Prof. Vaswani, Gulab and his mother. Visited the compounds of Kumhars. They are very dirty. Visited a Government School and the basti of 1,000 houses of Jatias and of 400 houses of Chamars. Saw 16 + 20 tenements constructed by the Municipality of Vishin Nagar.

Returned home at 1. Luncheon and rest. Got up at 3-30. Read post received at 4. Read newspapers.

Function of females in Nari Shala from 5 to 6. Rameshwari Malkani spoke well. Visited Thakarbai's Bal Mandir for the children of Meghwal. Visited the 'Dahi' Basti of Bhangis ; the bathrooms are very bad. 150 Hindu Bhangis in all live there. Saw Gandhi Nagar of Meghwal Bhangis near the school.

Went to the meeting of Harijans held in the Ram Krishna compound. Dr. Chimandas, Rameshwari, myself spoke. Gudibai (a very good singer) sang.

Returned home at 9. Supper at 10. To bed at 11. Wrote diary.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 1942

*Amarapada to Pakuria* via *Gopi Kandar. Afternoon to Maheshpur straight and to station of Murarai—44 miles*

Up at 6-10 before sun rise—with Motibabu's recitation of Shlokas. For ablutions to the river Bansloi beyond the bridge and returned without bath. After refreshments, wrote yesterday's diary—and ready at 7-30 to go out in car for Pakuri via Gopikandar. But the motor would not work and so were detained. Came back home. Motilal read out accounts of the Ashram and found that too much money was spent on food charges and travelling. Went for a bath to the river under the small fall—at about 10-30 went to Jagannath Bhagat for food. After return took little rest and then, out-of-order car was brought in working order, and we left by it.

Back on Dumkaside for 10 miles up to Gopikandar, and then branched off on the left to Karudih and Pakuria.

13 miles—these 13 miles road was very rough and hilly. Halted at Mangal bundh and then to Pakuria meeting. Saw M.E. School up to class 8, aided by District Board.

2-30 to 4 meeting. Satyanarayan Pande (Santali), Motilal (translated by Ram Sadhu), Bindo Babu and I spoke. Much criticism on the oppression by subordinates of Receiver of Maheshpur.

Left by car northwards to Maheshpur, 14 miles, extremely rough road. Reached T.B. of Pakuria—had provisions sent by Brijlal Dukania, but used fruits only. Left by car, seven miles to Murarai station and put up in the waiting room. Took milk and wrote diary at 8 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1942

*Vijayanagaram at* 5-30. *At* 10-20 *left by car for Aruku* via *Sranjava pukota and Anantgiri—65 miles. Hundreds of hillmen—Happy day*

Up to 5 a.m. in train. Attended the call of nature. Train reached Vijayanagaram at 5-30 (instead of 4 a.m.). Inter-class travelling was comfortable. Shivam was at the station—also Krishna Murthy, our host, Sharma's relative,

Had a good time in the host's house. Ablutions, shaving, bath, etc. Received post. Read it and specially the report about Gorakhpur Harijan Basti. Got two cards written to—(1) Shyamlal and (2) Sahu, Rayagade. Took food at 9 but Sharma would not be ready before 10. Even then he had to be dragged out. I had to be very angry with him for taking photographer, as the 7th man in the car.

Left at 10-20 after the exhibition of a temper. Had a softening talk about Krishnamurthi of Palsa.

Passed by Shranvai pukota-taluka town and the huts of Kasipatnam and Kottur and then on the hill road, which is very well constructed. A number of hair-pin bends. The scenery is excellent—going round and round the hills—the gradient is all steep in some places.

At Anantgiri met overseer Gopalrao of Kasargod. He is a good Manglorian like our Bhandari. We are dining with him on the morning of 20th.

Reached Arukhu at 4 p.m. Arukhu valley is wide and good. Met S.I. of Police, a Doctor and a Schoolmaster. They gave very good information. School has 68 boys and two teachers.

Took rest and took food. Attended the meeting of 1,000 people, 200 Takli spinners—very good gathering. Closed at 7-30. Many Alokpanthis-Bow-Taklis too. Slept in verandha of Rev. Shed.

## SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 1942

IN DELHI

*Fever. Birlaji, Rajendra Babu and Mahadevbhai called on me. Jivanlalbhai arrived*

In the morning, Jivanlalbhai (Harakhchand's brother) arrived, with his two sons from Lahore. They were lodged in the house opposite to ours and arrangements for their meals etc. were made. Mohanlal went out with them to Birla House in the afternoon.

Had fever whole day ; took about 28 grains of quinine.

Birlaji phoned to the effect that the dates for the annual meeting of the C.B. have been pushed forward to 28th and 29th instant, from 14th and 15th, in consultation with Bapu. Shyamlalji went to Birla House. A circular was sent out regarding the change of dates, along with the Agenda.

Bapu left for Wardha by the G.T. Express.

Mahadevbhai, G. D. Birlaji and Rajendra Babu had kindly called on me at 5-30. Birlaji told that the land at Nasik has been bought by the Birla Trust and that the money which had to be paid to Jivanlal is placed at Bapu's disposal for Goseva work. It was suggested that I should pass the whole of May in Nasik and begin the work of building-construction on that land. Bapu sent his message to me with Birlaji.

At night Kakasaheb Kalelkar came and met me and suggested that I should write my Biography. I said that I am not competent for that work,

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1943

IN POONA

*3 p.m. D.P.I.'s Office ; 6 p.m. met Gandhiji, in Agakhan's Palace. Resignations of Modi, Aney and Sarkar*

Up at 7 a.m., awakened by the coming in of Amtus Salam from Bombay unexpectedly. Heard what she had come here for. Put her up in one of the rooms.

Breakfast—read the morning *Times of India*. Got shaved.

At about 9 went to the 'phone in the Press. Talked with Jail Superintendent of Agakhan's Palace, then with Col. Bhandari, then again with Jail Superintendent regarding time for Amtus' meeting Gandhiji as per permission got.

Incidentally Col. Bhandari told that I too had got permission to see Gandhiji. 6 p.m. was fixed for it.

11 to 11-45, dictated letters to clerk Kale, who typed them for me upto 2 p.m. and they were ready for despatch.

At 2-30 left by tonga for D.P.I.'s Office. Worked with him from 3 to 4-15. Corrected yesterday's proceedings and settled the items of yesterday, viz. Primary hostels and Agrl. Bias Schools, and thereafter worked with Nene, the places proposed by departmental officers for locating primary hostels.

Waited on road-side at 5 p.m. for taxi in which brother and Amtus came and we went to Bidhan Roy. He gave medical news and good advice to Amtus not to worry Gandhiji by questions. We were taken in the Agakhan Palace at 6. Had a frank talk with Bapu ; rather he talked mostly. Amtus had little time. Met all others. Ba is very much wasted out. Sarojini as cheerful as ever—Miraben with fever.

Returned to Bidhan Roy who gave news of three resignations. Went to Laxmibai Rajwade and talked with her (Amtus). Returned at 8 p.m. Amtus and Ramanrao (Mandeshwer's son-in-law) dined with us. Talk with Vaze up to 11. Slept at 11.

## SUNDAY, JULY 25, 1943

*From Gochida to Kakhada and Kakhada to Dehurda*

Up at 6 a.m. It was slightly drizzling. After ablutions and bath took refreshments which were unnecessarily rich and varied. Saw the exhibition of Spinning Wheels at work by women. Distributed to them saris etc., prepared from yarn spun by them. Spoke to the audience a few words. Shashi Bhauj read out the address, which contained many exaggerations which I told him afterwards. I critised the rich food that they gave us twice.

Left at 8-30 by 'Palki' for Kakhada—3 miles. Got information from the Relief Officer, Narayan Chaudhari. His men were distributing free doles. His supply is much less than his need. He has Unions No. 2 and 3. And Unions No. 1 and 5 got from Dehurda—a sub-centre. Lot of distress is visible here. Too many people surrounded us. We put up in the M.E. School and dined in a house behind. To get peace of mind, I had to shut all doors and windows of the room.



SHRI RAJAJI PERFORMED THE OPENING CEREMON
OF THE KASTURBA BALIKA ASHRAM, OKHLA
DELHI (1944)



*In Mathurai*



Left after 1 p.m. in Palki for Dehurda, a distance of 6 miles. Road was very bad. Occasional drizzles. Reached Dehurda at 3 p.m. Put up in the house of Charu Babu, M.L.A.

Mr. Jadunath Das, S.I. of Schools, is in charge here. We inquired into cases of deaths by starvation and cholera round about, specially at Deula. 9 deaths occurred in one family there. Saw the rice sales by cash and extra free doles of one seer each. Addressed a large meeting. Dined at 7 p.m. and left for Batgaon—a mile and a half away. Took leave of Upendra Babu, elder brother of Charu Babu, and the big old house.

An old man from the crowd was seen in a dying condition. *Starvation Case.* On the way in Palki had some showers of rain. Side of Palki closed. Palki taken across a canal bodily, on a raft. Lodged in a house between the canal and the river on a high piece of ground. Could not move for the night due to heavy winds.

## SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1944

IN DELHI

12 *to* 1 *Office.* 1 *to* 7-30 *outing*—(1) *K. B. Ashram,* (2) *J. K. Birla, and* (3) *Pandit M. N. Dar. Hot day*

Up at 6-30. Ablutions. Barber came early and got shaved. Account books. Welfare account books with Namboodri. The mistake was there in summary, but he could find it only in the evening. There was a serious mistake of Rs. 1,000 in the carrying forward of Bank (of H.S.S.) balance on one day. Laxmansing, Hariji's accountant, brought the accounts of Balika Ashram—he goes into them throughly.

Sat with Hariji and Laxmansing over his 1944-45 budget. Increased the income side by Rs. 5 to 6 thousand. Total budget goes above 60 thousand. Those who get Rs. 40 will get Rs. 45 from 1st October next. On the whole it is not very expensive.

Dined and read the post. Office work 12 to 1. Dictated letter to Dr. Katju regarding my visit to U.P.

In Birla car Hariji, Tula Ram, Gopallal, Motilal, Shivram and I went to (1) Khadi Bhandar and (2) Kasturba Balika Ashram. Here we spent nearly 4 hours, talked with teachers, saw buildings and grounds, saw classes, drill. Took a Gartiwali girl and rejected 2 daughters of Sushila Devi, Amba, wife of Prabhudas Gandhi, and her two daughters admitted as teacher and taught.

Jugalkishorji talked freely regarding Mandala Gonds and Aboriginal tribes. He gave 10 scholarships for aboriginal boys to Hariji at Rs. 15 each.

Went to Pandit Dar on Curzon Road. He complained of Tulasiram regarding Vaidya. Land transfer deed not yet made.

Saw Okhala Head Works of the Jumna Canal hastily, between 2 and 3. Returned to Colony at 7-40. Prayers—Meal—Shyamlal's home life is now much happy, Shyamlal's fever having gone.

Slept early at 9-20, being tired due to having moved in the hot Sun.

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30, 1944

IN BOMBAY

12-30 *to* 5-30 *Kasturba Trust Fund Office—Saw sick friends—Gordhandas and Gomatikaki*

Up at 6. Ablutions. Read the post that was seen last night, but not read. Read all letters—Kasturba Fund and others.

Got shaved in the saloon on the ground floor—Bath.

Read *Times* and *Chronicle*. Ratilal Sodha's daughter came with letters received about her mother's specimen signature and her receipt for money of Insurance Policy Dividend of Ratilal.

At 10-30 went out with Laxmidas and Sukhadev to Babulnath, house of Gordhandas Bhagvandas. He had 12 days' para-typhoid and is now confined to bed, though fever is off since 10 days.

Went to Laxmidas' house at 11-30 and dined. Sarala, the daughter of Dahyabhai, has recovered (partly as she said) from the effects of her disease in the head at the back.

After 12-15 by tram and victoria to Scindia House, reaching it at 1 p.m. Swami Anand had waited for me over half an hour and left, leaving typed instructions.

I attended office work. Chimanlal, head clerk, is ill and in his place Shantikumar has given a man by name Nagarkar, but he is not of much use. He is new and not clever—cannot make drafts.

Looked into the work and dictated several letters regarding Maharashtra, about which I had information in Poona on the 29th. Birlaji's instructions regarding making journal entries about collections promised, but not realised, have not been given effect to. I instructed office to do so for August accounts and figures. Bhise of Bordi called—also Samaldas Gandhi and Jaisukhlal Gandhi. Former talked of Kathiawar, latter of Sind.

Returned home in Shantikumar's car.

With Laxmidas went to Sir Harkisandas Hospital. Met Gomatikaki (from Wardha) and Kamalshanker of Dohad there.

Read newspapers in terrace upto 7-30. Dinker talked about scheme for Vakhals of Karwar, and marketing books of Agricultural department.

Diary, 9-30. To bed at 10.

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1944

IN BOMBAY

*Gandhi-Jinnah Day—Trustees' Meeting of K.G.N.M. Fund*

Up at 7-15. Ablutions. Got shaved in the shop below. Bath. Milk. Had a hasty glance at the papers.

Out at 9-30. Kishun put me in the bus at the Opera House. It was rare to-day,

being so arranged by the Police. Use of Nepean Sea Road was restricted. Even Sir P.T. was stopped at the hanging garden.

To Birla House at 10-15. Rajaji was there. All the trains.—G.I.P, Nagpur Mail and B.B. Frontier Mail were late by 3 hours. Dined at 11 and stayed at home. Studied the Trust Deed and made notes of doubtful points, for decision in the meeting of to-night.

Gandhiji came home at 1-40 p.m. The house was astir. His rooms were arranged. 16 men party and 102 packages. Jehangir Patel too had gone there.

After rest he left for Jinnah's place at 4.

Nagarkar was active enough to get audited accounts up to 31st August signed by Auditors—Dalal and Shah for 56¾ lacs.

Went to the Society at 4-30. Dictated the Society's report and got it typed by Lakhi—his wife had no fever today—Dr. Sadhu. Met Kahandubhai and Nanda regarding contributions of Ahmedabad Majur Mahajan.

Dined in Birla House at 8-30. Gandhiji decided in Ahmedabad matter that if the contribution was to be used in Ahmedabad for maternity home, it cannot be taken as a part of Kasturba Fund.

9 to 10-15 Trustees' meeting. J.R.D. was sitting next to me. All sat on the floor. Sir P.T., C.R. and others attended. Details of Trust Deed settled. Secretary's report read. If possible 75 lacs should be collected. Returned home at 10-30.

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1944

*Bombay—Morning: Gandhiji. 12-30 to 5 Office—Evening: Birla House and prayers and discussions*

Up at 6-10, when the driver from Birla House awoke me. Hurried and left at 6-40.

With Gandhiji 7 to 7-30. Discussed District Committees for Kasturba Fund and types of institutions to be started. Wrote letters to Satish Babu, Jajoojee, Aryanayakam and V. L. Mehta.

Read papers in Devidas' room up to 9, bu. he did not wake up. Talked with R.D. Home at 9-40.

L.N. had no fever, but is weak. Bath. Drafted circular and letter to G.D., Calcutta.

Dined and to Office—From Bor Bunder M. P. Gandhi picked me up and left in Scindia House.

Correspondence. The figure of collection, made up yesterday at 69 lacs is increasing. Gujerat adds one lac, Tamilnad 22¾ of a lac and others. Sent out press message about the same, as exceeding 70 lacs.

Left office, walking some distance, taking bus to J. J. Hospital, then by tram here. Got Birla House car to go there. Talked to Devdas, Mrudula and V. L. Mehta about Wardha function details.

Attended Rungata House prayers. Lot of attendance. Money.

Took meal there. Discussed with Pakwasa, Munshi, Rajaji, etc. about Trust matters, which must be expedited. Left Birla House at 10-40 with Navalchand and Deshpande. Bed at 11.

## MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1944

IN BOMBAY

*12 to 6 in Office. Deposited 50 lakhs in Fixed Deposit*
*Dined with Pakwasa at night*

Up at 7. Ablutions. Read papers. Got shaved. The new Gujerati apprentice by name Bhupat Sheth was tired. Shyamji Master came. Agreed to accept their Kasturba Purse at Bapu's prayer time to-morrow. Amritlal Sheth called and talked about his typist.

One Oriya Congressman, with a vow of silence, came and asked for lodging which I could not give.

Dined at 11-30. To Vaikunth L. Mehta's Office straight. Decided there to deposit 25 lakhs in Central Bank and 25 lakhs in United Commercial, at 1½% in both. However the latter gave 1¾%.

Then to office. To day the cheques numbered over 40. Also heavy Bank advices. The cash in the evening amounted to 62 lakhs. Disposal of correspondence took long. Had not a minute's rest. Ratilal Gandhi and Shantikumar called. Dilip from Wardha came saying that meetings were banned in Wardha. Hence Gandhiji after 8 p.m. decided to hold the meeting in Sevagram at 2 p.m. on the 2nd.

Returned home at 7. Talked with Dr. Pillai. Laxmidas returned this morning from Calcutta, with a total of Rs. 90,000 from Gujeratis there.

To the prayers, though a little late. Talked with Bapu about details of the Fund and cables from Nairobi and Kampala. Went with Pakwasa to his house for dinner, where Amritlal Sheth was also called. Returned home in Sheth's car. Diary. To bed at 10-40.

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1944

IN DOHAD

*Morning outing. Dining with Manibhai Panwala. Afternoon visitors*

Up at 6-30 a.m. The night was cold, but sleep good. Ablutions. Got shaved by a barber from the town. Bath.

Kumarika Mandal—daughters of Pandya and Mahendra came and talked about their work. Kamalashanker talked about the proposal for a college for Panchmahals.

At 10-30 a.m. went to the town. Called at Ishwerlal's place. Then went to Dabhgarwada and saw their temple under construction. Then went to sweepers' quarters and then to vankars' quarters. Vankars are progressing well economically. Talathi Mulajibhai—Harijan.



SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS YOUNG

Went to Manibhai Panwala. About a dozen persons there. Naranbhai Sheth was there. Walked back half the way and half the way by carriage. Home at 2-30 p.m. and slept up to 4 p.m.

Dahyabhai had invited all pleaders, all merchants, Sub-Judge, etc. for debt relief discussions. Lalchand's report discussed. It was a large gathering, first in the room and then outside on the lawn. Dahyabhai served refreshments and drinks.

Took a stroll and went up in terrace above where some plaster has gone off.

Took light dinner. Sarla and Manju sang Bhajans. To bed at 10-30 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1944

IN BOMBAY

*Birthday felicitations—Rs.* 1,001 *given away. Visited American W. I. Library at Hornby Road*

The day was the day of festivals. The *Nutan Gujerat, Janmabhumi* and *Lokmanya* all the three papers of Amritlal Sheth had advertised my 75th birthday much.

Amritlal Sheth and his party, daughter and sons came about 8, garlanded and photoed me (by Kirti Krishna Ladia) and sang a song and presented Rs. 1,001 which I afterwards sent away to (1) Satana Dang Seva Mandal and (2) Appa Patwardhan for Kunbi Seva Sangh.

The whole day visitors poured in up to 7-30 p.m. and even after 9 p.m. Kasturba Trust Office people and V. L. Mehta at 5-30 p.m.

Pakwasa and his son and daughter-in-law. Durlabhji and his brother Rasiklal Parikh (Kathiawar matter). Naranbhai Bhatt and B. N. Motiwala. Maganbhai Patel and his father Bhatabhai and a friend. That young Jain friend of Jain lodge. One unknown friend with his son and two daughters at 10 p.m. and some others.

I was thrice feasted to-day. Dined with Amritlal Sheth on Marine Drive—at 5 p.m. with Dinker Desai and his father—and at night at 8 p.m. with Navalchand T. Shah in Birla Mansions.

Dinker took me between 2 and 4 p.m. to the American War Information Library. It is a first class institution—furniture with excellent teak and arrangement very nice. All new American books of 1939 to 1944.

Perhaps this day may turn my head and make me prouder than I am. But I must use it to make me humbler.

I was happy in sending away the two sums of Rs. 500 each for the two Backward Class welfare works.

Slept at 10 quietly.

Laxmidas' elder son had got high fever. Wrote a long letter to Dahyabhai and him at Dohad,

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1944

IN POONA

*Some friends called in the morning.* 2-30 *to* 4-30 *Rao Saheb Ranganathan of Madras University. Indian Year Book of* 1944-45

This morning got up very late at 8-15. So every thing was very late. No 'Gnanprakash', but read other papers.

Several friends called: (1) Old Karve with his umbrella. He delivered an article for Vaze. I will go to his function at Hingne on 20th in the afternoon; (2) Mama Phadke is on a visit to Poona. He came to me from R.P. Patwardhan,; (3) Valjibhai came after 10; and (4) his son at about 11-45. He was taking one of the new planning books of Beveridge.

Bath and dinner. Dictated letters to Kale—the drafts made yesterday and to-day's letters.

2-30 to 4-20 Ranganathan, Librarian of Madras University, an expert in library matters, called. He first enquired into 'the lapse into illiteracy' research made by Gadgil for Bombay Government. Then we went in the library upstairs. Librarian Dev asked certain questions there and at the tea-table. I asked him about cuttings to be kept by the librarian.

Signed papers. Exchanged letters with Ambekar.

Read papers—*Times* and *Chronicle*. 'Times of India Indian Year Book' was looked into—the part of 'Who is Who?' etc.

6-50 to 7-30 walk. Dinner. Taught Kishan.

Dispatch Book—Diary. To bed at 10.

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 1945

*Sangamner to Akola and back* (14 *plus* 14) 28 *miles. Rajur is* 13 *miles beyond on Ghoti Road. Dattatraya* (*Vyankatrao*) *Pinglay*

Good sleep. Up at 7-25. Ablutions. Had good motion too.

Milk and bath early and was ready at 9-0. Prepared to go out to Akola by bus. Pinglay could not come, and he sent Satbhai, the newspaper Agent, who had given the newspapers—*Chronicle*, etc. yesterday.

Dined early at 10 and left for Akola by first bus at 10-30. It is 14 miles from Sangamner and the road is straight and in the plain.

Reached the David Sassoon. B.C. Hospital at 11-30. The Superintendent had got previous notice. By the *ad hoc* Committee's work 10 boys at Rs. 7-8 have been increased and 30 boys at Rs. 10. Now there are 29 boys of Kolis (two-thirds), Thakurs, Vanjaras and Kandadis. Cheaply managed. Boys get clothes and books.

Rajur is more central for Kolis, not Akola. Two Koli teachers had come from there. They are running a hostel there of 25 boys, all paying for their food. Only rent and a cook are supplied by private contributions. I wish I could go to Rajur

and do something there—Gujerati Jains are there. I asked the teachers to have their own Association and then pay something (say Rs. 10 p.m.) for Rajur hostel.... Saw upper primary school and their field for Agricultural Class—wheat, gram, brinjals, tomatoes, culli flowers were seen.

Returned at 4 leaving it at 3 p.m.

5-15 to 6-30 visited Bhangi Co-operative Society. They get as loan 15 times their salary. They have made good deposits. They have not been completely freed from debt, so they sometimes take loans from high interest sowkars (1 to 2 annas). They promised to (1) send their children to school, (2) reduce their marriage expenses, and we promised to redeem their debts completely. Returned at 7-30.

I stayed at home afternoon. One senior Vakil, by name Parashram, against whom that Trust case has been decided, called. Talked with Dada Lele and to bed at 9-30.

## THURSDAY, JULY 26, 1945

IN MADHUBANI

*Balwadi inspected. Left at 5 for Patna and Rajgir*

Up at 5-30. Ablutions. Attended the Jhanda—Vandan at 6 a.m. Spoke to the trainees for about 10 minutes on the strength of purpose or will power. Shaving and bath.

8 to 9 inspected Balwadi work—27 children, 17 of the trainees, 5 of the A.I.S.A. staff and 5 outsiders were there. Shelat is much interested in this work and is a propagandist. The children are well cared for by four trainees in attendance. Some of them do good work by hand. Returned home and dictated letters to Shyamlal, Lakhi, Rajen Babu, etc.

11 to 11-45 attended the Baudhik class which was taken by Vidyarathi. He was giving a short history of the Congress for the last 40 years. I asked more girls to write notes in diaries and impressed for a class to be set apart for writing work.

Dinner and talked with District Board President Padmanabha Prasad, son-in-law of Sakhi Chand of Puri.

Slept up to 3 p.m. Laxmi Babu read from Khadi Jagat, the story of Maithili Brahman widow, Kamala, aged 25 who has become a worker of Charkha Sangh and now a trainee in the camp against the wish of her villagers who wanted to beat her. She was protected by the workers in February 1942.

Left for station at 4-45. Left by 5-30 through train to Samastipur. Bought 2 second-class tickets for being entitled to sleep in the waiting room at Samastipur. At Darbhanga, Khadi Bhandar staff had brought food for 7 or 8 persons, which we ate in the carriage. Returned at Samastipur and slept in the waiting room under the fan. Slept at 11.

## SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1945

IN WARDHA

*The Office was closed. Worked well at home*

Up at 6-30. After ablutions wrote a long letter in Gujerati to Keshubhai, after many days. Dictated several letters to Shubh.

Dhote had come to office and typed all the letters dictated yesterday and made a large number of copies of tour programme, up to 1 p.m.

I read from book about 'Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah'. Therein Ambedkar says 'I am a critic and as some say with feelings of hatred.' Read chapters 10 and 8 of the same.

After dinner, Dhote brought a lot of his typed papers. I was busy in signing and putting them in envelopes. This was up to 5 p.m Also dictated some letters to Shubh which he typed and posted. The total number of letters posted to-day is 33.

Read the *Hitavada* and *Nagpur Times* of the 1st instant.

Kamale of Sevagram, who had threatened to fast, was persuaded by Harijans of Sevagram to abandon it, which he did and ate after 1 p.m. The matter has been squared up with a little difficulty. Shyamlal was busy with the preparation of a table showing amounts sanctioned by executive committee, from 17th to 20th August for circulation among Trustees of Kasturba Fund. He has half done it. It rained hard in the afternoon. Diary. To bed at 9-30.

## WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1945

*Whole day in the train from Gooty to Kurudwady. C.R.'s election declared invalid by Tamil Nad P.C.C.*

Dr. Rajan was a companion in the train from Madras—also one N.W.F. retired Police Officer from Guntakal—a Namazi Muslim.

Had taken purgative last night. It worked well. Took rice, etc. in the Hindu hotel at Raichur station at 12. Kishandas also taken there.

Read in the papers about C.R.'s election from Tiruchengode Taluk—Congress Committee as declared invalid by Tamil Nad P.C.C. Also Andhra P.C.C. asked Congress President not to invite C. R. to Congress Working Committee in Poona.

Wrote diary of three days—17th, 18th and 19th—in afternoon. Had good sleep up to 3 p.m.

Signed papers (3 only) typed yesterday afternoon—at 5-45 p.m. in the train.

Read from Jagdisan's 'The other Harmony' (Dryden's phrase) Shastri's speech on 'Rishi Ranade'.

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1945

IN CALCUTTA

*An idle day. Did not go out anywhere*

To-day was a day of idleness and of subdued helplessness—I do not feel equal to go out anywhere, unattended by a companion, who will take care of me. In a crowded town like Calcutta, it is impossible for me to go out.

In the morning read papers only. This evening Gandhiji meets Wavell. It may be a merely formal affair. No negotiations—yet it has its significance.

Arranged for going out to-morrow morning to Sodepur. Wrote a letter to Labanyalata Chanda and sent it with Kishan. Informed Hiralal personally and also his wife Ratanbai (or Ratanyee, as they call her).

Read literature of Daxin Hindi Prachar Jubilee—Its appeal for five lacs. Dr. D. N. Maitra's new Education College—Shri Nanda literature read. I met him after many years last night.

Sent away cheque of Rs. 500 (Aber. W.W.) to Delhi. Wrote letters to L. N. Sahu regarding Children's homes, and to Shyamlal regarding Taraben Mashruwala to appoint agent for C.P. and Berar.

Received post in the evening.

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1945

IN DELHI

*Office work* 10 to 5. *Met Pandit Kunzru in New Delhi*

Up at 6-45. Night was very cold. After ablutions I saw both cash books and signed them.

Partly I read, and then Tyagi read *Hindustan Times*, when I was dining in the front Verandah in the Sun.

Kishan shaved me and had bath.

Went to Office early at 10. Shivam was there, so I utilised him. To-day I took much work from Ramcharan, both for Hindi and English letters. He read for me the third half-yearly report of the *ad hoc* Committee on the action taken by various departments.

Looked into the monthly bill of Okhla Balika Ashram and found that the expenditure of last three months has exceeded the budgeted amount.

Wrote to Sucheta about Maharashtra-Prema Kantak and Sushila Pai affair. She left Delhi for Ahmedabad last night. This was told by Principal Madani on the phone.

Tried, but failed, to contact by phone Delhi Congress people regarding the work of Engineer Gulati.

Hariji brought from Calcutta the cheque for Rs. 25,000 being the contribution of M. P. Birla for Udyogshala.

After 5 went in the 'Khadkhad' with Shivram to New Delhi. Chandrakant of Godhra read from Shukla's book on the way. Kunzru came from Allahabad, and had up with Hansraj Gupta. Talked with him regarding Malaya Indians' affairs. Dr. P. P. Pillai came there and talked of Madras C. R. politics.

Returned home at 8-45. Took meal. Diary. To bed at 9-30.

## MONDAY, MARCH 25, 1946

IN NAGPUR

*Left by Mail at 5 p.m. for Bombay. Purchase of ticket. Kamalabai Hospet.*

The day was well spent and very usefully. After ablutions and bath, had a talk with K. L. N. about famine relief work in Andhra and North Mysore. Was ready at 8.

Went by a rikshaw, with Shyamlal, to Mahal, in the interior of the town, to Maternity Home of Kamalabai Hospet. She was absent at Hingan Ghat and returned by G. T. Express at 10 a.m. We were shown over by Mr. Gokhale and the two Mohani brothers and treated with coffee, etc. It is a poor men's home—stables converted into nursing quarters.

Returned to the Society. Talked with P. K. R., his letters to friends and the Society and to Gandhiji.

Dined with Raos—Kishan with K. L. N.

At 12-45 sat with Nagar Kath, Registrar Kher, and his Deputy Mukhtiar and talked details of Mandala Co-operative Scheme. Vanikar objected to the work under the Association. He will be provided with truck.

Talk with Mani and Laxmidas regarding a seat for Bakhale in Bombay Upper House (Labour).

To the station. Mani procured a 2nd berth with much trouble, but it was O.K. in the end. Met Kamalabai at the station—Grey haired widow, with a lot of go and full of service and independence. She can be used for Kasturba work.

Comfortable in train. The next compartment had a row.

At Wardha Shailen and the children of Shyamlal met.

Food sent by Shyam was eaten.

To bed at 9-30.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 1946

IN DELHI

*Sick Day. Office work 7 to 11 and 3 to 4-30.*
*Came to reside in Gandhiji's Camp*

To-day was a day of sickness. After midnight I had five motions, with some pain in the stomach. Something was wrong with digestion. So I took no solid food in the whole of to-day, but took buttermilk in the morning and noon—A couple of 'santras' in the evening.

Office was attended in the morning from 7-30 to 11 a.m.

Shivan had gone to Gandhiji's camp for money (collections at Prayers). Tyagi was ill and did not attend office. Pande acted for him.

1 to 2-30 Pande read to me from *Hindustan Times.*

3 to 4-30 office work. Shivan brought about Rs. 500 from Gandhiji's camp.

Left at 4-30 by *tonga,* with Kishan and beddings to Gandhiji's camp for residence

for 4 or 5 days for treatment and rest. I lodged myself in newly made reed hut, with roof of grass (and so cool), next to Pyarelal and Parashram's office.

Gandhiji, after prayers went direct to Harijan Colony as was arranged. Gulati and Shivan arranged it and had collected Radio Colony and Dhakka village people. Gandhiji examined the staff and their women-folk (of teachers). He returned after going to the house of Zora at 8-45.

I slept outside in the verandha on a cot but was disturbed by mosquitoes and other insects.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1946

IN NEW DELHI

*(Gandhiji's Camp)—Had fever the whole day*
*Read of the death of Sastriyar*

To-day the whole day was spent in bed. Besides the diarrhoea, fever began to rise from 9 a.m. It went up to 102 and came down to 100 degrees in the afternoon.

Dr. Sushila attends on me with care and she must have seen me not less than ½ a dozen times. Shivam was here up to 6 p.m. Also Tyagi had come for some hours. Morning's paper announced the death of Sastriyar on the night of the 16th. A great Patriot is gone. Gandhiji issued a statement about him. Rao Bahadur Chandavarkar came in the morning and brought barley and annar for use. He goes to Sukkar to-morrow.

G. D. Birla called at about 12 and suggested my being sent to Joshi's Home, if the temperature does not go down.

Cripps called on Gandhiji for an hour and half. He went to Lord P. Lawrence in the afternoon.

Wrote a letter to Jagdisan regarding the death of Sastriyar.

## MONDAY, MAY 6, 1946

IN BOMBAY

*Reached at* 9-15. *Bhulabhai died. Very angry with Kishansingh*

Reached Kalyan at 8-15 a.m. an hour late. In the night the train was late by 2½ hours, but it made up one hour and a half and hence it was ultimately late by only an hour.

Gokhale met me at the station. Came home before 10. Shops were mostly closed due to Bhulabhai Deai's death early this morning. There was a rush towards Congress House, where his body lay from 8 to 10.

At Kalyan, read in the *Chronicle* about Bhulabhai's death, and the surprise which the (British Government) Mission had sprung on the Congress and the Muslim League.

Met Bakhale, Laxmidas, Devchand, Chitale, etc. Got shaved. Tried to go in Bhulabhai's funeral procession but as the crowd was immense, I did not go.

Bakhale's nomination to the Bombay Council is almost certain. He is asked by Governor if he accepts it.

Dinner from Laxmidas. . . . Rest up to 2 p.m. . . .

Jethabhai Patel called with his car. Laxmidas had arranged an interview with Balasaheb Kher. Met him with Bakhale regarding his nomination to Bombay Council. He related the incident of some boys insisting in burning Bhulabhai's dead body on Chowpaty.

Met Ministers—Tapase and Vaikunthbhai in their offices.

Became very angry with Kishansingh for his giving away too much to station coolies, etc., and his impertinent words. So passed the night restlessly.

Jagdish, the son of Ambalal Vyas who is studying in Medical School and is here for appearing in the examination, called.

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 1946

*Mandala to Jubbulpore and Jubbulpore to Dindori.* 150 *miles*

Dr. Barlinge with D.C. went to Manot—18 miles on the direct Dindori road to see the submerged causeway and came back at 8. A raised causeway should be built there.

We left Mandla at 8 straight for Jubbulpore and put up in the C House and got food prepared for both the parties. Read *Leader* and *Bharat* of to-day. Pressman Narad came and gave him news.

Dr. Barlinge's party (but not he) was sent ahead at 2 p.m. D.C., S.S.P., Barlinge, Kher and I went at 3 in D.C.'s car. Then followed our lorry. The first reached Dindori at 7 p.m., the second at 9 p.m., and the third after 10 p.m. A few causeways are built high, a large number of others are not paved at all, and a few are dug out on the lower side. The road is second class.

Saw the school of 100 boys at Kundam in Patan Tehsil. It may be converted into middle school with hostel. The school at Shahpura was closed.

Barlinge's party was put up in the Rest House, one mile away on the hill. Vanikar and I with the Tehsildar and D.C , D.S.P. and Kher in the Sarai. Both the parties dined with Dal Chand Jain who had managed it well for about 30 persons.

I was tired but not much and slept without a break in the comfortable house of Tehsildar.

The road requires improvement urgently. Both the schools require middle sections plus hostels, without doubt, for Gonds. The D.C. was very helpful on the way. Driving the motor over the causeway at Shahpur was dangerous but well managed.

The talk about narrow village roads or foot-paths with Barlinge was amusing. Gulati Engineer mentioned that the country is picturesque but thinly populated and had wild animals.



# APPENDIX

## LEADERS' APPEAL

## THAKKAR BAPA'S EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

SHRI A. V. THAKKAR, affectionately known all over India as Thakkar Bapa, will be completing his 80th year on November 29. He is truly the Grand Old Man of India to-day. There is no figure in the country more venerated than Bapa. Aged as he is, he is as active as younger workers and inspires them by his untiring devotion to a multitude of causes. When one contemplates the long unbroken record of service of the forlorn and the forgotten which Bapa's life has been, one realises why Gandhiji once said that his ambition was to equal Bapa's long record of selfless service. Shri Srinivasa Sastri who worked with Bapa for long years as Servant of India referred to Bapa as the supreme embodiment of human sympathy. It is needless to recount his various fields of untiring service such as famine relief work, Bhil Seva, Harijan Seva, Kasturba work and, indeed, the service of all sections of humanity that are neglected. It is fitting that the country should honour itself by honouring one so great and so rare.

It is proposed to bring out a Commemoration Volume and to present it at a formal ceremony in Delhi to Thakkar Bapa on his forthcoming birthday. The Volume will be compiled and edited jointly by Shri T. N. Jagadisan of the Akhil Bharatha Kushta Samiti, Madras, and Shri Shyamlal of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Wardha, both of whom are fellow-workers of Thakkar Bapa peculiarly qualified for the honour. It will contain articles and pictures relating to the great life of Thakkar Bapa and will embody descriptions and treatises on the numerous humanitarian activities with which he has been closely connected and other original articles on various topics of national importance. Every effort will be made in the short time available to produce a Volume worthy of the subject it will deal with. It is estimated that the production of the Volume will cost about Rs. 25,000. This amount, we are confident, will be met privately from the numerous known and unknown friends and admirers of Thakkar Bapa.

The sale proceeds of the Volume will be donated to any fund named by Thakkar Bapa.

We further call upon people in all parts of the country to pray on the happy and auspicious occasion of Thakkar Bapa's 80th birthday for his continued good health and long life.

All correspondence relating to the contents of the Commemoration Volume should be addressed to Shri T. N. Jagadisan, 53 Edward Elliot Road, Mylapore, Madras 4.

## SIGNATORIES

1. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
2. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
3. Dr Rajendra Prasad
4. Mr G. V. Mavalankar
5. Mr K. M. Munshi
6. Dr B. R. Ambedkar
7. Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya
8. Mr Mangaldas M. Pakvasa
9. Dr K. N. Katju
10. Mr Sri Prakasa
11. Mr M. S. Aney
12. Maharaja of Bhavnagar
13. Pt Govind Ballabh Pant
14. Mr K. C. Reddy
15. Mr B. G. Kher
16. Mr Balwant Rai Mehta
17. Mr P. S. Kumarswami Raja
18. Dr Jivraj N. Mehta
19. Mr Harekrushna Mahtab
20. Mr Gopinath Bardoloi
21. Mr Devadas Gandhi
22. Pandit Ravishankar Shukla
23. Dr P. C. Ghosh
24. Mr Hiralal Shastri
25. Mr A. P. Pattani
26. Dr T. S. S. Rajan
27. Mr Alagappa Chettiar
28. Mr V. Bhashyam Iyengar
29. Kakasaheb Kalelkar
30. Mr Shankerrao Dev
31. Mr G. D. Birla
32. Pandit H. N. Kunzru
33. Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru
34. Mr K. Kelappan
35. Mr Kishorelal Mashruwala
36. Mr S. K. Patil
37. Mr Bhagirath Kanodia
38. Shri Shrikrishna Sinha

लाल बहादुर शास्त्री राष्ट्रीय प्रशासन अकादमी, पुस्तकाल
Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Libra
म सु री
MUSSOORIE.
103885

यह पुस्तक निम्नांकित तारीख तक वापिस करनी है।
This book is to be returned on the date last stamped.

| दिनांक Date | उधारकर्ता की संख्या Borrower's No. | दिनांक Date | उधारक की संख्य Borrower No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

103885

320.092
Tha

अवाप्ति संख्या
Acc No. [illegible]

वर्ग संख्या
Class No.

पुस्तक संख्या
Book No.

लेखक
Author Thakkar Bapa.

शीर्षक
Title Thakkar Bapa : Eighieth

320.092 LIBRARY [illegible]
Tha LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI
National Academy of Administration
MUSSOORIE

Accession No. 103885

1. Books are issued for 15 days only but may have to be recalled earlier if urgently required.
5. An overdue charge of 25 Paise per day per volume will be charged.
3. Books may be renewed on request at the discretion of the Librarian.
5. Periodicals, Rare and Reference books may not be issued and may be consulted only in the library.
5. Books lost, defaced or injured in any way shall have to be replaced or its double price shall be [illegible]