

Vol.13, No.2

July-September, 2018



গান্ধী মহারাজ

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

গান্ধী মহারাজের শিষ্য
কেউ বা ধনী, কেউ বা নিঃস্ব
এক জায়গায় আছে মোদের মিল—
গরিব মেরে ভরাই নে পেট,
ধনীর কাছে হই নে তো হেঁট,
আতঙ্কে মুখ হয় না কভু নীল।
যাঙা যখন আসে তেড়ে
উঁচিয়ে ঘৃষি ডাঙা নেড়ে
আমরা হেসে বলি জোয়ানটাকে,
'ঐ যে তোমার চোখ-রাঙানো
খোকাবাবুর ঘুম-ভাঙানো,
ভয় না পেলে ভয় দেখাবে কাকে।'
সিধে ভাষায় বলি কথা,
সঙ্গে তাহার সরলতা,
ডিপ্লম্যাসির নাইকো অসুবিধে।
গারদখানার আইনটাকে
খুঁজতে হয় না কথার পাকে,
জেলের দ্বারে যায় সে নিয়ে সিধে।
দলে দলে হরিণবাড়ি
চলল যারা গৃহ ছাড়ি
ঘুচল তাদের অপমানের শাপ—
চিরকালের হাতকড়ি যে,
ধুলায় খসি পড়ল নিজে,
লাগল ভালে, গান্ধীরাজের ছাপ।

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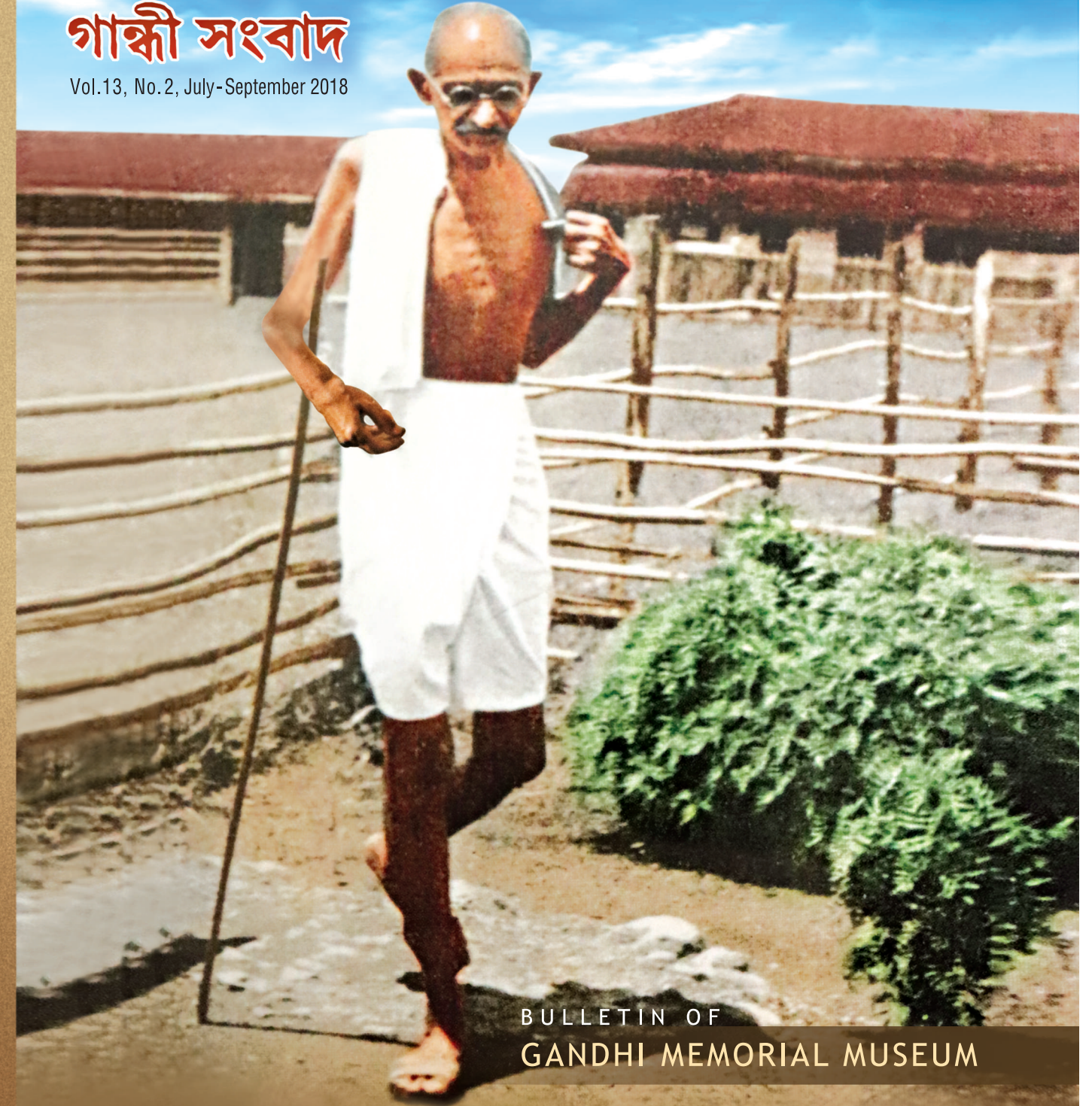
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GANDHI NEWS

গান্ধী সংবাদ

জুলাই-সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০১৮



সূচিপত্র

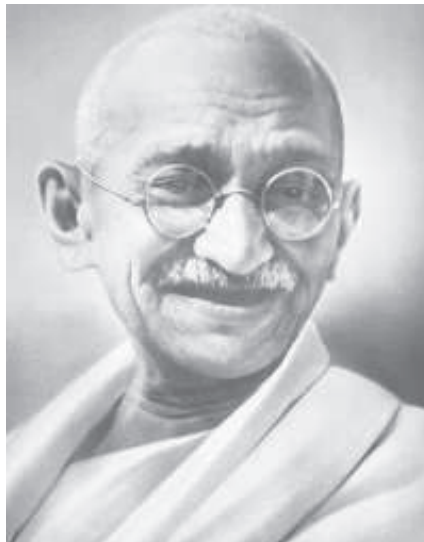
1. **Editorial** : Remembering Little Gandhis ৫
2. Message of Mahatma Gandhi on Equality and Unity of Religions ১১
3. Gandhiji's Struggle against Untouchability ২৯
4. Gandhi explains the significance of Harijan Movement ৪৫
5. **Sisir K. Dhar** : The Way the World is Moving and the Insight and Foresight of Mahatma Gandhi ৫৭
(to be continued)
6. জাতির প্রতি মহাত্মা গান্ধীর ঐতিহাসিক আহ্বান ৬৯
7. গান্ধীজির সঙ্গে বিনোবা ভাবের প্রথম সাক্ষাৎকার ৭৩
8. Tentative Plan of Action for Celebration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi ৭৭

Remembering Little Gandhis

With each day I realize more and more that my mahatmaship, which is a mere adornment depends on others. I have shone with the glory borrowed from my innumerable co-workers. However, no one has done more to add to this glory than Maganlal.

M. K. Gandhi : Collected works Vol. 36, PP 279-281.

Jayant Pande in his *Gandhi and his disciples* (National Book Trust India, 1995) has reminded us that the disciples of Gandhi are innumerable and this fact, in itself, is a “a pointer to a direction for anyone to explore the treasure of the lives of these persons and



present from it Gandhiji, as seen in their work and as reflected from their style of living. In so doing, perhaps, we may find out some saplings from where may bloom a new Gandhi-age ready to evolve itself in this world.”

Pande has analysed the life and works of some prominent disciples of Gandhi, such as Maganlal Gandhi (d. 23 April 1928) Acharya Vinoba (11 September 1895-15 Nov. 1982),

Narahari Parikh (7 October 1891-15 July 1957), Mahadev Desai (1 January 1892-15 August 1957), Kishorelal Mashruwala (5 October 1890-9 Sept. 1952), Mirabehn (1892-20 July 1982), Ravishankar Maharaj (25 February



1884-1986), Badshah Khan, Jiwatram Bhagwandas Kripalani (1888-19 March 1982), Zakir Husain (February 1897-3 May 1969), J.C. Kumarappa (4 January 1892-30 January 1960) and Jugatram Dave (Sept. 1892-1985). The examples cited in this book are illustrative and not exhaustive. All of them were ardent disciples of Gandhi. Indeed, they themselves were little Gandhis. Many of them were not his blind followers. They introduced in Gandhian thoughts what may be termed as parallel discourse.

In 1972, a book entitled “*Sābarmati Āshram Snehamilan Sañ Smaranī*” was published under the auspices of Sābarmati Āshram Surakshā Ane Smārak Trust, Harijan Ashram, Ahmedabad. This book contains an introductory note on Ashram Culture. As many as forty eight eminent inmates of the Ashram who stayed there from time to time narrated their reminiscence in this book. Their names are as follows : Pushpa G. Nayak, Satyadebi, Neemu bahen Seth, Nirmala Desai, Shashikanta Mehta, Nayan Bhansali, Mangala Desai, Banamala Desai, Uma Agarwal, Madalasa Narayan, Narayan Desai, Nilkantha

Masruwala, Laljibhai Parmar, Purusottam Gandhi, Rukmini Bajaj, Manibehn Patel, Prabhudas Gandhi, Ramjibhai Bathia, Ratnaji Nagji, Chhaganlal Jadav, Champabehn Mehta, Manibehn Parikh, Janakidevi Bajaj, Tribeni behn Mehta, Ganga behn Suresh Joshi, Ashabhai Patel, Binubhai Shah, Chhotubhai Patel, Munnalal Shah, Ramchandra Apte, Abbas Sushal, Nandalal Patel, Ambalal Patel, Balkoba Bhave, Dattowa Dastane, Appa Patwardhan, S.D. Bisen, Gajanan Mabankar, Balbant Singh, Tulsi Meher, Kundar Diwan, Jagadish Verma, Jagrup.

A valuable list of the names and addresses of three hundred seven inmates of the Ashram has been provided in the last chapter of the book. The inmates who lived here hailed from different parts of India. They were subsequently associated with several organisations started by Gandhi himself : the Majdoor Mahajan Sangh in Ahmedabad, the Charka Sangh, All India Khadi and village Industries Board, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Nai Talim Sangh, Hindi Pracharini Sabha, Achhut Nibaran Samiti, Adim Jati Sevak Sangh, etc. They were the saplings of little Gandhis who preserved and transmitted the



Gandhian legacy for posterity.

An investigation and analysis of the life and works of little Gandhis are integral to the study of the Gandhian theory of social change. The little Gandhis identified themselves with Gandhi as Gandhi himself identified with them. They identified their interests with larger social interests. They promoted interests of others, sacrificing their own self-interest. Thus they acquired a moral power to act fearlessly. The Gandhian path of socialisation transformed their relationship with the rest of the society. “The leadership of such individual transforms the entire power structure of the society in question. Gandhian movement created exemplary individuals who provided leadership at all levels of society”. (T. K. N. Unnithan. *Change without Violence : Gandhian Theory of Social Change*. Shri Jannalal Bajaj Institute of Studies in Ahimsa. Monograph-5. Gujrat Vidyapith, 1987, pp. 62-63).

Bengal (both West Bengal and

Bangladesh) can boast of a large number of *Gandhian Karmayogins*. Satish Chandra Dasgupta was the most well known figure as a Gandhian *Karmayogin*. As early as 1933 Gandhi described him as “a valued and well-known co-worker. His non-violence is deep-rooted and he is one of the truest of men it has been my



Satish Chandra

good fortune to meet.” The citation in connection with the award of Jannalal Bajaj Award for the year 1978 evaluates his works in golden letters :

A true disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, a venerable pioneer in the field of rural reconstruction, and an outstanding research scientist, Satish Chandra

Das Gupta represents the commingling of the streams of Science and Satyagraha. By choosing Sri Satish Chandra Dasgupta for the Jannalal Bajaj Award for pioneering research done on the application of science and technology for rural development the Jannalal Bajaj



Foundation is proud to honour one of the great scientific innovators and humanists of our land, in whom, at 99, the light still shines bright.

On 14 January 1880 Satish Chandra was born at Kurigram in the district of Rangpur, now in Bangladesh. He passed his entrance examination from Kurigram. As a student of Ripon College, Calcutta he came in touch with Surendra Nath Banerjee as his teacher. In the Presidency College of Calcutta, he found in Professor Prafulla Kumar Ray an everlasting source of inspiration. He came in contact with Satish Chandra Mukherjee of Dawn Society. Dasgupta was deeply influenced by the life and works of Mukherjee.

In 1906 Dasgupta was appointed Superintendent of Bengal Chemical works which was established by Prafulla Chandra Ray to serve the cause of the Swadeshi Movement. He worked here for eighteen years. Rajsekhar Bose was the manager of Bengal Chemical.

Both Dasgupta and Bose, under the inspiring leadership of P.C. Ray, helped to develop this



Gandhiji and Satish Chandra

institution as a pioneering chemical industry in India.

He was a remarkable genius who engaged himself in all sorts of creative activities. The manufactures that he invented include instruments for college laboratories, fire extinguishers which were exported to Mesopotamia during the first world war, tubewell equipment, caffeine from waste tea-leaves, printing inks, alkaloids, strychnine alkaloids, and Ferro alum for purification of water at Palta water works. Gandhi instructed him to enrich the constructive programme under P.C. Ray at the Bengal Chemical. Dasgupta took to spinning. Handlooms were installed inside the factory. Both Dasgupta and Bose helped P. C. Ray in the publication of a book on the application of dyes on khadi.



In 1926 Khadi Pratisthan was formally inaugurated in Sodepur Ashram by Gandhi. Under the inspiring leadership of Dasgupta Khadi Pratisthan developed rapidly as a trust organization dedicated to the task of revival of Bengals cottage industries. It had branches in different parts of Bengal. It was a pioneer organisation in implementing the Gandhian Constructive programme in different parts of Bengal. Some of his experiments in Khadi Pratisthan were highly successful. The following experiments deserve special mention :

improved mustard seed crusher, hides and skins, manufacture of sugar cane and palm molasses, jute batching oil, manufacture of twisted Jute yarn as a cottage industry and an improved and comparatively cheap gobar gas plant without bricks. In Wardha Ashram's Research Institute where he served as a director, Satishchandra developed a new method of manufacturing good quality paper from bamboo pulp. He launched a scheme of land reclamation in 1966 which aimed at

conversion of fallow lands in Bankura in West Bengal into fertile lands. In 1979 Bidhan Chandra Kriśi Viswavidyalaya conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa). The citation in connection with this award mentioned that he "has developed a novel and a very cheap technique of reclamation of red, Laterite and fallow waste lands at



Gandhiji at Sodepur Ashram

Barkura with indigenous material he turned the land green which was once completely barren."

His contribution to literature deserves special mention. He wrote a book entitled *Home and Village Doctor* to enable the poor rural people to treat themselves at a low cost.

Two volumes of his *Cow in India* was recommended



for veterinary studies. He translated the original autobiography of Gandhi from Gujarati to Bengali. The Bengali Translations of *Ramcharitmanas* and *Bhagavatgita* manifesto his genuine spiritual awareness. The most memorable phase in his life was his pilgrimage to riot-affected Noakhali (in Bangladesh). He was selected as one of the trusted companions of Gandhi. He paved the way for Gandhi mission in the real sense of the term. The entire district of Noakhali was enveloped with dark clouds of distrust, into lence terror and violence. Dasgupta accompanied Gandhi in his journey from village to village. He set up centres for constructive work in a

large number of villages and ensured with his innovative skill the purity of drinking water in those villages.

In independent India, he was offered a post of Deputy High Commissioner at Dacca, then in East Pakistan. He declined to accept the offer andhi asked him to stick to social work. He knew his path and moved towards his destination.

There were innumerable little Gandhis who have vanished into oblivion. During their life-time they could not or did not adorn the stage with all the foot lights turned on them. A proper documentation of their devotion at different levels of the Gandhian movements is a desideratum we pay homage to all of them.



Message of Mahatma Gandhi on Equality and Unity of Religions

All World Religions are True

I

(The following extract is from a speech of Gandhiji delivered at a public meeting in Trichinopoly on 10-2-'34 which appeared under the title "Towards the Brotherhood of Man".)

I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.

Harijan, 16-2-'34, p. 5

II

(The following extract is taken from a summary of the speech of Gandhiji in reply to an address by Jains of Coonoor, which appeared in "Weekly Letter-No. 14" by C. S.)

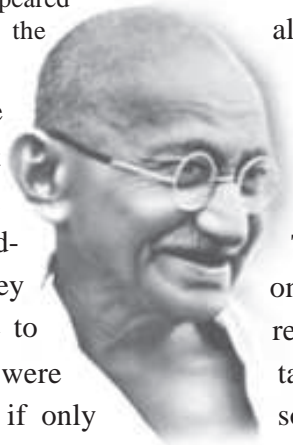
I believe in the truth of all religions of the world. And since my youth upward, it has been a humble but persistent effort on my part to understand the truth of all the religions of the world, and adopt and assimilate in my own thought, word, and deed all that I have found to be best in those religions. The faith that I profess not only permits me to do so but renders it obligatory for me to take the best from whatsoever source it may come.

Harijan, 16-2-'32, p. 6 and p. 7

Beautiful Flowers from the Same Garden

(From "A Christian Letter")

For me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore they are equally true, though being received and interpreted





through human instruments equally imperfect. It is impossible for me to reconcile myself to the idea of conversion after the style that goes on in India and elsewhere today. It is an error which is perhaps the greatest impediment to the world's progress towards peace. 'Warring creeds' is a blasphemous expression And it fitly describes the state of things in India, the mother as I believe her to be of Religion or religions. If she is truly the mother, the motherhood is on trial. Why should a Christian want to convert a Hindu to Christianity and vice versa? Why should he not be satisfied if the Hindu is a good or godly man? If the morals of a man is a matter of no concern, the form of worship in a particular manner in a church, a mosque or a temple is an empty formula, it may even be a hindrance to individual or social growth. and insistence on a particular form or repetition of a credo may be a potent cause of violent quarrels leading to bloodshed and ending in utter disbelief in Religion, i. e. God Himself.

Harijan, 30-1-'37, p. 406

So Many Branches of a tree

(Originally appeared under the title "Islamic Culture")

A great Muslim asked

me what appeared to me strange questions the other day. Strange, because I should have thought that every Muslim who knows me, and this great Muslim knew me, could answer them for me. Here is the dialogue.

Q. : Are you the same to Muslims now, that you used to be in South Africa,—their friend, father and guide?

A. : I never claimed the privilege of being father to them or anyone in South Africa. But I certainly was their guide and friend. (I may state in passing that I was addressed as Bhai [brother] by them and others.) I am absolutely the same as I was in South Africa, twenty-four years ago. I regard Muslims like other Indians as blood-brothers entitled to the same rights and privileges as any other nation.

Q. : Then do you cherish their culture as you would cherish your own Hindu culture?

A. : Of course I do. I cannot do otherwise, as I believe Islam and other great religions to be as true as my own. India is the richer for the cultures that Islam and Christianity brought with them. I regard the present antagonisms as a passing phase.

Q. : Let me be plain. I do not believe in Akbar's dream. He aimed at fusing all religions into one and producing a new

faith. Do you have some such aim?

A. : I do not know what Akbar dreamt. I do not aim at any fusion. Each religion has its own contribution to make to human evolution. I regard the great faiths of the world as so many branches of a tree, each distinct from the other though having the same source.

Harijan, 28-1-'39, p. 448

The Need for Religious Toleration

(Originally appeared under the title "Religion of Volunteers")

After showing that in this land of many religions a volunteer is hard put to it to find a common denominator of conduct, a correspondent thus eloquently describes the religion of a volunteer :

"The religion of the Volunteer does not stand on a par with the denominational religions, just as unquestionably, Truth does not stand on a par with them. All the religions inculcate Truth, have as their essence Truth; but Truth is not of a piece with those religions. It is not one among those religions, but it is the Religion over and above all minor religions, their acknowledged Lord and Superior. If only the Truth at the bottom of the several religions of the world be fully recognized and assimilated, that very moment the conflict between the various religions will disappear and the bloody scenes that are now and then enacted in

the name of religion, will have their final quietus. It is this Truth, the Religion of religions, which inevitably commands instantaneous, universal assent and allegiance of mankind when it is understood, though surely they would not for a moment brook their conversion to any other faith. But this sort of conversion, this letting in a flood of light and dispelling of darkness, this clearing up of vision, everyone hails and longs for from the depth of his heart. A Hindu would not like actual conversion to Islam, but he would, most surely, be always ready to greedily imbibe the Truth that may be em-bedded in it. If ever the dream of bringing the whole world under one religion is to be realized it can only be by establishing the sovereignty of Truth as the world-religion. The religion of the Volunteer is none other than Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, and it is not too much to expect mankind voluntarily to submit to its sway. This being made clear, we must next inquire into the profound effects which Truth will have on its devotee. It will be as if a chronic disease of a very long standing, inherited or acquired, has been healed; as if the blind man has been given back his sight; as if the cripple has been enabled to walk; and the impotent again blessed with his manhood. Truth will not only illumine the darkness of the soul of its devotee, but will





light up his body also. The soul has been called the 'eye of the body', and if it is filled with Truth or Light, it shall see clearly and will itself become light and guide the body properly.

Jesus says : 'The light of the body is the eye; therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light, but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness'."

Stripped of the eloquence, this religion of Truth again resolves itself into its component parts Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc. For Truth will appear to most sincere and conscientious Hindus, Musalmans and Christians as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity respectively as they believe them.

The golden rule of conduct, therefore, is mutual toleration seeing that we will never all think alike and that we shall always see Truth in fragment and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody else's freedom of conscience. It is a much abused term. Have all people a conscience? Has a cannibal a conscience? Must he

be allowed to act according to the dictates of his conscience which tells him that it is his duty to kill and eat his fellows? Now the etymological meaning of 'conscience' is true knowledge.' The dictionary meaning is 'faculty distinguishing between right and wrong and influencing Conduct accordingly.' Possession of such a faculty is possible only for a trained person, that is one who has undergone discipline and learnt to listen to the inner voice. But even amongst the most conscientious persons, there will be room enough for honest differences of opinion. The only possible rule of conduct in any civilized society is therefore mutual toleration. It can be inculcated among and practised by all irrespective of their status and training.

Young India, 23-9-'26, p. 333

Toleration in Matters Religious

(Originally appeared under the title "Sindh Bans *Satyartha Prakash*")

One had thought that the ban on *Satyartha Prakash* had lapsed, never to be renewed. But the hope was a dupe. Here is the renewed ban :

"Whereas it appears to the Government of Sindh that Chapter XIV of the book in Sindhi entitled *Satyartha Prakash* contains matters which promotes feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His



Majesty's subjects—

“Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conderred by Section 99A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, the Government of Sindh hereby declares to be forfeited to His Majesty every copy wherever found of the book in Sindhi entitled *Satyartha Prakash* written by Swami Dayananda Saraswati and published by Professor Tarachand D. Gajra, M.A. on behalf of the Pratinidhi Sabha, Sindh, Karachi, and all other documents containing copies, reprints or translations of, or extracts from Chapter XIV of the said book on the grounds that in the said chapter the author,

- (a) ridicules some of the religious beliefs of the Muslims;
- (b) misrepresents and reviles the teachings of the Koran;
- (c) attacks and belittles the authority of the Prophet Mohammed; and
- (d) generally contains matters calculated to hurt and which hurts the religious susceptibilities of Muslims.”

It is wider in application than before. The laped ban made it criminal to print or publish the book containing Chapter XIV. The renewed ban makes the possession of such a copy a crime. I cannot help feeling that the ban is senseless and is calculated to wound the susceptibilities of the Arya Samajists all the world over. *Satyartha Prakash* enjoys the same status for 40 lakhs of

Arya Samajists as the Koran for the Muslims and the Bible for the Christians. It is possible to understand a ban on contemporaneous controversial literature, though at this time of the day popular Governments are reluctant even then to use their power. But it seems to be mischievous to ban a scriptural book. I would, therefore, urge the Sindh Government to withdraw the ban in question. The Sindhi translation of *Satyartha Prakash* is not a new publication. Is it to be contended that a book that has passed through so many editions and has been translated in most of the languages of the world has been now found to contain matter “which promotes feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects”? The virtue of toleration is never strained, especially in matters of religion. Differences of religious opinion will persist to the end of time; toleration is the only thing that will enable persons belonging to different religions to live as good neighbours and friends. Religion never suffers by reason of the criticism fair or foul of crities; it always suffers from the laxity or indifference of its followers.

Harijan, 3-11-'46, p. 383



Conversion Without A Clean Heart

(Originally appeared under the title “To My Numerous Muslim Friends”)

The newspapers report that about a fortnight ago my eldest son Harilal, now nearing fifty years, accepted Islam and that on Friday last 29th May, in the midst of a large congregation in the Juma Musjid at Bombay he was permitted to announce his acceptance amid great acclamation and that after his speech was finished, he was besieged by his admirers who vied with one another to shake hands with him. If his acceptance was from the heart and free from any wordly considerations, I should have no quarrel. For I believe Islam to be as true a religion as my own.

But I have gravest doubt about this acceptance being from the heart or free from selfish considerations. Every one who knows my son Harilal, knows that he has been for years addicted to the drink evil and has been in the habit of visiting houses of ill-fame. For some years he has been living on the charity of friends who have helped him unstintingly. He is indebted to some Pathans from whom he had borrowed on heavy interest. Up to only recently he was in dread of his life from his

Pathan creditors in Bombay. Now he is the hero of the hour in that city. He had a most devoted wife who always forgave his many sins including his unfaithfulness. He has three grown-up children, two daughters and one son, whom he ceased to support long ago.

Not many weeks ago he wrote to the Press complaining against Hindus—not Hinduism—and threatening to go over to Christianity or Islam. The language of the letter showed quite clearly that he would go over to the highest bidder. The letter had the desired effect. Through the good offices of a Hindu councillor he got a job in Nagpur Municipality. And he came out with another letter to the Press about recalling the first and declaring emphatic adherence to his ancestral faith.

But, as events have proved, his pecuniary ambition was not satisfied and in order to satisfy that ambition, he has embraced Islam. There are other facts which are known to me and which strengthen my inference.

When I was in Nagpur in April last, he had come to see me and his mother and he told me how he was amused by the attention that were being paid to him by the missionaries of rival faiths. God can work wonders. He has been known to have changed the stoniest hearts and



turned sinners into saints, as it were, in a moment. Nothing will please me better than to find that during the Nagpur meeting and the Friday announcement he had repented of the past and had suddenly become a changed man having shed the drink habit and sexual lust.

But the Press reports give no such evidence. He still delights in sensation and in good living. If he had changed, he would have written to me to gladden my heart. All my children have had the greatest freedom of thought and action. They have been taught to regard all religions with the same respect that they paid to their own. Harilal knew that if he had told me that he had found the key to a right life and peace in Islam, I would have put no obstacle in his path. But no one of us, including his son, now twentyfour years old and who is with me, knew anything about the event till we saw the announcement in the Press.

My views on Islam are well known to the Musalmans who are reported to have enthused over my son's profession. A brotherhood of Islam has telegraphed to me thus : "Expect like your son you truth-seeker to embrace Islam truest religion of the world."

I must confess that all this has hurt me. I sense no religious spirit behind this demonstration. I feel that those who are

responsible for Harilal's acceptance of Islam did not take the most ordinary precautions they ought to have in a case of this kind.

Harilal's apostasy is no loss to Hinduism and his admission to Islam a source of weakness to it if, as I apprehend, he remains the same wreck that he was before.

Surely conversion is a matter between man and his Maker who alone knows His creatures' hearts. And conversion without a clean heart is, in my opinion, a denial of God and religion. Conversion without cleanness of heart can only be a matter of sorrow, not joy, to a godly person.

My object in addressing these lines to my numerous Muslim friends is to ask them to examine Harilal in the light of his immediate past and if they find that his conversion is a soulless matter, to tell him so plainly and disown him, and if they discover sincerity in him, to see that he is protected against temptations so that his sincerity results in his becoming a God-fearing member of society. Let them know that excessive indulgence has softened his brain and undermined the sense of right and wrong, truth and falsehood. I do not mind



whether he is known as Abdulla or Harilal if by adopting one name for the other, he becomes a true devotee of God which both the names mean.

Harijan, 6-6-'36, p. 129

The Essence of Hinduism

(From the speech at Kottayam)

Latterly I have been endeavouring to describe to vast assemblages of men and women I have addressed what I regard as the essence of Hinduism, and I have been suggesting to them one incredibly simple *mantra* of the Ishopanishad, and as you know it is one of the Upanishads that enjoy the sanctity of the Vedas. The very first verse of the Ishopanishad means simply this : God pervades everything that is to be found in this universe down to the tiniest atom. The *mantra* describes God as the Creator, the Ruler, and the Lord. The seer to whom this *mantra* or verse was revealed was not satisfied with the magnificent statement that God was to be found everywhere. But he went further and said : 'Since God pervades everything nothing belongs to you, not even your own body. God is the undisputed, unchallengeable Master of everything you possess'. And so when a person who

calls himself a Hindu goes through the process of regeneration or a second birth, as Christians would call it, he has to perform a dedication or renunciation of all that he has in ignorance called his own property. And then when he has performed this act of dedication or renunciation, he is told that he will win a reward in the shape of God taking good care of what he will require for food, clothing or housing. Therefore, the condition of enjoyment or use of the necessaries of life is their dedication or renunciation. And that dedication or renunciation has got to be done from day to day, lest we may in this busy world forget the central fact of life. And to crown all, the seer says : 'Covet not anybody's riches.' I suggest to you that the truth that is embedded in this very short *mantra* is calculated to satisfy the highest cravings of every human being—whether they have reference to this world or to the next. I have in my search of the scriptures of the world found nothing to add to this *mantra*. Looking back upon all the little I have read of the scriptures—it is precious little I confess—I feel that everything good in all the scriptures is derived from this *mantra*. If it is universal brotherhood—not only brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living beings—I find it in this *mantra*.



If it is unshakable faith in the Lord and Master—and all the adjectives you can think of—I find it in this *mantra*. If it is the idea of complete surrender to God and of the faith that He will supply all that I need, then again I say I find it in this *mantra*. Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical communists. This *mantra* tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and if my life and that of all who believe in this *mantra* has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of our fellow creatures. This, I say, is my faith and should be the faith of all who call themselves Hindus.

Harijan, 30-1-'37, p. 409

Much in Little

“In Mr. Mahadev Desi’s book on the Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation, I find your speeches made in several places in Travancore. You have spoken of the Ishopanishad and said that if the first verse alone survived and all the rest of the Hindu scriptures were destroyed, it would alone save religion from

extinction, Perhaps, you know that, verse was a turning point in the life of Devendranath Tagore, the Poet’s father. Young Devendranath was in a mood of great depression when his father died leaving the family estate highly encumbered. One day while in this mood a piece of printed paper was wafted by a passing breeze to where he was sitting. He picked it up. It was in Sanskrit which he had not learnt then. He took it to the family pandit who read it out. It was the first verse of the Ishopanished. ‘Nectar poured into my soul’, says the Maharshi in his autobiography.

“The phrase about enjoying by renunciation puzzled me for long. One day (or night to be correct) it flashed on me that the phrase but expressed a daily experience. What greater enjoyment is there than renouncing something one values to one—person or cause—which one holds dear?”

The above letter from Shri K. Natarajan was received by me about three months ago. I had hoped to deal with it in these columns much earlier but could not. Nothing, however, is lost for the subject matter of the letter is an evergreen. I try to the utmost of my ability to live the meaning that, in my ungrammatical



way, I have ascribed to the *shloka*. Not being a reader of books, I never knew the instance that Shri Natarajan quotes from Maharshi Devendra's life. It fortifies my belief that the first mantra of Ishopanishad is all that undiluted Hinduism—in other words, for me, religion—can have to give. The recitation of the eighteen chapters of the Gita is finished in one week at the morning prayer and so it has gone on now for some years from week to week. The Gita is a commentary on the first verse of the Ishopanishad. And I feel, not without diffidence, that the interpretation that flashed on Shri Natarajan's mind reveals but the partial truth. As I understand it, his interpretation is only the well-worn doctrine of self-sacrifice which is undoubtedly a common enough experience. Take only one instance. Many a mother sacrifices all for her children. But the *mantra* referred to here was not revealed to confirm the truth of that practice, well known even during the remote times when it is said to have been given. To live up to that verse means the new birth enunciated in the New Testament or *Brahma-samarpana* (dedication to God) as taught in Hinduism. The verse, therefore, seems to

me to mean only one thing. Recognize that everything you fancy you have is God's and from God and take only what you really need for life. In other words, in the language of the Gita it teaches the doctrine of uttermost detachment. Then only is life worth living.

Harijan, 23-6-'46, p. 189

My Claim

(From "Friendly Discussion Always Welcome" which appeared in "Notes")

I am no Sanskrit scholar, but I know sufficient to detect errors in translations that may be given to me. I claim to have read the Shastras to my satisfaction, and I claim to have endeavoured from my youth upwards to put into practice the fundamental precepts of the Shastras. Thus I have no hesitation in putting before the public, with the utmost confidence, the conclusions I have reached regarding certain fundamentals of Hinduism.

Harijan, 12-1-'34, p. 3

Why I am a Hindu

An American friend who subscribes herself as a life-long friend of India writes :

"As Hinduism is one of the prominent religions of the East and as you have made a study of Christianity

and Hinduism, and on the basis of that study, have announced that you are a Hindu, I beg leave to ask of you if you will do me the favour to give me your reasons for that choice. Hindus and Christians alike realize that man's chief need is to know God and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Believing that Christ was a revelation of God, Christians of America have sent to India thousands of their sons and daughters to tell the people of India about Christ. Will you in return kindly give us your interpretation of Hinduism and make a comparison of Hinduism with the teachings of Christ? I will be deeply grateful for this favour."

I have ventured at several missionary meetings to tell English and American missionaries that if they could have refrained from 'telling' India about Christ and had merely lived the life enjoined upon them by the Sermon on the Mount, India, instead of suspecting them, would have appreciated their living in the midst of her children and directly profited by their presence. Holding this view, I can 'tell' American friends nothing about 'Hinduism' by way of 'return'. I do not believe in telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it

becomes self-propagating.

Nor do I consider myself fit to interpret Hinduism except through my own life. And if I may not interpret Hinduism through my written word, I may not compare it with Christianity. The only thing it is possible for me therefore to do is say as briefly as I can, why I am a Hindu.

Believing as I do in the influence of heredity, being born in a Hindu family, I have remained a Hindu. I should reject it, if I found it inconsistent with my moral sense or my spiritual growth. On examination I have found it to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal to me in as much it gives the votary the largest scope for self-expression. Not being an exclusive religion, it enables the followers of that faith not merely to respect all the other religions, but it also enables them to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in the other faiths. Non-violence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism. (I do not regard Jainism or Buddhism as separate from Hinduism). Hinduism believes in the oneness not of merely all human life but in the oneness of all that lives. Its worship of the





cow is, in my opinion, its unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarianism. It is a practical application of the belief in the oneness and, therefore, sacredness, of all life. The great belief in transmigration is a direct consequence of that belief. Finally the discovery of the law of Varnashrama is a magnificent result of the ceaseless search for truth. I must not burden this article with definitions of the essentials sketched here, except to say that the present ideas of cow-worship and Varnashrama are a caricature of what, in my opinion, the originals are. The curious may see the definitions of cow-worship and Varnashrama in the previous numbers of *Young India*. I hope to have to say on Varnashrama in the near future. In this all to brief a sketch I have mentioned what occur to me to be the outstanding features of Hinduism that keep me in its fold.

Young India, 20-10-'27, p. 352

Hinduism as I Understand

(Extract from "Cow Protection")

I claim to be a Sanatani Hindu. People may laugh and say that to call myself a Sanatani Hindu when I eat and drink from the hands of Musalmans and

Christians, keep an untouchable girl in my house as my daughter and do not hesitate to quote the Bible, is nothing short of doing violence to language. But I would still adhere to my claim, for I have faith in me which tells me that a day would come—may be most probably after I am dead and no longer present in this world in the flesh to bear witness—when my critics would recognize their error and admit the justness of my claim. Pretty long while ago, I once wrote in *Young India* an article on Hinduism, which I consider to be one of my most thoughtful writings on the subject. The definition of Hinduism which I gave in it is probably the clearest that I have ever given. After defining a Hindu as one who believed in the Vedas and Upanishads, recited the Gayatri and subscribed to the doctrine of rebirth and transmigration etc., I added that so far as the popular notion of Hinduism was concerned, its distinguishing feature was belief in cow protection and reverence for the cow. I do not want to be told as to what Hindus ten thousand years ago did. I know there are scholars who tell us that cow-sacrifice is mentioned in the Vedas. I remember when I was a high school student we read a sentence in our Sanskrit text-book to the effect that the Brahmanas of old used to eat beef. That

exercised my mind greatly and I used to wonder and ask myself whether what was written could be after all true. But as I grew up the conviction slowly forced itself upon me that even if the text on which these statements were based was actually part of the Vedas, the interpretation put upon it could not be correct. I had conceived of another way out of the difficulty. This was purely for personal satisfaction. 'If the Vedic text under reference was incapable of bearing any other interpretation than the literal,' I said to myself, 'the Brahmanas who were alleged to be eating beef had the power to bring the slaughtered animals back to life again'. But that is neither here nor there. The speculation does not concern the general mass of the Hindus. I do not claim to be a Vedic scholar. I have read Sanskrit scriptures largely in translation. A layman like myself, therefore, can hardly have any *locus standi* in a controversy like this. But I have confidence in myself. Therefore I do not hesitate to freely express to others my opinions based on my inner experience. It may be that we may not be all able to agree as to the exact meaning and significance of cow protection. For Hinduism does not rest on the authority of one book or one prophet; nor does it possess a common

creed-like the Kalma of Islam-acceptable to all. That renders a common definition of Hinduism a bit difficult, but therein lies its strength also. For, it is this special feature that has given to Hinduism its inclusive and assimilative character and made its gradual, silent evolution possible. Go to any Hindu child and he would tell you that cow protection is the supreme duty of every Hindu and that any one who does not believe in it hardly deserves the name of a Hindu.

Young India, 29-1-'25, p. 37

My Meaning of Sanatan Hinduism

(Originally appeared under the title "Hinduism")

In dealing with the problem of untouchability during the Madras tour, I have asserted my claim to being a Sanatani Hindu with greater emphasis than hitherto, and yet there are things which are commonly done in the name of Hinduism, which I disregard. I have no desire to be called a Sanatani Hindu or any other if I am not such. And I have certainly no desire to steal in a reform or an abuse under cover of a great faith.

It is, therefore, necessary for me once for all distinctly to give my meaning of Sanatana Hinduism. The word





'Sanatana' I use in its natural sense.

I call myself a Sanatani Hindu because,

1. I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in avatars and rebirth,
2. I believe in the Varnashramadharma in a sense in my opinion strictly Vedic but not in its present popular and crude sense,
3. I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular,
4. I do not disbelieve in idol-worship.

The reader will note that I have purposely refrained from using the word 'divine origin' in reference to the Vedas or any other scriptures. For I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe the Bible, the Koran, and the Zend-Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. Nor do I claim to have any first-hand knowledge of these wonderful books. But I do claim to know and feel the truths of the essential

teaching of the scriptures. I decline to be bound by any interpretation however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. I do most emphatically repudiate the claim (if they advance any such) of the present Shankaracharyas and Shastris to give a correct interpretation of the Hindu scriptures. On the contrary, I believe that our present knowledge of these books is in a most chaotic state. I believe implicitly in the Hindu aphorism, that no one truly knows the Shastras who has not attained perfection in Innocence (Ahimsa), Truth (Satya) and Self-control (Brahmacharya) and who has not renounced all acquisition or possession of wealth. I believe in the institution of gurus, but in this age millions must go without a guru, because it is a rare thing to find a combination of perfect purity and perfect learning.

Varnashrama is in my opinion inherent in human nature, and Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science. It does not attach to birth. A man cannot change his Varna by choice. Not to abide by one's Varna is to disregard the law of heredity. The division, however, into innumerable castes is an unwarranted liberty taken



with the doctrine. The four divisions are all-sufficing.

I do not believe that inter-dining or even inter-marriage necessarily deprives a man of his status that his birth has given him. The four divisions define a man's calling, they do not restrict or regulate social intercourse. The divisions define duties, they confer no privileges. It is, I hold, against the genius of Hinduism to arrogate to oneself a higher status or assign to another a lower. All are born to serve God's creation, a Brahmana with his knowledge, a Kshatriya with his power of protection, a Vaishya with his commercial ability and a Shudra with bodily labour. This however does not mean that a Brahmana, for instance, is absolved from bodily labour, or the duty of protecting himself and others. His birth makes a Brahmana predominantly a man of knowledge, the fittest by heredity and training to impart it to others. There is nothing, again, to prevent the Shudra from acquiring all the knowledge he wishes. Only, he will best serve with his body and need not envy others their special qualities for service. But a Brahmana who claims superiority by right of

knowledge falls and has no knowledge. And so with the others who pride themselves upon their special qualities. Varnashrama is self-restraint and conservation and economy of energy. Many a man eating meat and with everybody, but living in the fear of God is nearer his freedom than a man religiously abstaining from meat and many other things but blaspheming God in every one of his acts.

The central fact of Hinduism is however cow protection. Cow protection to me is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution. It takes the human being beyond his species. The cow to me means the entire sub-human world. Man through the cow is enjoined to realize his identity with all that lives. Why the cow was selected for apotheosis is obvious to me. The cow was in India the best companion. She was the giver of plenty. Not only did she give milk, but she also made agriculture possible. The cow is a poem of pity. One reads pity in the gentle animal. She is the mother to millions of Indian mankind. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God.



The ancient seer, whoever he was, began with the cow. The appeal of the lower order of creation is all the more forcible because it is speechless. Cow protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world. And Hinduism will live so long as there are Hindus to protect the cow.

The way to protect is to die for her. It is a denial of Hinduism and Ahimsa to kill a human being to protect a cow. Hindus are enjoined to protect the cow by their *tapasya*, by self-purification, by self-sacrifice. The present day cow protection has degenerated into a perpetual feud with the Musalmans, whereas cow protection means conquering the Musalmans by our love. A Musalman friend sent me sometime ago a book detailing the inhumanities practised by us on the cow and her progeny. How we bleed her to take the last drop of milk from her, how we starve her to emaciation, how we ill-treat the calves, how we deprive them of their portion of milk, how cruelly we treat the oxen, how we castrate them, how we

beat them, how we overload them. If they had speech, they would bear witness to our crimes against them which would stagger

the world. By every act of cruelty to our cattle, we disown God and Hinduism. I do not know that the condition of the cattle in any other part of the world is so bad as in unhappy India. We may not blame the English-man for this. We may not plead poverty in our defence. Criminal negligence is the only cause of the miserable condition of our cattle. Our *panjarapols*, though they are an answer to our instinct of mercy, are a clumsy demonstration of its execution. Instead of being model dairy farms and great profitable national institutions, they are merely depots for receiving decrepit cattle.

Hindus will not be judged by their tilaks, not by the correct chanting of *mantras*, not by their pilgrimages, not by their most punctilious observance of caste rules but by their ability to protect the cow. Whilst professing the religion of cow protection, we have enslaved the cow and her progeny, and have become slaves ourselves.

It will now be understood why I consider myself a Sanatani Hindu...

I can no more describe my feeling for Hinduism than for my own wife. She moves me as no other woman in the world can. Not that she has no faults. I



dare say she has many more than I see myself. But the feeling of an indissoluble bond is there. Even so I feel for and about Hinduism with all its faults and limitations. Nothing elates me so much as the music of the Gita or the Ramayana by Tulasidas, the only two books in Hinduism I may be said to know. When I fancied I was taking my last breath, the gita was my solace. I know the vice that is going on today in all the great Hindu shrines, but I love them in spite of their unspeakable failings. There is an interest which I take in them and which I take in no other. I am a reformer through and through. But my zeal never takes me to the rejection of any of the essential things of Hinduism. I have said I do not disbelieve in idol-worship. An idol does not excite any feeling of veneration in me. But I think that idol-worship is part of human nature. We hanker after symbolism. Why should one be more composed in a church than elsewhere? Images are an aid to worship. No Hindu considers an image to be God. I do not consider idol-worship a sin.

It is clear from the foregoing, that Hinduism is not an exclusive religion. In it there is room for worship of all the prophets of the world. It is not a missionary

religion in the ordinary sense of the term. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes in its fold, but this absorption has been of an evolutionary, imperceptible character. Hinduism tells every one to worship God according to his own faith or Dharma, and so it lives at peace with all religions.

That being my conception of Hinduism, I have never been able to reconcile myself to untouchability. I have always regarded it as an excrescence. It is true that it has been handed down to us from generations, but so are many evil practices even to this day. I should be ashamed to think, that dedication of girls to virtual prostitution was a part of Hinduism. Yet it is practised by Hindus in many parts of India. I consider it positive irreligion to sacrifice goats to Kali and do not consider it a part of Hinduism. Hinduism is a growth of ages. The very name, Hinduism, was given to the religion of the people of Hindusthan by foreigners. There was no doubt, at one time sacrifice of animals offered in the name of religion. But it is not religion, much less is it Hindu religion. And so also it seems to me, that when cow protection



became an article of faith with our ancestors, those persisted in eating beef were excommunicated. The civil strife must have been fierce. Social boycott was applied not only to recalcitrants, but their sins were visited upon their children also. The practice which had probably its origin in good intentions hardened into usage, and even verses crept into our sacred books giving the practice a permanence wholly undeserved and still less justified. Whether my theory is correct or not, untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity or love.

A religion that establishes the worship of the cow cannot possibly countenance or warrant a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings. And I should be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes. Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom, nor get it if they allow their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability. And as I love Hinduism dearer than life itself, the taint has become for me an intolerable burden. Let us not deny God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing.

Young India, 6-10-'21, p. 317



Gandhiji's Struggle against Untouchability

UNTOUCHABILITY—NO PART OF HINDUISM

(From "What is Hinduism?")

If untouchability was a part of the Hindu creed, I should decline to call myself a Hindu and most decidedly embrace some other faith if it satisfied my highest aspirations. Fortunately for me, I hold that untouchability is no part of Hinduism. On the contrary it is a serious blot upon it, which every lover of it must sacrifice himself to remove. Suppose, however, I discovered that untouchability was really an integral part of Hinduism, I should have to wander in the wilderness because the other creeds as I know them through their accepted interpreters would not satisfy my highest aspirations.

Young India, 24-4-'24, p. 136

WHAT DETERMINES THE MAN?

(From an article which appeared under the title "Its Implications")

The vast meeting at Palni under the shadow of the Temple was perfectly silent; there were no noises. I seized the occasion to give the audience the implications of



*My fight
against
untouchability
is a fight
against the
impure in
humanity.*

M. K. Gandhi

removal of untouchability. It began with touch but it would be a wooden thing, if it merely ended there. A Brahmana may be a depraved man in spite of his learning. It would be preposterous to call him one. A Brahmana is one who knows Brahma. It is character, not occupation, that determines the man. The Bhangi is



or should be on a par with the Brahmana in all social relations. There is no reason why he should not, other things being equal, occupy the chair which Maulana Abul Kalam Azad occupies with distinction. I would be happy to see the day when a Bhangi working as such, is in the Presidential Chair.

The ulcer of untouchability has gone so deep down that it seems to pervade our life. Hence the unreal differences : Brahmana and non-Brahmana, provinces and provinces, religion and religion. Why should there be all this poison smelling of untouchability? Why should we not all be children of one Indian family and, further, of one human family? Are we not like branches of the same tree?

When untouchability is rooted out, these distinctions will vanish and no one will consider himself superior to any other. Naturally, exploitation too will cease and co-operation will be the order of the day.

Harijan, 10-2-'46, p 4

THE CANCKER OF SUPREIORITY

The following remarkable paper handed to me at Mymensingh by the District Vaishya Sabha Association cannot fail to be of general interest :

“1. Our Samiti aims at unity and regeneration of our community.

“2. Your mission as we understand it is threefold : (a) Introduction and spread of Khaddar and Charkha; (b) Hindu-Muslim unity; (c) Removal of untouchability.

The first two are common to all. We have come to you mainly in connection with the third item and beg leave to give you an idea as to how untouchability stands in the way of unification of the Hindus in Bengal.

3. In Bengal Hindu society may be principally grouped into two calsses.

(i) Jal Acharniya

(ii) Anacharaniya

Group (i) Consists of :

Brahmanas

Baidyas

Kayasthas

Navashakas (meaning 9 or 10 castes)

Group (ii) consists of :

Baishyashahas

Subarnabaniks (goldsmiths)

Sutradhars (carpenters)



Jogis (weavers)
Sundis (wine sellers)
Fishermen
Bhui Malis (sweepers)
Dhopas (washermen)
Muchis or Reshees (cobblers and drummers)
Kapaliks
Namashudras, and others

Some of these are classified as depressed classes by the Census authorities.

“Of the first group the first three classes claim to dominate the rest of the Hindu society and not only do they despise them (particularly those belonging to group ii) at heart, but oppress them in various ways, e.g. (i) Freedom of worship in or access to public temples not allowed; (ii) Mess and hostel difficulties of the students of the 2nd group; (iii) Entrance into hotels and sweetmeat shop resented.”

“In Bengal those who are taking lead in the movement for removal of untouchability are not, in our opinion, adopting the right method and have not made any appreciable progress in this direction.”

“According to the census of 1921, of the total Hindu population of Bengal numbering 2,09,40,000 and odd the Brahmanas (13,09,000 i.e. 17%) Kayasthas (12,97,000 i.e. 16%) and Baidyas (1,03,000 i.e. 1%) together count only 28,09,000 or thereabout.”

“Baishyashaha community of East Bengal and Sylhet—one of the premier mercantile communities in Bengal—are mainly confind to parts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra, Rajshahi, Faridpur, Dacca, Noakhali, Chittagong, Tippera and Sylhet, the total population coming up to 3,60,000, i.e. 3¹/₂% of the entire Hindu population of Bengal.

“Literacy per mile among the Baishyashahas is 342; while that of

Baidyas	662	Subarnabanik	383
Brahmanas	484	Gandhabanik	344
Kayasthas	413		

“Literacy is much less amongst all other Acharaniya classes not to speak of those held Anacharaniya.”

“Our community does not lag behind others in founding and maintaining educational and charitable institutions, e.g. several colleges, many High and M.E. Schools and charitable dispensaries and hospitals, tanks, pacca wells etc. besides private donations to institutions, educational, charitable and religious.”

“In point of manners, customs and hospitality this community yields to no other class. As regards female education this community is by no



means less advanced.”

“In spite of all these we are treated as if we are outside the pale of Hindu society. And up till now no sincere attempt has been made to recognize our proper status in the Hindu community, although the members of these communities never keep aloof from taking part in all national movements. But for the social disabilities and difficulties attendant thereon this community could be much more useful.”

“This community is quite distinct from the Sundies. Taking advantage of the fact that the Sundies also use the surname ‘Shaha’ the narrow-minded members of the Hindu society envious of our prosperity have been maliciously and falsely stigmatizing this community by classing them with the Sundies (liquor traders). We have, however, succeeded to a great extent to remove the mischievous and wrong notions created as above, establishing from history that this community belonging to Baishya Barna migrated from time to time for trading purposes from North Western India and settled in parts of East Bengal and Sylhet, and that as this community could not shake off the Buddhistic influence as easily as the other classes when Brahmanism revived, they were not given a proper place in the Hindu society and left in a despised condition.

“For the purpose of ameliorating our condition and for having our proper status recognized, we have formed associations which are doing considerable work.”

“Total removal of untouchability is in the opinion of this community essential to solidarity of the Hindus and consequently to Hindu-Muslim unity. We approach you, Mahatmaji, with the request that in your public utterances regarding untouchability, you will not lose sight of the peculiar features of the Hindu society in Bengal as we have tried to give you an idea of; and we solicit your advice, as of one who is a born devotee to and fighter for the cause of the down-trodden, in our fight with the bureaucracy in the Hindu society.”

It is likely that there is some exaggeration in the foregoing statement. But the reason why I have reproduced the paper is to show how deep the canker of superiority has eaten into the very vitals of Hinduism. The writers, them-selves a despised group in the estimation of their so-called superiors, have not hesitated to claim for themselves a status superior to and distinct from those more despised. The same notion of superiority and inferiority runs through the despised ‘untouchables’!

I notice through my tour in Cutch that as in other parts of India, ‘the untouchables’ have among themselves also superior and inferior castes, and the higher caste Antyaj will not touch the lower caste, will positively refuse to send their children to those belonging to the lower caste.



Inter-marriage and inter-dining between them is unthinkable. This is caste reduced to the grossest absurdity. And it is by way of protest against this arrogation of superiority by one class over another that I delight in calling myself a Bhangi, that is a sweeper, beyond which so far as I am aware, inferiority does not travel. He is the social leper shunned by all and yet he belongs to the one group more indispensable than any other for the sanitary wellbeing of society, and therefore its very physical existence. My sympathies are all with gentlemen on whose behalf the foregoing statement was given to me. But I warn them against claiming superiority over men

more unfortunately placed than themselves. Let it be their privilege to take even these with them and refuse to take privileges which may be denied to others. It is necessary if we will rid Hinduism of the curse of unnatural inequalities for some of us to rise with our whole soul in revolt against it. In my opinion,



Gandhiji and Kasturaba with Harijan children, July 1934

he who claims superiority by the very nature of the claim forfeits it. Real, natural superiority comes without the claiming. It is recognized ungrudgingly, and ever refused not pompously, not out of a false sense of modesty, but because the superiority is not even felt, and because the superior man knows that there is no distinction whatsoever between the soul within himself and the soul within one who regards himself as his inferior. Recognition of the essential identity and oneness of all that lives excludes the very idea of superiority and inferiority. Life is duty, not a bundle of rights and privileges. That religion is doomed to destruction which bases itself upon a system of gradations high and low. Such is not the meaning for me of Varnashrama. I believe in it because I imagine that it defines the duties of men belonging to different vocations. And



Brahmana is he who is the servant of all, even the Shudras and the 'untouchables'. He dedicates his all to such service and lives upon the charity and sufferance of his fellow-beings. He is no Kshatriya who puts forth pretensions to rank, power and privileges. He alone is Kshatriya who uses the whole of himself for the defence and honour of society. And a Vaishya who earns for himself only, and believes in merely amassing wealth is a thief. A Shudra because he labours for hire on behalf of society is in no way inferior to the three classes. According to my conception of Hinduism there is no such thing as a fifth or 'untouchable' class. The so-called untouchables are as much privileged labourers of society as Shudras. Varnashrama seems to me to be an ideal system conceived for the highest good of society. What we see today is a travesty and a mockery of the original. And if Varnashrama is to abide, Hindus must sweep away the mockery and restore Varnashrama to its pristine dignity.

Young India, 5-11-'25, p. 379

THE SUPPRESSED CLASSES

Mr. Gandhi presided at the suppressed classes conference held at Ahmedabad on the 14th and 15th instant. There was a large attendance of ladies and gentlemen from the town, though the number of the untouchables was much less than expected, a rumour having spread in the town that Government would arrest those of them who attended.

Mr. Gandhi regretted in the beginning this small attendance, and said that, incidents as the present, took away what little faith he had in conferences as an effective agency of social reform. If therefore, he occupied the audience shorter than they expected, it would be because his remarks would not reach all he meant to address and not because his enthusiasm for the work was in any way damped. He was also thankful for the fact that the conference had brought him the pleasure of meeting friends on the same platform—it was not usual for him nowadays to meet—friends, co-operation with whom used to be a pleasure and privilege, but from whom the present conditions had unfortunately cut him off. It was happy, however, that on the question of untouchability he was in the same boat as they.

Coming to the subject he said : "I do not know how I am to convince those who oppose the reform, of the wrong position they have taken.



How am I to plead with those who regard any contact with the members of the suppressed community as entailing defilement and of which they cannot be cleansed without necessary ablutions and who thus regard omission to perform the ablutions a sin? I can only place before them my innermost convictions.

“I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This idea was not brought home to me by my bitter experiences during the S. African struggle. It is not due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think, as some people do, that I have taken my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back as the time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible.”

“I was hardly yet twelve when this idea had dawned on me. A scavenger named Uka, an untouchable, used to attend our house for cleaning latrines. Ofteh I would ask my mother why it was wrong to touch him, why I was forbidden to touch him. If I accidentally touched Uka, I was asked to perform the ablutions, and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion, that it was impossible that it should be so. I was a very dutiful and obedient child and so far as it was consistent with respect for parents, I often had tussles with them on this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with uka as sinful.”

“While at school I would often happen to touch the ‘untouchables’ and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Musalman passing by. And simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so, but never did so believing it to be a religious obligation. After sometime we shifted to Porbandar, where I made my first acquaintance with Sanskrit. I was not yet put to an English school, and my brother and I were placed in charge of a Brahmana who taught us *Rama Raksha* and *Vishnu Puja*. The text “*jale Vishnuh*” “*sthale Vishnuh*” (there is the Lord (present) in water, there is the Lord (present in earth), have never gone out of my memory. A motherly old dame used to live close by. Now it happened that I was very timid then, and would conjure up ghosts and goblins whenever the lights went out, and it was dark. The old mother to disabuse me of fears, suggested that I should mutter the *Rama Raksha* texts whenever I was afraid, and all evil spirits would fly away. This I did and, as I



thought, with good effect. I could never believe then that there was any text in the *Rama Raksha* pointing to the contact of the ‘untouchables’ as a sin. I did not understand its meaning then, or understood it very imperfectly. But I was confident that *Rama Raksha*, which could destroy all fears of ghosts, could not be countenancing any such thing as fear of contact with the ‘untouchables’.”

“The Ramayana used to be regularly read in our family. A Brahmana called Ladha Maharaj used to read it. He was stricken with leprosy, and he was confident that a regular reading of the Ramayana would cure him of leprosy, and indeed, he was cured of it. ‘How can the Ramayana,’ I thought to myself, ‘in which one who is regarded nowadays as an ‘untouchable’, took Rama across the Ganges in his boat, countenance the idea of any human beings being ‘untouchables’ on the ground that they were polluted souls’? The fact that we addressed God as the ‘purifier of the polluted’ and by similar appellations, shows that it is a sin to regard anyone born in Hinduism as polluted or untouchable—that it is satanic to do so. I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. I do not pretend that this thing has crystallized as conviction in me at the age of twelve, but I do say that I did then regard untouchability as a sin. I narrate this story for the information of the Vaishnavas and orthodox Hindus.”

“I have always claimed to be a Sanatani Hindu. It is not that I am quite innocent of the scriptures. I am not a profound scholar of Sanskrit. I have read the Vedas and Upanishads only in translations. Naturally therefore mine is not a scholarly study of them. My knowledge of them is in no way profound, but I have studied them as I should do as a Hindu and I claim to have grasped their true spirit. By the time I had reached the age of 21, I had studied other religions also.”

“There was a time when I was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity. When I recovered my balance of mind, I felt that to me salvation was possible only through the Hindu religion and my faith in Hinduism grew deeper and more enlightened.”

“But even then I believed that untouchability was no part of Hinduism; and, if it was, such Hinduism was not for me.”

“True Hinduism does not regard untouchability as a sin. I do not want to enter into any controversy regarding the interpretation of the Shastras. It might be difficult for me to establish my point by quoting authorities



from the Bhagavata or Manu Smriti. But I claim to have understood the spirit of Hinduism. Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to untouchability. It has degraded us, made us the pariahs of the Empire. Even the Musalmans caught the sinful contagion from us, and in S. Africa, in E. Africa and in Canada the Musalmans no less than Hindus came to regarded as pariahs. All this evil has resulted from the sin of untouchability.”

“I may here recall my proposition, which is this. So long as the Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment. Yudhishtira would not enter heaven without his dog. How can, then, the descendants of that Yudhishtira expect to obtain Swaraj without the untouchables? What crimes, for which we condemn the Government as satanic, have not we been guilty of towards our untouchable brethren?”

“We are guilty of having suppressed our brethren; we make them crawl on their bellies; we have made them rub their noses on the ground; with eyes red with rage, we push them out of railway compartments—what more than this has British rule done? What charge, that we bring against Dyer and O’dwyer, may not others, and even our own people, lay at our doors? We ought to purge ourselves of this pollution. It is idle to talk of Swaraj so long as we do not protect the weak and the helpless, or so long as it is possible for a single Swarajist to injure the feelings of any individual. Swaraj means that not a single Hindu or Muslim shall for a moment arrogantly think that he can crush with impunity meek Hindus or Muslims. Unless this condition is fulfilled we will get Swaraj only to lose it the next moment. We are no better than the brutes until we have purged ourselves of the sins we have committed against our weaker brethren.”

“But I have faith in me still. In the course of my peregrinations in India I have realized that the spirit of kindness of which the poet Tulasidas sings so eloquently, which forms the corner-stone of Jain and Vaishnava religions, which is the quintessence of the Bhagavata and which every verse of the Gita is saturated with—this kindness, this love, this charity, is slowly but steadily gaining ground in the hearts of the masses of this country.”

“... I have also realized that those whom we regard as illiterate and ignorant are the very people who deserve to be called educated. They



are more cultured than we, their lives are more righteous than ours. A little study of the present day mentality of the people will show that according to the popular conception, Swaraj is synonymous with Ramarajya—the establishment of the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth.”

“If it can bring any comfort to you, my untouchable brethren, I would say that your question does not cause so much stir as it used to do formerly. That does not mean that I expect you to cease to have misgivings about the Hindus. How can they deserve to be not mistrusted having wronged you so much? Swami Vivekananda used to say that the untouchables were not depressed, they were suppressed by the Hindus who in turn had suppressed themselves by suppressing them.”

“I suppose I was at Nellore on the 6th of April. I met the untouchable there and I prayed that day as I have done today. I do want to attain Moksha. I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. I, therefore, prayed that if I should be born again, I should do so not as a Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra, but as an Atishudra.”

* * * *

“I love scavenging. In my Ashram, an eighteen year old Brahmana lad is doing scavenger’s work in order to teach the Ashram scavenger cleanliness. The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy. He is a regular reader of the Gita and faithfully performs *sandhya-vandana*. His pronunciation of Sanskrit verses is more faultless than mine. When he conducts the prayer, his soft sweet melodies melt one into love. But he felt that his accomplishments were incomplete until he had become also a perfect sweeper, and that, if he wanted the Ashram sweeper to do his work well, he must do it himself and set an example.

“You should realize that you are cleaning Hindu society. You have therefore to purify your lives. You should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one may point his finger at you. Use alkali, ash or earth, if you cannot afford to use soap, to keep yourselves clean. Some of you are given to drinking and gambling which you must get rid of. You will point your finger at the Brahmanas and say even they are given to these vices. But they are not looked upon as polluted, and you are. You must not ask the Hindus to emancipate you as a matter of favour.



Hindus must do so, if they want, in their own interests. You should, therefore, make them feel ashamed by your own purity and cleanliness. I believe that we shall have purified ourselves within the next five months. If my expectations are not fulfilled, I will think that, although my proposition was fundamentally correct, yet I was wrong in my calculation; and I will again say that I had erred in my calculation.”

“You claim to be Hindus; you read the Bhagavata; if, therefore, the Hindus oppress you, then you should understand that the fault does not lie in the Hindu religion but in those who profess it. In order to emancipate yourselves you shall have to purify yourselves. You shall have to get rid of evil habits like drinking.”



“If you want to ameliorate your condition, if you want to obtain Swaraj, you should be self-reliant.... Let me tell you that you will never be able to obtain redress by discarding Hindu religion.... Your emancipation lies in your own hands.”

“I have come into contact with the untouchables all over the country; and I have observed that immense possibilities lie latent in them of which neither they nor the rest of the Hindus seem to be aware. Their intellect is of virginal purity. I ask you to learn spinning and weaving, and if you take them up as a profession, you will keep poverty from your doors. As regards your attitude towards the Bhangis, I will repeat what I said at Godhra. I cannot understand why you should yourselves countenance the distinction between Dheds and Bhangis. There is no difference between them. Even in normal times their occupation is as honourable as that of lawyers or Government servants.”

“You should now cease to accept leavings from plates however clean they may be represented to be Receive grain only—good, sound grain,



not rotten grain, and that too only if it is courteously offered. If you are able to do all I have asked you to do, you will secure your emancipation, not in four or five months, but in so many days.”

“The Hindus are not sinful by nature—they are sunk in ignorance. Untouchability must be extinct in this very year. Two of the strongest desires that keep me in flesh and bone are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow. When these two desires are fulfilled, there is Swaraj, and therein lies my own Moksha. May God give you strength to work out your salvation.”

Young India, 27-4-'21, p. 135 and 4-5-'21 p. 143

UNTOUCHABILITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The following is a free rendering of Mr. Gandhi's speech at the Untouchability Conference held at Belgaum during the Congress Week :

Friends,

It was hardly necessary to ask me to express my views on the subject of untouchability. I have declared times without number from various public platforms that it is the prayer of my heart that if I should fail to obtain Moksha in this very birth I might be born a Bhangi in my next. I believe in Varnashrama both according to birth and to Karma. But I do not regard Bhangis as in any sense a low order. On the contrary I know many Bhangis who are worthy of reverence. On the other hand there are Brahmanas going about whom it would be very difficult to regard with any reverence. Holding these views, therefore, if there is a rebirth in store for me, I wish to be born a pariah in the midst of pariahs, because thereby I would be able to render more effective service to them and also to be in a better position to plead with other communities on their behalf.

But just as I do not want the so-called touchables to despise the untouchables, so also I do not want the latter to entertain any feeling of hatred and ill-will towards the former. I do not want them to wrest their rights by violence as is done in the West.

The trend of world opinion is against such violence. I can clearly see a time coming in the world when it will be impossible to secure rights by arbitrament of force, so I tell my untouchable brethren today as I tell the Government, that if they resort to force for the attainment of their



purpose they shall certainly fail.

I Want to uplift Hinduism. I regard the untouchables as an integral part of the Hindu community. I am pained when I see a single Bhangi driven out of the fold of Hinduism. But I do not believe that all class distinctions can be obliterated. I believe in the doctrine of equality as taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita. The Gita teaches us that members of all the four castes should be treated on an equal basis. It does not prescribe the same Dharma for the Brahmana as for the Bhangi. But it insists that the latter shall be entitled to the same measure of consideration and esteem as the former with all his superior learning. It is therefore our duty to see that the untouchables do not feel that they are despised or looked down upon. Let them not be offered leavings from our plates for their subsistence. How can I accord differential treatment to any person, be he Brahmana or Bhangi, who worships the same God and keeps his body and soul pure and clean? I for one would regard myself as having sinned if I gave to a Bhangi unclean food from the leavings from the kitchen or failed to render him personal assistance when he was in need.

Let me make my position absolutely clear. While I do hold that the institution of untouchability as it stands today has no sanction in Hindusim, Hinduism does recognize untouchability in a limited sense and under certain circumstances. For instance, every time that my mother handled unclean things she became untouchable for the time being and had to cleanse herself by bathing. As a Vaishnava I refuse to believe that anyone can be regarded untouchable by reason of his or her birth, and such untouchability as is recognized by religion is by its very nature transitory, easily removable and referable to the deed not the doer. Not only that. Just as we revere our mother for the sanitary service that she renders us when we are infants, and the greater her service the greater is our reverence for her, similarly the Bhangis are entitled to our highest reverence for the sanitary service they perform for society.

Now another point. I do not regard inter-dining and inter-marriage as essential to the removal of untouchability. I believe in Varnashramadharm. But I eat with Bhangis. I do not know whether I am a Sannyasi, for I seriously doubt whether in the Kaliyuga, it is at all possible for any one to fulfil



the conditions prescribed for a Sannyasi. But I am moving deliberately in the direction of Sannyasa. It is, therefore, not only not necessary for me to observe these restrictions but their observance may be even harmful for me. As regards the question of inter-marriage, it does not arise in cases like mine. Sufficient for me to say that my scheme does not include inter-marriage. Let me tell you that in my own clan all the members do not inter-dine. In certain cases among our Vaishnava families they do not use each other's utensils or even cook food on fire fetched from others' kitchens. You may call this practice superstitious, but I do not regard it as such. It certainly does no harm to Hinduism. In my Ashram, Dudhabhai, one of the untouchable inmates, dines with the rest without any distinction. But I do not recommend anybody outside the Ashram to follow this example. Again, you now the esteem in which I hold Malaviyaji. I would wash his feet. But he would not take food touched by me. Am I to resent it as a mark of contempt? Certainly not, because I know that no contempt is meant.

The religion to which I belong prescribes for our observance *Maryada Dharma*. The Rishis of old carried on exhaustive researches through meditation, and as a result of the researches they discovered some great truths, such as have no parallel perhaps in any other religion. One of these was that they regarded certain kinds of foods as injurious for the spiritual wellbeing of man. So they interdicted their use. Now suppose some one had to travel abroad and live among strange people with different customs and standards as regards their diet. Knowing as they did how compelling sometimes the force of the social customs of the people among whom men lived was, they promulgated *Maryada Dharma* to help one in such emergencies. Though however I believe in *Maryada Dharma*, I do not regard it as an essential part of Hinduism. I can even conceive a time when these restrictions might be abolished with impunity. But the reform contemplated in the untouchability movement does not obliterate the restriction as to inter-dining and inter-marrying. I cannot recommend the wholesale abolition of these restrictions to the public even at the risk of being charged with hypocrisy and inconsistency. For instance, I let my son dine freely in Musalman house-holds because I believe he can take sufficient care as to what to take and what not to take. I myself have no



scruples in taking my food in Muslman households because I have my own strict rules about my diet. Let me tell you of an incident that happened at Aligarh. Swami Satyadeva and I were Khwajasaheb's guests. Swami Satyadeva did not share my views. We argued about them. I told him that holding the views I did, it would be as wrong of me to refuse to partake of the food offered by a Musalman as it would be on his part to transgress his *Maryada*. So Swami Satyadeva was provided with sepatate cooking arrangements. Similarly when I was Barisaheb's guest he provided us with a Brahmana cook with strict instructions to obtain all the rations for us fresh from the bazar. When asked why he put himself to such inconvenience he explained that he did so because he wanted to avoid the slightest possibility of suspicion on the part of the public that he enrtertained any secret designs of proselytization against me or my companions. That single incident raised Barisaheb in my esteem. He sometimes commits mistakes but he is as simple and innocent as a child. And although sometimes people complain of him to me bitterly, my first impression of him still remains.

I have dwelt on this point at such great length, because I want to be absolutely plain with you (untouchables). I do not want to employ diplomacy in my dealings with you or for that matter with anyone. I do not want to keep you under any false illusion or win your support by holding out temptations. I want to remove untouchability because its removal is essential for Swaraj and I want Swaraj. But I would not exploit you for gaining any political ends of mine. The issue with me is bigger even than Swaraj. I am anxious to see an end put to untouchability because for me it is an expiation and a penance. It is not the untouchables whose *shuddhi* I effect—the thing would be absurd—but my own and that of Hindu religion. Hinduism has committed a great sin in giving sanction to this evil and I am anxious—if such a thing as vicarious penance is possible to purify it of that sin by expiating for it in my own person.

That being so, it follows that the only means open to me for my purpose are those of Ahimsa and truth. I have adopted an untouchable child as my own. I confes I have not been able to convert my wife completely to my view. She cannot bring herself to love her as I do. But I cannot convert my



wife by anger; I can do so only by love. If any of my people have done you any wrong, I ask your forgiveness for it. Some members of the untouchable class said when I was at Poona that they would resort to force if the Hindus did not alter their attitude towards them. Can untouchability be removed by force? Can the amelioration of untouchables come through these methods? The only way by which you and I can wean orthodox Hindus from their bigotry is by patient argument and correct conduct. So long as they are not converted, I can only ask you to put up with your lot with patience. I am willing to stand by you and share your sufferings with you. You must have the right of worship in any temple in which members of other castes are admitted. You must have admission to schools along with the children of other castes without any distinction. You must be eligible to the highest office in

the land not excluding even that of the Viceroy's. That is my definition of the removal of untouchability.

But I can help you in this only by following the way indicated by my religion and not by following Western methods. For that way I cannot save Hinduism. Yours is a sacred cause. Can one serve a sacred cause by adopting Satan's methods? I pray you, therefore, to dismiss from your mind the idea of ameliorating your condition by brute force. The Gita tells us that by sincerely meditating on Him in one's heart, one can attain Moksha. Meditation is waiting on God. If waiting on God brings the highest bliss or salvation, how much quicker must it bring removal of untouchability? Waiting on God means increasing purity. Let us by prayer purify ourselves and we shall not only remove untouchability but shall also hasten the advent of Swaraj.

Young India, 22-1-'25, p. 29



Gandhi explains the significance of Harijan Movement

WHY 'HARIJAN'?

Several correspondents have asked me why I have adopted the name 'Harijan' for 'untouchable'. Some English friends have asked me for its meaning. It is not a name of my coining. Some years ago, several untouchable correspondents complained that I used the word *Asprushya* in the pages of *Navajivan*. *Asprushya* means literally untouchable. I then invited them to suggest a better name and one of the untouchable correspondents suggested the adoption of the name 'Harihan', on the strength of its having been used by the first known poet-saint of Gujarat. Though the quotation he sent me did not exactly fit the case he wanted to make out for the adoption, I thought that it was a good word. 'Harijan' means 'a man of God.'. All the religions of the world describe God, pre-eminently as the Friend of the friendless, Help of the helpless and Protector of the weak. The rest of the world apart, in India who can be more

friendless, helpless or weaker than the forty million or more Hindus of India who are classified as untouchables? If, therefore, any body of people can be fitly described as men of God, they are surely these helpless, friendless and despised people. Hence, in the pages of *Navajivan*, since the correspondence, I have always adopted Harijan as the name signifying untouchables. And, when God chose to entrust me with their service even whilst undergoing imprisonment, I could not use any other word for describing them. I recoil with horror from that word and all it implies. Not that the change of name brings about any change of status, but one may at least be spared the use of a term which is itself one of reproach. When caste Hindus have of their own inner conviction and, therefore, voluntarily, got rid of the present day untouchability, we shall all be called Harijans, for according to my humble opinion, caste Hindus will



then have found favour with God and may, therefore, be fitly described as His men.

Harijan, 11-2-'33, p. 7

THE INWARDNESS OF HARIJAN MOVEMENT

(Gandhiji's speech at the Kengeri Conference)

Our Goal

Whoever conceived the idea of this conference gave vent to a happy idea and we should be able to make good use of this meeting. Though there are at this conference representatives invited from all parts of South India, there are others here too, and instead of confining myself only to the actual work of the delegates, I will make some general observations.

These general observations I shall make for the benefit of the Savarna Hindus. Let them understand that this movement for the removal of untouchability is different from other current movements in India. So far as I am concerned, and so far as the Harijan Sevak Sangh is concerned, the anti-untouchability movement is not a political movement. Nor is it intended purely for the economic amelioration of the Harijans nor yet for their social

regeneration. But this does not mean that we do not aim at the Harijans' social, economic or political advancement. We want all these improvements. If we are honest about our work, progress in these directions is bound to follow from our efforts.

But our goal is quite different from the things I have mentioned just now. It is this : that untouchability is a blot upon Hinduism and must be removed at any cost. Untouchability is a poison which, if we do not get rid of it in time, will destroy Hinduism.

I know that those of you who are outside the ranks of workers and delegates—nay, even some of the workers and delegates—do not realize the real significance of what I am saying. But whether you realize the significance or not, I must continue to express the views which I hold and hold very strongly.

I can see in the continuance of untouchability slow destruction overtaking Hinduism now, and I promise that if you study the thing itself as I am doing, you will observe that the slow disintegration which Hinduism is going through may become so rapid as to make it impossible for the workers to overcome it.



Gandhiji visits the Kodambakkam Harijan Industrial School in March 1937

No parallel in the World

And why do I say that untouchability is a curse, a blot and a powerful poison that will destroy Hinduism? It is repugnant to our sense of humanity to consider a single human being as untouchable by birth. If you were to examine the scriptures of the world and the conduct of peoples other than Hindus, you do not find any parallel to the untouchability I have brought to your attention just now. I can well understand a person being untouchable whilst he is performing a task which he himself would feel makes him untouchable. For instance, a nurse, who is nursing a patient who is helpless and bleeding and soiling his clothes and suffering from a disease giving out from his body a foul

smell, such a nurse whilst she is nursing such a patient is untouchable. But when she has washed herself, she becomes as touchable as ourselves. Not only that. She is not only just as fit to move in society as any of us, but she is also adorable for the profession which she follows. She is worthy of

our respect and, so long as we have ranks in our society, she must occupy a very high place amongst us.

Now look at the other side of the picture. Take, for instance, Dr. Ambedkar. He is pronounced as belonging to the Depressed Classes and as being untouchable. Intellectually he is superior to thousands of intelligent and educated caste Hindus. His personal cleanliness is as high as that of any of us. Today, he is an eminent lecturer in Law. Tomorrow you may find him a Judge of the High Court. In other words, there is no position in the Government of this country to which he may not aspire and rise, and to which an orthodox Brahmana can rise.

But that orthodox





Brahmana will be defiled by the touch of Dr. Ambedkar and that because of his unpardonable sin that he was born a Mahar (Untouchable)!

If we had not been habituated to think that untouchability by birth is an integral part of Hinduism, we would not conduct ourselves towards our fellow human beings as many of us conduct ourselves even today.

How to remove it

I know that I have told you nothing new in this my talk to you today. I know I have said this same thing in much more burning language than I have done today. Yet what I say is not, and will not be, superfluous so long as this simple fact of the need for the removal of untouchability does not affect your understanding or conduct.

Untouchability is a phenomenon which is peculiar to Hinduism only and it has got no warrant either in reason or in Shastras and what little I have studied of the Shastras and what I have been told by people who have made a deeper study of them shows that there is no warrant for untouchability by birth in Hinduism. I

have not the time now to go into the Shastric precepts. Nor is it necessary at this time of the day to give you Shastric proofs for my statement. But what is necessary is that if you are satisfied that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism and that there is a danger of its destroying Hinduism, you must set about removing it.

What will you do to remove it? If all of you will say that you have done your duty by declaring that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism it will be a mockery. It will not be enough even if you in a flush of enthusiasm go to a Harijan and touch him and embrace him, and then forget all about him. It will not do even if you go to the Harijan quarters every day and make it a point to touch a number of Harijans as a token of your conviction.

What is required of you is that you should regulate your day-to-day conduct in such a manner that you make it absolutely evident to the Harijans whom you come across that a better day has dawned for them all.

You will begin by taking the Harijans along with you to the temple if you are in the habit of going to a temple. But if you discover that you will not be allowed into the temple



along with your Harijan companions then if you have the living belief that I have that untouchability is wrong, you will shun that temple as you shun a scorpion or fire. You will then believe with me that such a temple is not inhabited by God. I will take by way of illustration the greatest temple known all over the world, viz., Kashi Vishwanath in Banaras. The Lord who is supposed to reside there is known as the Lord of the Universe. And yet in the very name of that Vishwanath the Savarna Hindus have today the impudence to say to the Harijans : 'You shall not come to this temple.'

No Temples of God

I claim to be as good a Hindu as any orthodox Hindu. I have endeavoured to enforce all precepts of Hinduism in my own life to the best of my ability. I admit that my ability is small. But that does not affect my attitude to and love for Hinduism. Yet, in spite of all that love for Hinduism, with a due sense of my own responsibility, I am here to tell you that so long as the doors of the Banaras Temple are closed against a single Harijan, Kashi Vishwanath does not reside in that temple and I could not possibly approach that

temple with a belief in its sanctity, or in the faith that by worshipping there I should be purified of my sins. I can have no sense of piety in respect of such a temple. And what is true of Kashi Vishwanath is true of every other temple in India which bars its doors to Harijans. It applies of course to all such temples in South India, including to Guruvayur Temple.

Thank God, the gates of the Guruvayur Temple are closed to me. But even supposing the trustees of that temple, or whoever is in authority there, gave me permission to enter that temple, I could not possibly avail myself of it so long as members of the Harijan community are shut out. Unless every one of you here begins in the way I have pointed out, he has not removed untouchability from his heart.

A matter of Duty

It is absolutely of no consequence that a vast majority of Harijans are uninterested in our campaign. Only this morning Mr. Desouza, leading a deputation of Harijaas, told me that the Harijans were not so interested in temple entry as in their political and



economic amelioration and perhaps a rise in their social status. Naturally, they cannot think otherwise. For we are responsible for deadening their sense of unity with us and their desire to worship in common with us in our temples.

Therefore, I say that the God of Hinduism is really non-existent for them. It is true that the God of Hinduism is not different from the God in Islam or Christianity. Only the mode of worship is peculiar to each religion. If Harijans, because of our own sins—our own unpardonable treatment towards them—have been taught to consider that the temples visited by Savarnas are not for them, you could not blame them for their indifference in this matter. Force of habit has made them indifferent. That Harijans in Travancore and other parts of India have still got the desire to enter the temples and claim the same right as other Hindus, is a good thing and a comfortable thing, but it does not affect my argument.

Conversion Question Has no Bearing

There is another aspect of the opening of temples to Harijans which you must not fail to realize. If you open your temples to

Harijans because they demand that they shall be so opened, you will not be doing any great thing. But if you open the temples to them because of a sense of sin for which you should atone, it becomes a religious act. I should insist on Hindu temples being thrown open to Harijans even if the Harijans in India were converted to another religion and there was only one Harijan left in the Hindu fold. It is this religious attitude that isolates the harijan question from all other questions, and gives it a special importance. If our present programme was merely one of policy or political expediency, it would not have the religious significance that it has for me. If it was demonstrated to me to my satisfaction that the political or economic regeneration of Harijans would be enough to retain the Harijans in the Hindu fold, I should still want to open the temples and remove every trace of inequality. Because for me it is, as it must be for you, a question of repentance and reparation of the wrong we have done to our fellowmen.

Thus the threat of the conversion of Harijans to other religions, which is agitating so many Hindus today, has no bearing on our duty to Harijans. If we



Gandhiji collecting money for Harijan welfare while travelling by train

begin to quicken our activities, because of the threat of conversion, then such opening will lose the significance which I have outlined. I promise you that Hinduism will not be saved by such means.

Hinduism can only be saved when it has become purified by the performance of our duty without the expectation of any return whatsoever from the Harijans. Nothing less than that can possibly save Hinduism. If you do something by Harijans as a matter of expediency or

political manoeuvre, you have not rid yourselves of untouchability in your hearts. There will come many occasions when that poison will erupt on the Hindu social organism to such an extent that we shall be confounded. If we are ashamed of untouchability, we must shed it, no matter what results follow or may not follow.

Sheer Cussedness

I become impatient when Savarna Hindus tell me from their platform of high superiority that they will remove untouchability when Harijans give up their habits of drinking, eating carrion, uncleanliness etc. Suppose my father, mother, son or daughter were lepers can I say that I will touch him or her only when he or she has got rid of leprosy? I will be false to our sacred tie if I do not serve him or her in his or her need. The position regarding Harijans is infinitely worse, because we ourselves are responsible for the condition to which Harijans have been reduced. For their drinking, eating carrion, and other unclean habits we are





directly responsible. Therefore if we are true, we have to embrace them in spite of their shortcomings and I hope, not without foundation, that immediately you adopt an attitude of mind looking upon the Harijans as your brothers they will change their habits. People who had experience in this direction will confirm this statement. It is, therefore, first necessary that Savarna Hindus should purify their hearts and change their attitude towards Harijans.

I would ask you, please, not to fling in my face bad cases you may have come across—cases where you be-friended Harijans and they refused to improve.

But having uttered this word of caution, I want to give you my evidence. I do not know a single Harijan adopted by a Hindu who has not reformed himself. As a matter of fact, it cannot be otherwise. The Harijan is bound to feel the change to be too good to be true. The novel experience of his improved surroundings will enable him to get rid of the craving for drink or carrion-eating.

As for cleanliness it is a question of facilities made available to him. It is merely the cussedness of the Savarna Hindus that

employs the arguments about the uncleanliness of the Harijans, so that they themselves need not act correctly.

“Oh Ye of Little Faith”

I will close with a material thought. I have told you exactly my views of the duty of every Savarna Hindu to Harijans. There are many more things that the Savarna Hindu can do in his own personal conduct.

But I know that there will be a lot of discussion among members assembled here as to how to conduct the work of Harijan Sevak Sanghs without money. I say to such delegates that the fear comes out of their own want of faith. We want to move not half a dozen Savarna Hindus, we want to touch the hearts of millions of Savarna Hindus. Paupers though we are, we find that no Hindu temple has ever to be closed for want of funds. I invite you to study this phenomenon. But do not run away with the false idea that millions of Hindus always pay to their temples merely out of superstition. There may be a partial truth in that statement. But it is only a partial truth. The better part of the truth is that the people who support these temples by their offerings of pice or rice

or cocoanut or *supari*, do so because of an indefinable faith that they are doing an act of piety. And I tell you that you will not be doing justice to yourselves, or to India or to humanity, if you will characterize these things as superstition. I know that superstition is a long-lived thing. There are many monsters of superstition which have been given a long rope by the Almighty. But however long their life, it is nothing in the cycle of Time. The better half of the truth is that there is some thing undoubtedly holy and true about the faith that takes millions to the temples. If you have faith in the piety of the dumb humanity who support these temples, and faith in your mission, each of you will become little temples and gather pice or rice from the people.

If you remain content with the lazy delusion that a few millionaires like Ghanashyamdas Birla will always send money to you for your work, I assure you that the movement is bound to fail. You will never be able to bring this movement to a successful conclusion unless you realize the need to go to the dumb millions and collect pice or even their rice as a token of their conviction that untouchability is a sin to be got rid of.

The Only Way

Never mind if it takes time before you are successful. Whether it takes a few years or ages you must have unbounded faith that it is the only way to convert Savarna Hindus and bring this message to every Hindu home. Know that time never runs against Truth. And this is downright truth : ‘You have to get rid of untouchability or perish.’ Only those become impartient who want to prop up a mission about whose correctness they havbe a doubt. Have faith that when all the forces that are arrayed against us—and they are mighty forces—have died down, there is still this movement which will go on to purify Hinduism. But if you lose heart, courage and faith and become too lazy to remain on the watch-tower, do not blame people for not paying. The movement will perish not because of external forces but because of internal weakness. I urge every worker ot apprtoach the problem in this light.

Harijan, 20-6-'36, p. 148

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

(The following question and answer thereto by Gandhiji are reproduced from an





article which appeared under the title “Some Misconceptions” by M. D.)

Q. : You always say that the Harijan campaign has nothing to do with questions of eating and drinking or with the question of marriage. Why then, did you marry your boy Devadas to a Brahmana girl?

A. : This is an irrelevant question. But I must answer it. The marriage was no part of the Harijan movement. I did not allow the marriage as a leader of the anti-un-touchability campaign, but I allowed it as a Hindu reformer. As a reformer of Hinduism. I want to restore the ancient varnashramadharma, to its pristine purity. Varnashramadharma lays down the functions and duties of various classes according to their special aptitudes and gifts and has nothing to do with questions of marriage and food and drink. Now that you have raised the question of my son’s marriage, I shall summarize the considerations that weighed with me and would weigh with me on all such occasions : (1) The four Varnas do not exist today, and, therefore, it is the duty of those who believe in the Varnas to restore them by observing

the sovereign principles of purity and self-restraint. Let me tell you that, when I was told that there was mutual attachment between the two young people in question, I asked them to impose self-restraint on themselves for a period of five years—not to meet each other, not even to correspond with each other—and thus to prove the purity of their attachment. They fulfilled the conditions and even then would not have the marriage until it was blessed by their parents. (2) Even assuming that Varnas exist, instances are not wanting in Mahabharata and other works, of inter-Varna marriages. (3) After all is said and done, the laws and codes governing personal conduct apply to the times in which they were framed. The ruling principle is self-restraint.

There are, besides, numerous texts in our Smritis which contradict on another, and hence we cannot blindly accept every text as gospel truth. We have to prove them on the touchstone of truth and non-violence. There are things, for instance, in Manusmriti which no author believing in Ahimsa could ever have written and which run counter to the precepts in the same great work, precepts which would do credit to the



spiritual genius of any race or clime. I must expunge those texts as apocryphal, as we do in the case of many verses of doubtful authenticity which have crept into a much more recent work like, for instance, Tulasidas' Ramayana. For me, the text of Manu defining Sanatana Dharma—eternal religion—is all sufficing : 'That Dharma is eternal which is always observed by saintly men of learning, free from ill-will and passion and which appeals to one's *hridaya*

or sense of right and justice.'

Harijan, 24-8-'34, p. 220, at p. 221

INCONSISTENCIES?

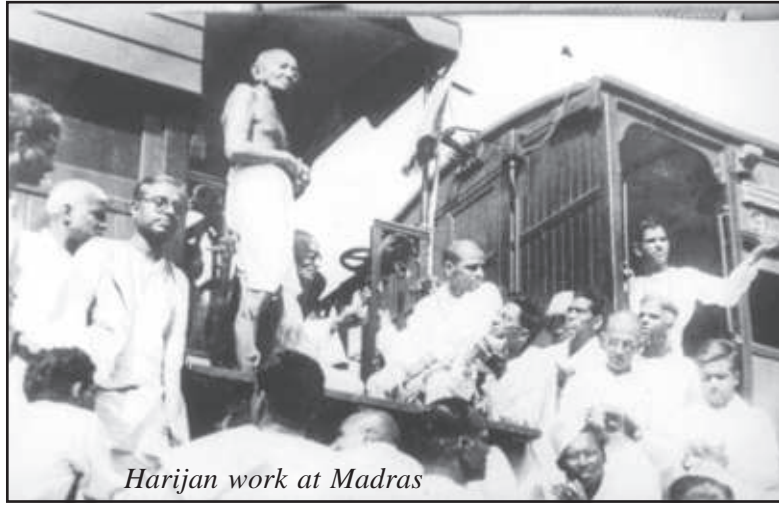
(Originally published in "Notes" under the above title)

A correspondent who is a diligent student of my writings finds it difficult to reconcile my recent writings about intercaste dining and inter-caste marriage and corresponding writings of some years ago.

He quotes from my article on "Hinduism" contributed to *young India*

of 6th October 1921. I give the quotation below with his omissions :

"Though, therefore, Varnashrama is not affected by interdining and inter-



Harijan work at Madras

marriage, Hinduism does most emphatically discourage inter-dining and inter-marriage between divisions. Hinduism reached the highest limit of self-restraint. It is undoubtedly a religion of renunciation of the flesh, so that the spirit may be set free.... By restricting his choice of a bride to a particular group, he exercises rare self-restraint. Prohibition against inter-marriage and inter-dining is essential for a rapid evolution of the soul."

And then he quotes from my statement dated the 4th November last year, which was circulated to the



Press. I give the quotation again with his omissions :

“Restriction on inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriage is no part of Hindu religion. It is a social custom which crept into Hinduism when perhaps it was in its decline Today these two prohibitions are weakening Hindu society, and emphasis on them has turned the attention of mass mind from the fundamentals which are vital to life’s growth.... Dining and marriage restrictions stunt Hindu society.”

As I read them with a detached mind, I find no contradiction between the two statements, especially if they are read in their full context. In the statement of 1921, I wrote on Hinduism and gave the briefest outline of it. On the 4th of November I had to apply myself to the innumerable castes and caste restrictions. The mode of life in the Ashram in 1921 was absolutely the same as it is now. Therefore my practice has undergone no change. I still believe that restriction imposed by oneself upon inter-dining and inter-marriage is an act of renunciation of the flesh. There is one word that perhaps I would change if I was writing the article of 1921 today. Instead of “prohibition”, I should repeat the expression used in the same article just a few lines before and say “self-imposed restriction

against inter-marriage and inter-dining is essential for a rapid evolution of the soul.”

In spite of my statement of 4th November last, I would say that inter-dining and inter-marriage are in no way essential for the promotion of the spirit of brotherhood or for the removal of untouchability. At the same time, a superimposed restriction would undoubtedly stunt the growth of any society, and to link these restrictions to Varnadharmas or caste is undoubtedly prejudicial to the freedom of the spirit and would make Varna a drag upon religion. But having said this, I would like to say to this diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

Harijan, 29-4-'33, p. 2



The Way the World is Moving And the Insight and Foresight of Mahatma Gandhi

Sisir K. Dhar

Life has a value when it has something Valuable as its object

—Hegel

Is there anyone in this world, except insanes, who not like to be happy in life? Mahatma Gandhi, to whom “The supreme consideration is man,” holds “human happiness combined with full mental and moral development” as the goal of life. There can be no better goal for a man than happiness and all-round development of the mind, that makes a man ‘a traveller in a larger world’ and, that is the fulfilment of life. Verily, a developed mind is the greatest asset of a man.

What do we mean by happiness and mental development? I have long felt - and this conviction is all the stronger at the age of 75 years today, that the happiness or the sense of satisfaction of a mentally developed person is something richer,

qualitatively different, than that of an under-developed person. The wise are happy, felt Plato. The sense of satisfaction of a Buddha, deliberately giving up the kingdom and dear ones in search of the well-being of others in the world, is something different from that of a ruffian for success in his sphere, just as the taste of a ripe fruit and a rotten one differs. Buddha or Socrates’ satisfaction is too deep for perception by the ruffian. It is not for nothing that the ‘Isopanishad’ enjoins one to ‘enjoy hrough sacrifice’. One in whom inner development has kindled an awareness of something or things great, might do away smilingly with things that ordinary minds crave for. By mental development mean the blooming in a man of basic richer qualities of mind. To me, they are compassion or goodwill, meral sense, sense of beauty and truthfulness (a quest to reach the roots of

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questions, something not identical with mere scholarliness).

How far does the modern industrial civilisation help or hinder attainment of this goal of happiness and mental development? This civilisation is prominent most in the Western countries, while non-Western countries in general have since long accepted it as the model. (We may also call this Western civilisation for this reason, or capitalist civilisation as capitalism and industrialism grew as twins of a single process, or modern civilisation as it grew during the modern period of history-since the Industrial Revolution in the West. We may also call it a materialist civilisation, that it is basically, facilitating a sort of material abundance along with growth of materialist utilitarian values and having no avowed spiritual aim.)

While considering the question raised above, we must recognise the contribution of this civilisation, based on an immense growth of science and technology, to a vast advancement of the society in different directions and entichment of the standard of living of the mankind as a whole. The distance between the condition of the early men-an insecure life in caves and jungles with little knowledge of things before them and with no worthwhile tools and instruments and the condition of citizens in a

modern society is immeasurable. Since the earliest days, after man had acquired language, or some rudiments to start with, and was thus capable of transmitting experience, mankind has moved ahead from common sense to science, and the stride, gigantic in its totality, continues. We need not recount here in detail all the advances thus attained stage by stage and we may instead look at the condition in our own time to gauge the extent of this contribution.

Obviously, science and technology, as the foundation of the civilisation, have carried the human society from a nadir of existence to a rather dazzling height-from a state of helplessness against the vagaries of nature to one of great control over Nature and a state of considerable security and plenty. In fact, science and industrial growth have acted beneficially in different spheres of human life. Thus, apart from a promise of eradication of poverty and hunger with an abundant production and actually with some remarkable success in the matter mainly in the countries of the West, there has been a great increase in the quantity of human knowledge and increase in the facilities for education and health, a noticeable growth of rationalism as compared with the blind superstitious faith of the primitive man. This increase of knowledge has led to less dependence on the mercy of a supernatural force on the one hand and



for better social arrangements, institutions etc. on the other, to greater scope for leisure owing to higher productivity and dirty work being done by machine, relative advance in women's position, greater facilities for communication and transport, entertainment and amusement etc.

II

One of the most obvious aspects of human frailty is too much concentration on the immediate, with too little care for future consequence, ...

We have just indicated the beneficial side of the modern civilisation, only very briefly, as people today are so conversant with the benefits of science and industry, when even an average school boy or girl can prepare a long essay on this subject. Rather, to have a balanced view, we should discuss at greater length the other side, not at all rosy, of the matter that generally gets much less attention in our academic or intellectual circles.

In striking contrast to the common notion, as early as in 1908, in 'Hind Swaraj' Gandhi deprecates the modern industrial civilisation in very strong terms : "drive out Western civilisation. All else will follow." I consider the 'Hind Swaraj', in which he "pits soul force against brute force," the most basic of all that Gandhi had written. All that he has said afterwards are more or less the elaboration of the

basic theme of the 'Hind Swaraj'—the supremacy of the 'soul force'.

A great spiritualist humanist, Gandhi's supreme concern has been the inner development of man that distinguishes him from all other animals. With this development, a man is, in poet Shelley's words, "the king over himself; just gentle, wise." In this inner development, Gandhi had no doubt, lies happiness and fulfilment of life. I admire and respect with all my heart this uncommon man, who wants "to wipe every tear from every eye" and dares to fight all evils and injustice with love and without arms. But our respect or admiration must not cloud our judgement. Right or wrong, I notice streaks of one-sidedness, extremism, exaggeration and over-simplification in not a few of his pronouncements made from time to time. (Looking at, what I feel, his excessive preoccupation with the evil of sex, I ask myself : Is not Gandhi a bit puritan?) The 'Hind Swaraj' is a coherent thesis against the industrial civilisation. His mentor, Gokhale, thinks it "so crude and hastily conceived". His disciple, Mahadev Desai, also feels the language about machinery "rather crude". But even as late as 1938 Gandhi sticks to his views in 'Hind Swaraj'. I believe, he sticks to them till the last; and I accept as invaluable the basic thrust of his



thoughts and approach.

One may attribute the above-mentioned drawbacks in Gandhi's statements to the fact that, active in a tumultuous world of politics, he was an man in a hurry. By nature, he is however strikingly calm and resolute. More plausible than this explanation is the possibility that, fighting single-handedly against prevalent ideal and approach, he is inclined to lay emphasis-and sometimes he lays over-emphasis on his ideas. Also plausible is the possible idea that there are 'two Gandhis' in the same person. This explanation is of utmost help in understanding him whom so many have found an enigma. Of the 'two Gandhis', one is an 'idealist', who left to himself will strive unwaveringly to reach the farthest point of his ideas in its perfect form; and there is a 'practical idealist' who is convinced that much more important than presenting a 'blue-print' of a perfect utopia is leading the people themselves even one step ahead towards the ideal. The 'practical idealist' never turns his face away from the ideal, but recognises that our ideal is like the pole star-it cannot be reached, it should guide us-and he sometimes allows concession to realities of the situation and to the imperfection of human nature, e.g. on the question of use of machine.

Gandhi recognises the

spiritual emptiness or rather the degrading materialist character of the industrial civilisation. Essentially, his basic thoughts are not much new, which he says are "as old as the Himalayas". The thoughts have roots in the 'Upanishads', 'Gita', Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus and such others, including Tolstoy and Ruskin. In his own land, and in his own time, poet Tagore, whom Gandhi called 'Gurudeva', also presented in his writings the concepts of inner-development ('Atma-shakti'), 'satyagraha' (cf. the drama 'Prayaschitta' - Atonement), a simple life, rural reconstruction, constructive activity etc. But not only thoughts, action was Gandhi's forte and with that he captured the imagination of the world.

In 'Hind Swaraj' Gandhi emphasises that the modern civilisation is "a civilisation only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day." He says these even when he is conscious that the people in Europe, with bodily welfare as the object of life, are as a whole better off materially than earlier. He adds, "Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy. Again, "They keep up their energy by intoxication. They can hardly be happy in solitude." He does not ignore their good qualities : "They



are enterprising and industrious, and their mode of thought is not inherently immoral. Neither are they had at heart. I therefore respect them.” Nonetheless, never does he like the life-style the materialist civilisation creates.

Gandhi had witnessed closely the contribution of the modern civilisation. But he was not enamoured, aware of its weak foundation “This civilisation takes note neither of morality nor of religion,” he observed. He did not live to see the unimaginable advance of science during the post World War II decades. But he was dismayed to see what havoc even a single atom bomb could cause. “There are now diseases of which people never dreamt of before,” he said in ‘Hind Swaraj’. More diseases are emerging in the modern civilisation. We indicate below not only diseases that may afflict man individually, but also some deadly ailments and evils that this civilisation, with all its contribution before, produces today, darkening the future of mankind.

(1) The modern industrial civilisation is over-exploiting, polluting and exhausting Nature and thus harming seriously the future of the inhabitants on the earth. The original object of science was (i) to know the laws of Nature and to increase control over it, and (ii) to raise productivity specially through industrial growth to remove poverty and hunger. While the

success in the first field has been conspicuous enough, very much remains undone in the second (as will be detailed later). However, a reckless pursuit for material abundance is threatening Nature and if unchecked, cannot but endanger the very human existence, when natural resources, mostly non-renewable and supplying raw materials for industry, are limited in supply. The over-exploitation of resources now going on as also technologies being developed for more production are harming the environment increasingly as production increases. As the authors of the Valuable Report by the Council of the Club of Rome, Alexander King and Bertrand Schncider, observe, “the human race, in pursuit of material gain by the exploitation of nature, is racing towards the destruction of the planet and itself.”

There is, no doubt, a burning problem of a growing population with a rising impact on the demand for resources, Sir Julian Huxley described the exploding human population as “The cancer of the planet.” Others also have spoken on the same lines. The growing population is encroaching menacingly forests and virgin lands. One shudders to think what will happen to the existing stock of natural resources if this growth continues or, if this large, growing population, mostly in the Third World,



happens to acquire the standard of living of its Western brethren, Yet when we speak of the environment pollution, it will be erroneous to lay the entire or even the major blame, as several writers do, on this population growth, though the gravity of the matter is undeniable.

Let us look at the matter in the correct perspective. Thus, as Walden Bello writes for Third World Network Features, (i) 80 per cent of the current consumption of the earth's resources may be accounted for by the 20 per cent of the world's population residing in the North; (ii) the average Swiss, for instance, pours 2,000 times more toxic waste into the environment than the average Sahelian farmer; (iii) if the levels of consumption and waste do not change, 57 million Northerners who will be born in the 1990s will pollute the earth more than the extra 911 million Southerners, owing to the gross disparity in the rate of consumption; and (iv) in the light of these data, one cannot but agree with the Treaty on Consumption and Lifestyle at the Rio de Janeiro Global Forum during the June 1992 Earth Summit that "While overall population growth is a danger to the health of the planet, it must be recognised that population growth in the North, due to the extremely high levels of per capita consumption is a far

greater threat than population growth in the South." Let us add here that more than 28 per cent of global emissions of 'greenhouse gases' originate in the USA, all developing countries causing just around 5 per cent. 2 Similarly, Japan is stated to be the world's largest consumer of tropical forest products and its insatiable demand rather than local population growth has been the main cause of rapid deforestation of a large number of the South East Asian countries, causing in turn a serious erosion of soil, when the rain washes away every year fertile top soil. For the same reason, this happens in other parts of the world.

Again, pollution of different types afflict the environment, besides what the population growth causes. There are diffusion of toxic substances into the environment, acidification of water and destruction of forests caused by effluents, macro-pollution in the upper atmosphere caused by the chlorofluorohydrocarbons, the 'green house effect' etc. The pollutions grow mostly because of the high level of consumption and eco-unfriendly technologies used for production. Disposal of effluents and garbages are major inevitable problems in the system of industrialisation. In future, not far off, we shall face a grave water scarcity problem. While the demand for water rises with economic growth, many technologies also enhance it.



(2) **The destructive potential of the modern civilisation is too high.** The world has not been without battles and wars in the past. But were today-even a local one that took place recently in Iraq-are unimaginably costlier and ruinous. Perhaps, the total volume of destruction during the five years of World War II far exceeds that of all previous wars since the dawn of human history. But the end of that war has not meant the end of wars.

Today, a huge portion of resources are being deployed for military purposes - more for destructive weapons than for health. Here, trading by industrially advanced countries plays a big role. The lure of profit through sales of arms and weapons attracts not the Western capitalist countries alone. Before its fall, the USSR was the largest dealer in arms in the Third World countries. Now, China has entered into this field. Anyway, such a large-scale trade in arms and destruction of humans, animals and resources are an off-shoot of the industrial civilisation. It is stated that there is a four-fold rise in expenditure on armaments since the end of the World War II. "Over US \$ 1 trillion is now spent by developing countries,"¹. The military expenditure is rising in most major countries including those unable to feed their people properly.

In this our civilisation, the people remain under a constant threat of annihilation with nuclear wars,

chemical wars, space wars and so on. Science is commanded to create a Frankenstein's monster and peace recedes more and more.

The industrial system is also fraught with risks of devastating accidents, besides more frequent smaller ones, with incalculable suffering and losses.

(3) **The industrially advanced countries (IACs) thrive on exploiting ruthlessly the less developed countries (LDCs).** That exploitation is bad is admitted universally. Yet, in practice, it continues glaringly. The IACs, enjoying a commanding position in the economic field, exploit LDCs, first by securing much-needed raw materials from the latter with uneven terms of trade. In the matter of technology transfer, the IACs dictate terms.

There are other exploitations, more obnoxious. The IACs find it difficult to dispose of toxic wastes locally and a number of these countries export their 'cargoes of poison' to poor countries in Africa that sell discharge rights. This is not done by the Western IACs alone. It is stated that apart from devouring South-East Asia's forests, the Japanese export of industrial pollution is on a massive scale to this region. Highly polluting resource processing plants like copper smelters



were relocated from Japan to the Philippines and Malaysia in 1970s.

(4) The industrial civilisation perpetuates a gross unequal distribution of riches and other benefits.

As promised, the progress of science and industry should have made much easier an abundance for all. But only a small section of the world's population enjoys most of the benefits and a much larger section continues to suffer from pangs of poverty, starvation, malnutrition and lack of education. Arnold Toynbee was optimistic that "Our present industrial revolution is.... perhaps the first, since the invention of agriculture, that has been potent enough to provide appreciable social and cultural benefits for all members of a society that has made it." 3 (He had underlined the above word 'all'.) Ironically, the same Industrial Revolution has widened the gap between the Northern and Southern parts of the world blatantly. King and Schneider observe : "In Europe, before the Industrial Revolution, per capita consumption was little different from that of many of the less developed countries today.

Now the average per capita consumption of materials and energy is about forty times greater in the North than

in the less developed countries of the South. At its extreme, this disparity may be more than 100:1." 1 An unfortunate exploiter - exploited relationship- internal and intra-national, grotesque and unkind, remains a stark fact for the humanity mocking at all rhetorics about advancement of the civilisation.

Available statistics regarding gross disparity in levels of income, consumption, health and educational facilities, possession of wealth, investment, share of world trade, etc. tell a story of man's mercilessness towards man. A large population in the under developed part of the world does not have safe drinking water. According to the World Health Organisation, already about 1.3 billion people, more than 20 per cent of the world population, are seriously sick or malnourished. An inescapable conclusion is that "Scientific and technological advances in the industrialised countries tend to increase the economic disparities between the rich and the poor countries and to inhibit the latter from undertaking technological innovation."

And, the depletion of Nature becomes more reckless, when the resources position demands of us to be more thoughtful. As stated in a paper presented in the recent Science Congress of India, world oil reserves,



as estimated by geologists, currently stand at 136 billion tons. At an annual production rate of 3.2 billion tons, the reserves are likely to last another 42 years. World-wide natural gas reserves, now 138 trillion cubic metres, are expected to last 69 years, if the annual production rate of two trillion cubic metres continues. The disparity in the rate of consumption of resources between the IACs and the LDCs is too high. A German economist suggests that to save the environment from ruin the IACs must reduce their consumption of commodities by 90 per cent (!), while for the world as a whole the rate of reduction should be 50 per cent. Efforts are now on to invent technologies for utilisation of renewable resources, to recycle wastes and to invent pollution-free technologies. But these are mostly birds in the bush, rather distant ones. Success in these spheres, if any, and yet far from adequate judging by the needs, may perhaps mitigate a fraction of the problem. And it is too much to expect that any possible success, at least in the foreseeable future, will ensure the Western level of consumption in the entire world.

(5) The modern industrial civilisation causes injury to health (physical and mental) and leads to cultural impoverishment and spiritual

degradation. Prima facie, the conclusion here regarding physical health may sound preposterous after all the progress in curative and preventive measures. The costly services, however, are often beyond the reach of the majority. And we have also referred to the WHO's findings regarding serious sickness of a large population. The increasing and menacing environmental pollution, telling seriously on health, is a harsh fact. In its 1993-94 Report, the World Resources Institute warns us that by the turn of this century one out of every three persons will suffer from respiratory problems or impaired liver and kidney functions, cardio-vascular and other related disorders making the megacities in our country a sick place to live in. And pollution does not differentiate between West and East, rich and poor - a global phenomenon.

What about mental health? "We find ... that the countries in Europe which are among the most democratic, peaceful and prosperous ones, and the United States, the most prosperous country in the world, show most severe symptoms of mental disturbance," observes Eric Fromm. 4 "Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden and the United States are the countries with the highest suicide rate, and the highest combined suicide and homicide rate The



figures for alcoholism show that the same countries - the United States, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark - which have the highest suicide rate, have also the highest alcoholism rate, with the main difference that the United States are leading in this group..." he adds. If I remember correctly, somewhere Prof. Galbraith said that he noticed some peacefulness in an Indian villager (or peasant), which he did not notice in New York (or America). With reference to the modern society, an earlier report of the UNESCO said that : "The signs of very great individual unhappiness are legion. They range from complete breakdown - suicide or permanent mental illness through sickness with a large psychosomatic component - to obsessive thinking and morbid states of dejection.... Divorce, delinquency, and the myriad examples of anti-social behaviour not classified as crime are the repercussions in intimate social relations."

The trend appears to get stronger. According to a recent report, of every three Americans today, one is mentally ill and half of the population has sometimes or other been afflicted with such illness. Also mental fatigue, addiction to drinks and an inclination to avoid company of others are spreading in America like infection

diseases and that America tops the list in the matter of rapes, murders, drug addiction, accidents and military expenditure. The drug trade has become so well organised in different countries. Surprisingly, "The total earnings from the drug trade exceed even that of the oil industry."¹

The trends that we notice also at the cultural level are hardly elating. So common is the vulgar ostentation by the rich of his riches, pomp, luxury, and 'status symbols'. How much can a person use really? Things are purchased much beyond needs for displaying, avidly. A venomous demonstration effect pollutes the cultural life. The atmosphere is growingly such that those too, not as rich, like to ape the rich even by borrowing or even by recourse to amoral means. Corruption, that almost everyone condemns, thrives. So often today, one will notice a senseless demonstration of vulgarity and obscenity in the name of art and culture, a display of gaudiness and garishness in the name of beauty, of raucousness aided with numberless musical instruments in the name of song and music, of idiotic and ugly postures in the name of dance and so on. "Rock music, gadgets and cola drinks have forged a new, parallel and temprary (as long as youth lasts) society and created what the African



historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo calls ‘homo cocacolens’,” say King and Schneider.¹ It is not that there are no things of beauty in the land of culture. But a ‘Gresham’s Law’ operates here forcefully : it leads to parade of shallowness and pretension, when opiating raucousness and vulgarity thrive in the name of art, entertainment and culture.

Now, things of this sort providing excitement for a while, like that comes with intoxicating drinks, cannot ensure and enduring sense of satisfaction. And, things like drug-addiction, turning people into Hippies and so on manifest an urge, though misguided, for distraction, and for escape through suicide, when the existing abundance, false glory and glamour fail to sustain the heart.

Cinema, T.V., newspapers etc. are the most important mass media with a strong impact on the cultural life. But while possessing a valuable potential for mass education, they tend to acquire a potential for ill education - extremely pernicious, with a pronounced commercial bias and, this is the stronger trend today.

Today, technological advance offers a variety of entertainments. Very many of them, however, are trash qualitatively utterly lacking in depth of thinking or feeling. Hardly do they serve to enrich the aesthetic sense of

viewers or audience. Definitely, they harm an impressionable mind. Our child-psychologists are worried with the TV-addiction of our children, who are so prone to imitate. The injurious off-shoots of this addiction are an aggressiveness in behaviour, confusing fantasies with realities and acquiring a distorted notion of the reality, harm to studies, waste of time. Most or many of the commercial films screened are loaded with vulgarities of sex, crime and violence, when money is God. All these, repeated day in and day out, serve to fortify a conviction that crime and violence rule the world. They overshadow good things, erode faith on perennial values and create a belief that in a world where villainy pays and villains are heroes, honesty is foolish. Of course, there are other forces-most of all, unscrupulousness and hypocrisy of political leadership and ostentation of the rich - also working in the same direction. But that does not turn the film-makers’ vices into virtues. One of our front-ranking film directors pointed out some time ago that nowadays gay and lesbian films are getting more and more place in film festivals. It seems, culture is decaying qualitatively but flourishing quantitatively : we have more films, more entertainments, even more books and so on but not



many good ones. One will notice, even in big cities and towns, while there are numberless shops offering an infinite variety of fashionable goods, drinks and so on good bookstalls are few.

A large part of the mass circulation newspapers and journals are replete with advertisement, mostly to allure the gullibles. There is intrusion of more and more such advertisements into the TV controlled in India by the Government. Viewing such advertisements, one may feel all the problems of the country except that of cosmetics and fashionable goods have been solved. The reports and discussions in the remaining pages of the papers pander most to the tastes of the elitist section; and problems and

agonies of the masses, particularly in villages where the majority lives, rather trite, to the elite, get a grudging accommodation. Thus, the mind of the people, it seems, is transported by our cultural media to a world of fantasy and of indifferent to others.

In short, judging by the most important test of cost-benefit ratio, I am constrained to conclude that this materialist industrial civilisation is more costly or noxious than beneficial : all that glitters is not gold. But, then, are all the evils mentioned above really products of this civilisation? Many of them are so, as can be proved definitely. And those which cannot be so proved are found to be associated invariably with this civilisation, and this is suggestive enough.

(To be continued)

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জাতির প্রতি মহাত্মা গান্ধীর ঐতিহাসিক আহ্বান

৮ই আগস্ট '৪২ নিঃ ভাঃ কংগ্রেস কমিটিতে ভারত ছাড় প্রস্তাব গ্রহণের পর মহাত্মা গান্ধী সমগ্র জাতির উদ্দেশ্যে যে আহ্বান জানান তাহা এখানে সংক্ষিপ্তাকারে দেওয়া হইল।

আপনারা প্রস্তাবটি গ্রহণ করিয়াছেন, তজ্জন্য আপনাদিগকে অভিনন্দিত করিতেছি। যাঁহারা এই প্রস্তাবের বিরোধিতা করিয়াছেন তাঁহাদিগকেও অভিনন্দন জ্ঞাপন করিতেছি, কেন না তাঁহারা অন্তরের নির্দেশেই কাজ করিয়াছেন। প্রস্তাবের বিরোধিতা করাতে লজ্জিত হইবার কিছু নাই। ১৯২০ সাল হইতে আমরা এই শিক্ষা ও নীতি অনুসারেই চলিয়া আসিতেছি। সত্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত ও দৃঢ়প্রতিজ্ঞ হইলে বহুমতের বিরোধিতায় দোষ নাই, বরং তাহাই বাঞ্ছনীয়। বহু বৎসর পূর্বে আমি এই শিক্ষাই লাভ করিয়াছিলাম।

আপনাদের মধ্যে যাঁহারা বিরুদ্ধে ভোট দিয়াছেন তাঁহাদের নিকটে এইক্ষণে আর একটি শিক্ষালাভ করিলাম। এই বিষয়ে তাঁহারা আমাকে অনুসরণ করিয়াছেন দেখিয়া সুখী হইয়াছি। প্রস্তাবে যেসব কথা বলা হইয়াছে তাহার সবটাই যে নিখুঁত সুন্দর তাহা নহে। এক সত্য ব্যতীত আর কিছুই নিখুঁত বা সর্বাঙ্গসুন্দর নহে। মৌলানা সাহেব ও পণ্ডিত জওহরলাল নেহরু আপনাদের কাছে প্রস্তাবের মর্ম ব্যাখ্যা করিয়াছেন।

একসময়ে মুসলমান মাত্রই ভারতবর্ষকে মাতৃভূমি বলিতেন। আলি ভ্রাতৃদ্বয় সতাই তাহা বিশ্বাস করিতেন। তাঁহাদের এই কথা মিথ্যা বা লোক দেখানো ইহা আমি কস্মিনকালেও বিশ্বাস করি না। আবার সহকর্মীর সম্বন্ধে সন্দেহ করা অপেক্ষা তাহাদের সম্বন্ধে অজ্ঞ থাকাই আমি ভাল মনে করি। কংগ্রেস যদি সত্যসতাই হিন্দু ও মুসলমানের মধ্যে

মৈত্রী সংস্থাপন করিতে চায়, তবে তাহা কেবল আমার জীবদ্দশাতেই সম্ভব, এই কথা সহস্র সহস্র হিন্দু-মুসলমান আমাকে বলিয়াছেন।

হিন্দু-মুসলমান একতা চাই-ই চাই

হিন্দু-মুসলমান মৈত্রী ও সাম্প্রদায়িক একতা আমাদের চাই-ই চাই, ইহা আমার আশৈশব অন্তরের কামনা। ভারতবর্ষকে একসূত্রে গ্রথিত করিতে হইবে ইহাও আমার শৈশবার্জিত দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস। মুসলমান মসজিদের মোকদ্দমা সম্পর্কেই আমি দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকায় গিয়াছিলাম এবং তথায় তাঁহাদের স্বার্থ রক্ষার জন্য লড়িয়াছিলাম। মুসলমানকে আমি কোন দিনই অবিশ্বাসের চক্ষে দেখি নাই। নিরাশায়, নিরুৎসাহে বা পরাজয়ে লজ্জিত হইয়া দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা হইতে আমি স্বদেশে প্রত্যাবর্তন করি নাই।

মুসলমান বন্ধুদের কেহ কেহ আমার নানা নিন্দা ও কুৎসা রটনা করিতেছেন। তাহা আমি গায়ে মাখি না। আমার কোন্ কার্যের জন্য যে তাঁহারা আমার উপর এরূপ অসন্তুষ্ট তাহা আমি জানি না। হাঁ, গোমাতার পূজা আমি করি বটে। জগতের জীব মাত্রই ভগবানের সৃষ্টি, ইহাই আমার বিশ্বাস। আমার সুহৃদবর্গ, বিশেষতঃ মৌলানা বারি ও মৌলানা আজাদ প্রমুখ মুসলমান বন্ধুগণও ইহা উত্তমরূপেই অবগত আছেন। মুসলমানদের সহিত এক পংক্তিতে বসিয়া আমি আহা করি। ধর্ম বা নীতি-নির্বিশেষে সকলের সঙ্গে বসিয়াই আমি পানাহার করিয়া থাকি।

বিদেষ আমার অন্তরে নাই,



কাহাকেও আমি ঘৃণা করি না। লঙ্কোয়ে মৌলানা বারি সাহেবের বাড়ীতে আমি আতিথ্য গ্রহণ করিয়াছিলাম। তিনি অতি মহাশয় ব্যক্তি ছিলেন। যে সময়ের কথা বলিতেছি তখন উভয় সম্প্রদায়ের মনে কোন সন্দেহ বা অবিশ্বাস ছিল না।

জিন্নাসাহেব ভ্রান্তপথে চলিয়াছেন

জিন্নাসাহেব পূর্বে কংগ্রেসসেবী ছিলেন তাঁহার কার্যকলাপ দেখিয়া মনে হয় তিনি ভ্রান্তপথে চলিয়াছেন। তিনি দীর্ঘজীবী হউন, আমার চলিয়া যাওয়ার পরেও বহুদিন বাঁচিয়া থাকুন। এমন একদিন আসিবে যখন তিনি দেখিতে পাইবেন যে, তাঁহার বা মুসলমানদের কোন ক্ষতি আমি করি নাই। মুসলমানদের আন্তরিকতা সম্বন্ধে আমার মনে সন্দেহের লেশ মাত্রও নাই। তাঁহাদের হাতে যদি আমার জীবনাবসান ঘটে, তবুও তাঁহাদের সম্বন্ধে আমার মুখ হইতে নিন্দাসূচক বাক্য বাহির হইবে না। তাঁহারা আমার সম্বন্ধে যে মতই পোষণ করুন না কেন—আর যে কোন অভিমত পোষণের অধিকার তাহাদের ষোল আনাই আছে—আমি অতীতে যেমন ছিলাম আজও ঠিক তেমনই আছি। সাময়িক উত্তেজনায় আত্মবিস্মৃত হইয়া তাঁহারা আমাকে গালি দিতে পারেন, তা দিন। অপরের নিন্দাবাদের শিক্ষা ইসলামে নাই। ভারতবর্ষের মুসলমানগণ যদি পবিত্রাত্মা পয়গম্বরের যথার্থ অনুগামী হন, তবে তাঁহারা তাঁহার নির্দেশ পালন করিয়া চলিবেন। গুলিবদ্ধ হওয়ার যাতনা অপেক্ষা তাঁহাদের নিন্দাবাদ আমার কাছে অধিক পীড়াদায়ক। তাহা হইলেও তাঁহাদের অপবাদ ও কুৎসা আমি মাথা পাতিয়া লইতে সতত প্রস্তুত।

কংগ্রেস সাম্প্রদায়িকতার বিরোধী

কায়েদে আজম বলিয়াছেন যে, ইংরেজগণ যদি তাহাদের হাতে রাজত্ব অর্পণ করিতে প্রস্তুত থাকেন তবে মুসলিম লীগ উহা গ্রহণ করিতে রাজী আছেন কারণ ইংরেজগণ মুসলমানদের নিকট হইতেই রাজত্ব

নিয়াছিলেন। তাহা হইবে মুসলিম-রাজ। মৌলানা সাহেব বা আমি যে আহ্বান দিয়াছি তাহা মুসলিমরাজও নয়, মুসলিমের অধীনতাও নয়। কোন গোষ্ঠী বা সম্প্রদায়ের অধীনতায় কংগ্রেস বিশ্বাস করে না। ইহা গণতন্ত্রে বিশ্বাসী যাহার কোটরে হিন্দু, মুসলমান, বৌদ্ধ, পার্সী, খ্রীষ্টান এই বিরাট দেশের সকল অধিবাসীই রহিয়াছেন। মুসলিমরাজ যদি অপরিহার্য হয় তবে হউক। কিন্তু আমরা কিরূপে উহাতে সম্মতি দিতে পারি? আমরা কিরূপে এক সম্প্রদায়ের উপর আর এক সম্প্রদায়ের অধীনতা স্বীকার করিয়া লইতে পারি?

ভারত মুসলমানদেরও মাতৃভূমি

এই দেশের লক্ষ লক্ষ মুসলমান হিন্দুসম্প্রদায় হইতে আসিয়াছে। ভারতবর্ষ ব্যতীত আর কোন দেশ তাহাদের মাতৃভূমি হইতে পারে? কয়েক বৎসর পূর্বে আমার জ্যেষ্ঠপুত্র ইসলাম ধর্ম গ্রহণ করিয়াছিল। তাহার মাতৃভূমি কি হইবে, পোরবন্দর, না পাঞ্জাব? আমি মুসলমানদের জিজ্ঞাসা করি, —“ভারতবর্ষ যদি আপনার মাতৃভূমি না হয়, তবে আপনি কোন দেশের? আমার পুত্র যে ইসলাম ধর্ম গ্রহণ করিয়াছে, তাহাকে আপনি কোন পৃথক মাতৃভূমিতে রাখিবেন?” তাহার ধর্মাস্ত্রের গ্রহণের পর তাহার মা তাহাকে লিখিয়াছিল সে ইসলাম ধর্ম গ্রহণের পর মদ্যপান ত্যাগ করিয়াছে কিনা, কারণ ইসলাম ধর্মে মদ্যপান নিষেধ। যাঁহারা ইহাতে আনন্দিত হইয়াছিলেন, তাহাদের উদ্দেশ্যে তাহার মা লিখিয়া- ছিলেন—“সে মুসলমান হওয়ায় আমি কিছু মনে করি না, যতটা মনে করি সে মদ্যপান ত্যাগ না করায়। ধার্মিক মুসলমান হিসাবে ধর্মাস্ত্রিতের পর আপনারা কি তাহার মদ্যপান সমর্থন করিবেন? মদ্যপান করিতে করিতে সে নিজেকে লম্পটে পরিণত করিয়াছে। যদি আপনারা তাহাকে আবার মানুষ করিয়া তুলিতে চাহেন তবে তাহার ধর্মাস্ত্রের গ্রহণকে ভাল কাজে লাগাইতে হইবে। সুতরাং আপনারা দেখিবেন যাহাতে মুসলমান হিসাবে সে মদ ও নারী পরিত্যাগ করে। যদি তাহার কোন পরিবর্তন না হয় তবে তাহার



ইসলামধর্ম গ্রহণ বৃথা যাইবে এবং তাহার সহিত আমাদের অসহযোগিতা পূর্বের ন্যায়ই চলিতে থাকিবে।”

ভারতে বসবাসকারী প্রত্যেক মুসলমানেরই মাতৃভূমি ভারত, ইহা নিঃসন্দেহ। অতএব প্রত্যেক মুসলমানেরই ভারতের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামে সহযোগিতা করা উচিত। কংগ্রেস কোন শ্রেণী বা সম্প্রদায়েরই নয়, ইহা সমগ্র জাতির।

প্রত্যেক মুসলমান কংগ্রেসে যোগদান করুন। কংগ্রেসের দ্বার তাঁহাদের জন্য উন্মুক্ত। কংগ্রেসে তাঁহাদের মতাদিক্য সৃষ্টি করিয়া তাঁহারা কংগ্রেসকে ইচ্ছানুরূপে গড়িয়া লইতে পারেন। কংগ্রেস গণতান্ত্রিক প্রতিষ্ঠান। অতএব তাহাতে বাধা নাই।

সকলের জন্য যেমন লড়িতে হইবে, সংখ্যালঘদের জন্যও লড়িতে হইবে। এই কথা যেন হিন্দুরা কোনক্রমে ভুলিয়া না যান। মুসলমানদের প্রাণ রক্ষার্থ তাঁহারা নিজ প্রাণ বিসর্জন দিতে প্রস্তুত হউন। ইহাই অহিংসার প্রথম ও প্রধান শিক্ষা। প্রতিবেশীর প্রতি সহিষ্ণুতা পোষণ করা উচিত। মুসলমানদিগকে এবং অপর সকলকেও এই উপদেশ মানিয়া চলিতে বলি।

সংগ্রামে গোপনীয় কিছু থাকিবে না

আমাদের আসন্ন সংগ্রাম গণযুদ্ধের রূপ পরিগ্রহ করিবে। প্রত্যেকে আমার নির্দেশ অনুসারে চলিলে সংগ্রামে জয়লাভ সুনিশ্চিত, অন্যথা ইহা সম্ভব নয়। আমাদের সংগ্রামের পরিকল্পনায় গোপন কিছুই নাই। তবুও পাক্ল সাহেবের বিজ্ঞপ্তির প্রতি আপনাদের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করিতেছি। ব্যাংয়ের ছাতার মত রাতারাতি উদ্ভূত কতকগুলি দলের সহায়তায় গভর্নমেন্ট কংগ্রেসের বিরোধিতা করিবে এবং কংগ্রেসকে নির্মূল করিতে পারিবে, ইহার মত অবাস্তব কথা আর নাই। আমরা একটি পরাক্রমশালী সাম্রাজ্যের বিরুদ্ধে সংগ্রামে লিপ্ত হইতেছি। আমরা যে খোলাখুলি সংগ্রামে লিপ্ত হইতেছি, এই কথায় যেন কোথাও ভুল বা গোল না থাকে। গুপ্ত কর্মপন্থা অবলম্বন করিবেন না। যাঁহারা তাহা করিবেন, তাঁহারা সর্বনাশ করিবেন, পরাজয়ের পথ সুগম করিবেন।

জনসাধারণ চিরদিন আমাকে বিশ্বাস করিয়াছে। আমি সারা ভারত ভ্রমণ করিয়াছি; জনগণের উপরও আমার বরাবর বিশ্বাস আছে। আজ আমরা এক সংকটময় সন্ধিক্ষণে সমুপস্থিত। আমরা প্রস্তুত নই; প্রস্তুত হইলে তবে তোমরা আসিও, একথা আমি ইংরেজ বা জাপানকে বলিতে পারি না। আর কালবিলম্ব করিলে ভগবান আমাদের শাস্তিবিধান করিবেন।

আর বিলম্ব করা চলে না

আমি যে কেবল ভারতবর্ষ সম্বন্ধেই কথা বলিতেছি তাহা নহে। এই সংগ্রামই আমার জীবনের শেষ সংগ্রাম। বিলম্ব করিলে আমরা বিপন্ন হইব। আর বিলম্ব আমাদের সকলের পক্ষেই লজ্জার বিষয় হইবে। আর বিলম্ব করা চলে না। যে সব দেশ স্বাধীনতার জন্য লড়িতেছে তাহাদিগকে যদি সাহায্য করিতে চাই তবে এই মুহূর্তেই আমাদের স্বাধীন হইতে হইবে। স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের লগ্ন উপস্থিত। কিন্তু সংগ্রাম আরম্ভ করিবার পূর্বে বড়লাটের নিকট আমি একখানা চিঠি লিখিব এবং তাহার উত্তরের প্রতীক্ষা করিব। ইহাতে সপ্তাহ বা পক্ষকাল বা তিন সপ্তাহ লাগিতে পারে। ইতিমধ্যে আমাদের তের দফা গঠনকর্ম চালাইতে হইবে এবং নিম্নলিখিত নিয়ম অনুসারে নিজেদের চলিতে হইবে।

আগে স্বাধীনতা পরে অন্য কথা

আমি স্বাধীন, এই উপলব্ধি প্রতি ভারতবাসীর শিরা উপশিরায় প্রবাহিত হউক। যথার্থ স্বাধীনতা লাভের জন্য প্রত্যেকে প্রস্তুত হউন বা তৎপ্রাপ্তির চেষ্টায় মৃত্যুকে বরণ করুন। আমি স্বাধীন, এই ভাবেই তিনি চলিবেন, ফিরিবেন, কথা বলিবেন এবং কাজকর্ম করিবেন। কেবলমাত্র জেলে গেলে তো চলিবে না। দর কষাকষির কথাও আর এখন নাই। মস্তিষ্ক গ্রহণের প্রশ্নও নাই। আমরা স্বাধীন হইব, এই সংকল্পের মধ্যে আপোষের কোন স্থান নাই। স্বাধীনতা আগে অন্য কথা পরে। ক্লীব হইও না। মনে রাখিও



কাপুরাশের বাঁচিয়া থাকার অধিকার নাই। স্বাধীনতা আমাদের বীজমন্ত্র হউক, আর সকলে তাহা জপ করুন।

সংবাদপত্রসমূহকে স্বাধীন ও নিষ্ঠীক হইতে হইবে

সংবাদপত্র সমূহকে নিষ্ঠীক ও স্বাধীনভাবে স্বীয় কর্তব্য সম্পাদন করিতে হইবে। ভয়ে বা অর্থ লোভে যেন তাঁহারা বশ্যতা স্বীকার না করেন। তাঁহারা নিরপেক্ষভাবে সততার সহিত কর্তব্য করুন। সংবাদ পত্রগুলি সকলেরই মত প্রকাশের সমান বাহন হউক। আমি সংবাদপত্রের স্বাধীনতা চাই। সরকারের চাপে অপপ্রচার করা অপেক্ষা সংবাদপত্র বন্ধ করিয়া দেওয়া ভাল। অবশ্য সংবাদপত্রের ব্যবসার দিকও একটা আছে। তাহাদের ঘরবাড়ী আছে। কলকজা আছে, অনেক লোকজন আছে। এই সবই বিসর্জন দিতে তাহাদের প্রস্তুত থাকিতে হইবে। স্বাধীনভারতে তাঁহারা না হয় পুনরায় সংবাদপত্র প্রকাশ করিবেন। আমার নবজীবন প্রেসকে আমি বিসর্জন দিয়াছি। তাহার ফলে অনেকগুলি লোক বেকার হইয়াছে। কিন্তু তজ্জন্য আমি দুঃখের লেশমাত্রও অনুভব করি নাই, কারণ আদর্শের মর্যাদা রক্ষার জন্যই আমি কাগজ বন্ধ করিয়া দিয়াছি। সম্পাদক সংঘের স্থায়ী কমিটি গভর্নমেন্টের নিকট যে অঙ্গীকারে আবদ্ধ হইয়াছেন, সংবাদপত্রসেবীরা তাহা নাকচ করুন, লঙ্ঘন করুন। ইহাতে আপনাদের দিক হইতে পাক্ল সাহেবের সার্কুলারের সমুচিত উত্তর দেওয়া হইবে। আপনারা যেন আত্মসম্মান বিসর্জন না দেন, অবমাননার লাঞ্ছনা মস্তকে তুলিয়া না লন। নূতন মনোভাব সৃষ্টির কার্যে আপনারা আপনাদের শক্তি নিয়োগ করুন।

দেশীয় রাজাগণ কালের ধর্ম বুঝুন

আমি রাজন্যবর্গের অন্তরতম শুভাকাঙ্ক্ষী, এই কথা তাঁহারা বুঝুন। আমার পিতা এক দেশীর রাজ্যের দেওয়ান ছিলেন। আমি জন্মগ্রহণ করিয়াছি এক দেশীয় রাজ্যেই। দেশীয় রাজ্যের অন্নজলেই আমার দেহ গঠিত। সে ঋণ আমি অস্বীকার করিতে পারি না। রাজন্যবৃন্দ কালের

ধর্ম অনুসারে কর্তব্য পালন করুন। স্বীয় প্রজাবৃন্দের হাতে রাজ্যশাসনের দায়িত্ব তাঁহাদের ন্যস্ত করিতেই হইবে। সময়ের গতি লক্ষ্য করিয়া তাঁহাদের চলিতে বলি। অন্যথা স্বাধীনভারতে তাঁহাদের স্থান নাই। পণ্ডিত জওহরলাল ও অপর অনেকে সামন্ততন্ত্রের প্রতি সহানুভূতিসম্পন্ন নহেন। পণ্ডিত জওহরলালের মত নেতারা স্বাধীন ভারতের ভাগ্য নিয়ন্তা হইবেন, এই কথা মনে রাখিতে বলি। তাঁহারা স্বেচ্ছাচার পরিহার করুন।

প্রজাদের হাতে শাসন ভার অর্পণ করুন

একথাও বলি যে, রাজন্যবর্গ যেন স্বীয় ক্ষমতার অপব্যবহার না করেন। প্রজাবর্গের মন জয় করিলেই কেবল তাঁহারা টিকিয়া থাকিতে পারিবেন নচেৎ নহে। ভারতবর্ষ স্বাধীন হউক, ইহা কি তাঁহারা চাহেন না, এই প্রশ্ন জিজ্ঞাসা করিতে পারি কি? স্বাধীনতা যদি কাম্য হয়, তবে আসুন মুক্তিসংগ্রামে যোগ দিন। আর যদি তাঁহাদের মত অন্যবিধ হয়, তবে স্পষ্ট কথায় বলিয়া রাখিতেছি যে, তাহারা যে গভর্নমেন্টের মুখাপেক্ষী সেই গভর্নমেন্টও তাঁহাদিগকে রক্ষা করিতে পারিবে না। কারণ উহার নিজেরই অস্তিত্ব থাকিবে না। প্রজাদের হাতে কালবিলম্ব না করিয়া দায়িত্বপূর্ণ শাসনভার ন্যস্ত করিতে বলি।

আমি অত্যন্ত দৃঢ়তার সঙ্গে বলিতেছি, কেহ যেন কোনরূপ গুপ্ত কর্মপস্থা অবলম্বন না করেন। আন্দোলনে যেন গোপন কিছুই না থাকে। গোপনীয়তার আশ্রয় লওয়া পাপ।

ছাত্রমণ্ডলী ও অধ্যাপকগণ স্বাধীনতার বীজমন্ত্রে উদ্বুদ্ধ হউন। তাঁহারা কংগ্রেসের পক্ষ অবলম্বন করুন। অকম্পিত হৃদয়ে তাঁহারা বলুন, আমরা কংগ্রেসেরই পক্ষে, আমরা কংগ্রেসেরই। যখন প্রয়োজন হইবে সানন্দে যেন তাঁহারা কর্মত্যাগ করেন ও উচ্চপদের লোভ পরিহার করেন।

সূত্র : মোহনদাস করম চাঁদ গান্ধী, বিদ্রোহের আহ্বান, অনুবাদ— শান্তিরঞ্জন দাস, কলকাতা-সর্বোদয় প্রকাশন সমিতি, পৃ. ৪৫-৭০



গান্ধীজির সঙ্গে বিনোবা ভাবের প্রথম সাক্ষাৎকার

ছোটবেলা থেকেই আমার মন হিমালয় এবং বাংলার প্রতি আকৃষ্ট হয়েছিল। আমি হিমালয় ও বাংলায় যাবার স্বপ্নে বিভোর হয়ে থাকতাম। একদিকে বাংলার বন্দেমাতরম-এর ক্রান্তি ভাবনা আমাকে টানত, অন্যদিকে হিমালয়ের জ্ঞানযোগের আকর্ষণে আমি আকর্ষিত হতাম। হিমালয় ও বাংলা দুইয়েরই পথে পড়ে কাশী নগরী। সংযোগ বশে আমি সেখানে এসে পড়েছিলাম। অথচ না আমি হিমালয় গেলাম, না বাংলায়। কিন্তু মনে মনে আমি দু-জায়গাতেই একসঙ্গে পৌঁছে যাই। আমি গান্ধীজির কাছে গিয়েছিলাম, তাঁর কাছে



হিমালয়ের শান্তি ও বাংলার ক্রান্তি দুই-ই পেয়েছিলাম। তাঁর কাছে যা পাই তার মধ্যে বাংলার ক্রান্তি ও হিমালয়ের শান্তির অপূর্ব সন্মিলন ঘটেছিল।

আমি যখন কাশী আসি তখন সেখানে বাপুর একটি বক্তৃতার আলোচনা চলছিল। বাপুর এই বক্তৃতা হয়েছিল সেখানকার হিন্দু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে। ঐ বক্তৃতায় তিনি অহিংসা সম্পর্কে অনেক কথা বলেছিলেন। মুখ্য কথা এই ছিল যে, নির্ভয়তা ছাড়া অহিংসা চলতে পারে না। মনে মনে হিংসার ভাব পোষণ করা অপেক্ষা প্রকাশ্য হিংসা করলে তা লঘুহিংসা বলে মান্য হবে। অর্থাৎ মানসিক অহিংসাই মুখ্য অহিংসা। আর এক ছাড়া নির্ভয় হওয়া সম্ভবই নয়। নানাবিধ অলঙ্কারাদিতে সজ্জিত যে সব রাজা মহারাজার (হিন্দু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সভায়) এসেছিলেন ঐ ভাষণে তাঁদেরও তিনি কড়া সমালোচনা করেছিলেন। ঐতিহাসিক এই ভাষণের এক মাস পরে আমি যখন ওখানে (কাশীতে) পৌঁছাই

তখনও নগরে তার গৌরবপূর্ণ আলোচনা চলছিল। ভাষণ পড়ে আমার মনে যে সকল আশঙ্কার উদয় হয়েছিল তা একটি চিঠিতে লিখে আমি বাপুকে জানাই। তিনি আমাকে ঐ পত্রের খুবই সুন্দর উত্তর দিয়েছিলেন।

দশ-পনের দিন পরে আবার আমি আমার সংশয় সম্পর্কে জানতে চাই। তখন তিনি একখানা পোস্টকার্ডে জানান যে, ‘অহিংসা সম্পর্কে যা জিজ্ঞাসা করেছ তার সমাধান চিঠিপত্রের দ্বারা হওয়া সম্ভব নয়, তার সমাধান নিতে হবে জীবন থেকে। এর জন্য আশ্রমে এসে আমার কাছে যদি কিছুদিন থাক তো আস্তে আস্তে কথাবার্তা হতে পারে।’ তাঁর ঐ জবাব—সমাধান কথায় নয়, জীবন থেকে হবে—আমার বড়ই মনঃপূত হয়।

ঐ পত্রের সঙ্গে বাপু আশ্রমের একটা নিয়মাবলীও পাঠিয়েছিলেন, যা আমার নিকট আরো আকর্ষক মনে হয়েছিল। তখন পর্যন্ত কোনো সংস্কারই ঐ রকম নিয়মাবলী কখনো আমি পড়ি নি। তাতে ছিল—এই আশ্রমের আদর্শ হল—“বিশ্বহিত অবিরোধী দেশসেবা। আর তার জন্য আমরা নিম্নলিখিত ব্রত আবশ্যিক বিবেচনা করি।” তার নিচে সত্য, অহিংসা, ব্রহ্মচর্য, অস্ত্যেয়, অপরিগ্রহ, শরীরশ্রমাদি একাদশ ব্রতের নাম লেখা ছিল। এটা আমার খুবই আশ্চর্যজনক মনে হয়েছিল। আমি বহু রকম ইতিহাস পড়েছি কিন্তু কোথায়ও দেশ উদ্ধারের জন্য ব্রত-বিধানের আবশ্যিকতার কথা পাইনি। এ সমস্তই যোগশাস্ত্র, ধর্মগ্রন্থ ও ভক্তিমার্গের



কথা। কিন্তু ঐ নিয়মাবলীতে ছিল যে, দেশসেবার জন্যও এর আবশ্যিকতা আছে। এই জন্য আমার মন তাঁর প্রতি আকৃষ্ট হয়। আমার বোধ হল ইনি দেশের রাজনৈতিক স্বাধীনতা লাভ ও ব্যক্তিগত জীবনে আধ্যাত্মিক তার বিকাশ একত্রে সাধন করতে চান। এই আদর্শই ছিল আমার মনের গভীরে। বাপু লিখেছিলেন—“তুমি এখানে চলে এসো।” আর আমি বাপুর নিকট গিয়ে উপস্থিত হলাম।

ঐ দিনটি ছিল ৭ই জুন, ১৯১৬। আমি আমেদাবাদ স্টেশনে নামি। আমার নিকট বেশি জিনিস ছিল না। যা ছিল নিজেই বয়ে নিয়ে পথ জিজ্ঞাসা করতে করতে পদব্রজে অগ্রসর হলাম। এলিট ব্রিজ পার হয়ে সকাল আটটার সময় (কোচরব) আশ্রমে পৌঁছাই। বাপুকে জানানো হল—এক নতুন ভাই এসেছেন। তিনি বললেন—ঠিক আছে, স্নানাদি করার পর আমার সঙ্গে দেখা করতে বল। স্নানাদি সেরে আমি তাঁর কাছে গেলাম। তিনি তখন তরকারি কুটছিলেন। আমার কাছে ওটাও একটা নতুন দৃশ্য ছিল। আমি কোনো দিন শুনি নি যে, রাষ্ট্রনেতা তরকারি কোটার কাজও করেন। তাঁর প্রথম দর্শনেই আমি আমার শ্রমের পাঠ পেলাম, একটা ছুরি আমার হাতেও বাপু ধরিয়ে দেন। আমি তো এর আগে ঐ কাজ কখনো করি নি। ঐ দিন আমার প্রথম অনুশীলন হল। ওখানে আমি যা পেয়েছি এটা ছিল তার প্রথম শিক্ষা।

তরকারি কুটতে কুটতেই তিনি আমার খবরাখবর নেন। তারপর বলেন যে, ‘এখানকার জীবনযাপনের রীতি-পদ্ধতি যদি তোমার ভালো লাগে এবং নিজের জীবন যদি তুমি সেবার কাজে উৎসর্গ করতে চাও তো এখানে থাক। আমি তাতে খুশি হব।’ আমার প্রশ্ন তিনি বুঝে নিয়েছিলেন, বলেন—‘কিন্তু তুমি দেখতে তো খুব দুর্বল। সাধারণত আত্মজ্ঞানীর দৈহিক বল কমই থাকে কিন্তু তোমাকে তো অসুস্থ বলে মনে হয়। আত্মজ্ঞানীর কখনো

অসুখ করে না।’ এটি ছিল দ্বিতীয় শিক্ষা। বাপুর এই শিক্ষা আমি কখনো ভুলতে পারি নি।

সে দিন সবজি কুটতে কুটতে বাপুর সঙ্গে যেটুকু কথাবার্তা হওয়া সম্ভব তাই হয়েছিল। তারপর শুধু কাজের কথাই হতো। কাজের মধ্যেই আমি সব সময় ডুবে থাকতাম। অনেকের সঙ্গে বাপুর কথা হতো, তা শুনতাম। বাপু জানাতেন যে, ছেলেটি (বিনোবা) সদভাবনা থেকে এসেছে। কিন্তু অন্যেরা আমাকে জড়তুল্য মনে করতেন। একদিন এক ভাইয়ের সঙ্গে গীতা সম্বন্ধে আলোচনা করতে গিয়ে বাপু বলেন—‘এটা তো গৌণ ভাষা’। আমি তখন বলি—‘না, এ ভক্তির ভাষা’। বাপু বলেন—‘হ্যাঁ ঠিক কথা। এক, জ্ঞানের ভাষা, আর দুই, ভক্তির ভাষা।’ এমনই ছিলেন বাপু! আমার মতো বালকের কথারও মহত্ত্ব স্বীকার করে মেনে নেবার মতো নম্রতা ছিল তাঁর মধ্যে। এই ঘটনার পর সকলের মনে হয়—আমিও কিছু জানি।

এতে লোকের কোনো দোষ ছিল না। ঐ সময় আমি একুশ বছরের যুবক, খুব রক্ষ মানুষ ছিলাম। আমার বন্ধুরা জানেন যে, যাকে সভ্যতা, শিষ্টতা বলে তা আমার খুবই কম ছিল। কারো সঙ্গে কথাবার্তাও বলতাম না। কাজের মধ্যে ডুবে কিংবা অধ্যয়নে বা ধ্যান-চিন্তনে মগ্ন থাকতাম।

একদিন খুব ভোরে উঠে আমি আমার ঘরে উপনিষদ পড়ছিলাম। আশ্রমবাসীরা শুনতে পেয়ে বাপুকে জানান—এ ব্যক্তি তো সংস্কৃতও জানে। পরে বাপু অনুসন্ধান করে জানতে পারেন এবং মাঝেমাঝে প্রার্থনার পর কিছু কিছু বলতে বলেন। এইভাবে চলতে লাগল।

বাপু আমাকে তৈরি করবার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিলেন। আমার নিকট লোকজন পাঠাতেন। ওয়ার্ধা যাবার পর সেবাগ্রামে জিজ্ঞাসু কেউ এলেই বাপু জানতে চাইতেন—‘আপনি বিনোবার সঙ্গে দেখা করে এসেছেন? না হয়ে থাকে তো অবশ্যই দেখা করে নেওয়া চাই।’ একদিন বাপু এক ভাইকে আমার কাছে পাঠিয়েছিলেন। তিনি ছিলেন ভারতের



প্রধান এক বিপ্লবী। বাপুর কথায় তিনি পওনার অবধি আসেন, পায়ে হেটে এসেছিলেন। আমি তখন মাটি কোপাচ্ছিলাম। চোখ তুলে দেখি যে সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে আছেন এক ভাই। আমি জিজ্ঞাসা করলাম—এসেছেন কেন? তিনি বলেন—‘এমনিই। দর্শন করতে এসেছি।’ আর কি? আর কোনো কথাবার্তা হল না। একটু পরেই আবার আমি কাজে লেগে গেলাম। কাজেই দৃষ্টি নিবদ্ধ হল। ঐ ভাই দাঁড়িয়ে ছিলেন কিন্তু কিছু বলেন নি। ফিরে গিয়ে তিনি বাপুর কাছে অনুযোগ করেছিলেন, —‘আপনি আমাকে কেমন লোকের কাছে পাঠিয়েছিলেন! আমার সঙ্গে তিনি আলাপ পর্যন্ত করেন নি। বাপু বুঝেছিলেন। বলেন—আপনি যখন গিয়েছিলেন তখন সে কি করছিল?—মাটি কোপাচ্ছিল। বাপু তখন বলেন—তা হলে ও-তে রুপ্ত হবার কি আছে? বিনোবা নিজের কাজ করছিলেন, তখন কি করে সে আপনার সঙ্গে কথা কইতে পারে?



মহাশয়, আপনার জানা নেই যে, কারো সঙ্গে দেখা করতে হলে আগেই সময় চেয়ে নেওয়া দরকার। এই ভাবে বাপু তো তাকে বুঝিয়ে দেন কিন্তু পরে আমার সঙ্গে দেখা হলে আমাকে ভর্তনার ভঙ্গিতে বলেন, কোনো সজ্জন দেখা করতে এলে তাঁর সঙ্গে দেখা করা ও কথাবার্তা বলাও এক রকমের কাজ। এইভাবে তাঁর হাতে আমি ধীরে ধীরে গড়ে উঠতে থাকি। স্বভাবে আমি বন্য প্রকৃতির ছিলাম। বাপু আমাকে পোষমানা বন্য প্রাণীতে পরিণত করেছিলেন। তাঁর চরণের তলে বসেই আমি বন্য মানুষ থেকে সেবকে পরিণত হয়েছি। বাপুর সঙ্গে থেকেই আমার সেবার প্রতি আকর্ষণ জন্মে। তাঁর কাছেই আমি সেবাকে ভগবানের পূজার সাধন এবং জনতাকে নিজের প্রভু মনে করতে শিখি।

বাপু আমাকে পরীক্ষা করেছিলেন কি না তা

আমি জানি না, কিন্তু আমি নিজের বুদ্ধি অনুসারে তাঁকে অনেক পরীক্ষা করে নিয়েছিলাম। আর ঐ পরীক্ষায় যদি তিনি ভালো ফল করতে অসমর্থ হতেন তাহলে আমি তাঁর কাছে থাকতে পারতাম না। আমাকে পরীক্ষা করে আমার মধ্যে যত দোষই তিনি দেখতে পেতেন না কেন তবুও তিনি আমাকে তাঁর সঙ্গে রাখতেন। কিন্তু আমি যদি তাঁর সত্যনিষ্ঠায় কিছুমাত্র অল্পতা,

ন্যূনতা অথবা ত্রুটি দেখতে পেতাম তা হলে কিছুতেই আমি তাঁর কাছে থাকতে পারতাম না। আমি এমন অনেক মহাপুরুষ দেখেছি যাঁদের নিজেদের সম্পর্কে ধারণা ছিল যে, তাঁরা মুক্ত পুরুষ, পূর্ণ মানুষ। এমন কারোর প্রতি আমার আকর্ষণ ছিল না। কিন্তু সর্বদা নিজেকে অপূর্ণ মান্যকারী বাপুর প্রতি আমার অনির্বচনীয় আকর্ষণ ছিল। তিনি হামেশাই বলতেন এখনো পূর্ণ সত্য থেকে আমি অনেক দূরে। আমার উপর বাপুর প্রভাব যতটা পড়েছিল

ততটা পূর্ণতার দাবিদার অন্য কোন সজ্জনের প্রভাব পড়েনি।

বাপুর সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎ হতেই তাঁর ভিতর ও বাইরের একরূপতা আমাকে মোহিত করে। আবার কর্মযোগের দীক্ষা তো আমি তাঁর কাছ থেকেই পেয়েছি। ও-কথা (কর্মযোগের কথা) গীতায় বলা হয়েছে, কিন্তু আমি কর্মযোগের সাক্ষাৎ পেয়েছিলাম বাপুর জীবন থেকে। গীতার কর্মযোগের প্রত্যক্ষ আচরণ আমি বাপুর মধ্যে দেখেছি। গীতায় স্থিতপ্রজ্ঞের লক্ষণ আছে। অনুসন্ধান করলে বড় ভাগ্যগুণে এই বর্ণনা অনুযায়ী দেহধারী স্থিতপ্রজ্ঞ পাওয়া যায়। কিন্তু এই লক্ষণের কাছাকাছি এসেছেন এমন একজন মহাপুরুষ আমি নিজের চোখেই দেখলাম।

বাপুর নিকটে আশ্রমে যে



জীবনের স্বরূপ আমি নিজের দৃষ্টিতে দেখেছি তা থেকেই অনেক কিছু আমি পেয়েছি। পরিণাম স্বরূপ আমি অনুভব করেছি—জীবন অবিভাজ্য এবং অখণ্ড। বাপু কখনো নিজেকে গুরু বলে মানতেন না। আর কাউকে নিজের শিষ্য বলেও স্বীকার করতেন না। এমনিতে যদিও আমি গুরুর মহত্ত্ব খুব মানি, তবুও আমি না কারোর গুরু, না কারোর শিষ্য। কিন্তু গুরুগিরির কথা ছেড়ে এইটুকু আমি বলব যে, বাপুর আশ্রমে আমি যা কিছু পেয়েছি আজ অবধি তাই দিয়েই আমার কাজ চলছে। বাপুর আশ্রম আমার দৃষ্টিদানকারী মাতৃস্থান।

খাঁন আব্দুল গফুর খাঁনের সহায়তার জন্য তাঁর নিকট যাওয়ার বিষয়ে বাপুর সঙ্গে একবার আমার আলোচনা হচ্ছিল। তখন তাঁর মনে হয়েছিল এমন হওয়াও অসম্ভব নয় যে, ফিরে আর আসাই হল না। এ জন্য তিনি আমাকে আলোচনা করতে ডাকেন। পনের দিন পর্যন্ত আমাদের আলোচনা হয়। দুই-তিন দিন তিনি কেবল প্রশ্ন করেছেন আর আমি উত্তর দিয়েছি। পরে একদিন আমি তাঁকে ঈশ্বর বিষয়ক অনুভূতি সম্পর্কে, জিজ্ঞাসা করি। আমি বলি—আপনি বলে থাকেন ‘সত্যই পরমেশ্বর’—সে তো ঠিক, কিন্তু অনশনের সময় আপনি বলেছিলেন যে, অন্তরের বাণী শুনতে পান,—এটা কি? এর মধ্যে কি কোন গূঢ় রহস্য আছে?

উত্তরে তিনি বলেছিলেন, ‘হ্যাঁ, এর মধ্যে ঐ রকম কিছু অবশ্যই আছে। এটা একেবারেই সাধারণ কথা নয়। আমি স্পষ্ট আওয়াজ শুনতে পেয়েছিলাম। আমি (বাপু) জিজ্ঞাসা করি—কি করা চাই আমার, তো উত্তর পাই—উপবাস করা চাই। আমি জানতে চাই—কত দিন উপবাস করতে হবে? উত্তর : একুশ দিন।’*

এতে (এই আলোচনায়) একজন ছিলেন

প্রশ্নকর্তা অন্যজন উত্তরদাতা। অর্থাৎ পুরোপুরি কৃষ্ণ-অর্জুন সংবাদই ছিল। বাপু তো সত্যবাদী ছিলেন, সেজন্য এটায় ভুল কিছু হওয়া সম্ভবপর নয়। তিনি বলেছিলেন, ঈশ্বর আমার সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন। সে জন্য আমি পুনরায় জিজ্ঞাসা করি ‘ঈশ্বরের কোন রূপ হতে পারে?’

তিনি বলেন, ‘রূপ তো হতে পারে না, কিন্তু আমি যে আওয়াজ শুনেছি।’ আমি বলি—কেমন করে? রূপ যদি অনিত্য হয় তো আওয়াজও অনিত্য। তবুও আওয়াজ যদি শুনতে পান তবে রূপ কেন দেখেন না? পরে তাঁকে আমি ইহলোকের অন্যদের এই রকম গূঢ় অনুভবের কথা বলি। নিজের অনুভূতির কথাও কিছু বলি। ঈশ্বর দর্শন কেন হয় না সে বিষয়েও কিছু কথা হয়। শেষে তিনি স্বীকার করেন যে, যদিও আমি আওয়াজ শুনেছি, রূপের দর্শন হয় নি, তবুও রূপ দর্শন হওয়া সম্ভবপর।

বাপুর ‘আত্মকথা’ যখন বেরোচ্ছিল তখন একবার ঐ বিষয়ে তিনি আমাকে প্রশ্ন করেছিলেন। আমি বলেছিলাম,—আপনি সত্যবাদী, মিথ্যা তো কিছু লিখবেন না, এর জন্য কারো হানি হবে না কিন্তু উপকার কি হবে জানি না। কেননা, যার যেটা নেবার তিনি সেটাই নেবেন। বাপু বলেন, ‘আমি যা চাচ্ছিলাম তোমার উত্তরে তা পেয়ে গেছি। হানি হবে না এটাই যথেষ্ট।’ উপকারের সম্পর্কে গুজরাটিতে বলেছিলেন— “আপণা বধাঁ কামোন্টু পরিণাম মীডুচ্ছো” (আমাদের সকল কাজের পরিণাম হচ্ছে শূন্য)। তিনি শূন্যে আঙ্গুল দিয়ে বড় একটা গোল ঐকে দেখান এবং বলেন, আপণ তো সেবা করী ছুটীয়ে (আমাদের তো সেবা করেই ছুটি)। এই কথা আমার হৃদয়ে গেঁথে গেল। এর মধ্যে বাপুর যাবতীয় তত্ত্বজ্ঞান এসে যায়।

সূত্র : বিনোবা রচনাবলী-১, প্রথম খণ্ড, কলকাতা : পশ্চিমবঙ্গ বিনোবা শতবার্ষিকী প্রকাশন সমিতি, পৃ. ৪৫-৫১

* শরৎচন্দ্র (শিষ্য) লিখেছেন স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের শ্রুত ক্ষীর ভবানী মন্দিরের দৈববাণী সম্পর্কে তিনি বলেছিলেন—‘যেন একটা শব্দ আকাশ থেকে আসছে, কোনো লোক দেখতে পাওয়া যাচ্ছে না’।—স.



Tentative Plan of Action for Celebration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi

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■ Preparing West Bengal for 2019 :

Our state of West Bengal had celebrated the Gandhi Centenary year in 1969 in a befitting manner. While the voluntary organizations in the field of Gandhian constructive programme had the key role, the active support of the then State Government and its Governor, the Chief Justice and a few top officers were remarkable. The work of the Gandhi Centenary Committee had been able to create a good impression among the people of the State.

With this very brief introduction let us try to jot down some points about the modus operandi of the forthcoming big event of 2019.

In brief there are three types of Gandhian Organizations in our State. Due to historic reasons for long, the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore has evolved as the pivot of all Gandhian activities in West Bengal. Its library, museum galleries, archives of our history, the services provided by its band of experts to the general public and observance of all important programmes related to the life and work of the Mahatma, have made it the nerve-centre of the Gandhian activities and programmes of the State.

Then there are branches/ federated units of the eminent All-India Gandhian organizations. They include the State Sarvodaya Mandal, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Kasturba Trust and others. Excepting the Sarvodaya Mandal, the affiliated branches of all other national organizations have several branches in the North and South Bengal.



They have one or more committed field workers in the remotest regions of the State, who along with implementing the programmes of the above national bodies with devotion, have participated with open arms, in all the State level Gandhian programmes in the past. Their participation in celebrating 2019 programme will be very vital this time also. All that is needed is a prior organization and co-organization with them.

Then there are nearly 200 Gandhian organizations spread throughout all the corners of the State and they concentrate mainly on a single Gandhian programme like Khadi, Village Industries, Basic education, Rural reconstruction etc. But they always respond enthusiastically to any state level call to propagate Gandhian programmes or philosophy. Through these institutions, we expect to reach out to the people of distant areas of the State with the message of 2019.

Last but not the least is, like the Centenary year organizing celebrations at the Visva Bharati. Though the two leviathans of Indian history of the previous Century charted different courses according to their inner lights, they had not only highest regards about each other and had special positions for one another in their hearts. Manifestations of this special retaken within the frame-work of regular programmes of Visva Bharati are the annual official celebrations of 'Gandhi Punnyah' on 10th of March every year. There is in addition to Halakarshan 'tree plantation day' and the activities of craft based education and rural service in the "Shri-Niketan". The Departments of Gandhian Studies, set up in most of the Universities, during Gandhi Centenary Year, have been playing commendable roles ever since and this time their co-operation is to be garnered to add to our success. We cannot forget on this occasion the role of "All India Women's Conference", the genesis of which lies in our glorious national liberation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. This premier body along with its many associates, including the "Sarojnalini Narikalyan Samity", is providing commendable service in the field of women and children. If contacted like the Gandhi Centenary Celebration year, along with its associate bodies, it may join the celebrations this time also.



■ **Strategy of Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore :**

The institutions shall have to be physically contacted through their Secretaries and the principal workers regionally to gear them up for the occasion. Along with the national and the State level programmes, they shall have to be assisted in drawing up their regional and local programmes also. Senior Gandhian Workers and Scholars may have to be sent at regular intervals to keep the flames burning. Naturally, the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore shall have to play a key role in fulfilling this task. Regional Committees of two-three districts may have to be set up for following up this move in close relation with the Barrackpore Gandhi Museum. This relation is expected to be a two-way traffic. Such regional leaders may have to be invited at the State-level meetings of formation of programmes and review of their progress. Whoever necessary, the State level Committee will monitor the programmes of regional and local implementation committees.

■ **Tentative Plan of Action to 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019 :**

To celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019 the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore has planned a proposal of programmes and activities to commemorate our 'Father of the Nation', which are related to the appropriate and befitting commemoration of the multifaceted genius of Gandhiji and his enduring contributions, nationally and internationally. The Managing Committee of our Sangrahalaya has taken the decision that we would start our activities for celebrating the 150th Birthday of Gandhiji in 2019 by the celebration of the Centenary Year of the Champaran Satyagraha in Bihar on April 10, 2017. To actively involve the community in these programmes, the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore has developed a separate proposal for the programmes and activities, which would be continued from 2017 to 2019. The aim of making of the proposal is to facilitate a process of development and organizational change within Sangrahalaya that are committed to active partnership with the various levels of communities of our state. The distinctive characteristic of the proposed programmes of our Sangrahalaya



would be a collaborative, reflective, learning process through which we want to reflect a great tribute to Mahatma Gandhi.

■ **Objectives of the Proposed Plan :**

- To spread awareness of the relevance of the philosophy of Gandhiji among the common people.
- To support the Sangrahalaya through a process of organizational change, through which our Sangrahalaya can be able to place the collaborative works at the heart of our organization, building sustainable partnerships with communities and involving them in decision-making.
- To support collaborative and reflective approaches to skills development and learning.
- To establish a network of our Sangrahalaya in which participatory practices are exemplary and inspiring.
- To gather, document, analyse and disseminate compelling evidence of positive impact and best practices in our Sangrahalaya, as part of a wider strategy to achieve significant shifts in participatory practices within the sector nationwide.

■ **Proposed Plan :**

Our Sangrahalaya has planned to build up such types of programmes and activities so that we can be able to reach the different sections of the community including students, youth, scholars, senior citizens' group, women and others general people. Keeping in mind the present situation of the society our Sangrahalaya has planned to try to develop some strategies to enable us to reach Gandhiji's rich and beneficial ideas to each level of the community for the betterment of the present society. Such types of programmes through which the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore would try to implement successfully the occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations are as follows :



■ Proposed plan for the participation of the School Students :

Sl. No.	Suggested Programmes	Objectives	Participants	Programme in Details
1.	Inter-School State Level Competition	To develop greater understanding of the life and message of Mahatma Gandhi amongst children	School Children	We have planned to initiate a State Level Essay Writing, Story Writing and Debate Competition among the students of the various schools in different districts of West Bengal on various topics of Gandhian Thought and related issues. In the 1 st phase the Competition would be arranged in the individual school level and in the next phase winners of the school level would compete in the district level and finally the district level winners would compete at the state level.
2.	Mobile Exhibitions and Interactive Programmes in various schools of West Bengal	To develop greater understanding of different aspects of Gandhian philosophy and contemporary discourses	School Children	The Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore has planned to initiate a Mobile Exhibition and Day-long Programme by visiting different schools in remote areas of West Bengal so that the student groups who are not able to visit our Sangrahalaya owing to distance and such other problems, would not be deprived from knowing the Life and Activities of Mahatma Gandhi. For that purpose the Sangrahalaya would mount the various Exhibition Sets on different activities of Gandhiji, which would inspire the students in their future life. Some Film



Sl. No.	Suggested Programmes	Objectives	Participants	Programme in Details
				Shows and an interactive Audio-Visual Quiz based on the life of Gandhiji would also be arranged as the part of such programme. We have planned to cover various schools of almost all the districts of West Bengal within 2019.
3.	Painting and Poster making Competition for Children	To promote creative expressions amongst young people	Children from various background in different parts of West Bengal	The topics of such competitions would be Peace, Non-violence, Communal Harmony, etc.
4.	Inter-School Competition on Devotional and Patriotic Songs	To promote and propagate amongst our younger generations the thought, philosophy and values of Mahatma Gandhi.	School Children	We would arrange such Inter-school group singing competition in Bengali and Hindi for various groups of students from primary to secondary level and through such competition we would select the three best groups in a year.
5.	Examination based on Gandhian Studies	To familiarize school students with Gandhian thoughts.	Secondary and Higher Secondary Level Students	The Sangrahalaya would provide the subsidized course material to secondary and higher secondary schools, based on which exams would be conducted. The Sangrahalaya would award certificates to every student and the teacher-coordinator for their participation and support in this examination and the medals would be awarded to first three meritorious students from each standard from each district.



■ Proposed plan for the participation of the Youth Groups :

Sl. No.	Suggested Programmes	Objectives	Participants	Programme in Details
1.	Gandhian Thought Course	To create an intensive acquaintance with the growing field of knowledge and orient its recipients with truths, goals, values, institutions and process of the new society to which the course leads us.	College and University Students, who are not Gandhian constructive workers but are interested in the phenomenon of Non-violence and Gandhi	We would prepare a comprehensive syllabus concerning Mahatma Gandhi's life, activities, philosophy and programmes for projection and dissemination of Gandhiji. The course would be arranged of 8 days' duration, open to all and the Faculty would include eminent Academicians from different Universities and Social Activist. We have planned to organize three courses in a year in collaboration with other Gandhian Study Centres of West Bengal.
2.	Yearlong Mass Awakening Campaign for Youth	To make aware and educate youth on key issues in thematic areas, provide information on the avenues for skill development, encourage and empower them with the spirit of nationalism and volunteerism.	Young Adults from different parts of West Bengal	The yearlong programme would create awareness among youth and empower them to become active partners in nation building activities.
3.	Interactive Round Table Discussion on various issues related to the	To introduce the young generations from a variety of backgrounds to the analysis of conflict,	Research Scholars and Fellows of the University	We would select the following topics for such activities :



Sl. No.	Suggested Programmes	Objectives	Participants	Programme in Details
	life, activities and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi	violence, and peace. The specific purpose of such activity is to help them to identify and use tools that can guide them in working towards a more sustainable and durable peace by strengthening and solidifying the existing peace in the community.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gandhian Values— Relevance of Gandhi in 21st Century ○ Gandhian Principles— Relevance to the Contemporary Period ○ Present Education System and Gandhian Thought ○ Spiritual Aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy and Practices
4.	'Community Outreach' competition	To reinforce the need to familiarize younger generation with Gandhiji's idea of Sarvodaya	College Students	Students would be asked to do a case study of 'people who need us'. Students would ask to talk to poor needy people, old people, rickshaw pullers and women in distress and submit their reports before the deadline. The best three will be awarded prizes.
5.	Ex-Tempore competition	To develop greater understanding of the life and message of Mahatma Gandhi	Research Scholars	Participants would be given various quotes of Mahatma Gandhi and they would be asked to speak on the same. Interesting points that would emerge from the young minds would be noted down.



■ Proposed plan for the participation of the Women :

Sl. No.	Suggested Programmes	Objectives	Participants	Programme in Details
1.	Development of a Training Centre for Women for developing the technical skills and managerial capability of them	To assist in capacity building of women and to raise their technical and management skills, general confidence, interactive capacity, creativity and their social and political status.	Local needy Women	Some practical oriented training courses like Food Processing and Preservation, Cutting and Tailoring, Manufacture of Jute Products, Fabric and Batik Print, Grooming and Personality Development, etc. would be arranged throughout the year. The Sangrahalaya would also assist in marketing of the various products, which they will prepare after formation of their Self Help Group.
2.	Cooperative Day Celebration	To increase the awareness among general public about the important roles of this event in the Indian society	Members of various Co-operative Societies, governed by the group of Women	Discussion would be arranged by the Government Officials on various significant topics, such as the importance of self sufficiency and empowerment of Women, formation of Self Help Groups, etc. Some exhibition stalls would be put up consisting of various products of different cooperative societies of Bengal.
3.	Orientation and Sensitization Programmes on different aspects of violence against	□ To generate discussions for an effective well-coordinated humanitarian and collective response	Representatives from voluntary organizations working on the issue, college students,	We would arrange such types of programmes in different parts of our state. Interactive



Sl. No.	Suggested Programmes	Objectives	Participants	Programme in Details
	the girl child and importance of education of the girl child	<p>to abuse, exploitation and violence against girls.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ To discuss problems and arrive at possible solutions to address different forms of violence against girls and to highlight issues of the education of the girl child. ❑ To raise issues related to female foeticide and to further a collective consciousness for a girl friendly society. 	teachers, professional working on the issue	discussion, Audio-Visual Presentation, Expert opinion, Publication related to the issues would be arranged as the part of such activities.
4.	Seminar on Women in Freedom Struggle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ To develop understanding of Gandhian perspectives on women empowerment ❑ Disseminate about the role of women in freedom struggle ❑ To develop understanding of role of women in peace and development 	Representatives from the civil society, Teachers and Research Scholars	Seminar would be arranged throughout the year in collaboration with different Colleges, Universities and other Gandhian Institutes.



■ **Other Suggested Programmes :**

◆ **Celebration of Important Events of the various Movements of Mahatma Gandhi :**

- Celebration of the Commencement of the Rowlatt Satyagraha (in 1919), by means of Seminars, Symposiums and Discourses.
- Celebration of the commencement of the Non Cooperation Movement (in 1921) by organizing programmes such as workshops, Seminars, Round Table Conferences, extempore etc.
- Celebration of the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) by means of suitable programmes such as Symposiums, Seminars, Exhibitions, etc.
- Organizing the celebrations of the Quit India Movement (1942) by various suitable programmes such as Seminars, Exhibitions, Scholarly Discussions etc.

◆ **Gandhi Memorial Award :**

The Sangrahalaya would select a personality or a Gandhian Institution who has dedicated himself for Gandhian cause or nobler society enriching works or activities. An award in the name of Mahatma Gandhi, entitled '*Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Award*' to be given every year on the 2nd October.

◆ **Gandhi Fellowship to young people committed to work on Gandhian philosophy :**

To motivate young people to research on a dimension of Gandhian philosophy, develop action plan and try to implement it within a community, such initiative would be taken by the Sangrahalaya. As part of the Fellowship, the youth will be expected to take up an action project and work on it. It would entail research, documentation and direct action. At the end of the period, the Fellow would be expected to put together a booklet on the work done.

◆ **Gandhi Literature Festival :**

To promote and propagate the Gandhism such type of programme may be arranged once in a year for the public, all those are interested in Gandhian philosophy.



◆ **Data Bank of Activities of all Gandhian Institutions of Bengal and Gandhian Literatures in Bengali :**

Since literature is a valuable aid to propagate the Gandhian philosophy and as the publication and distribution sources of Gandhian literatures in Bengali have dried up in course of time, so it is very much necessary to create a Data Bank of Gandhian Literatures in Bengali. A web based portal would be developed by the Sangrahalaya in which all the information including the activities of all Gandhian Institutions of the state could be taken up in a common platform.

◆ **Publications of Gandhian Literatures :**

The Sangrahalaya plans to undertake the publication of quite a few publications on the occasion of the celebration of the 150th year Celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi in order to propagate the philosophy and ideals of Gandhiji. The following are the publications that the Sangrahalaya plans to bring out—

- Publication of a book on the life of Mahatma Gandhi in Bengali for distribution among the students of Secondary level schools in West Bengal.
- Publications of books on the life of Mahatma Gandhi in English for distribution among the students of colleges and Universities of our State.
- Compilation of the Books would be released regarding Gandhiji's relationship with Bengal and Bengalees and Reminiscences of Gandhiji from those who were associated with Gandhiji in Bengal.

